Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in
Lingue Moderne per la Comunicazione e la Cooperazione Internazionale
Classe LM-38

Tesi di Laurea

Interpreters, mediators and humanitarian contexts

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Anno Accademico 2021 / 2022

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Introduction

During my course of study in Languages for Communication and International Cooperation, I have developed an interest in the topic of international cooperation, and in particular, how so-called irregular and undocumented migration is managed by the international community and how communication is a key point during international relations, especially in emergency contexts.

As we have seen in recent years, migration flows have increased throughout the world, especially in Europe. The current global estimate reported by the International Organisation for Migration states 281 million international migrants, which corresponds to 3.6% of the global population (IOM 2022). In order to help ensure humane management of migration, promote international cooperation on migration issues and provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, the work of the international community, in particular that of NGOs, GOs or non-profit organisations, is a beacon of hope for thousands of men and women. It is therefore important that the personnel of these organisations are increasingly prepared and ready to follow the complicated dynamics of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants. One of the most significant figures working in humanitarian organisations is the humanitarian interpreter and mediator.

The humanitarian interpreter and mediator provide assistance to displaced populations areas including medical services, health promotion, psychological services and legal devices. This figure is today a particularly requested instrument because s/he is able to help the linguistic and cultural differences that often exist between migrants and those who receive them. In addition, on the refugee's arrival, humanitarian interpreters and mediators play a pivotal role in translating, informing and acting as go-betweens with the local authorities. Furthermore, they have the task of protecting individuals in order to allow them access to their rights.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the role of humanitarian interpreters and mediators in providing assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in need, through communication, in the context of the current situation in Europe, specifically in Italy. In addition, the aim of the thesis is to explore the obstacles they need to overcome to conduct their job effectively and the responsibilities they have. It is important to underline that their task is not only cultural and linguistic, but also emotional, which makes it extremely

challenging. In fact, they often work in emergency contexts dealing with difficult situations, whilst forced to be neutral, and they have to be the voice of people who cannot speak for themselves. Finally, the third scope of the dissertation is to explore the relationship between humanitarian interpreters and mediators and the organisations for which they work.

Overview of the structure of the thesis

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter introduces the phenomenon of globalisation, which is transforming our social condition of conventional nationality into one of globality (Steger 2017). Changes in technology, international economics and political policies have reduced many barriers and have joined regions and continents through wireless communication, commercial exchanges, intragovernmental institutions and those intercultural relations that are the result of the increasing migration flows and mobility. Subsequently, the first chapter will focus in greater detail on migration and the history of migration. In particular, it will explore different types of migration paying attention to so-called irregular migration flows, all of which involve people who are pushed to migrate to European countries, in this case Italy, due to humanitarian crises. In order to manage the dynamic migration flow in Europe, the international organisations that deal with these challenges are presented. The international community plays a pivotal role because it attempts to ensure and defend the human rights of those who have fled their countries. In particular, one of the fundamental principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948) is the right to seek, receive and impart information in a language that people can understand and in formats they can access.

Chapter Two starts by exploring the importance of communication and the right to access information for people in emergency situations, such as refugees and asylum seekers as an effective humanitarian response. To do their job effectively, humanitarian organisations need to understand the newcomers and be understood by them. One of the tasks of humanitarian organisations and agencies is to help refugees and asylum seekers to ensure their rights by both explaining and providing what they need. In order to overcome the barriers to effective communication, international, local and private sector organisations hire professionals who can speak the language of refugees and asylum

seekers (MICIC 2017). Chapter Two will discuss humanitarian interpreting and mediating and analyse the figure of humanitarian interpreters and mediators. In particular, it will examine the challenges, responsibilities and competencies that linguistic experts need to have to carry out their work effectively in the context of humanitarian crisis. A final part of the chapter is dedicated to humanitarian agencies and their internal organisation and the way they view communication and interpreters and mediators.

In the third and last chapter, I will present my research and the data collected through interviews with seven stakeholders working in the field of humanitarian interpretation and mediation in Italy. To be precise, the linguistic experts work in the following international and local humanitarian organisations: International Rescue Committee; Sos Mediterranee; Médecins Sans Frontières; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); Cooperativa Eucrante and Centro Stranieri "Sanzio Togni". In addition, I also interviewed the program director of the organisation Translators Without Borders. This is not a humanitarian organisation, but it works in a humanitarian context by providing language services and tools in order to overcome linguistic barriers in emergency settings. First, I will present an overview of the humanitarian organisations mentioned and the method that I used to carry out the study. I will then illustrate the thematic analysis conducted on the data extracted from the interviews. The themes identified will then be related to the concepts discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. With my study in the context of interpreting and mediating in humanitarian contexts, first I wish to investigate the role that communication has in humanitarian organisations, and in consequence, the relationship between humanitarian interpreters/mediators and the organisations for which they work. Secondly, I will also try to explore the challenges and responsibilities these figures have in this highly stressful and emotional context.

1. Migration and humanitarian crises

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the role of humanitarian interpreters and mediators in providing assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in need and the obstacles they need to overcome to develop their job properly. However, before exploring humanitarian interpreters and mediators' tasks, it is first necessary to describe the factors and the background that led this practice to emerge. The first chapter will deal with the phenomenon of globalisation, which encourages states to be borderless thanks to the improvement of technology, economic and political norms and promotes migration flows. This chapter will also provide a general background to migration, a globalisation-related phenomenon that has always existed throughout history. People are driven to migrate because of varied reasons and according to these reasons, there are different types of migration.

Throughout my dissertation, I will consider only forced international migrants that are pushed to migrate to Europe, in particular Italy, due to humanitarian crises. Furthermore, I will focus my attention on the organisations and agencies that deal with humanitarian crises and ensure human management of irregular migration flows. These organisations welcome refugees and asylum seekers in a safe way and provide first assistance and basic services for them. The first source of help for people in need is communication and the newcomers have the right to receive information in a language they can understand. However, linguistic barriers are obstacles that make difficult the communication between refugees and asylum seekers and the organisations that help them. The last part of the chapter will pay attention to the importance of communication and the right to access information that are fundamental principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right is ensured by interpreters and mediators who function as intermediary between two languages, assert refugees and asylum seeker's rights and ensure the adequate management of migrants needs.

1.1 Globalisation

According to the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.), globalisation is the situation in which available goods and services, or social and cultural influences, gradually become similar in all parts of the world. It can

be also defined as an ongoing process by which regional economies, societies and cultures have become integrated through a network of communication and trade. The discussion about the phenomenon of globalisation began in the mid-1980s in the United States (Turner 2010) although it is believed that globalisation has existed since human migratory routes in the first century Before Christ (FutureLearn 2022). The term was first coined by Theodore Levitt who defined globalisation as the changes in social behaviors and technology that allowed companies to sell the same product around the world (Levitt 1983). The majority of scholars tend to emphasise only the economic and technological aspects of the phenomenon (Turner 2010), but globalisation involves a lot of complex dynamic and multidimensional process (Heywood 2019:161) that transforms our social condition of conventional nationality into one of globality (Steger 2017).

1.1.1 Globalisation's starting point

Globalisation refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world that is the result of the movement of goods, services and capital across borders, in addition to the movement of people and knowledge (International Monetary Fund 2008). There is a debate among scholars about the starting point of globalisation and it exists different theories. First of all, it is commonly shared the idea that the phenomenon began 60.000 years ago, at the beginning of human history (Youmatter 2020). Since then, people from different parts of the world have come into contact through wars and migration experiencing cultural exchanges and developing commercial trade routes. The earliest trade route acknowledged to be the large-scale example of globalisation is the Silk Road which allowed products coming from China to be traded in Europe (FutureLearn 2022). The Age of Discovery contributed connecting the world thanks to European explorers who find new routes across China, India and America (National Geographic 2021). Despite that, there is a huge assumption that the Industrial Revolution is considered the beginning of globalisation (FutureLearn 2022). In fact, the Industrial Revolution made possible the trading of goods faster with new means of transport such as trains and ships. In addition, the years between the World Wars connected markets to the global economy making world trade accelerated (Youmatter 2020). However, it is in 1989, when the Iron Curtain fell, that globalisation became a truly global phenomenon (Vanham 2019). The 21st century is an era of unprecedented global integration thanks to changes in technology

and international economic policies that have reduced many barriers to the free flow of good, service and capital (Peters 2021). The actual information Age is known as globalisation 4.0 due to the improvement of digital economy and advances in communications that speed up the connections across the world (Vanham 2019).

1.1.2 The aspects of globalisation

Globalisation is not a single phenomenon, and it relates to our lives in a wide variety of ways. It is possible to underline two main dimensions of it: the techno-economic and the socio-political dimension (Turner 2010).

After the Cold War, scholars began to view globalisation as a resurgence of capitalism where market capital and technology would not encounter national boundaries (Turner 2010). The world began to be economically integrated and came to be highly interconnected through the intensification of global connectivity. Technology and as a consequence, the Internet, acquired a pivotal function in facilitating the development of globalisation. Internet, through the World Wide Web, breaks down barriers and connects billions of individuals, civil societies associations, and governments (Steger 2013: 36). In addition, the development of technology and the rise of the World Wide Web have reduced communication costs (De Hass 2009) due to the diffusion of digital media and online social networking tools (Steger 2013:50). In fact, they compress time and space (Hopkins 2006) simplifying the closer integration of countries and people of the world (De Hass 2009) creating the world as a global village (McLuhan 1964). Technology and economic policy have reduced the barriers permitting the free flow of goods, services and capital.

The increasing development of technology and communication has facilitated the emergence of political globalisation with intergovernmental organisations, giving a borderless world. The changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels facilitate flows (Youmatter 2020). After World War I, the notion of a global system of collective security and the idea of giving international cooperation and institutional expression was realised with the founding of the United Nations in 1945 (Steger 2017). Supraterritorial institutions and associations like the European Union and United Nations together with non-governmental organisations helped to shape the emerging structure of global governance (Steger 2017). The Westphalia model, namely the social order which

established that international law was oriented to the minimal rules of co-existence, was replaced by a new world order. In fact, in 1990 the president of the United States George W. Bush announced the death of the Westphalia model, and it was declared the rise of borderless world with cooperation between sovereign territorial states (Steger 2017).

From goods and services to money and technology, globalisation speeds up how people move and exchange things across the world (FutureLearn 2022). The phenomenon of globalisation not only integrates regions and continents by wireless communication, commercial exchanges and intragovernmental institutions, but also by intercultural relations that are the result of the increasing migration flows and mobility of people. The expanding worldwide connection, the freedom of movement politics and the market liberalisation encourage the movement of people within their country or across international borders. Mobility and migration are two of the most visible and significant aspects of globalisation and it is necessary to clarify and differentiate the meaning of these terms. On one hand, mobility refers to privileged people who benefit from resources and access to travel. On the other hand, the term migration in policy and public discourse is used concerning less privileged people, such as migrants seeking opportunities and refugees. Mobility may become a synonym for freedom for a small part of the world population (Inghilleri 2017) which can freely move across borders without suffering isolation (Canagarajah 2017), while the displacement of many refugees or migrant workers can signify restricted opportunities, discrimination and exclusion (Inghilleri 2017:6). The intercultural relations resulting from migration flows and mobility of people create cultural globalisation which is the sharing of cultural beliefs, traditions and ideas all over the world. Moreover, the mobility of people increases the concern toward the environment and brought to the formation of movements that see the earth as a single unit for which we all have responsibilities. This global concern guides to another aspect of globalisation which is the ecological one.

1.1.3 Benefits and negative impacts of globalisation

The phenomenon of globalisation has a positive impact on people's lives but at the same time, it provides negative aspects too. The most visible benefits are in the economic and financial field since it has lifted many countries out of poverty and integrates the economies of the world creating global markets. A globalised economy allowed the

increase of global cooperation between state actors that put their differences aside and put effort to work together (Stobierski 2021). Despite the fact that globalisation developed and improved the economies of the world, it is argued that it operates the interests of the world's richest countries which dominate world trade at the expense of developing countries (BBC 2022). Moreover, thanks to globalisation, societies have become larger, and languages and customs have spread all over the world as a consequence of the movement of people across borders during migration, expatriation or travel (Youmatter 2020). Different cultures are spread and known also thanks to the development of technology that make communication faster and possible to reach people of different countries. This positive point of view has also a negative side because globalisation can be seen as a threat to the world's cultural diversity (BBC 2022). In fact, scholars talk about cultural loss because it homogenised the world's cultures and makes specific cultural characteristics of some countries disappear (Youmatter 2020). Furthermore, the movement of people creates a demographic disproportionate growth (Stobierski, 2021) and it has an impact on our planet. Thus, the emission created by traveling has contributed to global warming and air pollution (Vanham 2019). The global effect of climate change leads to extreme weather events and the cutting of forests has a further effect on not just the world's biodiversity, but its capacity to cope with greenhouse gas emissions.

1.2 Migration

Even though migration is a globalisation-related phenomenon (Cronin 2020), globalisation is not the starting point from which human migration originated. In fact, it has been going on for centuries (Williamson 2006) due to warfare, conquest, formation of nations and emergences of states and empires. However, since the end of World War II, migration has undergone fundamental changes under the influence of globalisation, decolonization, demographic change, economic growth and wars. Besides, the nature and scope of migration have changed too. Nowadays migrants and refugees are pulled to migrate by access to a better lifestyle condition or they are pushed by conflicts or climate disasters. The drivers of migration are varied and according to these factors, migrants can choose to move voluntarily in order to seek better opportunities, or refugees are involuntarily pushed by human-made crises and environmental ones. Furthermore, migration can occur internally within a country or across international borders.

International migrants and refugees once they enter a host country can face different issues and problems such as marginalisation, discrimination or social distance. This may occur because host countries see migration as a negative phenomenon without taking into consideration the cultural enrichment that intercultural relations generate. In fact, in Europe, which has emerged as a major global migration destination (De Hass et al .2018), public opinion associates migration with invasion and competition.

1.2.1 European history of migration

The movement of people across and within borders historically and geographically has played a vital role in the evolution of the social and physical world (Inghilleri 2017:3) because it shaped and still structures countries and societies (Sisk 2017:3). Throughout European history, people have always shifted, but significant waves of migration took place in the 19th and 21st centuries (Inghilleri 2017). Indeed, it is possible to summarize five main phases in the European migration transition (Castles et al. 2014): the first phase runs from 1850 to 1900 and involves people leaving Europe for economic reasons in the direction of the Americas and Australia (Inghilleri 2017). People also escaped from Europe during the second migration transition (1945-1970) due to the Second World War. However, in the second part of this era, Europe stopped being a destination to escape from and started being a place to which people from other countries headed. Migration flows were directed towards Europe especially triggered by decolonization and the political and economic turmoil that took place in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. Moreover, from 1970 to 1990 many guest workers arrived in Europe from North and West Africa and Latin America (De Hass et al. 2018:9). The last migration flow phase is the current one and it began in 2008 in response to the Arab Spring which has produced millions of refugees and large-scale undocumented migrants. Large-scale undocumented migration, according to the International Organisation for Migration (2009), is "the movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving country". In 2021 irregular border crossing occurs mainly from the Middle East (24%) and Africa (25%). In particular, asylum seekers and refugees come from Syria (23.2%), Afghanistan (8.4%), Tunisia (8.3%), Morocco (8.2%), Algeria (6.9%), Egypt (4.6%), Bangladesh (4.5%), Iraq (4.3%) and Turkey (2.3%) (European Commission 2021). They lodge in Europe, especially in Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Austria (European Commission 2021).

This is a relatively new social phenomenon and according to Betts (2011) it characterises the current migration wave by unprecedented numbers of undocumented and informal migrants (Sisk 2017).

1.2.2 Drivers of migration

While migration has always been part of human history, its nature and scope have changed in response to revolutionary technological and economic developments (De Hass 2009:6). The factors that lead people to migrate, voluntarily or involuntarily, are commonly referred to as drivers of migration (IOM 2017). Overall, it is possible to identify two types of reasons that led people to move from one place to another, and these dynamics are defined as pull and push factors (Inghilleri 2017). Migration can occur as people respond to 'pulled factors' drawn by hopes for employment, prosperity and opportunities for development that distant lands appear to offer (Sisk 2017: 2). Access to better economic, employment and educational chances (Geddes et al. 2012) play a role in the welfare that people are constantly searching for. Moreover, migration is also caused by demographic drivers such as overcrowding and the effects of disease and mortality (Geddes et al. 2012). At the same time, humans can be 'pushed' toward host countries due to humanitarian emergencies, which are the consequence of an event or a series of events that represents a critical threat to health, safety, security, or wellbeing of a community over a wide area. Humanitarian emergencies, like human-made crises such as conflict, poverty, state fragility and civil war, have generated unprecedented refugee flows and are today among the primary root causes of population movements. In addition, environmental factors like climate change and natural disasters are included in the push factors that lead communities to migrate (IOM 2017).

According to Eurostat statistics (2022), in 2020 migrants came to Europe for different reasons both by push and pull factors. The 40% of migrants reach the continent for employment reasons, while the 11% for education. The 28% arrived in Europe for family reasons and just the 11% for asylum. To sum up, the majority of migrants decided consciously to move to seek better life opportunities, while the minority were pushed by human-made crises.

1.2.3 Types of migration

People who migrate originate from diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds (Sisk 2017:5); most are in a regular migration status while others are in an irregular migration situation. Some are in transit, others are on short-term business and certain are exploited as victims of trafficking, or in other abusive arrangements. Some have fled natural disasters or violence in their state of origin, others are nomadic, pastoralists, or Indigenous populations who move across international borders as part of their traditional way of life (IOM 2016). There exist distinct types of migration and in summary, it is possible to distinguish between four macro-areas. There are voluntary migrations, such as migrants that move in legal conditions for economic reasons, and involuntary ones that shape the figure of refugees and asylum seekers (Geddes 2003:6) moving in an irregular manner. In addition, the migration can occur within the state, or across borders defying the international migrants and refugees.

Voluntary migrations involve those figures who choose to move legally to improve their lives to seek better job opportunities, for education or for family reunions (Edwards 2016). Migrants can also choose to return home at any time, and they continue to receive the protection of their government (Edwards 2016). On the other hand, refugees and asylum seekers form part of involuntary or forced migration. While a migrant is "someone who makes a conscious decision to leave his or her home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there" (Sisk 2017), for refugees and asylum seekers it is not a conscious decision. Sometimes they are forced to flee their home because of armed conflict, violence, or persecution (Haines, Rosenblum 1999). Asylum seekers form part of mixed migration, which refers to flows of people traveling together generally in an irregular and illegal manner. It is important to underline that irregular is the act of migration, not the migrant, for this reason this thesis will refer to these people as undocumented or migrants in an irregular situation (IOM 2017). Individuals can enter irregularly in the territory through three main routes. They can enter in a country without proper authority and through a clandestine entry or under the control of smugglers; they can enter with authorisation but then overstay that authorisation and lastly abuse the asylum system (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015).

The asylum seeker is someone seeking international protection from dangers in his or her home country and has applied for refugee status but whose claim has not yet been

definitively evaluated (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018) and she/he cannot be determined legally as a refugee (IOM 2019). When asylum seekers are determined legally as refugees, they are no longer considered as illegal migrants. In order to be determined as refugees, they must meet certain criteria provided by the 1951 Geneve convention: they need to be outside the country of origin in consequence of a well-founded fear or of persecution due to their race, religion or nationality and they are unable or is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country (IOM 2019). For this reason, refugees cannot return home easily as migrants and the denial of asylum and refugees' status can have deadly consequences (Edwards 2016). According to the report of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR 2015), in the current reality wars and conflict have forced more people than at any other time since records began to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere. Observers have argued that the recent intensified migration constitutes the worst migration crisis since the end of World War II. Indeed, more than sixty million people in the world and 6.7 million in Europe (UNHCR 2015) are temporarily or permanently displaced because of violence and persecution (Inghilleri 2017:14).

Another distinction must be made between internal and international migration. An internal migrant is someone who moves to different administrative territories within his/her own country (IOM 2015), while international migration is "the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals" (IOM 2019). Throughout the world, international migration is constantly growing (Cronin 2020:215) and the existing global estimate reported by the International Organisation for Migration states 281 million international migrants, which equates to 3.6% of the global population (IOM 2019).

1.2.4 Migration and host countries

Migration is an inevitable complement of development and change (De Hass et al. 2018:5) and migrants and refugees transform and are transformed by communities and societies they become a part of (Inghilleri 2017:3). For this reason, this phenomenon can be seen positively or negatively by the host country that accepts migrants and refugees. On one hand, it is positive because it promotes diversity and creates economic opportunity and social integration. Indeed, host countries are enriched by cultural diversity and the

presence of migrants and refugees helps to reduce any labour shortages. In addition, they are more prepared to take low-skilled jobs than the local population. On the other hand, it can be seen as a negative phenomenon when associated with invasion and competition (Inghilleri 2017:16). In fact, migration is often linked with the overcrowding problem of the host country and the disagreement between diverse cultures. This fact can introduce tensions into society and into political dynamics. Furthermore, many migrants and refugees arriving in the host counties are likely to experience acute marginalisation, social distance, inequalities and discrimination. Language barriers, restrictions on mobility, irregular immigration status, unemployment and attacks are some of the factors that hinder the ability of migrants and refugees to ensure their own safety and wellbeing (IOM 2016).

In Europe the debate about migration is dominated by media images that represent it in a negative way, because of war, poverty and population growth (De Hass et al. 2018). Media discourse is accompanied by the political rhetoric underlining the fact that Europe is facing an unprecedented and existential crisis as a consequence of the mass arrival of asylum seekers and unauthorised migrants (De Hass et al. 2018). Although EU member states have become increasingly open to movement of goods, capital and services, they make quite stringent efforts to filter the movement of people and to distinguish between wanted and unwanted forms of migration (Geddes 2003).

1.3 Europe: a destination choice

Media, politicians and scholars often portray migration as new, increasing and massive. Media reportage and popular discourses give rise to an apocalyptic image of a “wave” or “exodus” of people (Vives 2011). This has happened because, in recent years, European countries have been dealing with a great mass migration composed of undocumented migrants that are pushed to move from their countries of origin due to humanitarian crises. Nowadays Europe has become one of the principal destinations of humanitarian migration and irregular migration has turned out to be a central issue for European states (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015). In fact, Border States of the EU such as Greece and Italy have received the largest number of unauthorised migrants (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015) coming from Asia, Africa and the Middle East that undertake

Mediterranean Sea routes. The reasons that led people to choose Europe are many based on economic, migration policy, information and smugglers factors.

1.3.1 Factors influencing undocumented migrant's destination choice

The peak of irregular crossings in Europe was reached in 2014 when 267.334 people were detected at the EU borders (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015:12). The question which arises is: what are the factors which influence the destination choice of migrants? In order to answer this question, there have been identified four key factors (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015). The first one is the economic reason which includes the cost of the journey, the economy of destination country and the migrant's perception of economic factors such as employment and wages (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015:55). Furthermore, what influences migrants' choice is the migration policy of the destination country. Migration policy means border restrictions, police interventions, state asylum policies and incentive policies to return. In fact, refugees and asylum seekers are attracted to certain countries because of favorable policies relating to the asylum process and the economic support available to refugees (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015). In addition, access to information plays a central role in determining the destination choice. Information received from multiple sources such as social networks, internet and media impacts the migrant's view of the destination (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015). Finally, smugglers are a fundamental key factor for the decision. Smugglers have become an embedded part of the migration journey, and, as Robinson and Segrott (2002) indicated, once migrants decide to use a smuggler, they become restricted in their destination choices based on routes they operate with (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015).

1.3.2 The Mediterranean Route

Migrants use numerous land, air and sea routes to reach their desired destinations in Europe (IOM 2017). In fact, based on data from International Organisation for Migration (2022), in 2022 14.298 people cross the border by land and 33.685 by sea. Despite that, Europe's increasingly restrictive immigration policies and migration controls have made irregular border crossing more difficult. Although, it exists the Mediterranean Sea route still used by undocumented people that want to enter in Europe.

Crossing the Mediterranean Sea from south to north did not make a significant appearance until the 1970s, the year that 2.5 million migrants crossed the Mediterranean Sea enter with no visa. The context was an economic crisis triggered by the rise in oil prices following the Arab-Israel war (IOM 2017). According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014) almost three-quarters of people cross the border illegally and as it is shown in figure 1, there are several routes that lead undocumented migrants to Europe from the sea.

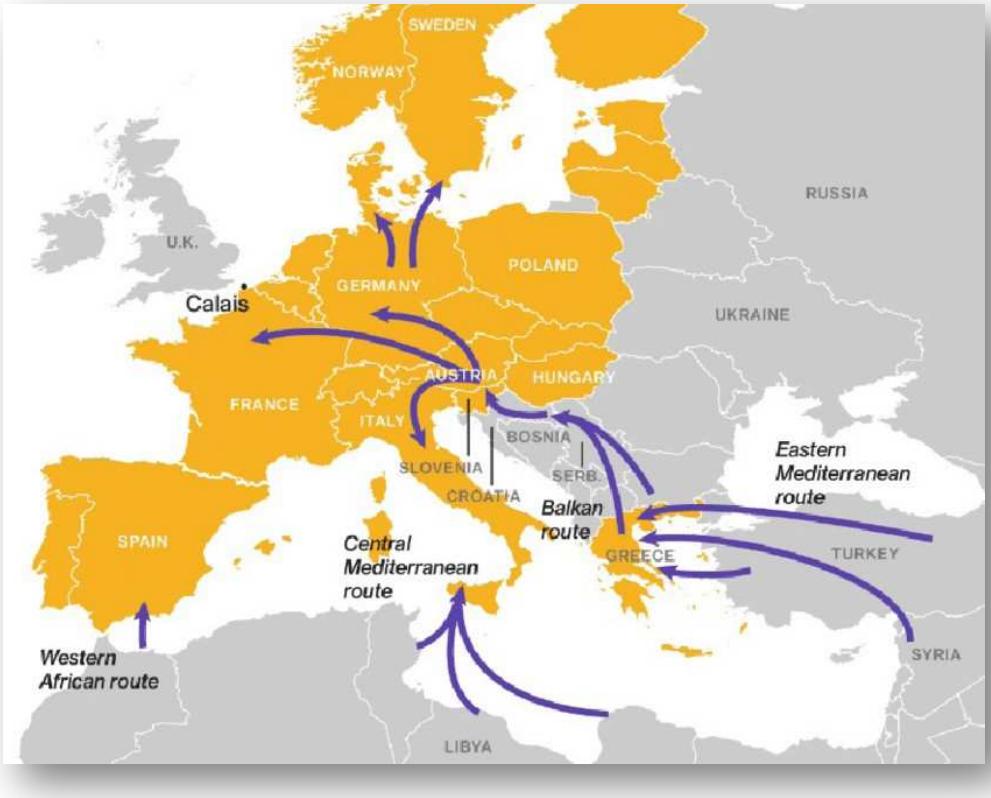

Figure 1. Migratory Route from the Mediterranean to Europe
Source: Frontex

The Western Mediterranean route originates from Morocco to Spain and includes people from Cameroon, Algeria and Mali. This was the first south-to-north route of cross-Mediterranean unauthorised migration, and it is the shortest because asylum seekers would cross less than 15 km Strait of Gibraltar from Morocco to Spain. Between 2006 and 2008, around 50.000 migrants embarked on fishing boats towards the Canary Islands, but in 2008 numbers decrease as a consequence of harsh policies (IOM 2017).

The Eastern Mediterranean route originates from Turkey to Greece and Bulgaria, with the majority of people from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. Between 2014 and 2016 Greece received 1.047.939 undocumented migrants by sea (IOM 2017) and it is possible to affirm that the Mediterranean migration crisis was, in the first instance, a Greek crisis (IOM 2017).

The third migration route is the Central Mediterranean route, which involves migration movements from North Africa to Italy and it is the largest number of sources of the irregular migration routes. Together with the Channel of Otranto, which was the most traveled since the Albania crisis between 1991 and 1999, and the Channel of Sicily with the islands of Lampedusa and Pantelleria, the Central Mediterranean route has been an entry point in Europe for migrants (IOM 2017). From 2003 to 2010, most undocumented people arrived by sea in Italy entering through the Channel of Sicily. In 2010 the Arab revolts provoked a surge in irregular cross-Mediterranean migration to Europe and Tunisia and Libya became points of departure for migrants smuggled into Italy (IOM 2017).

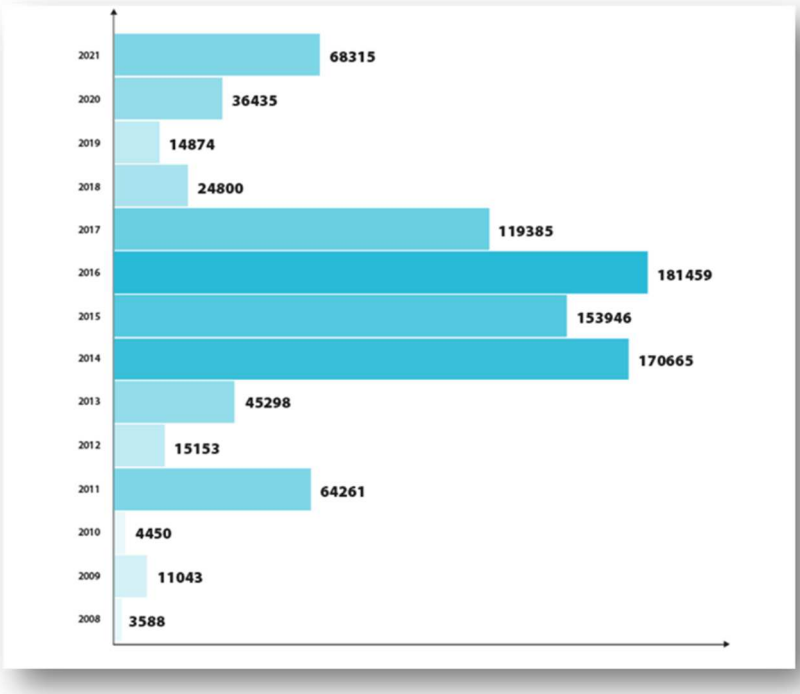

Figure 2. Illegal border crossings on the Central Mediterranean Route
Source: Frontex

As is possible to see in figure 2, between 2014 and 2016 there was an increase of undocumented arrivals by sea in Italy and those are the years known as the Italian migration crisis. It was launched the Search and Rescue system and many projects such as Mare Nostrum started in order to rescue people and safely brought to Europe and Italy (IOM 2017). However, in the years between 2017 and 2020 there was a decrease in the number of unauthorised people crossing the border due to restrictive migration policies.

1.3.3 Nationalities of undocumented migrants

When migrants arrive by irregular routes, very little is known about them. For this reason, the migration police proceed with identification and nationality is one of the fundamental factors necessary to be identified. Based on that, figure 3 represents that the majority of people come from Asia and Africa, following the Middle East, Europe and Latin America.

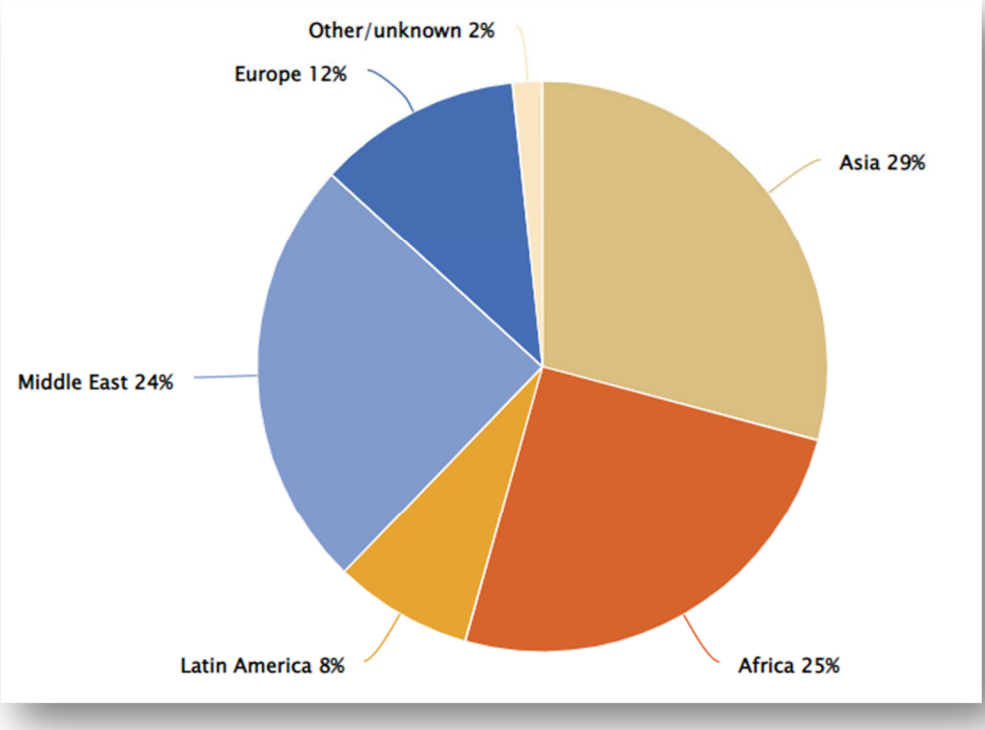

Figure 3. The main source country of undocumented migrants
Source: Eurostat

In the mid-2000s, Morocco was the main source country of undocumented migrants entering in Europe, but in recent years the arrival of unauthorised migrants coming from

China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh increased. They started to migrate to the Maghreb overland via Saharan routes or they fly from Asia to West-African cities via the Gulf States (Vives 2011). Others enter north-Africa through Egypt to Libya and Tunisia, from where they cross to Italy and Malta (Simon, 2006: 39). In addition, it increased also the number of asylum seekers originating from conflict-affected countries such as Syria, Somalia (Düvell 2011). More specifically, as figure 4 shows, the high percentage of undocumented people entering Europe are Syrians, Afghans, Tunisians and Moroccans.

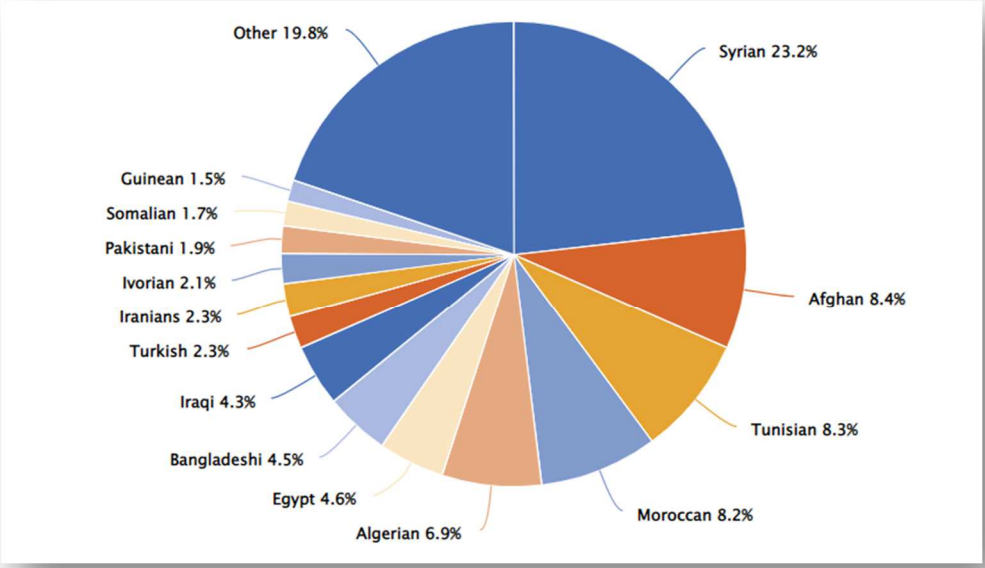

Figure 4. Countries of undocumented migrants
Source: Frontex

1.4 Humanitarian crises and the international community

The General Assembly of the United Nations, in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, claims that since the earliest times, humanity has been on the move (OHCHR; GMG 2018), but nowadays all worldwide countries are facing a consistent crisis in consequence of humanitarian emergencies that cause large-scale international involuntary migration. An emergency is an unpredictable and sudden change to the status quo that require immediate and urgent response of other agents (Federici 2016). An emergency may have an unexpected starting date, but it is also considered for its duration over time (Federici 2016). In addition, emergencies can be considered as stable and

relatively predictable contexts in which urgent responses are expected, such as any emergency department in a hospital, or medium to long term responses, like the constantly growing numbers of displaced people from several countries of the world (Federici 2016) and unprecedented mass migration caused by human-made crises and environmental disasters. According to International Rescue Committee, in 2021, 274 million people worldwide are dependent on humanitarian aid, most of whom escaped from armed conflicts, food insecurity, or persecution to safeguard their rights (IRC 2021). The outbreak of the Syrian conflict, South Sudan's displacement crisis, the recent conflict in Ukraine, the crises in Africa and the security concerns in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Somalia (UNHCR 2012) are just a few of the biggest drivers of migration.

In the light of what has been said in the previous paragraph, in 2022 many communities are dependent on humanitarian help. It is shared the idea that the aim of humanitarian action is to provide a needs-based emergency response in order to preserve life, alleviate human suffering and maintain human dignity. However, what is not clearly defined is humanitarian sector because it is in constant evolution. According to ALNAP the humanitarian sector should be understood as the network of inter-connected institutional and operational entities that receive funds, directly or indirectly from public donors and private sources (Downham 2021). Walker and Maxwell (2009:136) expressed that humanitarian setting is challenging and difficult to describe due to its complexity of origins, multitudes of players and varying environment. According to ALNAP's publication, migration is not included in the humanitarian sector, however, illegal and irregular migration and refugees need humanitarian aid (Aardema, Churruca Muguruza 2014) and one of the purposes of humanitarian aid is to protect life in danger as it is stated in the Declaration of Human Rights.

Asylum seekers' human rights and lives are put in danger constantly in their original countries and in the journey they undertake (BBC 2016). In addition, their rights can be questioned also when arriving in the host countries. A wide range of practices may expose them to human rights violations such as closure or rejection at the borders, denial of access to effective screening and identification, collective expulsion, violence by state officials and other actors, inhumane or degrading reception conditions and denial of humanitarian assistance (OHCHR; GMG 2018:7). In order to ensure human management of involuntary migration crises, the international community appropriates a narrative of

unity in support of those in need (Federici 2016). The international community plays a significant role since emergencies are becoming more and more visible in terms of their international dimension (Federici 2016). The coordination at the local, national and international levels as well as between governments, NGOs and private sector actors put together their response plans to crisis (PWC 2017).

1.4.1 State Actors

Refugees flee governments that are unable or unwilling to protect their human rights and seek international protection from the international community. Countries deal with involuntary migration through norms of refugee and asylum protection that are defined in national legislation and International Law. They have specific responsibilities towards anyone seeking asylum on their territories and they need to defend their rights (IOM 2017:2), because human rights belong to all persons, and it is important to ensure that these rights are upheld (OHCHR; GMG 2018).

From the point of view of International Law, States have assumed obligations to respect, protect and fulfill involuntary migrants' human rights by becoming parties to international human rights treaties (OHCHR; GMG 2018). Throughout the 20th century, the international community assembled a set of guidelines and conventions to ensure the adequate treatment of refugees to protect their rights (Guterres 2011:1). In particular, the 1951 Geneve Convention set out principles that protect refugees from all forms of discrimination, exploitation, violence and torture. Furthermore, the principles push governments to protect refugees' lives and safety by offering them immediate assistance, education and work. Moreover, they ensure that all border governance measures protect human rights and provide them access to justice. Lastly, they uphold migrants' right to information (OHCHR; GMG 2018). In addition, refugees have the right not to be punished for illegal entry (Inghilleri 2017) and not to be expelled (Lucassen 2019). Indeed, the article thirty-three of the Convention underlines the principle of non-refoulement that prohibits the return of refugees and asylum applicants to countries where they risk their life:

> No Contracting State shall expel or return ('refouler') a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be

> threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (UN 1951).

Furthermore, they are allowed to request international protection which is a set of fundamental rights recognised for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (Ministero dell'Interno 2003) Together with these specific guidelines, refugees benefit also from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights where countries accept to respect the minimum civil, political, economic and cultural rights that all human beings should enjoy (OHCHR; GMG 2018).

Besides International Law, countries have national legislation that deal with involuntary migration. Under EU law, member states must consider the need of vulnerable people seeking international protection (FRA 2020:10) and for this reason, European countries, together with the United Kingdom, have also signed the European Convention of Human Rights in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

1.4.2 Non-state Actors

Besides respecting human rights, governments worldwide must develop a fair, united and coordinated response to help the millions of vulnerable people who are on the move and who settle in their countries. In order to promote international cooperation on migration issues and to provide humanitarian assistance to people in need, international and local organisations are built. In particular, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations and non-profit organisations are established to deal with humanitarian emergencies and to provide assistance quickly and efficiently to those in need. The priority in any humanitarian response is to save lives and reduce suffering through meeting humanitarian needs, and for this reason, the work of aid agencies is a beacon of hope for thousands of men and women. It exists diverse types of organisations and agencies and they can be divided in governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations, and they have the potential to bring peace, solidarity, and equality to communities.

1.4.2.1 Governmental organisations (GOs)

A governmental organisation is often a group funded by the government's states through multilateral treaties (Boland 2022). Besides being national, governmental organisations can be intergovernmental or international governmental (IGO) made up of more than one national government. IGOs conduct their operation on large scales and their task includes working for a large number of countries for the welfare of people. Indeed, the main purposes of IGOs are to create a mechanism for the world to work together in the areas of peace and security (Harvard Law School n.d.). Governmental Organisations usually have a governing structure that includes an executive council, a plenary assembly in which all members are represented, a secretariat and subsidiary organs (Boland 2022). As it is possible to understand, GOs have the ability to make rules and exercise power within their member countries (Harvard Law School). In fact, they usually have a legislative body that creates legal acts like decisions, resolutions and directives (Boland 2022).

The best-known example of an international governmental organisation is the United Nations with a hundred ninety-three member countries. Its bureaucracy comprises many funds, programs and specialised agencies, each of which has its own area of work, leadership and budget. There are seventeen agencies which are autonomous international organisations cooperating with the United Nations. The agencies cover multiple issues depending on the area of work, like the International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) or World Health Organisation (WHO). The United Nations is not the only IGO that exists; there are many organisations that differ in their purposes. For instance, there are organisations that deal with financial, trade and customs such as Organisation of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) or the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Moreover, the governmental organisations are not always international but can be also regional. In Europe, it exists several organisations such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) or the European Space Agency (ESA). Every continent develops different organisations, such as the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) in Asia, or the Africa Union in Africa, and the Organisation of American States (OAS) in the USA. Furthermore, GOs can be also transcontinental unifying two or more continents, like the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

A special area of work of IGOs is dedicated to humanitarian issues. An example provided by the United Nations is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is part of the General Assembly, one of the six organs of the UN. UNHCR helps countries to deal with their asylum and refugee protection responsibilities and its main function is to protect refugees and irregular migration worldwide. Refugees are deprived of the protection of national authorities, for this reason, UNHCR operates so that they can enjoy legal protection (Milner 2011). Moreover, it exists a specialised agency that cooperate with the United Nations that deals with irregular migration, and it is called International Organisation for Migration (IOM). IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration and to assist and provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and displaced people.

1.4.2.2 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

A non-governmental organisation is an entity that operates at the regional, national or international level independently from any government even though it may receive funding from them or from other foundations. Along with states and IGOs, NGOs build close cooperative relationships to reach common objectives and goals. They have become fundamental in today's globalised world (Tesseur 2018) and the term turns out to be a commonplace feature of contemporary discourse. Despite that, there is still little agreement on what exactly an NGO is and to what deal with (Davies 2019).

Originally the word NGO was a technical term that had its breakthrough with the Charter of the United Nations in 1945. Article seventy-one made a distinction between 'specialised agencies', such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), and other agencies which were considered as having a lower status that only consisted of consultation. These agencies were referred to as non-governmental organisations. Actually, the fact that the acronym was coined after the World War II does not mean that NGOs did not exist. In fact, religious order, charities, missionary bodies and secular organisations have been regarded as ancient forms of NGOs (Götz 2019). In addition, many authors suggest that the anti-slavery movement of the late eighteenth century was the prototype of current global NGO networks (Charnovitz 1997).

The term was considered by the international relations scholars inside the diplomacy world until the middle nineties (Willetts 2011:7). Then, the acronym has gradually spread

from the UN to societal discourse (Götz 2019) and in its broadest usage, NGOs applied to any non-state, non-profit and noncriminal organisation however large or small and regardless of its field of work (Davies 2019), whose primary aim is to promote common goals and public interest at the international and local level (Stroup 2019). The roles that NGOs play are numerous, for instance, some NGOs primarily help in development and operation of infrastructure, they conduct research or attempt to influence policy development in favor of poor and marginalised communities. In addition, they disseminate information in areas where governments are unable to reach out to people. Nowadays, there is an estimated 40.000 international NGOs of different kinds (Binder-Aviles 2012) with considerable differences in terms of origin, composition, function, roles and approaches to development (Davies 2019). They can be large, multinational, small or village-based groups and address multiple issues and sectors such as environment, human rights, or youth (Binder-Aviles 2012). What all NGOs have in common is a wide range of services aimed at human well-being and social welfare (Davies 2019).

Overall, NGOs can be divided into two types. The first one is operational organisations which focus on the design and implementation of the development public. The other one is advocacy organisations which raise awareness of issues and bring them into the public view. This separation is not exclusive, some NGOs may fall under both categories simultaneously and the common goal is to promote and trigger action (Davies 2019). Furthermore, there are different NGOs performing various duties and working in diverse fields, such as community health and education promotion, community social problems, environmental issues, or humanitarian functions.

It is estimated that there are more than 4.400 non-governmental organisations worldwide undertaking humanitarian action (Aardema, Churruca Muguruza 2014). Humanitarian NGOs have a broader and internationally driven footprint, and they are often working in isolated lands with widespread famine and disease, military bases, and large-scale disasters (Davies 2019). Moreover, they also provide local assistance to refugees and asylum seekers or for local communities in emergency situations (Tesseur 2018). The meaning of humanitarian aid is ambiguous; more broadly conceived, humanitarianism aims to provide education, building and sustainable development. Recently, due to the European refugee crisis, humanitarian aid is also dedicated to helping

people that cross the Mediterranean Sea from the Middle East or Africa. The emergence of humanitarian NGOs reflects historical and political development and has roots in violent conflicts. In fact, according to Michael Barnett (2011), the years 1945 and 1989 appear to be the turning point of humanitarian action. First of all, the Second World War create emergencies and crises all over the world with people suffering and in displaced situations. Indeed, huge humanitarian organisations such as Oxfam, Save the Children and the International Committee of the Red Cross, were created in response to the first and second wars (Roth 2019). Secondly, other social conflicts were born around the end of the twenty century after the wars of independence that led refugees and migrants to escape. These battles have roots in colonial institutions and imperial traditions (Roth 2019) that have resulted to be the cause of the territorial division.

There are different types of humanitarian organisations, and they vary with respect to their mandate, their independence from government, their relation to religion and nationality. For example, there are pure humanitarian organisations that focus solely on relief or multi-mandated organisations that encompass broader objectives including the development and peacebuilding, the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy (Weiss 2012). In addition, depending on their size the staff can be composed of paid workers, volunteers or both and can be trained as professionals or not. In particular, highly qualified staff is more likely in NGOs that have quite a high budget (Davies 2019).

1.4.2.3 Local organisations

A local organisation is an agency that operates limitedly in a state or in a specific geographical area in the state. Due to recent humanitarian emergencies that cause a large-scale illegal migration, a lot of refugees and asylum seekers are settled in host countries and for this reason, there exist several types of local organisations trying to help refugees and migrants in need by providing them basic services. The local agencies' policies depend on the country's legislation, it is not internationally regulated. For example, in Italy, these organisations are part of the Reception and Integration System (SAI) and are distributed throughout the country. They guarantee integrated reception interventions to asylum seekers and holders of international protection (Ministero dell'Interno 2020).

Over the years, the legislation governing the reception of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Italy has changed several times and the degree now in force provides many steps regulating the reception of asylum seekers in Italy. The first step is rescue, first assistance and identification. Foreign nationals rescued at sea or who have entered the country irregularly are taken to government centers near the areas of disembarkation or main entry into the country for first aid, photo-identification and pre-identification. These types of centers are covered by the hotspot approach, which was created in 2015 due to commitments made by the Italian government to the European Commission. In the centers there is also the first exchange of information on asylum procedures: this is where asylum seekers are differentiated from the economic migrants. Then, there are the Government first reception centers where are moved the ones who express a desire to seek asylum in Italy. Asylum seekers remain there for the time necessary to carry out identification operations and to initiate the asylum application procedures. In these centers, the health conditions of the guests must be ascertained, in order to verify possible situations of vulnerability when entering the second reception phase. The third step consists of the second reception center. This is the Reception and Integration System (SAI) that replaces the System of Protection for Holders of International Protection and Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (SIPROIMI), established by the Security Decree in 2018, which in turn replaced the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), in place from 2002 to 2018 (Le Nius 2021). The SAI has two levels of services. One is reserved for asylum seekers and is based on legal, health and language assistance. The second level is reserved for the protection of holders and also has integration and employment guidance functions. When the first and second reception systems are exhausted, the prefectures may provide for the establishment of Extraordinary Reception Centers (CAS) and entrust them to private subjects through the procedures of public contracts. Asylum seekers are accommodated in these centers, limited to the time needed to be transferred to SAI facilities. Despite the fact that this is an extraordinary system, the use of the CAS has over the years become by far the majority (Openpolis 2022).

All territorial projects of the Protection System, within the measures of integrated reception, in addition to providing food and lodging, provide for the implementation of social accompaniment activities, aimed at the knowledge of the territory and the access to local services, including social and health care. Activities are also provided to facilitate

the learning of Italian and adult education, school enrollment of minors of compulsory school age, as well as additional legal information interventions on the procedure for the recognition of international protection and the rights and duties of beneficiaries in relation to their status (Ministero dell'Interno 2020).

1.5 The right to access information and to communicate

One of the fundamental principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular in article nineteen, is the right to seek, receive and impart information in a language that people can understand and in formats they can access:

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (UN 1948).

Once asylum seekers arrive in the host country, they may need orientation and information such as their rights, their legal status and other issues like the asylum procedures, laws and regulations about the application for international protection and all phases of the procedures. Article nineteen of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also underlines the fact that everyone has the right to communicate and express their needs. In fact, "significant fundamental human rights such as the right to life and liberty will be infringed if refugees are erroneously returned to their country of origin [...] states are guilty of violating non-refoulement by not following fair administrative procedures" Khan (2013: 96). For instance, asylum seekers may be under psychological strain, in a vulnerable emotional state and tired or distressed from the journey and they could have suffered from violence and abuses or traumatic experiences in their original country. For this reason, they may need healthcare as well as people with disabilities, elderly people, or pregnant women. They may need to communicate also to report various forms of violence including human rights violations and abuses. Lastly, they may have welfare needs such as a warm meal, access to the bathroom and hygiene items or new clothes. In addition, they might also suffer a cultural shock as they find themselves incorporated into an alien bureaucratic system (Williams 2005:42). They cope with the stress of

misinformation about their legal rights and with the stress of building a life in a new country (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018).

Refugees and asylum seekers have the necessity to be informed and to communicate their needs for first aid but also during their stay. They have to face bureaucratic duties and they need to plan their future, like find accommodation, education, healthcare and employment opportunities (PWC 2017). At times of humanitarian disasters and in situation of crisis, communication is and access to information should be a priority in a refugee context and vital for emergency response. Despite that, gaining access to these services may present obstacles and one of them is language barriers (PWC 2017). To ensure linguistic rights as fundamental rights, translation and interpreting are becoming a necessity (Vojko, Morel 2012).

2. Humanitarian interpreters and mediators speaking the "right" language

Communication and information are fundamental components of effective humanitarian response because the primary and most important source of help is understanding between humanitarian volunteers and the people affected by the emergency. To do their job properly, humanitarian organisations need to understand the newcomers and be understood. One of the tasks of humanitarian organisations and agencies is to help refugees and asylum seekers to ensure their rights by explaining and providing what they need. As Alban (2010) remarked, providing what they need is not just a migration issue, it contributes to consolidating fundamental human rights and the rule of law. For this reason, humanitarian organisations should find appropriate channels and ways to communicate (MICIC 2017) because what people need most in an emergency is information in their own language. They should analyse which language refugees speak and which formats and channels will be most effective for communicating complex information. Generally, there is a broad assumption that it is sufficient to speak English as a Lingua Franca, but most people in the world including older people or vulnerable groups, do not speak English. Indeed, sometimes they cannot speak the official dominant language of their country either.

In order to overcome barriers to effective communication, international, local and private sector actors hire professionals who can speak the language of refugees and asylum seekers (MICIC 2017). These characters play an essential role, and they are called humanitarian interpreters and mediators. Humanitarian interpreters and mediators provide assistance by listening to the newcomers' needs and informing them about medical services, health promotion, psychological services and legal devices. Furthermore, they help refugees and asylum seekers to gain access to their rights. Today these services are frequently required, not only for first aid but also to help the newcomers to integrate into the host community. Interpreters and mediators act as go-betweners with the local authorities and mediate between two cultures. In fact, migrating does not only imply a physical movement from one place to another, but people also arriving in a new country bring with them different cultures (Cronin 2020) and in this complex encounter between the global and the local, interpreting and mediating services are the first and only way for migrants and the host country's institutions to communicate with each other.

2.1 Humanitarian interpreting and mediating

Humanitarian interpreting and mediating refers to the work of interpreting in situations of natural disasters, conflicts, post-conflict areas, emergencies and crises (Fassetta et al. 2018). It also includes interpreting with refugees and asylum seekers in different settings. In fact, the expression interpreting in refugee contexts or asylum settings (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018) underlines a more specific situation of interpreting and mediating. The term humanitarian interpreting has been adopted by the organisation Translators without Borders, a non-profit organisation that supports NGOs and organisations in humanitarian interventions by providing language and translation (Fassetta et al. 2018). The definition is quite recent because interpreting in a refugee context is a practice that has for a long time been invisible not only to western societies but also to Interpreting Studies (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). As a result of migratory movement and in particular the massive influx of Syrian refugees to Europe after the outbreak of the civil war, today humanitarian interpreting has become a matter of life and death (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018).

Humanitarian interpreting and mediating belong to the broad category of community interpreting, since it shares the same interpreting settings, namely legal, health and social service contexts. However, humanitarian interpreting and mediating is more specific than community interpreting because it falls within the legal framework of International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law (Delgado Luchner, Kherbiche 2018:424). In addition, contrary to humanitarian interpreting, public service interpreting or community interpreting has been a subject of widespread study for several decades (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018) and it has been defined as specific interpreting to any form of community-based organisation setting where language is an impediment to communication between the service provider and the public (Fassetta et al. 2018). The term first found coinage in Australia in 1970 (Chesher 1997) and the growing interest in community interpreting led to the 1995 First International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings at Geneva Park in Toronto (Bancroft 2015). The duty of community interpreters is to represent human rights, social justice and equality in their relations with public sector providers. Access to translation and interpreting in public service settings needs to be guaranteed and a failure to enforce it may endanger the well-being of millions of people (Bancroft 2015). Despite the major

responsibility given to this type of interpretation, this area has not been given specific attention in terms of status, training, remuneration and research (Gentile 1997:117) because it has been considered the poor cousin of conference interpreting.

Conference interpreting differs from community interpreting according to the setting where the interpretation takes place. While in the community interpreting the setting ranges from the hospital, the court, the police, lawyer office, social institutions, welfare offices, psychotherapy (Schider 2016:26) and immigration departments, conference interpreting is used in international settings with a large audience for ministries, political parties or trade unions (Schider 2016:7). Thus, the conference interpreter must be able to provide an exact and faithful reproduction of the original speech (Schider 2016:5) usually using one language direction only (Roberts 1997). On the other hand, the community interpreter works in two language directions (Roberts 1997) and the interpreting session takes place between two people as a form of dialogue (Schider 2016), mainly between a representative of public service on one hand, and a member of the ethnic communities on the other (Roberts 1997). The representative of the public service may offer legal, health and social services and represent the major cultures that is in control and has power. Instead, the members of ethnic community, such as migrants and refugees, are part of minority culture and have a different cultural background (Kalina 2015). This cultural diversity and asymmetrical power relationship belie the low regard given to community interpreting making this job more complicated than that of the other interpreters (Roberts 1997). In fact, community interpreters and mediators need a high degree of intercultural sensitivity and empathy to take the different perspectives registers and interests into account (Kalina 2015).

2.1.1 Modes of interpreting

Community interpreting and humanitarian interpreting are typically carried out consecutively. In consecutive interpretation the speaker delivers a speech in his/her native language and the interpreter listens and remains silent for a few sentences and then delivers the speech in the target language (Grbić, Pöllabauer 2006). Then, the speaker makes short pauses so that the interpreter relays one section of the speech at a time. Community interpreting can also involve instances of interpreting performed simultaneously which occurs concurrently when the speaker speaks. This interpretation

is delivered live without making any pauses and the interpreter receives the sound and relays the message in another language almost simultaneously through a microphone. Sometimes, the interpreter does not use the microphone but stands next to the client and listens and whispers to the client's ear without interrupting the speaker. This mode of interpretation is used more often in conference interpreting, along with sight translation and verbatim interpretation. The first one is a translation that relays written documents from one language to another while verbatim interpretation implies word-for-word interpretation after each phrase or sentence. These two interpreting modes are mainly used in court settings to convey precise procedures and legal documents (UNHCR 2009) like in asylum seekers' interviews for refugees' status. Lastly, summary interpretation can be used, especially for less detailed information. It consists of listening to the speech, taking notes and providing a summary in the language of the audience.

2.1.2 The role of humanitarian interpreters and mediators

Humanitarian interpreters and mediators work in humanitarian contexts and fall within the legal framework of International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law. Their primary function is to enable humanitarian organisations and public authorities to communicate with refugees and asylum seekers so that the latter can access their rights. In addition, they are key allies of humanitarian actors who recognise the essential principles of people-humanitarian intervention. Up to now, it has been used the terms interpreter and mediator as interchangeable words, but they show some differences.

The interpreter is a figure who verbally translates spoken material from one language (source language) to another language (target language) (TWB 2017). The task of the interpreter is to enable people to communicate with each other because of linguistic barriers. On the other hand, a mediator is a person who facilitates mutual understanding between a person or a group of people by interpreting considering cultural factors. In fact, mediating means acting as an intermediary in a conflict between two parties. Unlike the interpreter, the mediator is not a mere conduit of words, but s/he facilitates the genuine meeting of human beings (UNHCR 2020). A mediator, besides being an interpreter, may also be defined as an informer, a guide and can give advice to both parties regarding appropriate cultural behaviors (TWB 2017). In fact, the mediator's primary function is to encourage liaisons between the cultural object and individuals.

Overall, interpreters and mediators are different jobs with different skills. Not all interpreters will be able to provide cultural mediation and not all cultural mediators will have professional interpreting skills (Di Carlo et al. 2021). The main differences can be resumed in several characteristics. First of all, mediators convey only the main message. They transfer the meaning as accurately as possible, but they also offer explanations on cross-cultural issues, and they provide cultural advice. On the other hand, interpreters do not focus on the difference between two cultures but interpret the meaning accurately, objectively and completely (Di Carlo et al. 2021). In addition, interpreters interpret objectively without intervening to prevent a conflict caused by lack of cultural awareness, while mediators can do that and build a constructive relationship based on trust. Another significant difference is that mediators provide additional support such as assistance, while interpreters focus just on interpretation services (TWB 2017). Lastly, the figure of the mediator is not internationally recognised like the interpreter. For example, in the UK intercultural mediation skills are embedded in the services and figures that provide support to citizens and they are called *advice* (Casadei, Franceschetti 2009). On the other hand, in Italy, the role of the mediator is acknowledged, and it has many roles (Casadei, Franceschetti 2009).

Besides the main differences, mediators and interpreters have also common elements (TWB 2017). For example, they both verbally transfer a message from one language to another and verbally translate spoken information. They try to facilitate communication between two parties, and they have cultural competencies in source and target culture. In the humanitarian context, these two figures tend to mix (Rudvin, Tomassini 2008) because, in this environment, linguistic professionals are expected not only to interpret accurately but also to solve problems, explain concepts and solve cultural misunderstandings (Bancroft 2015).

2.1.2.1 Professionals and non-professionals

In the past decades, in response to international migration and globalisation (Baker, Saldanha 2011), interpreting in communitarian and humanitarian settings has been professionalised (Bancroft 2015) because it enables those who lack the knowledge of language and culture to receive full and equal access to public service facilities (Baker, Saldanha 2011). The interpreter Carmen Delgado Luchner in her research blog (2022),

explains that a profession is defined in terms of training, skills, socialisation, aspiration and remuneration. In order to work as professionals, interpreters are supposed to hold a secondary school diploma and obtain results in a validated language proficiency test (Bancroft 2015). However, this is not a general principle because the minimum requirements for interpreting and mediating in humanitarian contexts have been spearheaded by governments and professional associations. What is important is to attend general courses of formal or informal trainings. From such training, interpreters are supposed to acquire specific skills including notions of ethics and rules of behavior.

Nevertheless, this job continues to be generally not professionalised, and performed by untrained individuals (Bancroft 2015). The absence of training programs in humanitarian field is one of the reasons why this job can be carried on by those who have just bilingual competencies (Martínez-Gómez 2019) and have not attended any training course. This category concerns aid workers and first-generation immigrants or refugees themselves (UNHCR 2009) that develop this paper for languages of limited diffusion. It is taken for granted that unprofessional refugee interpreters are only adult people. However, children may also play the role of interpreters, as they often learn a language more quickly than their parents and are educated in the host country. Yet, it should be noted that children do not have the skills and the proper training to interpret, nor do they have the relevant experiences required.

The qualifications that interpreters need to develop for this job depend on the different countries in which they work (Fassetta et al. 2018). For instance, in the UK there is no requirement for interpreters to hold a specific degree or professional diploma. Sometimes a Public Service Interpreting Diploma is provided by some institutions or large organisations working with refugees. In general, anyone speaking a language, in addition to English, can register with interpreting services in the UK (Fassetta et al. 2018). A common feature of all countries is that the professional title of the interpreter is unprotected, which means that anyone speaking two or more languages can claim to be an interpreter (Fassetta et al. 2018).

2.1.2.2 Training programs

Humanitarian interpreters and mediators usually work in a fragile environment including conflict and post-conflict contexts, refugee camps and urban refugee settings. In addition,

they may also work to support migration problems and to help foster refugees and asylum seekers' integration into the host society. In order to be able to work in these unstable settings, they need to develop different strategies, adapt to different situations and create a dialogue with people in need. They have to act as language facilitators and help to ensure that all parties' interests and points of view are understood. For this reason, adequate training is fundamental in order to face this challenging context (Schider 2016). However, the resources available for training and the opportunities for professional development can be very limited (Fassetta et al. 2018). Organisations that work in this field, such as Translators Without Borders, the International Committee of the Red Cross or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have developed their own formal and informal training covering the fundamental skills of interpretation and professional ethics (Fassetta et al. 2018).

Translators Without Borders (TWB) is a non-profit organisation that provides translators and interpreters coming from all over the world to NGOs and local organisations. Its mission is to train interpreters and mediators and to create a translation network intended to improve communication between crisis-affected communities and humanitarian responders by eliminating language barriers that can impede vital relief efforts in the areas of health, human rights and migration issues (TWB 2015). Another organisation that trains interpreters is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); it has educated over hundreds of participants. Its courses have been running since 2013 and consist of two learning models: one on professional ethics and other on basic skills in consecutive interpreting. The content for both modules was created using the tools and functionalities of the Virtual Institute learning environment developed by the Interpreting Department of the Geneva University Faculty of Translation and Interpreting (Moser-Mercer et al. 2014). As ICRC, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides formal and informal training courses for people working in this governmental organisation. In addition, it is an important partner of the InZone Project developed by the University of Geneva that trains interpreters who work in conflict zones and refugee camps (Hayman 2014). Also, the University of Glasgow offers an online course intended to train humanitarian interpreters and it is called "Interpreting for refugees: context, practices and ethics".

In the light of what has been mentioned above, training courses for interpreters are mainly provided by organisations, agencies or projects that give linguistic experts to associations. However, training courses are also beginning to be made official in universities nationwide. For instance, in Italy there exists one degree program which trains humanitarian interpreters. The first basic course in humanitarian interpreting arose from the collaboration between the Department of Interpretation and Translation of the University of Bologna and the Faculté de Traduction et d'Interprétation of the University of Geneva. The course is free and takes place in blended learning mode, both online and in person.

2.2 Humanitarian settings

Humanitarian interpreters and mediators work with a wide variety of organisations including NGOs, private profit and nonprofit agencies that intervene in crisis settings. When asylum seekers arrive in Italy, they need first-level assistance where they will receive initial care and information (Ministero dell'Interno 2003). Firstly, they have to deal with authorities that identify them in migrant registration centers nicknamed *hotspots.* During this process migrants are interviewed by police officers: they are asked about their name, their country of origin, the route they took and the reason for seeking exile. Then, migrants' fingerprints are recorded, and they are photographed. Afterwards, asylum seekers are sent to reception centers where they will be able to follow the procedure to apply for refugee status. During the interviews for refugee status, the role of interpreters and mediators is fundamental because the local authorities can take a positive or negative decision regarding their refugee status on the basis of the migrant's story. If they arrived in the host country for economic or family reunion reasons, they are sent to detention centers from where they must await deportation. Following the recent global pandemic of Covid-19, undocumented migrants are obliged to observe a mandatory quarantine period on board special boats. Quarantine is supposed to last ten days and during their stay on the boat, they can have access to medical and psychological assistance. They may need assistance also if they have faced violence and abuse. Once they obtain or apply for refugee status, they need to start a new life in the host country's community and non-governmental organisations or local agencies provide basic services to promote integration, like educational or employment services. In this context,

humanitarian interpreters and mediators facilitate the communication between social workers and service seekers.

It would be unthinkable for local authorities and services providers to explain these tortuous and bureaucratic processes to the newcomers if there were no lingual experts to help with the communication. Humanitarian interpreters and mediators are there to make these procedures possible, but also to give voice to migrant in irregular situation's rights. It is possible to summarise the emergency settings where humanitarian interpreters and mediators work into three main contexts: the legal settings, such as judicial, police and asylum, healthcare settings (Fassetta et al. 2018) and social services.

2.2.1 Legal settings: asylum hearings

It is essential to bear in mind that in order to obtain the status of refugee, asylum seekers have to be outside their country of nationality and unwilling to return to their country due to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion nationality or belonging to a particular social group (Pöllabaure 2015). If they meet these requirements, they have the right to claim refugee status in countries that signed the Refugee Convention, in order to be protected internationally (Barsky 1996). Their request must be based on the story of their personal experiences and immigration officials will decide if an applicant's request for asylum is accepted or rejected (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). In Italy, the procedures for applying for refugee status involve a personal interview that has to be conducted in a language that applicants understand (Pöllabaure 2015). If they are multilingual, they can choose a common Lingua Franca, otherwise, they may rely on interpretation. The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees Handbook recommends that "[t]he applicant should be given the necessary facilities, including the services of a competent interpreter, for submitting his case to the authorities concerned" (UNHCR 1992:192). Interpreters and mediators play a crucial role in asylum interviews because some applicants do not speak nor understand the host country's language (Pöllabaure 2015), and therefore they provide some relief and assistance to the claimant (Barsky 1996). In addition, from the interview, authorities decide if their life is truly at risk in the country of origin or not. If immigration officials and applicants do not speak the same language, the decision can be taken only thanks to the interpretation of interpreters (Fenton 2004).

As stated above, the interaction format of asylum interviews involves three individuals: the asylum authority official, the applicant and the interpreter. According to the handbook on procedures and criteria for determining refugee status (UNHCR 1992), the interpreter should be part of a group of adjudicators and technical staff involved in facilitating the complex process of recounting a refugee claim (Barsky 1996). The structure of asylum adjudication proceedings varies nationally. Within EU countries applicants often have a first interview at a Reception Centre where the admission of their claim is determined with the Refugee Status Determination. If a claim for asylum is admitted, the full interview called Resettlement interview takes place. Asylum interviews are characterised by a question-answer format that is typical for many bureaucratic settings (Pöllabaure 2015). Questions may be closed or open. Interpreting in asylum hearings mostly consists of consecutive interpretation, although longer answers may be translated simultaneously. Sometimes, lawyers and officials insist that interpreters provide a verbatim interpretation although a word-for-word or literal translation frequently produces distorted communication (UNHCR 1995:5). Officials prefer them to use this mode of interpreting because concepts such as credibility, plausibility and common sense are central to the asylum determination process, and they do not want that the interpreter influences the discourse. Remote interpreting (via phone or video-conference link) is sometimes used in asylum proceedings (Pöllabaure 2015).

Due to the recent Covid-19 crisis Home Offices paused face-to-face asylum interviews and they conducted the dialogue remotely through telephone or videoconference (UNHCR 2020). This method allows interviews to take place in safety and security, but it also presents several challenges, especially for interpreters. Applicants may not feel comfortable disclosing issues of a personal or sensitive nature via videoconference and they can have concerns regarding the confidentiality of communication (UNHCR 2020). For this reason, interpreters need to establish a connection of trust from distance and not always works. In addition, misunderstandings may take place, especially if there are technological difficulties.

2.2.2 Healthcare settings

There are many reasons why refugees are forced to flee their home countries such as war, poverty, or famine. From these emergencies, people may have suffered extreme forms of

violence and abuse and their physical and psychological health may be affected. In order to escape the crisis, people decide to find new countries to live in. Sometimes they have the possibility to do it legally, but other times they undergo journeys that are risky. Asylum seekers are generally exposed to great danger, especially those who cross the Mediterranean Sea. First of all, the boats are small and crowded and there may be little food or water on board. Secondly, they may even risk injury or death if there is a stormy sea. People, including children, elderly people and pregnant women, stay in those conditions for days before they reach land. In fact, once they arrive in the host country, humanitarian volunteers provide the necessary care for those in need. Asylum seekers do not only suffer from physical diseases but the experiences that they live can generate general psychological distress and psychiatric disorders (Fazel et al. 2005). Emotional traumas can emerge also during their stay in the host country, due to the stress caused by the long process of refugee application or by the lack of cultural and linguistic competence of the host country.

Health equity has become increasingly recognised as vital to refugee rights and well-being (Denov, Fennig 2021). In fact, the right to medical assistance is acquired at the moment of the registration (WHO 2021). This includes three types of mental health services: mental health services in primary care and general hospitals; community-based mental health services including clinical psychologists and psychiatrists and mental health services such as inpatient wards (Denov, Fennig 2021). Health equity would not be possible for refugees without the presence of interpreters and mediators. Most of the time, newcomers do not speak the language of the host country and it would be difficult, if not impossible, for doctors, nurses and psychologists to treat patients. The interpreting techniques used in this context are consecutive or simultaneous interpretations. Although, also sight translation is employed, especially when there are written documents.

Due to Covid-19, the recent pandemic that hit the globe, the management of healthcare has become more complicated (WHO 2021). There is no unified line of thinking among countries on how to handle the emergency. Some counties did not accept asylum seekers at the border, while others lift the financial burden for covering the Covid-19- related services. In addition, a few countries have launched communication campaigns for raising awareness about Covid-19 and the related preventive measures (WHO 2021). The

information campaigns were necessary because of the 42arginalization of refugee and migrant communities.

2.2.3 Social services

When asylum seekers arrive in the host country, in this case in Italy, they are first offered hospitality as International Protection at Government Reception Centers (Ministro dell'Interno 2003) for a period strictly necessary for their application to be processed. The Integrated Reception System is promoted by the Ministry of the Interior and by local institutions. During their temporary stay and while their application is in process, they are not allowed to work and, consequently, they cannot search for accommodation (Ministro dell'Interno 2003). During this period, they are visited by local charities, non-governmental organisations and representatives of the UNHCR that meet their social care needs and suggest activities for integration and recreation that include literacy courses, socialisation and multiculturalism. Learning the language of the host country helps asylum seekers not to be excluded from the society and it is useful once their request for refugee status is accepted. On becoming refugees, asylum seekers are protected by International Law and are allowed to work in the country where they made the application, find accommodation and have access to basic services such as the educational system. As it is possible to notice, also after the achievement of refugee status people have to deal with various administrative and bureaucratic issues. This process can present several obstacles if the newcomers are not confident with the host country's language. For this reason, interpreters and mediators assist their needs and act as a linguistic and cultural bridge facilitating the refugee's integration into the host community.

2.3 Humanitarian interpreters and mediators' challenges and skills

Humanitarian interpreters and mediators are the first points of contact with refugees and asylum seekers on their arrival in the host country. They hold a central role in addressing the needs of newcomers, communicating their rights and providing basic services. However, the challenges that humanitarian interpreters and mediators need to face are numerous and the lack of accreditation for those entering the profession has serious consequences for refugees and asylum seekers whose life depends upon mediated communication. In fact, "poor interpreters put asylum seekers at risk" (Stanners 2012)

because, as stated in previous sections, communication and information are two of the main sources of help.

The task of interpreters and mediators is very demanding and full of responsibilities as they are employed to help asylum seekers to overcome their problems. Moreover, they have the power to be decisive in the achievement of their refugee status (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). The UNHCR (2009) study module "Interpreting in a Refugee Context" outlines possible issues that an interpreter working with refugees may encounter and according to this list, being an interpreter requires more than just having fluency in two or more languages; they have to deal with many different problems. In order to overcome these challenges, they need to develop strategies and possess certain skills. For instance, they need proficiency in the languages, knowledge of both cultures, familiarity with the system and procedures of hosting community, flexibility and ability to adjust working conditions and ability to deal with emotional stress. Furthermore, they are required to communicate effectively under pressure and abide by the code of ethics. For this reason, the work of humanitarian interpreters and mediators is highly skilled and highly specific, and it requires appropriate training (Fassetta et al. 2018).

2.3.1 Language

It is not uncommon for refugees to have to flee without any identity documents that prove who they are and where they are from. In the absence of proof of identity, language has become a way to ascertain the newcomer's nationality. In 1993 governments, in response to the increasing number of undocumented asylum seekers from countries whose languages were little known (Fraser 2019), introduced a speech test that was carried out to complement other forms of identification. This process started in Sweden and at the time no linguists were involved, and the very same model was adopted by several countries. In addition, the Language Analysis for the Determination of Origin (LADO) was also introduced, and it came to use in Europe during the 1990s (Patrick 2019).

If an asylum seeker claims to be from a certain area, then it is assumed that s/he must speak one or more languages spoken in that area with a certain level of competency. However, the problem at the core of the issue is that sometimes speakers do not use only one language but they change between languages (Pöllabaure, 2015). In fact, many asylum seekers and refugees come from places where multilingualism is the norm. Pieter

Muysken (2018), an expert on multilingualism in Africa, writes that understanding multilingual communities and individuals' multilingual proficiency can be very difficult. Most of them have traveled great deal or have lived in places different from their communities of birth. Therefore, this is likely to have an impact on their linguistic proficiency. After some years spent in different countries, native speakers of a language may be perceived as foreign sounding. Their first language will be subjected to changes, showing disfluency or vocabulary problems. Furthermore, many countries have hundreds of indigenous languages or dialects that vary within different regions, making them difficult to define. It is very uncommon that all languages spoken within a state are officially recognised. Moreover, the way in which people speak depends also on the ways in which they grew up and the languages used at home for socialising with family and friends.

Thus, being experts in interpreting and cultural mediation means not only having bilingual communication competences, but also considering the newcomer's multilingualism and the different varieties of the languages spoken. It is also necessary to consider that migrants have varying levels of literacy.

Both host countries' interpreters and refugee interpreters should have the necessary language competence, but refugees may have better knowledge of the asylum seeker's language and its varieties. However, if they have not received adequate training, they may have difficulties in identifying, for example, the appropriate register and communicative interpreting strategies.

2.3.2 Culture

As stated in section *2.1.2* the figures of interpreters and mediators present some differences. While the interpreter interprets the discourse impartially and at a distance from the speakers, the mediator takes part in the conversation and tries to be the bridge between two cultures avoiding cultural conflicts and misunderstanding. In humanitarian contexts, the interpreter and mediator tend to have similar characteristics. They are both considered intercultural agents (Barsky 1996) and need to mediate between the service providers and the undocumented migrant. Likewise, in humanitarian interpretation not only is the mere transmission of a message important, but the interpreter also needs to mediate continually between sociocultural conventions.

In humanitarian settings, the mediation is fundamental because cultural divergences can create misunderstanding. This is highly risky in a context where aid is based on information and communication. Asylum seekers often use culture-specific words (Pöllabaure 2015) in their speech, especially during their refugee status interviews. Sometimes interpreters and mediators are not aware of the cultural nuances, especially if they are the host country interpreters. For this reason, some organisations prefer to use interpreters and mediators that share the same background as the newcomers (Schider 2016) but is not always possible to find someone who belongs to the same ethnic group as the asylum seeker (Schider 2016).

2.3.3 Environment and trust

Interpreting in humanitarian settings, or more specifically in a refugee context, can make great demands not only because of linguistic and cultural problems but also due to the environment in which interpreters work. Their task requires much concentration and sometimes the place where the interpretation takes place may be noisy or uncomfortable (UNHCR 2009). In fact, the interpretation usually takes place in refugee camps or in first aid sites crowded with people which makes the communication and the reception difficult. The interpreting sessions are also located in more comfortable environments like the immigration office, official settings such as the court, the police station, or healthcare settings, where the interpreter can carry on the conversation with concentration. However, talking in official settings may make migrants less confident, afraid and uncomfortable as they may have experienced the power of authoritarian figures in their origin country (Schider 2016:34). This situation can lead them not to talk to or trust the official authorities and, as a consequence, the interpreter.

Creating an atmosphere of trust is essential to achieve confidentiality and encourage the newcomers to speak (UNHCR 2009). It is possible that applicants may see the authorities as untrusted people and even the interpreters themselves. They come from a particular situation, and they have worries, fears and problems that can create barriers and complicate the interviews and meetings. Sometimes the presence of a third person can create lack of confidence, especially in psychotherapy situations. In asylum hearings interviews they can feel untrust as interpreters are involved with the host country system as collaborators (Pöllabaure 2015). Some applicants may be more likely to trust

compatriot interpreters with a similar background (Pöllabaure 2015). Even though compatriots are often informal interpreters without adequate training, they are preferred and the main reason for this preference is because of the lack of trust in the official system (Greenhalgh et al. 2006). However, if the interpreters are refugees themselves belonging to different ethnic group, migrants might feel distrust and fear in the same way (Pöllabaure 2015). Another disadvantage that compatriots may present is that asylum seekers are less likely to talk about private information such as the intimate details of their life or traumatic experiences (Fassetta et al. 2018). In this case, host country interpreters are viewed as more neutral (Pöllabaure 2015). On the other hand, other migrants could prefer interpreters who share the same background because they feel safer and understood.

Through interviews and meetings, the interpreter needs to establish a relationship of trust not only with the interviewee but also with the interviewer or the provider of services (UNHCR 2009:47). Even though the theoretically presumed role of interpreters is to facilitate communication, interviewers may see them as obstacles to communication because they assume the role of co-interrogators Interviewers might not trust interpreters and mediators because they are afraid that they influence the dialogue. In refugee status interviews, interpreters may be thought to have embellished the applicant's statement to make it more in line with what is expected by the host country authorities (Pöllabaure 2015). The same problem can happen in healthcare settings as in psychotherapy situations where psychotherapists expect neutrality from the interpreters (Schider 2016:34).

2.3.4 Emotions

Interpreting in a humanitarian context is often characterised by a high degree of emotionality. Humanitarian interpreters and mediators need to be able to work in high-stress situations deal with emotional stress and be able to communicate effectively under pressure. In addition, refugees and asylum seekers are people who have been living in difficult circumstances and have experienced traumatic events pre-departure and once arrived in the host country (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). Trauma, violence, and psychological disorders can affect the capacity of verbalizing feelings and emotions (Fassetta et al. 2018) finding it difficult to communicate distress, even in one's own mother tongue. Interpreters find it difficult to translate the ways in which distress is

expressed, and for this reason, therapists, scholars and mental health professionals have conducted research about the ways in which people communicate their suffering. The anthropologist Mark Nichter realised that often people express distress in a culturally specific way, using metaphors and cultural references that are unique. These metaphors may be difficult to understand for someone who is external to that way of speaking (Nichter 2010).

Interpreters are emotionally involved in the situation (Pöllabaure 2015) and research has shown that the effects of dealing with traumatic events or working with traumatised persons over a long period of time can have negative effects on those providing assistance themselves (McCann, Pearlman 1990). Interpreters will hear all kinds of difficult, traumatic and highly charged emotional material. If they have a refugee background, some of the stories they hear may be very close to their own experiences. Frequently having had with similar experiences of migration to those of their clients, they may be reminded of what have happened to them or to their close friends and family (Costa 2010). In a study conducted by Shakespeare (2012), several interpreters explained that when they interpret, they become the speaker, because when they interpret, they have to use the first person, and this inevitably has an impact on the interpreter's feelings and emotions. (Shakespeare 2012).

This stress may influence the work performance and also the interpreter's life. Experts consider three levels at which the signs of being under psychological or emotional impact are visible: physiological, cognitive, and effective. The most perceptible signs on a physiological level are high blood pressure, chest pains, headaches or backaches and nausea, which can be accompanied by antisocial behavior, insomnia, a change in appetite and consumption of alcohol and drugs. At the cognitive level, the most perceptible signs are confusion, paranoia, feelings of guilt, recurring thoughts and lack of concentration. Lastly, at the affective level, the most perceptible signs are sadness, anxiety, irritability, fear, and shock (Valero Garcés 2005). These symptoms can appear in the workplace but also outside the workplace. In the workplace, the consequences of developing trauma are present in the phenomenon of increased absenteeism, a tendency to leave the position or the organisation, and a rise in interpersonal conflicts. Here, they develop the burnt-out syndrome which includes symptoms such as disillusion, lack of motivation, apathy, loss of energy and frustration (Valero Garcés 2005). Outside the workplace, the consequences

are often problems within the family relationships, isolation, and effects of the vicarious syndrome. Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure that results from working with people who have experienced traumatic events. Vicarious trauma does not arise from having experienced trauma directly but may develop due to continuous and prolonged exposure to highly emotional or traumatic content. An additional cause is a fact that one feels useless (Ndongo-Keller 2015).

McCann and Pearlman (1990) first used the term vicarious traumatisation in 1990 specifically with reference to the experience of psychotherapists. Talking about vicarious traumatisation, McCann and Pearlman stated that "persons who work with victims may experience profound psychological effects, effects that can be disruptive and painful for the helper and can persist for months or years after work with traumatised persons" (1990:133). Vicarious trauma can divide into primary and secondary traumatisation. Primary traumatisation refers to the impact of trauma on the actual victim of the traumatic event. This may be applicable to workers if they have experienced their own trauma. Secondary traumatisation is usually about family members or close friends who witness a loved one's traumatic event. It can also refer to workers who witness a client's trauma (Saakvitne, Pearlman 1995:151)

2.3.5 Interpreting for minors

Amongst asylum seekers there are numerous unaccompanied minors who arrive in host countries and need assistance. Identifying minor's needs and overcoming their problems may present more challenges than with the adults. Children and young people may have difficulties expressing themselves and their needs and recalling situations accurately (UNHCR 2009). In addition, they may have suffered violence, abuse and emotional traumas (UNHCR 2009) and they may be afraid to trust someone who is not a family member. Moreover, they are more likely to feel uncomfortable and are more vulnerable. Interviews and meetings with minors should be well-planned and well-organised so as to create trust, and always be conducted in the presence of a psychologist.

2.3.6 Information and guidance

Humanitarian interpreting differs from conference interpreting and other forms of community interpreting for various reasons. The main reason is that humanitarian

interpreters need to have competencies regarding all the working field and not just one of them. For example, there are interpreters and mediators that specialise in legal or healthcare settings and work just in specific contexts such as courts or hospitals. Humanitarian interpreters and mediators do not have a particular competence, they need many competencies to work. They work both in courts, hospitals, administrative offices and emergency settings. Humanitarian context is a very complex administrative and bureaucratic field, and they need to have information and guidance skills because they have to identify and analyse the specific migrants' needs. It means knowing the different cultural groups and their customs. In addition, they are expected to know the procedures of refugee status application and have health, administrative and social service orientation. Moreover, they are requested to have knowledge of rights, migration legislation and the different migratory channels. Lastly, to match the need of migrant people with health and social services available in the area, a good knowledge of health care and social services is needed.

2.3.7 Interpreting techniques

Although interpreters are linguistic and culturally competent (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018), many other skills are required. In fact, misunderstandings do not always occur due to cultural problems, but they are caused to the lack of accuracy of interpretation. One important skill that interpreters must possess, is the knowledge of interpreting strategies and the way to conduct interviews and meetings. Interpreters need to be aware of the several and different ways that exist to interpret, and which way is better to employ in each context. The interpreting techniques are known just by the ones that are trained appropriately and have a significant formation in interpretation. Unprofessional interpreters often do not understand the responsibility of interpreting (Fassetta et al. 2018) and convey a summary of what each party has said. In doing so, they inevitably leave out parts of the communication and create misunderstandings (Fassetta et al. 2018). In fact, the accuracy of interpretation involving lay interpreters is of low standard (MacFarlane et al. 2009) and it can happen that asylum seekers' applications are rejected because considered untrustworthy.

2.4 The code of ethics

The task of humanitarian interpreters and mediators is challenging in any circumstances, and sometimes it can be difficult to perform effectively, professionally and ethically. For this reason, government agencies, interpreter services and non-profit or non-governmental organisation provide specific guidelines and standards that interpreters and mediators need to follow for the benefit of both the client and the interpreter (Fassetta et al. 2018). The guidelines are enshrined in the code of ethics which addresses issues such as roles, boundaries, cultures and how to manage the communication flow (Bancroft 2005). Baixauli-Olmos defines the code of ethics as "the framework upon which professions are built" (2017:250). In his research, he pointed out that there are three many types of documents that layout professional norms: the code of ethics, the code of conduct and the standards of practice. The first two codes are similar, and they are interchangeable; they are binding, short and contain general principles. On the other hand, the standards of practice are informative, longer and contain specific guidelines (Bancroft 2005). While most codes of ethics and codes of conduct are binding on members and intended to regulate behavior, standards are non-binding and intended to promulgate best practices that promote the professionalization of interpreting and the quality of services provided (Bancroft 2005). They are considered standards to which interpreters should aspire but do not have a regulatory function (Pym et al. 2012). Usually, organisations or interpreter services adopts a code of ethic that regulates the conduct of interpreters, but over time, the code is refined and a code of standards for practice is drafted. These standards can be incorporated into the code or as a separate document (Bancroft 2005).

Associations and employing agencies in different countries do not have a uniform code of ethics and no code of professional ethics has yet been developed specifically for humanitarian interpreters (Moser-Mercer et al. 2014). As they are people working in humanitarian fields, they have to follow the humanitarian principles because they are also aid workers. Humanitarian action is guided by humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Besides humanitarian principles, there are also general ethics guidelines developed for all-categories interpreters. In Europe, the largest international body that guides interpreters to ethics is AIIC, which was founded in 1953 and it numbers 2600 members in 880 countries (Bancroft 2005). Several nations have national ethics and standards of practice, for instance, in Italy is widely considered *Associazione Italiana*

Intepreteti e Traduttori (AITI), while in the United Kingdom the code of professional conduct National Register of Public Service Interpreting (NRPSI) is the most common. There exist several types of guidelines for the interpreter's conduct also regarding the specific interpreting settings, such as the European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (EULITA) or the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAIJIT) that give advice for interpreters performing in judiciary settings. In addition, the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) provides standards for interpreters in healthcare settings (Bancroft 2005).

In Sandra Beatriz Hale's study (2007), different codes of ethics are examined and sixteen codes from nine different countries are compared. The purpose of her research was to analyse the most important features that are included in the codes. The general principle common to all the codes is the responsibility that interpreters have as professionals, including the need for professional development, role definition and adequate working conditions (Hale 2007:110). Indeed, professionality is a key point of almost all codes of ethics. Being professional means being aware of what someone can or cannot do and does not try to ignore her/his limits. A professional is capable of drawing boundaries (UNHCR 2009:22) without abusing power. As the interpreter is the only person in the room who understand both languages (Fassetta et al. 2018), s/he may exploit his/her position by asking favours after the assignments (Kirst 2015). Using interpreters may be asylum seekers' only way to have their stories heard and the potential for exploitation of people who are in very vulnerable situations is present. Professionals have the duty of loyalty, respect rights and avoid situations that may affect human dignity or conflict of interest. The high degree of professionalism is shown also in the responsibility to listen carefully to the asylum case, provide channels for communication (UNHCR 2009), build trust, have empathy and respect, flexibility, openness and patience (Bancroft 2005). Furthermore, interpreters and mediators are not only responsible to be professionals, but also to be accurate, impartial, neutral and confidential.

The term accuracy underlines the fact of being faithful so as to render exactly the original meaning in the target language of the discourse given in the source language without censoring, adding or detracting from the client's statements (Crezee et al. 2011). The Canadian code of the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC), for example, explicitly explains that in order to render the exact meaning of the

source, the translation cannot be a literal, word-for-word rendition. In fact, a faithful interpretation should not be confused with a literal interpretation (Fassetta et al. 2018).

Impartiality and neutrality are fundamental skills that a humanitarian interpreter and mediator need to manage. Interpreters should translate verbally the message without influencing the client's discourse and without adding his/her own opinion or reactions (Crezee et al. 2011). Moreover, they cannot give advice or align with one party and takes sides (Bancroft 2005). Furthermore, humanitarian action must be autonomous from political economic and military objectives and must give aid regardless of the refugee's nationalities.

Lastly, confidentiality is another of the key points of the code of ethics and it refers to the obligation of not disclosing information that the interpreter has learned during his/her performance.

2.4.1 Critiques of codes of ethics

The guidelines governed by codes of ethics are essential for the interpreters' work. However, interpreters' personal values might be in conflict with the ethical standard outlined by a code of conduct, and the interpreting circumstances might make it difficult to take decisions following the code strictly (UNHCR 2009:11), especially in a humanitarian context. In the light of what has been discussed in the previous section, it can be seen that interpreting in humanitarian contexts has many distinguishing features. Humanitarian settings have a high emotional potential, the clients are vulnerable and have often suffered extremely traumatic experiences (Di Carlo 2021). In addition, interpreters may interpret repeatedly for the same beneficiaries who begin to trust them and rely on them as first source of aid asking them for advice or non-respecting their work hours (Fassetta et al. 2018). In this situation, the interpreter might not be able to maintain the proper distance from the client. In this deep relationship arising between the interpreter and the refugee it might be difficult for the interpreters to respect the fundamental principles of impartiality and neutrality, especially when refugees talk about their personal stories. In this case, there could be a tendency of the interpreter to allow his/her feelings to enter into narration, particularly if they are refugees themselves. Furthermore, their interpretation may reflect the interpreter's own opinion, feelings and judgment

towards the narration (UNHCR 2009:45) because they are social beings with their own professional and personal ideologies that can affect decisions.

For an interpreter, being impartial and neutral requires a high degree of professionality, and for this reason, rules of conduct are argued to present an ideal scenario which does not reflect real life. It is also necessary to bear in mind that broad consensus for a single code of ethics has not yet been reached. Lack of agreement points to the need to count on a more robust body of knowledge concerning how some ethical principles are currently adopted by different institutions and communities (Baixauli-Olmos 2017). In addition, those who do not work for an organisation and are instead freelance interpreters do not have to follow the rules of ethics, especially if they are unregulated professionals because they often do not have a strong ethical infrastructure to support their work.

2.5 Interpreters and mediators working in humanitarian organisations

In the light of what has been said in the first chapter and according to the International Rescue Committee, in 2021 million of people escaped from emergency situations such as armed conflicts, persecution of their rights or general humanitarian crises (IRC 2021). Many asylum seekers cross the borders and arrive illegally in host countries to save their lives and to find better lifestyles. In order to ensure the human management of irregular migration and to help migrants in need, the cooperation of the international community is fundamental. Governmental and non-governmental organisations and local agencies provide assistance to the newcomers, and they try to satisfy their needs, like legal advice, medical assistance or vital information. In order to satisfy asylum seekers' demands, organisations need to properly reach communities in a language they understand (Tesseur 2018) and find appropriate channels to communicate in emergency situations. To overcome barriers to effective communication, international and local actors hire professionals who can speak the newcomer's language. Speaking the same language of asylum seekers and refugees not only helps them satisfy their needs, but also consolidate fundamental human rights.

This section will focus on the relationship between humanitarian interpreters and mediators and the agencies for which they work. Particularly, it will concentrate on the importance that humanitarian organisations give to the language and communication and in consequence to language policy that each organisations have. In addition, it

investigates how interpreters are hired, what are the skills humanitarian workers need to have and the challenges that organisations face with interpreters and mediators.

2.5.1 Language policy

Language policy is a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules, and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, groups or systems (Kaplan, Baldauf 1997). The traditional scope of language policy concerns language regulation and set out principles of legitimate or illegitimate language use and the governing language (McCarty 2011). Language policy is mainly applied to governments which, through legislation, determine what and how languages are used. Many countries have policies designed to protect and promote regional languages while others prefer multilingualism. The language policy is not only regulated by governments and countries, but also by groups, and in this case, by organisations. A language policy is a critical component of organisations, especially those operating in international settings and humanitarian contexts which they need adequate tools to communicate their message and create effective communication for collaboration (multi-languages corporation 2020). Language regulations and guidelines provide also access for all governments and sectors of civil society to the organisation's documentation, archives and data banks (De Varennes 2012).

In humanitarian organisations the language policy is necessary both to communicate with the international community in order to promote projects and recall donors and as a first source of help of people in need. According to this, in international organisations exist three levels of language policies. The first level is the organisation official languages which are languages used for the cooperation with actors which include other organisations, states and donors (De Varennes 2012). Developing strategic communication is essential for compete for media attention and donor funds which finance organisations' projects. The second level of language policy is the working language, namely languages of work within the internal structure of supranational organisations. Humanitarian organisations work mostly in international settings and in multilingual contexts, where the staff is composed of workers coming from all over the world. The best way to communicate efficiently despite the different cultural and linguistic background is to establish a common language through which aid workers can conduct their job cooperating with the team. The last level of language policy is the

languages of external communication or service of organisation. These languages are used in communication and through exchanges with the organisations' clientele or public (De Varennes 2012). Humanitarian organisations meet the effective needs of people they help by providing assistance through the language that communities understand. Language represents a major tool of expression (Moser-Mercer et al. 2014) and delivering emergency and humanitarian aid across language represents a major challenge for organisations (Moser-Mercer et al. 2014). This level of language policy is achieved by organisations through translation and interpretation services (Meylaerts 2012: 165) because the languages and dialects used for external communication are multiple.

Before the 21st century, organisations did not have language policies depending on the relationship with actors, aid workers or external services. In fact, they operated with standard languages that were usually French and English. Firstly, French was considered the language of international politics and diplomacy, but then the growing influence of English affected the global community in economic, cultural, scientific and political spheres (De Varennes 2012). During the First World War period, languages used in organisations were employed just for diplomacy purposes. Since the Second World War, it begins to emerge the notion of individuals as holders of rights and beneficiaries of services (De Varennes 2012). With the acceptance of individuals as recipients of rights, organisations tended to recognise as official languages the languages of all the states parties to the organisation going beyond French and English. In this context, it began to raise humanitarian organisations, agencies that worked not only for international diplomacy but also in favor of civil society (De Varennes 2012).

2.5.2 Staff recruitment policy

Staff recruitment is the process of hiring staff to carry out activities in an organisation. Recruitment can occur internally or externally the organisation (Fall, Zhang 2012) and The International Civil Service Commission Human Resources Management Framework identified recruitment as the starting point of an organisation's policy and it should be based on merit, geographical distribution, gender balance and the basic requirements (Fall, Zhang 2012).

According to what has been said in the previous paragraph, organisations develop language policies that indicate what are the working languages. In order to work in the

organisations, workers need to be aware of language policies and to know the official language of the agency. In fact, usually it is required a minimum number of two working languages (Fall, Zhang 2012). Fluency in English is compulsory and at least one other language and it depends on the organisation and the place where they act. The language requirements are obligatory for all aid workers that develop their job within the organisation together with his/her qualifications, work experience competencies and soft skills (Fall, Zhang 2012). Humanitarian organisations have different recruitment policies depending on the availability of ongoing projects, the necessity to perform the job (CCHN 2021) and the employment position. Overall, the skills required for the staff are strong motivation by humanitarian work, ability to work under pressure in a potentially dangerous environment, open-minded behavior and adaptability to unstable conditions.

Eligibility requirements vary among organisations but in general, education and qualification are two of them (Fall, Zhang 2012). The level of education depends on the type of employment in the organisation. For example, in the United Nations system, a bachelor's or master's degree is needed for entry-level positions, while highly qualified positions require a degree from officially recognised university or institution (Fall, Zhang 2012). Another requirement that is needed is work experience. It is usually set the minimum number of years of work experience required although this can vary depending on the positions. In order to work in a humanitarian context, not only qualifications, work experiences and language knowledge are requested, but also competencies and soft skills. Competencies and soft skills are behaviors that employees must have in order to develop a good job (CHS Alliance 2017). European Universities on Professionalisation on Humanitarian Action (EUPRHA) shaped a project in order to identify key skills and competencies required for the occupation in the humanitarian sector. The most important competencies are various (Aardema, Churruca Muguruza 2014). The first one is the humanitarian commitment which is the appreciation of existing humanitarian standards and codes, knowing the humanitarian system and actors, understanding humanitarian law and principles (Downham 2021) as well as respect for all human beings. Then, the humanitarian worker needs to have the capacity of context analysis and reflection, namely situational awareness in humanitarian context and critically reflect upon one's action in this context. Also adapting behaviour, coping with stress together with maintaining the safety of one's person and protecting of crisis-affected people is a competency requested

and the ability to focus on motivating and coaching. In fact, the ability to manage stress and operate effectively in an uncertain and insecure environment is a fundamental quality (Downham 2021). In a humanitarian context teamwork is essential, for this reason, the candidate has to be collaborative and open to collaboration and communication. Lastly, s/he has to be professional and work very fast whilst maintaining quality and professionalism (Downham 2021). Furthermore, s/he can work with limited resources and equipment, excellent communication skills to coordinate and negotiate (Downham 2021). The project seeks also to explore how these skills are identified and certified through interviews, references, collaborative relationships, tests and simulations (Thurière 2017) written and oral tests. The data from the State of Humanitarian Professions (SOHP) seem to indicate that recruitment practices favour humanitarian experience over the existence of competencies. Despite a significant training offer by universities or specialised training organisations the SOHP study seems to indicate the absence of known reference training for humanitarian workers (Downham 2021).

The basic requirements and competencies listed in the previous paragraph should be met by all workers that work in humanitarian organisations. Then, depending on the role they play in the organisation they should develop specific competencies (CCHN 2021).

2.5.2.1 professional and non-professional workers

Humanitarian action was understood as an organised set of actions oriented to protect, help and assist people in distress or need. It encompasses protecting human life and dignity, satisfying basic needs, alleviating suffering, protecting human rights and preventing future risks. Humanitarian workers are concerned about the impact of current emerging global challenges such as climate change, food crises, wars and migration. To promote efficient help to these crises high qualified workers are needed and requirements for knowledge, skills and competencies (Aardema, Churruca Muguruza 2014). Treating humanitarian crises involves risks and requires high-quality standards, for this reason, the humanitarian sector is even more professionalising starting from the International Bill of Human Rights, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the International Humanitarian Law that provide a legal framework to protect beneficiaries of humanitarian aid (134). Over time, a lot of elements have contributed to structuring this sector demonstrating the will to improve the quality and relevance of humanitarian action.

There are a lot of projects aimed at professionalising the humanitarian sector such as EUPRHA or Humanitarian Action Qualifications Framework, projects that seek to contribute to the professionalisation and quality assurance of the humanitarian sector by determining the competencies and skills of professional humanitarian aid worker, including general education, training, formal and informal learning (Aardema, Churruca Muguruza 2014). The Humanitarian Competency Framework (CHCF) is another tool that can be used by organisations to find competencies in workers. It recommends a competency framework, a generic model for identifying the right competencies for employees in a humanitarian organisation (CHS Alliance 2017).

The debate around the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector has been ongoing for a long time (Rey Marcos 2010) and research was conducted by the State of Humanitarian professions (SOHP) to identify the state of the humanitarian sector in relation to professionalisation in order to understand if the quality of humanitarian action depends on the professionalism of humanitarian workers (Downham 2021). The study was conducted by humanitarian workers and in general, there is a lack of recognition of professions that are specific to the humanitarian sector (Downham 2021). In fact, organisations, especially non-government organisation, hire volunteers or people without competencies or experiences, especially when these are figures involved in the interpreting sector. In fact, some organisations vision in terms of human resources and staff needs remains very simplistic.

As stated above, interpreters and mediators can be divided into humanitarian or community interpreters or mediators and conference interpreters or mediators. In humanitarian organisations these figures are both present; on one hand, language specialists are employed in translating documents or interpreting in a conference setting for example to launch campaigns to promote human rights or report abuses. This type of worker is employed mostly in Governmental organisations or in NGOs that develop the main function of advocacy. In this case, it is often required a professional who knows interpreting techniques and modes and has certificated qualifications like a university education or a degree in interpreting with experience. On the other hand, humanitarian organisations that deal with field operations and help people to meet their necessities require an interpreter that can be professional or unprofessional. Organisations work with an enormous amount of non-professional interpreters (Tesseur 2018) due to the presence

of limited languages and dialects. It happens often that professional interpreters do not know the language of the community the organisation is working with, for this reason non-professional interpreters who are members of the community are hired.

2.5.2.2 In-house and external workers

Humanitarian organisations are more likely to hire workers from internal staff because this allows the continuity and long-term humanitarian response for the relationship of trust. Although, organisations are also keen to hire freelancer workers that can be recruited both from home countries and from the community the humanitarian organisation is working with (Tesseur 2018). In NGOs and local organisations, interpreters and mediators are usually recruited from external agencies because it happens that the organisations do not have a constant need for linguistic experts and for this reason, they hire them when there is a real necessity. Another reason why organisation hire external workers is because they work with communities with limited languages or dialects such as Burmese, Dari, Farsi, Karen, Kirundi (ICRC n.d.), and most of these languages are not taught in universities, therefore there is the need to hire a local interpreter or mediator.

2.5.3 Code of ethics

In order to work in a humanitarian organisation, workers have to follow guidelines that addresses issues such as roles, boundaries and the ethical management of the communication flow (Bancroft 2005). Interpreters and mediators, besides the code of ethics of interpreting, have also to follow the conduct dictated by the organisation that is addressed to all humanitarian workers. The code is not about operational details but seeks to guard standards of behaviour and to maintain high standards with the emergency response (IFRC 1994) because the purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure the respect of human beings (Fassetta 2018).

NGOs and the International Red Cross elaborated some general and imperative principles that all humanitarian workers, embedded interpreters, need to follow. The first principle is humanity, in particular, the right to offer fundamental humanitarian principle and it refers to the obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed (IFRC 1994). Secondly, humanitarian workers have to be impartial, giving aid regardless

of race, nationality, gender, class, political opinions and religious belief (Fassetta 2018). Furthermore, neutrality foresees that humanitarian action must not take sides in controversies. Lastly, humanitarian workers have to respect culture and costume (IFRC 1994) and the action must be independent, autonomous from the political, economic, military points of view (Fassetta 2018).

2.5.4 Challenges and problems

Communicating in the right language is considered fundamental for the humanitarian organisations but the staff and aid workers are not always fluent in the languages or dialects of the communities they work with. The University of Reading and Portsmouth collaborated on a research project titled the listening zones of NGOs, creating a workshop in order to acquire a better understanding of the challenges faced by humanitarian NGOs in terms of communication with beneficiaries and the recruitment of local translators and interpreters (Footitt 2014). The study was conducted between June 2015 and 2018 and comprises research in the archives of Cristian aid, Oxfam and save the children and preliminary research revealed that language issues do not tend to have a high profile within organisations.

Since the early 2000 scholars have increasingly considered translation and interpreting as sociological acts, in which language mediators make decisions depending on their social, political, and ethical positions and the institutional context in which they are working. The role of languages and translation in humanitarian organisations has not only escaped attention in Translation Studies but has also largely remained silent on languages. Fierke (2003: 67) has argued that a "history of silence has marked the issue of language in IR". Nevertheless, humanitarian organisations play a key role in enhancing communication, providing access to information and advocating for and on behalf of the people they work with. However, language issues do not have a high profile within organisations, formal language policies are often not in place, translation and interpretation needs are often under-funded and there is a general lack of quality standards.

2.5.4.1 Language as a priority

Language is often treated as a low priority and for many organisations, it is a blind spot because it is not perceived as an institutional urgency, but it is largely seen as an add-on extra in the organisation (Crack et al. 2016). Few organisations have language policies and despite considerable efforts in the sector, humanitarian workers practitioners felt that there was still low awareness of the need to be culturally sensitive (INTRAC 2018). Guidelines for language policy often go into a black hole in organisations (Crack et al. 2016) and interpretation and mediation are an area that has been generally overlooked and underfunded. Interpreters and mediators are figures that are usually underestimated, not well considered by national and regional institutions although the fundamental role they play in societies and dangerous settings, especially when they work in Anglophone organisations. Agencies that have English as official language consider language issues as an added extra (Footitt et al. 2014).

2.5.4.2 Lack of professional figures

A widespread problem in the development of the humanitarian sector is poor interpretation and mediation capacity in local languages (Luchner 2018). Language needs are often not planned in advance, and this affects the ability of organisations to listen to communities (Crack 2018). Delivering assistance or emergency and humanitarian aid across languages in high-risk settings can pose challenges to the interpreters involved in the field. First of all, training for professional interpreters in this area is very limited (Footit et al. 2014) and secondly because of the existence of many limited languages and dialects. For these reasons, humanitarian organisations, especially NGOs, rely on volunteers or non-professional interpreters part of the community. They know both the local language and the international language for cooperation (English), but they have not been trained as interpreters or mediators (Koskinen, Pokorn 2021). They rely also on volunteers also because professionals require higher fees than volunteers or non-professionals and organisations have often a limited budget.

2.5.4.3 Budget

Investment in language takes time and resources. Humanitarian organisations want to communicate with local populations, but they often do not provide resources for language needs (Crack et al. 2016). The selection and training of interpreters and mediators can be a difficult process, particularly in the context of tight budgets. It is extremely difficult to locate a technically strong staff who is fluent in languages when organisations spend just 7% of their budget on interpretation and mediation (Crack et al. 2016). Many humanitarian organisations and charities provide interpreting service as part of their work, but it is not always very structured because there is excessive demands on a small number of workers (TWB 2017). These organisations usually do not have much funding to devote to interpretation, it is overlooked in the budget and in many cases, it is described as an afterthought (INTRAC 2018). As a consequence, the interpreting and mediating service often results in being done by volunteers or staff who were not trained as linguistic experts (Tesseur 2015). For these reasons, many non-professionals intermediaries are employed and this raises issues around quality assurance (Crack et al. 2016).

3. Research process, data analysis and findings

In chapters 1 and 2 I discussed the task of humanitarian interpreters and mediators, their responsibilities and the challenges of their work. Moreover, another central scope of this thesis is to investigate the role that interpreters and mediators have in humanitarian organisations, governmental and non-governmental organisations and local agencies and how these organisations consider them. Chapter 3 aims to analyse the themes mentioned in the previous two chapters through the data resulting from field research. The research was conducted through interviews with interpreters, mediators and humanitarian operators working in international and local humanitarian organisations in Italy. Before going into the heart of the research, the first sections provide an overview of the humanitarian organisations involved in the research and an explanation of how the research was conducted.

3.1 Humanitarian organisations involved in the research

Today, there are many humanitarian organisations involved in helping people affected by emergencies and crises. There exist different types of organisations, governmental, non-governmental, international and local. In order to conduct the research, I chose to analyse seven types of organisations: an international governmental-organisation, two non-governmental Italian organisations, three international non-governmental organisations and one agency that operates in humanitarian contexts giving language support.

The international governmental organisation is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the three NGOs include International Rescue Committee, Sos Mediterranee and Médecins Sans Frontières. I have selected these international agencies because they all operate in one of the most dangerous humanitarian contexts: the Mediterranean Sea. The organisations are active in the Central Mediterranean route that goes from Libya to Italy, a zone that forms part of the SAR project. The term SAR stands for Search and Relief, and identifies rescue operations conducted by the humanitarian organisation using specific naval, air or land means aimed at safeguarding human life in hostile environments (UN 1979). The 1979 convention, adopted in 1979 in Hamburg, was aimed at developing an international SAR plan that

provides rescue for people in distress at sea (UN 1979). In particular, the Maritime Search and Rescue Convention oblige states parties to:

> ensure that assistance [is] provided to any person in distress at sea regardless of the nationality or status of such a person or the circumstances in which that person is found' (Chapter 2.1.10) and to 'provide for their initial medical or other needs and deliver them to a place of safety (UN 1979: 125).

Following the SAR Convention, the world is divided into thirteen search and rescue areas for which states are responsible (UN 1979). The Mediterranean region is a SAR region, and it has many stakeholders operating in it (European Commission n.d.). People arriving through unauthorised routes, such as the Central Mediterranean route, are then sent to reception centres to wait for the asylum application or to emergency centres. For this reason, I chose to analyse two Italian reception centres*, Cooperativa Eucrante* from Rimini and *Centro servizi per stranieri "Sanzio Togni*" from Cesena. These organisations provide many services, comparable to international humanitarian organisations. While governmental and non-governmental organisations help people in need in situations of immediate emergencies, local organisations provide a first aid service and welcome people helped by NGOs and IGOs that arrive in the host country. Finally, I selected Translators Without Borders although does not have the typical characteristics of humanitarian organisations. In fact, TWB is not a humanitarian organisation, but it works in a humanitarian context by providing language services and tools in order to overcome linguistic barriers in emergency settings. In addition, it provides humanitarian mediators and interpreters for work in various organisations.

3.1.1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR is an international governmental organisation and a multilateral institution. As stated in the first chapter, it is an organisation funded by states for operations on a large scale for the welfare of people and it works closely with the governments that are the principal actors in providing protection and enabling solutions to problems of forced displacement and statelessness (UNHCR 2017). The organisation's headquarters are

located in Geneva (Switzerland) and it has appointed representatives and correspondents in 125 countries throughout the world (UNHCR 1950).

The United Nations General Assembly decided to establish a High Commissioner's Office for Refugees on 1st January 1951. The statute was adopted in 1950 and it declares that "the work of the High Commissioner shall be of an entirely non-political character; it shall be humanitarian and social and shall relate to groups and categories of refugees" (UNHCR 1950). The statute also states the multiple functions that the organisation has. First of all, it has an advocacy purpose because it raises awareness and sensitise the population about the observance of human rights through campaigns, networks and direct action. Secondly, it provides education in countries where children have no access to instruction. Consequently, the IGO intervenes to help communities who suffer from climate change and disasters providing help and public services. Finally, it supplies protection for displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees. The UNHCR seeks to ensure that migration-management policies take into account the needs of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless people (Kushminder, De Bresser 2015) ensuring that they have access to safety and enjoyment of their rights to appropriate treatments. In addition, the UNHCR promotes inclusion for refugees taking in consideration diverse ethnic, gender and other identities (UNHCR 2017).

The UNHCR developed many projects around the world and in 2014 it launched a global initiative in the Mediterranean Sea in order to reduce loss of life as well as exploitation, abuse and violence experienced by people traveling irregularly (UNHCR 2019). 88 countries, 52 NGOs and 13 IGOs have taken part in the project, and they seek to ensure that responses to mixed migration by sea are in line with international protection needs (UNHCR 2019). The function of the project extends beyond the search-and-rescue system, as it helps those needing international protection, human treatment and prevention of refoulement, as well as access to fair and efficient asylum procedures (UNHCR 2019).

3.1.2 Sos Mediterranee

Sos Mediterranee is a non-governmental, European, humanitarian organisation that works in the Mediterranean Sea. It is a non-profit organisation and for this reason it is financed exclusively through donations. It was founded by European citizens in 2015 in response

to the deaths in the Mediterranean during the irregular crossings in the Central Mediterranean route. Furthermore, it has four headquarters that are located in Berlin (Germany), Marseilles (France), Milan (Italy) and Geneva (Switzerland). Sos Mediterranee is based on the respect for human beings and their dignity, without partiality as concerns their nationality, origin, social belonging, political position or ethnic identity. In addition, the association has many missions. It rescues people from distress at sea and provides emergency medical treatment on board. Moreover, it offers medical and psychological care to those rescued on board and connects to support institutions in Europe. Finally, it tries to give survivors a voice through the advocatory function that informs the European public about the situation of people seeking safety in the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, the ship that carries out a rescue represents the first platform to address the medical needs of survivors, collect their testimony and identify vulnerable people.

Since it first started operating at sea, Sos Mediterranee has been patrolling the central Mediterranean in international waters between Italy and Libya. The rescues take place outside Libyan territorial waters and from 2016 to 2018 the rescues were operated by the ship Aquarius, which provided assistance to 29,523 people between Italy, Malta and Libya (Sos Mediterranee n.d.). In 2020 the organisation resumed with a new ship, the Ocean Viking. The Ocean Viking is a cargo vessel designed for rescuing and taking care of a large number of people in the central Mediterranean. The ship is owned by Hoyland Offshore and the flag state registry is Norway. It used to be an offshore supply and rescue ship for the oil and gas industry in the North Sea, mainly in the Norwegian sector. The ship now is chartered and operated by Sos Mediterranee in partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross. They have equipped it to best accommodate, provide care and protect survivors. On board the Ocean Viking there is special accommodation for women and children, as well as a clinic to take care of medical emergencies, which was equipped by Médecins Sans Frontières (Sos Mediterranee n.d.). The crew of Sos Mediterranee consists of three teams. The marine crew made up of nine members who are employed by the ship-owner. This includes the captain, officers, seamen, engineers and cooks. Then, there is the search and rescue team including a search and rescue coordinator, a deputy search and rescue coordinator, a SAR team leader, eleven SAR team members, including a logistician, a mechanic engineer, a deck leader,

a cultural mediator, a communications officer and a photographer (Sos Mediterranee n.d.). Finally, there is a relief and protection team that includes medical staff, a midwife and professionals who can provide psychological support and assist those who are particularly vulnerable and in need of extra protection, such as unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking (Sos Mediterranee n.d.).

3.1.3 The International Rescue Committee (IRC)

The International Rescue Committee is a non-governmental organisation that responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises, helping to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing and power to people devastated by conflict and disaster. IRC was established in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein in the United States to assist Germans suffering Hitler's dictature (IRC 2018). The organisation has its headquarters in New York, and it has 28 regional offices across the United States. Furthermore, after the Second World War, IRC initiated its emergency programs in Europe where there are fifteen offices including Italy.

The IRC's main task is to avoid administrative barriers and discriminatory norms through a range of activities, such as group training sessions on cultural orientation or inclusive community engagement activities. In particular, it promotes with many activities aimibg at economic wellbeing, education, empowerment of communities through knowledge of their rights, health, safety and they support women and girls to change their life. The organisation's main goal is to help those who are recovering from conflicts and are seeking protection from harm (IRC 2014). Among the various tasks, the International Rescue Committee works with vulnerable irregular migrants in Niger, Libya and Italy along the Central Mediterranean route. It provides humanitarian assistance with emergency health care, cash support, information and case management of gender-based violence (IRC 2018).

3.1.4 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

Médecins Sans Frontières is an international independent medical humanitarian organisation that was founded in 1971 in Paris by a group of journalists and doctors. It is a non-profit and self-governed organisation that provides medical assistance to people affected by conflict, disasters or exclusion from healthcare (MSF 2018). The organisation

is present in more than 70 countries all over the world, especially in Belgium, Sweden, Germany and Italy, where it works to support people on the move in several areas. In Palermo, Sicily, MSF provides medical care for patients who survived intentional violence and torture in their country of origin or during their journey to Italy. The staff help everyone, children, adults, men and women without distinction.

The Médecins Sans Frontières' teams in the field perform an initial triage to identify people in need of immediate care and psychological first aid. Then, they conduct many operations such as rapid needs assessments, establish public health program priorities, work closely with affected communities, organise and manage health facilities and essential medical supplies, train local workers, coordinate with a complex array of relief organisations, monitor and evaluate the impact of their programs, and manage scarce resources (MSF 2018).

During 2015 and 2016 MSF provided assistance at multiple points along the Balkans overland route, especially at the borders of Greece and Serbia and now is relaunching rescue activities also in the central Mediterranean in order to keep saving lives. The organisation provides healthcare, psychological support, sanitation, food, shelter and transportation. Furthermore, they rescue people from international waters in the central Mediterranean between Libya, Malta and Italy with the ship Geo Barents. On board, there is a team of twenty people and twelve crew members guided by medical ethics and the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality (MSF 2018).

3.1.5 Cooperativa Eucrante

Cooperativa Eucrante is an Italian local organisation that operates in Rimini, a city in the Emilia-Romagna region in northern Italy. The organisation is a *cooperativa sociale* that was founded in 2010 and it aims at pursuing the general interest of the community in human promotion and social integration of citizens. Since 2015, the agency has welcomed migrants and refugees as part of the project "Temporary reception service for foreign citizens seeking international protection in the territory of the province of Rimini" in agreement with the Prefecture of Rimini (Cooperativa Eucrante 2021). The project offers several services to promote inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the community. The service is aimed at personal assistance, the provision of board and lodging, the supply of basic necessities, basic health care and legal support, as well as the provision of Italian

language courses and lessons. It provides basic services including information and accompaniment activities for asylum application procedures, linguistic-cultural mediation services for more than forty languages and orientation to the system of services available in the area (Cooperativa Eucrante 2021).

3.1.6 Centro Servizi per Stranieri "Sanzio Togni"

Centro Servizi per Stranieri "Sanzio Togni" is an agency that was established in 1998 in Cesena, a city in the Emilia-Romagna region, as a public service for foreign residents in the area. This agency is part of the category named ASP (*Aziende pubbliche di Servizi alla Persona*), is characterised as multiservice companies aiming to ensure greater cost-effectiveness and improvement in the quality of interventions through the reorganisation, throughout the region, of the public supply of services. These services, together with other public and private entities, will constitute the integrated network of territorial services. The ASPs are public law companies, with legal personality, statutory, managerial, patrimonial, accounting and financial autonomy and are non-profit (Sociale 2014).
At first, Centro Servizi per Stranieri provided with informative, administrative and legal services but since 2014 with the Arab spring and the mass illegal migration coming from North Africa, the agency's tasks have extended to be reception centre and international protection centre and for asylum applications. In particular, it is an extraordinary reception center (CAS) where asylum seekers are accommodated because in the SAI facilities there is no room[1]. Since 2014 approximately 620 people have been accommodated. The service is currently provided under an agreement with *the Unione dei Comuni Valle del Savio* and the Prefecture of Forlì-Cesena for a total of 95 places, divided into one flat for single women, three flats for families, and seven flats for single men. The CAS service welcomes applicants for international protection upon arrival in the territory and assists them until they leave the project, which usually coincides with the end of the application process for international protection.

The project offers various services to users, including orientation to the services of the area, language training, support for starting school, legal assistance, enhancement of

[1] SAI is a system of reception and integration that guarantee the reception of asylum seekers and refugees. When the reception system is exhausted, the prefectures may provide establishment of extraordinary reception centres (CAS) and entrust them to private subjects (Ministero dell'Interno 2020).

socio-work autonomy, linguistic-cultural mediation, health assistance, psychological support, support in becoming autonomous when leaving the centres and involvement in volunteer activities (A.S.P distretto Cesena Valle Savio n.d.).

3.1.7 Translators Without Borders (TWB)

Translators Without Borders is a non-profit organisation that provides people with access to vital information in a language they understand. It was established in 1993 in France and now provides linguistic experts from all over the world to NGOs (TWB 2021). TWB has two main missions. The first one is to raises awareness about why language matters in humanitarian work. The second one is to create a translation network intended to improve communication between crisis-affected communities and the staff of humanitarian organisations before, during and after a crisis, by eliminating the language barriers that can impede relief efforts especially in the areas of health, human rights, and humanitarian response or immigration issues.

Translators Without Borders has many functions. The organisation trains translators, interpreters and cultural mediators in the languages of crisis-affected countries and to work with refugees and migrants. In addition, it builds networks of trained linguistic experts who can provide immediate assistance. Besides providing interpreters to humanitarian organisations, TWB develops multilingual glossary apps, machine translation and channels for communicating with affected people (TWB 2021). It published a guide "Field guide to humanitarian interpreting and cultural mediation" to support humanitarian field managers, interpreters and cultural mediators in their daily interactions and responsibilities. Furthermore, since September 2015, Translators Without Borders has deployed its Words of Relief response program to support local and international humanitarian agencies working to assists refugees and migrants arriving in Europe (Tanner, Obrecht 2015). In particular, this is a project designed to provide local language translation services to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN agencies and other actors during humanitarian response.

3.2 Research methods for applied linguistics

The aim of this third chapter is to analyse interpreters' and mediators' experiences in working in humanitarian contexts and their relationship with the humanitarian

organisations for which they work. Before examining data and information, it is necessary to specify the research method, the mode and the approach that I used to carry out the study. To conduct research in applied linguistics, three common methods can be selected: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Lan 2020). According to the SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (Norman, Lincoln 2019), qualitative research is defined as the analysis of the language-based data collected through categorising data and identifying meanings (Norman, Lincoln 2019). This approach focuses on the process of natural settings with emerging questions and procedures (Lan 2020). Moreover, it uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives or case studies in order to develop themes from data (Creswell 2003:7). A qualitative method can be an effective method to understand in-depth meanings and reflect a dynamic reality. Thus, it may be necessary to collect multiple data over a long period of time (Lan 2020).

On the other hand, quantitative research employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys and collects data from multiple case studies that are objective from an outsider's perspective (Lan 2020). Quantitative research is systematic and has a rigorous process to collect and analyse data without giving space to interpretations and personal opinions.

Finally, there is data collection that involves both numeric information as well as text information so that the final result represents both quantitative and qualitative information (Creswell 2003:7). Some methodologists might argue that the combination of the two methods does not integrate quantitative and qualitative research because one tends to be subordinate to the other (Bryman 2006: 103).

The method that I selected to conduct this research is the qualitative method because I wanted to anaylise meanings, thoughts and experiences and interpret them. The principal goal was to develop concepts and theories by looking into deeper meanings; I attempt to confirm a theory or a hypothesis by collecting large amounts of data.

3.2.1 Qualitative research methods

According to the analysis of data based on qualitative research can be conducted through six approaches. The first one is the narrative analysis, an approach used to learn more about the culture, historical experiences and identity of the narrator (Butina 2015). In the narrative approach stories become the raw data (Bleakley 2005) that are transformed into

written autobiographies or oral histories (Hoshmand 2005). Secondly, the content approach analyses by classifying and identifying key categories in written texts. Furthermore, a third approach is grounded theory, which proposes an observation of the social world aiming to construct a new theory from collected data. The data collection process is influenced by the simultaneous development of concepts, categories and themes. In addition, the data of qualitative research can be examined through conversation analysis, an approach aimed at explaining the "technology of conversation" (Sacks 1992: 339), namely the interactions between participants. Conversation analysis takes place with semi-structured interviews, which give the interviewee the space to go on narrative tangents, or with heavily structured interviews that follow a question-answer format. Finally, thematic analysis searches and generates themes from the dataset. This is a method for describing data but also involves interpretation in the process of constructing themes (Kiger et al. 2020) that are "patterned responses or meanings" derived from the data that informs the research question (Braun and Clarke 2006: 82). The thematic approach is appropriate for written texts without pre-determined ideas and expectations about the data will reveal (Norman, Lincoln 2019).

The thematic approach is the one that I selected to examine the data of the interviews because it is appropriate to understand a set of experiences, thoughts and behaviours across the data set (Braun, Clarke 2012). There exist six different phases to conduct the research. The first one is to read and familiarise oneself with data. In this phase, it is possible to become familiar with the data set by reading actively through data (Braun, Clarke 2006). Depending on the study, the data set might include interviews, field notes or media such as videos (Kiger et al. 2020). The second phase is to generate initial codes. After having familiarised oneself with the data it is necessary to understand what is interesting about them (Kiger et al. 2020). In fact, this phase generates codes that are the basic segments of raw data assessed in a meaningful way (Boyatzis 1998: 63). The next phase searches for themes, analyses the interesting points and overarch the themes. The codes are examined, and data are extracted to look for potential themes of broader significance (Braun, Clarke 2006). Themes do not simply emerge from the data (Varpio et al. 2017); instead, themes are constructed by the researcher through analysing, combining, comparing and interpreting. In phase four, themes are reviewed: some can be added, combined, divided or discarded (Kiger et al. 2020). Then, the researcher creates

narrative descriptions, defines themes, names the essence of what each theme is about, and identifies what is interesting about them and why (Braun, Clarke 2006). In the final phase, a report is produced. This phase involves the final analysis and write-up report with descriptions of findings (Braun, Clarke 2006). The final report moves beyond a description of codes and themes (King 2004) and provides a clear, concise and logical narrative (Braun and Clarke 2006).

3.2.2 Interviews in qualitative research

Qualitative interviewing has become a key method in the human and social sciences (Brinkman 2014), because through interviews it is possible to investigate participants' identities, experiences and beliefs, to examine and develop concepts. In fact, they are considered research instrument perspectives in order to collect data (Talmy 2010). In applied linguistics, the interviews can be conducted in a structured, unstructured or semi-structured way. Structured interviews are passive recordings of people's opinions and attitudes because they are formed by predetermined questions in a set order (Brinkman 2014). They are often multiple choice or closed-ended questions and are used for quantitative studies. On the contrary, unstructured interviews are very flexible because questions and the order in which they are asked are not set (Brinkman 2014). In this case, the interview proceeds more spontaneously based on the participant's previous answers and the interviewer becomes a listener (Brinkman 2014). However, many scholars argue that is not possible to avoid the structure entirely, but it is possible to provide a flexible structure. For this reason, the most widespread form of interviews is the semi-structured ones. This type of interview is a blend of structured and unstructured interviews, where the interviewer has a general plan for what wants to ask, but the questions do not have to follow a particular order. They are open-ended and have a predetermined thematic order (Brinkman 2014).

Furthermore, interviews can be conducted in an inductive bottom-up way or deductive top-down way. An inductive approach means the themes identified are linked to data (Patton 1990). The purposes of using an inductive approach are to condense raw data into the summary format, establish links between research objectives and the summary findings and develop a framework of the theories derived from the data (Thomas 2006). In summary, the inductive method moves from specific observations to broader

generalisations and theories. On the other end, deductive analysis is data-driven because works from the more general to the more specific (Thomas 2006). There is a previous interest in the area and previous knowledge (Braun, Clarke 2006) and the interviews are carried on testing the hypothesis with specific data, confirmation of original theories (Thomas 2006).

The interviews I conducted for this research are semi-structured because the main goal of the study is to produce knowledge and to obtain the interviewee's description rather than reflections of theorisations in order to create new concepts. In addition, they are carried out in an inductive bottom-up way because from observations and measures I started to formulate hypotheses and ended up developing general conclusions.

3.3 Planning the research

The aim of this section is to present in detail the research process. To be precise, I will specify the procedure, the method and the approach chosen to carry out the study. In addition, the participants of the interviews will be presented, as will the questions chosen for them. Finally, I will explain the analysis developed to elaborate the findings and analysis.

3.3.1 Procedure

Descriptive qualitative analysis with a thematic approach was carried out to develop the present study. The technique applied to collect data and information was to conduct and record semi-structured interviews with seven interviewees that work for humanitarian organisations. I prepared a set of guiding questions divided into different thematic areas and while answering the questions, participants were free to talk as much as they wanted. After the interview, I transcribed the oral text into a written one and I familiarised myself with the data by reading them multiple times in an active way. Then, I generated codes and searched for interesting points. Consequently, I extracted data that were potential themes and I examined and interpreted them. Finally, I reviewed the main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis, and I created a report with descriptions of the findings.

3.3.2 Participants

To conduct the research and the interviews I selected seven interviewees. Two people are mediators and two are professionals working both as interpreters and mediators. The fifth and the sixth people interviewed works in the humanitarian sector and not linguistic experts. In particular, one is a psychotherapist and the other is the organisation service coordinator. Then, I interviewed the program advisor of an agency that trains mediators and interpreters for work with humanitarian organisations. The seven people interviewed are the following:

M/I1: Untrained female interpreter and mediator who works for Cooperativa Eucrante. Four years' experience as a mediator and interpreter with Pidgin English and British English as mother tongue and working languages.

M/I2: Trained male mediator and interpreter who works for Médecins Sans Frontières with a professional course in intercultural mediation. He has twelve years of experience, and he works with Arabic which is his mother tongue, and English.

M3: Untrained male mediator who works for Sos mediterranee. Eight years of experience and Arabic is his mother tongue. He works also with French and English.

M4: Trained male mediator who works for UNCHR with a course in mediation. He has twenty years of experience, and he works with Arabic which is his mother tongue, English and French.

HE5: Humanitarian employee, expert in psychosocial support and gender-based violence. She is the president of Centro Penc, an organisation related to the International Rescue Committee based in Palermo who deals with ethnopsychology, a discipline which has mental health as its focus especially when the therapist and the patient do not belong to the same culture of origin.

HE6: Humanitarian employee and service coordinator of Centro Servizi per Stranieri "Servizio Togni" he has a university degree as an *educatore socioculturale*.

PA7: European Refugee Response Program director who works for Translators Without Borders.

3.3.3 Instrument

The interviews took place between January and June 2022, and six of them were conducted in Italian while one was in English. I contacted the interviewees through e-

mail and then I adopted the mode of the virtual interview using the video conferencing tool zoom or via mobile phone. Three different types of interviews were conducted: one for mediators and interpreters, another for the humanitarian staff and the last one for the agency that provide interpreters and mediators for humanitarian organisations.

The questions asked with interpreters and mediators were organised into five topic areas. As shown in table 1, the first block is about sociodemographic questions, namely the work experience, the languages they speak and the training they have undertaken. Subsequently, I asked about the profession making a distinction between interpreters and mediators, and their opinions about their role in the organisations where they work. Furthermore, the questions related to the code of ethics were about their personal opinions and experiences. In particular, how the code of ethics is important in their work and if it is always possible to respect it. The last two blocks of questions are about one fundamental aspect of interpreting and mediating which is trust and the challenges and responsibilities that imply working as mediators and interpreters.

Questions for interpreter/mediator

- Why did you decide to become an interpreter/mediator?
- How long have you been working as an interpreter/mediator?
- What kind of training did you undertake?
- In your view, how important is training for interpreters and mediators?
- What is or are your native language or languages and which other languages do you speak?
- What are your working languages?
- Who have you worked for? Where do you do your interpreting/mediating activity?
- What do you think about codes of ethics?
- Is there a code of ethics for your work?
- Is it an important aspect of your profession?
- Is it always possible respect the code of ethics?
- How important are impartiality and neutrality? Are these possible to achieve?
- How important is trust?

- Have you ever experienced distrust from the newcomers involved in the interaction?
- What are the main challenges and problems of your work?
- What kind of responsibilities does your work have?
- Have you ever felt under stress?
- Have you ever had interviews with minors? Is it the same as with adults?
- Do you think that your role is rightfully recognised by organisations?
- What are the main differences between interpreters/mediators?

Table 1. Interpreting and mediating questions

I asked the members of staff of humanitarian organisations how the organisation see the figure of interpreters and mediators, in particular the advantages and disadvantages of working with them and if they are a real necessity for a humanitarian organisation.

Questions for humanitarian worker

- Which languages do you work with mostly?
- Would the staff be sufficient to communicate with asylum seekers or is a language expert needed?
- How are translators and interpreters/cultural mediators recruited?
- Is it preferred using interpreters/mediators whose mother tongue is the same as the person interviewed or people that do not have the same mother tongue?
- Does this organisation use professional interpreters and mediators or non-professional figures?
- Are there any advantages and disadvantages to using mediators and interpreters? (i.e economic loss, obstacles to communication)
- Do you have any draft codes of ethics to follow for mediators/interpreters or do they have to follow a general code of ethics?
- In which settings do you usually work?

Table 2. Questions for humanitarian workers

Finally, I chose a third set of questions when interviewing the Program Director of Translators Without Borders because she is not a humanitarian interpreter or mediator, but she works in order to train humanitarian interpreters and mediators. In particular, I asked her for information about the language used in humanitarian contexts, how her organisation tries to overcome linguistic barriers in humanitarian contexts and how seen interpreters and mediators are seen by humanitarian organisations.

Questions for Program Director of TWB
- Why do languages matter in humanitarian contexts? - What approaches and tools has TWB employed to overcome linguistic barriers? - Do interpreters and mediators need to know dialects and language varieties, or is a lingua Franca sufficient? - Do humanitarian organisations give the right importance to language, and, in consequence, to interpreters and mediators?

Table 3. Questions for the Program Director of TWB

3.3.4 Analysis

The data were analysed in a process of breaking down, examining, comparing and categorising (Amparo Jiménez, León Pinilla 2015). Then, responses were grouped into main themes and subcategories that bring together recurrent ideas and concepts (Strauss, Corbin 1998). In order to analyse answers and find themes to discuss, I used the software AntConc and Sketchengine to extract the most frequent words and to check the collocations of the keywords.

3.4 Interviews: results and findings

This section will present the data collected through interviews with stakeholders who work in humanitarian organisations in Italy mentioned in the previous sections. The primary goal of the interviews is to investigate the role of languages in humanitarian organisations, and if the right to access communication and information is respected by the organisations. In consequence, the second purpose of the study is to examine the relationship that these agencies have with linguistic experts and if their role is recognised.

Finally, the research explores the work of humanitarian interpreters and mediators, in particular, the challenges and the responsibilities that this job entails.

3.4.1 To communicate in the "right" language

At the beginning of the interviews, I asked interpreters and mediators some sociodemographic questions and one of them was what your mother tongue and the working languages are. From this type of question, it emerged that three out of four interpreters and mediators speak Arabic as their native language. Just one of them speaks Broccon English, a dialect that comes from Nigeria. In addition, all interpreters and mediators use British English as their working language and two out of four also speak French. Furthermore, they use Italian as a working language too, since they work in organisations located in Italy.

M/I1	British English, Pidgin English (Brocon), Italian.
M/I2	Arabic, English, Italian.
M3	Arabic, English, French, Italian.
M4	Arabic, English, French, Italian.

Figure 5. Languages

Figure 5 shows that Arabic and English are the languages most used among interviewees. In particular, M4 in his interview underlines the fact that: "with Arabic I cover all dialects". In chapter two, the problem of language was discussed and it was said that in a humanitarian context it is not sufficient to know the vehicular language because sometimes there are people who can speak only the dialect of their region. Furthermore, in some regions the ethnic languages are official languages spoken by all or some of the population. In fact, the program advisor for Translators Without Borders, in her interview affirms that:

PA7	"There is a huge assumption that the lingua franca is sufficient, but it is not. The biggest issue beyond and before dialects is the fact that people will assume that in Nigeria people speak English, it is not true. […] The

	second issue around dialects is depending on the language that can be so different. If you just take Arabic, there are spoken various of Arabic are so diverse that different Arabic speakers won't be able to understand each other. […] We have done some comprehension testing to demonstrate with evidence that this is not true that one dialect is sufficient for communication".

Figure 6. Vehicular and ethnic languages

As underlined also in the first chapter, communication should be a priority for emergency response and the right to receive and impart information in a language that people can access is written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, emerged that the majority of the mediators and interpreters that were interviewed do not take into consideration dialects and language varieties, but in their opinion, it is sufficient to speak vehicular languages.

I also asked workers who work in humanitarian organisations what the languages they work with were and HE6 answered that they use specifically vehicular languages such as English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. On the contrary, HE5 agreed with PA7 about the importance of dialects and ethnic languages. HE5 focuses on the right of the clients to choose the language they want to talk because in psychotherapy settings the therapist needs to examine the patient to understand his/her problems and some issues are expressed only in one's mother tongue, especially traumatic experiences.

HE5	"We have a team of 7 mediators who speak about 15 languages. We do not only use vehicular languages but also give importance to dialects and so-called ethnic languages because the guidelines tell us that the language must be chosen by the patient. We follow people who often come from the Mediterranean Sea trade, so most come from Africa, and we have languages such as Bambara or Pidgin English". (My translation)
HE6	"Communication takes place in the vehicular languages English, French, Arabic and Portuguese". (My translation)

Figure 7. Vehicular and ethnic languages

Since HE6 affirms that the centre uses mostly vehicular languages, he admits that workers are sufficient for the communication, and they do not need linguistic experts. However, he also adds that if they have to deal with sensitive and delicate issues in that case interpreters and mediators are needed. HE5 does not think that the work of humanitarian employees only is sufficient in psychotherapy settings because they need someone who shares a similar background to the patient, they listen to in order to do their job better:

HE5	"So, our work is a linguistic work because the clinical centre deals with foreign and humanitarian support and psychotherapy, therefore, both for immigrants and for refugees and asylum seekers. We give a lot of importance to language and […] we use people who not only know the patient's language but also share a similar background to the patient we listen to". (My translation)
HE6	"The operators speak main vehicular languages, and the vast majority of asylum seekers are fluent in at least one vehicular language, so the operators are sufficient. Then, for delicate and sensitive issues, it happens that the register to be addressed is that of one's mother tongue, therefore, interpreters and mediators are needed, although mediators are difficult to find". (My translation)

Figure 8. Humanitarian workers and linguistic experts

3.4.2 The role of interpreters and mediators in humanitarian organisations

As stated in the previous section, HE6 affirms that his organisation does not hire mediators and interpreters because each humanitarian employee is fluent in one of the vehicular languages among French, English, Portuguese and Arabic. Thus, there is the assumption that languages are not a priority for humanitarian organisations and language issues do not have a high profile within organisations. In fact, PA7 highlights that "most humanitarian organisations do not speak to people the language they know". Languages are generally treated as a low priority among organisations (Crack et al. 2016) despite the fact that "if you are going to provide lifesaving you need to be able to understand people in need in the language and format they understand", as PA7 specifies.

In humanitarian organisations mediation and interpretation appear to be overlooked and underfunded and interpreters and mediators are figures that are usually underestimated and not well considered although their fundamental role. The interpreters and mediators interviewed agreed on the fact that their role at the beginning was not recognised by the organisations for which they work, but they add that recently have started to be recognised:

M/I2	"Now my figure is recognised by my organisation even though we had initial difficulties. We have several projects where my figure is needed and is increasingly recognised. It is slowly being consolidated both in MSF and in the other organisations and also in the public context. But there is still a long way to go". (My translation)
M3	"No, it is not recognised. Let's say that the figure of the mediator is much more developed in Italy. Italy invented this figure in the late 1990s and early 2000s, whereas in other countries it is very rare to find a mediator. Now they are also starting to hire such figures in Greece or other countries. […] In Italy, this figure existed initially because the state did not know the foreigner well, also because Italy does not have a colonial past like France, England or Germany. Today it is mainly used to get to know the foreigner and reassure the migrant". (My translation)
M4	"I speak for my organisation and I also report on other experiences. This role was a bit unclear and undefined at the beginning, but over time it became clear. Mine is very recognised by my organisation, I am held in high esteem and there is great recognition. Any team humanitarian organisations are made up of professionals who are supported by the mediator: psychologist and mediator, lawyer and mediator, educator and mediator, and even within the immigration office there are mediators working". (My translation)
HE5	"The figure of mediator is little recognised as a profession". (My translation)
PA7	"Most humanitarian organisations don't speak to people the language they know. If you are going to provide lifesaving you need to be able to

	understand people in need in the language and format they understand […]. We are working very hard with organisations and we are spending a lot of our time on advocacy trying to explain to organisations but with really low success".

Figure 9. The role of interpreters and mediators

As is possible to read in Figure 9, the term "role" is accompanied by words like "unclear", "confusion", "change" and "substantial". These nouns and adjectives highlight that there is still confusion about the role of mediator and interpreter both at an institutional level and between organisations. M/I2 admits the initial difficulties within his organisations but despite that recently he has become to be recognised as a fundamental figure. M4 also defines his role as unclear and undefined at the start but now, as M3 says, it is mostly used to get to know the foreigner and reassure the migrant. Overall, interpreting and mediating appear to be recognised as considerable activities, despite the confusion that still exists around this figure.

M/I2 reports that the role of mediators and interpreters is beginning to be recognised but "there is still long way to go". As interpretation and mediation are not clearly defined at an institutional level, I asked the stakeholders to define their role and in particular, what the main skills and differences between interpreters and mediators were.

M/I2	"There must be a clear distinction between interpreter and mediator. The mediator must have knowledge of intercultural communication. We are not talking about comparing two figures, but simply that the mediator must be more aware of his or her role and have cultural knowledge of the people he or she is supporting. Having intercultural knowledge in the context in which one works is essential and not necessary in interpreting. However, the mediator is also an interpreter in certain situations". (My translation)
M3	"The interpreter has just to interpret, instead, the mediator is a facilitator because you have to, let's say, be the first link between migrants when they arrive in Italy and the rest of society. You have to facilitate integration, help them understand society and how it works. The mediator is a social

	worker for foreigners, he is a link between administration and authority and migrants". (My translation)
M4	"To interpret is to make a translation, whereas the job of a mediator is to be an interpreter but mediating between two cultures and two aspects, therefore, it is not just a translation but has a different approach". (My translation)
HE6	"Pure interpreting does not take into account a number of aspects related to the perception of the problem, people's feelings and also authority. Many times, the professional poses in a position of power in relation to the interlocutor and for people who come from difficult situations and have a difficult relationship with authority this is not the best. We need more mediators, even if they are difficult figures to find, I realise that it is also a utopian figure to think that the mediator is the key to achieving the understanding of the other that we cannot have". (My translation)

Figure 10. Differences between interpreters and mediators

Generally, they agree on the fact that mediating and interpreting are different roles. The mediator is a facilitator and, as HE6 states, is "a social worker and a utopian figure because is the key to achieving the understanding of the other". In fact, M3 underlines that the mediator is "the first link between migrants when they arrive in Italy and the rest of the society". The terms that often recur in the text with the word "mediator" are "big brother", "educator" and "key to understanding". Therefore, this figure is seen as the first source of help for people that arrive in a new country, in this case, Italy.

Mediation not only involves translation, but cultural knowledge is valuable. On the basis of this, M4 provides some examples of the mediator's tasks, such as "facilitate integration, help to understand the society and how it works". The role of the mediator is based on assistance, while the interpreter focuses on interpretation services (TWB 2017) and his/her main goal is to convey meaning as accurately as possible. Instead, the mediator intervenes in the conversation and tries to build a constructive relationship based on trust. In spite of the main differences, in humanitarian contexts the interpreter and mediator tend to have similar characteristics, they are both considered intercultural agents (Barsky 1996). In fact, M/I2 recognises that in these settings the mediator develops the

interpreter's task because they both verbally transfer a message from one language to another and they need to mediate between sociocultural conventions.

As stated in previous sections the role of humanitarian interpreters and mediators has recently begun to be recognised as a profession by humanitarian organisations. Since interpreting and mediating is only just starting to be professionalised, few training courses are present and generally, the job is performed by untrained individuals (Bancroft 2015). In fact, not all the interviewees have a formal training. For example, M/I1 and M3 do not have formal qulification. Instead, they were educated by the organisation for which they work. On the other hand, M4 and M/I2 are trained and have a certificate in the profession. M4 took a mediation course, and M/I2 took a professional course for intercultural mediators and then he attended a university course.

M/I1	"I do not have any training. I met a girl from Cooperativa Eucrante and she told me I could start doing this work right away, I didn't know it existed as a job". (My translation)
M/I2	"I have done various things. A professional course for intercultural mediator, then a recognised course in qualification, and recently I also did a university course. Training is fundamental, you cannot improvise, also because there can be damage". (My translation)
M3	"When I started as a mediator they did not ask for a degree in cultural mediation, it was enough to be resident in Italy and to know well the culture and language of the country of origin. Before they would take any person of foreign origin but now, they ask for training and this is better because you have to have certain level of experience and formation to start this job". (My translation)
M4	"I did a course in mediation. In the beginning, there were few courses now there are many, especially online. […] Training is the ABC of this type of work, having the training you can do it in the best way. Without it, you can damage the mediation process". (My translation)

Figure 11. Training

Although not everyone has formal training, all the interviewees agreed that training is "the ABC of this type of work" and improvisation is forbidden because there can be damage in the mediation process. In addition, M3 complained that some years ago this profession was not recognised and for this reason, there were few courses. When organisations hired a linguistic expert there was no need for trainings, it was sufficient to have lived in Italy for a couple of years, to know the culture and the language of origin well. Adequate training is considered invaluable in order to face the challenging settings of humanitarian contexts (Schider 2016). In this regard, humanitarian interpreters and mediators usually work in a fragile environment including conflict and post-conflict contexts, refugee camps and urban refugee settings. Furthermore, they may also work to support migration problems and to help foster refugees and asylum seekers' inclusion in the host society. In order to be able to work in these unstable settings, they need to develop different strategies, adapt to different situations and create a dialogue with people in need. They have to act as language facilitators and help to ensure that all parties' interests and points of view are understood.

The humanitarian operators interviewed think that there is a gap in training for interpreters and mediators too. HE5 underlines that there is varied training because there does not exist uniformity in training courses. For this reason, the organisation provides basic education on the topic they deal with. It is felt that untrained workers not only damage the conversation and the relation with the client, but they can also have difficulties relating with the organisation's humanitarian workers. In fact, HE6 reports that is difficult to relate with people who have been selected as mediators but who have a low average level of education without a training course. However, HE6 also found a positive point of view in working with unprofessional mediators and interpreters. He underlines that unprofessional people put the person receiving the message at ease, more than professionals. This happens because professionals tend to acquire an authorial position with respect to the client.

HE5	"The great dilemma of those who work in the humanitarian field is that the figure of the mediator is little recognised and this implies a huge gap on training. So, mediators often have very varied training because there are training courses organised by individual organisations. When we

	recruit, we also assess the training but then we ask them to participate and train on topics that we deal with, for example, gender violence, sexual and labour exploitation, the code of ethics, mental health and psychological issues". (My translation)
HE6	"There are advantages and disadvantages in working with professionals or not. It is difficult to relate to people who have been selected but who have a low average level of education and have gone through or are going through the same difficulties in integration as those being received. Difficulty in achieving fairness in communication. […] From the other side, is very calming the fact that they present themselves in a less formal manner than the professional puts one at ease, whereas seeing the professional creates awe precisely because of the relationship with the authority." (My translation).

Figure 12. Dealing with non-professionalised workers

3.4.2.1 Advantages and disadvantages of working with linguistic experts

Interpreters and mediators are essential to avoid misunderstanding and to help people from different cultures to understand each other, as affirms HE5. Indeed, HE6 agreed that linguistic experts help to solve complicated issues and overcome barriers. However, the humanitarian workers add that there are also some disadvantages that sometimes prevent them from doing their job properly. As was reported in the previous section, HE6 complained the fact that is difficult to work with untrained people because they can damage the interview session. In addition, HE6 admits that he prefers to work with mediators because interpreters do not take into account the perception of the problem and people's feelings. Another disadvantage reported by HE5 is that psychotherapy sessions take place in individual settings with the therapist because the patient is very vulnerable and can have problems talking with a third person present, especially if the mediator is from a different ethnic group.

HE5	"The advantages are all those listed so far, figures who share the same background as the patient are essential to avoid misunderstandings and

	help the therapist to understand better. I am a great advocate of the presence of the mediator, but in fact in some cases it can be or become an impediment, at least in my experience it has happened that a long-term psychotherapy at some point became disengaged from mediation by the patient's will. In real psychotherapy, the processing psychotherapy takes place in an individual setting with the therapist. Of course, it all depends on situation to situation, it does not depend on the mediation per se but on the choice of the mediator whether he belongs to the same group or to different, neighbouring ethnic groups". (My translation)
HE6	"Working with interpreters and mediators help to solve some complicate issues and overcome boundaries that are present between two cultures. However, I have found disadvantages especially in interpreting because it does not take into account a number of aspects related to the perception of the problem, people's feelings and also authority […]. Other disadvantages come from the fact that they sometimes prevent us from doing our job well because they start talking about private things with the person, they tell their experience and when we make short speeches and their translation takes twice as long we realise that something is wrong. The lack of neutrality is definitely a problem". (My translation)

Figure 13. Advantages and disadvantages

Another difficulty that appears to affect working with interpreters and mediators is that they are often asylum seekers or refugees themselves and they share the same experience as the interlocutor with whom they are talking. In this case, they may converse about private issues without taking into consideration the interview session. Interpreters and mediators coming from the country of origin of the client are preferred by humanitarian organisations for different reasons. HE5 expresses her preference for external linguistic experts because in psychotherapy "you have to go deep to unveil the symptom and the suffering". In order to do so, body habits such as gesticulating, touching one's hair are fundamental and these actions are governed by cultural habits and values. HE6 adds that using interpreters and mediators from the same geographical and linguistic area of the

person brings linguistic advantages, in particular for minority languages, and creates a comfortable environment. Usually, seeing a person of one's own nationality is reassuring.

HE5	"Language is also language of the body, of thought, of habits and values. There are body techniques that are the habits with which one carries one's body, gesticulating, touching one's hair, these are things that are important in a psychological setting. If the patient is from a different culture, the therapist can misunderstand, and so can the mediator if he/she is from the same culture as the therapist. An Italian interpreter or mediator has difficulty grasping all the nuances of an expression that is embedded in another culture, but not only the idioms that a good interpreter may be familiar with, but we are talking about what the language covers, the indirect messages. In psychotherapy you have to go deep to unveil the symptom, the suffering, then in the humanitarian field you have to go and talk about very painful situations, rape, abuse. You have to understand and comprehend what is said and what is not said, and that is why it is important for us that the nuances of language are perceived by someone who is native and who knows the original language". (My translation)
HE6	"Interpreters or mediators are usually foreigners and are from the same geographical and linguistic area as the person. One of the disadvantages is that it is difficult to relate to people who have a low average level of education and have gone through or are going through the same difficulties in integration that the received persons are going through. There are disadvantages even when the interpreters have a more substantial education because they place themselves in a position of power and this puts the interlocutor in a position of awe and what we are interested in is that people understand what what we are talking about. Of course, there are also linguistic advantages because with the interpreter speaking the mother tongue of the interlocutor it is first of all easier to understand and get the message understood, then usually the interviewee feels more comfortable. Seeing a person of one's own nationality 'from the

	other on the 'other side', i.e., on the side of authority, is very reassuring". (My translation)

Figure 14. Local and non-local linguistic experts

3.4.3 Challenges of humanitarian interpreters and mediators

One of the major aims of this study is to identify the challenges and the responsibilities which interpreters and mediators face in humanitarian contexts. Before going deep into the research, I would like to present the humanitarian settings in which the interpreters and mediators interviewed work. The stakeholders work for four different types of organisations: one Italian local organisation, Cooperativa Eucrante, two NGOs namely Sos Mediterranee and Medicine Sans Frontiers and one IGO which is UNHCR. Besides, they perform many tasks and are employed in different settings such as legal settings, healthcare settings and social services. The employees that works for the Italian agencies, namely M/I1 works in reception centres which offer hospitality as International Protection at Government Reception Centres. During the period that migrants are hosted, the workers accompany them in legal settings, such as courts for refugee status trials or to administrative offices for bureaucratic issues. The interpreters and mediators that work for NGOs and the IGO have also worked in administrative offices, police headquarters and prefectures. M/I2 has worked in healthcare settings too because he works for Médecins Sans Frontières, whose primary aim is to provide medical and healthcare assistance to migrants in need. People escaping their country of origin by irregular routes may have suffered extreme forms of violence and abuse and they are exposed to great danger. The main place where M/I2 developed interpreting and mediating skills is on board for the search and rescue project in the Mediterranean Sea, as did M3 and M4. Working in this unstable environment implies many responsibilities because interpreters and mediators have to calm the people on board, proceed to the identification of migrants, deal with authorities and provide healthcare assistance. After the first emergency aid, people arriving from the Mediterranean Sea are often sent to mental healthcare settings like psychotherapeutic centres to deal with the traumatic experience they have suffered.

M/I1	Cooperativa Eucrante; "administrative offices, courts, refugee status trials". (My translation)

M/I2	MSF; “first aid, administrative offices, on board”. (My translation)
M3	Sos Mediterranee; “social services, administration, police headquarters and prefectures, on board”. (My translation).
M4	UNHCR; “judicial authorities, finance courts, on board”. (My translation)

Figure 15. Environment

After having identified the contexts in which these linguistic experts work, I asked them about the main challenges that their roles present. The answers were different but in general, the major problems concern neutrality, communication, interpreting in legal settings and the role of the mediator and interpreter. In particular, M/I1 reports communication problems especially when people talk in different dialects from the one she speaks. M/I1 was the only one that commented on this problem, the other stakeholders cover all the languages with Arabic and English as stated in section *3.4.1.* Another challenge presented by M/I1 is the responsibility to work in court settings and to be neutral. Neutrality is a problem that HE6 also noticed in interpreters and mediators during interviews and meetings. Moreover, M3 complained that trust can be one of the major problems for interpreters and mediators because without trust it is impossible for linguistic experts to help people in need. Finally, M/I2 and M4 agreed that the confusion that stands around their professional role is quite challenging. The role of interpreters and mediators is not clear especially at an institutional level and this presents difficulties once they work with other humanitarian staff.

M/I1	“One problem could be communication, but before the meeting, I call people and we have a chat on the phone. If they can understand me, I accept the appointment, if not I don't. Another problem is working in court. There is a lot of responsibility there, and I have to be a computer, if you tell me A I have to say A because, otherwise, if something goes wrong, the interpreter gets blamed. Another problem is also being neutral. The people we work with have difficult experiences behind them and they are often very sad stories”. (My translation)

M/I2	"Mediators can be trained, have skills and abilities to perform their duty as it is required, but there is a lack of total training of operators. The big difficulty is that there is little knowledge of the figure of the mediator on the part of the operators with whom the mediators work, and there is often confusion about the role between interpreter and mediator, then there is the all-hands-on-deck especially in reception centres. Another difficulty is that it is not very clear to mediators what the fundamental objectives are, namely that our role is to relieve people. Another difficulty is that our role is not clear at institutional level". (My translation)
M3	"This work presents many challenges and one of them is trust. If an environment of trust is not formed, the work, any kind of work, is not done properly. Sometimes it is also difficult to gain respect, but this case concerns people who want to use the mediator for their own interests". (My translation)
M4	"There are many and one is to understand what the role of the mediator is and what it represents. One is a mediator or an interpreter but depending on the activity he or she performs the role changes. If one performs a role for a humanitarian organisation one is identified as an operator who wants to help and support. If you perform the job of mediator for ASL or ASP you are an operator who supports the health aspect. If you perform work for the police or the mobile squad you are identified as the person who is investigating the police target. Here you create confusion both for the person receiving mediation and for the worker because you create confusion about the role". (My translation)
HE6	"One of the major difficulties is that the interpreter and mediator are never neutral". (My translation)

Figure 16. Challenges

Another challenge agreed upon by the majority of the interviewees is the ability to work in high-stress situations, deal with emotional stress and be able to communicate effectively under pressure. M/I1 finds it very stressful working in court settings because the interpreter and the mediator have the responsibility to enforce the rights of those who

cannot communicate. Instead, M4 and M/I2 worked in a search and rescue program in the Mediterranean Sea and underlined that being on board is a very stressful setting because they face something they do not know, they do not know people's needs and they have the responsibility to calm people down giving short and clear messages in a very confused context. In order to face this problem, M/I2 said that training is fundamental.

M/I1	"Yes, in environments such as courts". (My translation)
M/I2	"Often, always. I worked in search and rescue in the Mediterranean and I had a key role. I was the first person to talk to the people on the overcrowded boat, the first person who has to approach them in order to calm them down and make sure that any kind of incident is avoided, to give short, clear messages. It is a stressful situation. Stress management is fundamental. Mediators are trained and have psychological supervision. I have worked with victims of torture, violence, survivors of shipwrecks. We do training and I train people because it is fundamental to know how to deal with stress". (My translation)
M4	"Yes, always because anyway you go to face something and you don't know what you are going to find. This morning 250 people are arriving and you already start to understand nationalities, if they are vulnerable, and situations they have traveled in so there is always a provocation on which you go to face and what you are facing. You don't go to the factory where there is the tested machine but you go to meet people in need and you don't know what their needs are and what they have faced. You can find a shipwreck in front of you, victims of torture that I want to tell you about, the particular vulnerable case that needs psychological support so every day is a new challenge". (My translation)

Figure 17. Stress

Working with minors is another problem listed by the interviewees. In humanitarian contexts, many unaccompanied minors find themselves in difficult situations, and three out of four interviewees have worked with children. M3 and M4 underline that the main difficulty when working with minors is gaining their trust. They are more likely not to

trust anyone because they are afraid and scared. In addition, explaining information to them is more complicated because they do not understand things like adults. They need information explained in an easier and clearer way. On the other hand, M/I2 clarifies that sometimes it is more complicated to talk with traumatised adults rather than minors.

M/I2	"Yes, I have worked with minors and it depends on the experience of the people, sometimes it is more complicated with adults who come from traumatic experiences". (My translation)
M3	"Yes, it has happened to me often. Children are a special category, if with an adult you can trust them more or less easily, you can have a discussion between adults and explain things to them easily of course, with a child it's much more difficult and you can't explain things to them like an adult because you have to explain to them with your senses. You can also explain hours and hours if they don't have trust they don't listen to you and they are much more vulnerable you have to go carefully". (My translation).
M4	"Yes, many children arrive by sea and very often they are unaccompanied minors. Talking to them can sometimes be difficult so there are often psychologists to assist". (My translation)

Figure 18. Working with minors

As outlined in the previous section, the role of interpreters and mediators in humanitarian contexts is demanding and complicated, but the reasons why people choose to work in such an environment are multiple. I asked the interviewees why they chose this job and four of them said to help people. M/I1 decided to become a mediator by chance; she helped the people of her community with bureaucratic issues and one day she met a staff member from Cooperativa Eucrante and she began to work for them. On the other hand, M/I2 decided to study to become a mediator because he was interested not only in helping people but also in developing intercultural communication. M3 also decided to become a mediator because he was helped when he arrived in Italy and he wanted to do the same.

M/I1	“I met a girl in an office in Rimini and she told me I could do the interpreter. […] I liked the idea to help with what I can do in my own small way”. (My translation)
M/I2	“I wanted to work in a humanitarian field and help to understand intercultural communication”. (My translation)
M3	“I started doing this job because I had the idea of helping other people as I was also helped when I arrived”. (My translation)
M4	“Mine was both a random choice and a choice to help others. I found myself accidentally helping people that needed to do paperwork. Then it was my choice to make it a profession to help people. (My translation)

Figure 19. Reasons to become interpreters and mediators

3.4.4 Responsibilities of humanitarian interpreters and mediators

As stated in previous sections, interpreting and mediating in humanitarian contexts involve many duties and the stakeholders provide some examples of responsibilities that they consider primary concerns. M/I1 finds working in courts a demanding job and very responsible because “there is a lot of responsibility in a sentence not said well”. During court appeals clients need to convince the judge to give clients refugee status and sometimes when the trial goes wrong, they blame the interpreter/mediator. In addition, M/I2 and M3 affirm that making people independent is the main responsibility that they have. To make people independent means explaining how the country works, the administrative procedures, health facilities and asylum procedures. Finally, M4 finds the main responsibility to be respecting the code of conduct.

M/I1	“There are many responsibilities. I notice this a lot when I accompany people to court appeals. If something goes wrong 80% blame the mediator because they say: "I came in I didn't understand anything, the mediator only spoke English and he didn't understand me, I said that and he interpreted it that way". There is a lot of responsibility in a sentence not said well, in fact before going to the committee we go over the

	sentences so that in front of the judge it won't be my problem". (My translation)
M/I2	"The greatest responsibility is to make people independent. The mediator must relieve people, give them the basic knowledge so that they can be independent". (My translation)
M3	"It depends on the context. If you are a mediator in reception centers, the mediator has to explain how it works because when a person arrives in Italy doesn't know the laws, customs, etc., so we have to explain how this country works, explain the various procedures with the administrations to apply for asylum, stay, health facilities, this in first reception centers. In other centers such as refugee centers we have to accompany people to apply for jobs and resumes. Those who work in detention centers need to be explained how to apply for asylum and appeal to the court. In rescue ship contexts it's totally different, it's a mix of everything and you are the first person they meet whom they have to trust because it's a special context". (My translation)
M4	"The main responsibility lies in respecting the code of conduct". (My translation)

Figure 20. Responsibilities

3.4.4.1 The code of ethics

Humanitarian interpreters and mediators work in unstable environments and the challenges that this setting presents are multiple. In order to develop the job in a professional and ethical way, rules and guidelines to respect are needed. In fact, codes of ethics have been created by governments and organisations to address issues such as roles, boundaries, cultures and how to manage the communication flow (Bancroft 2005). Indeed, M3 and M4 consider codes of ethics as fundamental in developing activities in humanitarian contexts; impartiality and neutrality are invaluable in order to be respected as a humanitarian worker. Humanitarian action is guided by humanity, neutrality and impartiality which imply on verbally translating the message without influencing the discourse with his/her opinions (Crezee et al. 2011).

Unlike M3 and M4, M/I1 reports the impossibility to follow a code of ethics closely, in particular the principle of neutrality because "we are human". Humanitarian settings have a high emotional potential, the clients are vulnerable and have often suffered extremely traumatic experiences (Di Carlo 2021). In addition, it often happens that the interpreter/mediator and the refugee or asylum seeker have shared the same experience and for the linguistic expert it can be difficult to respect the guidelines when they talk about their personal stories. This example is reported by HE6 who noticed that neutrality is one of the biggest difficulties of interpreters and mediators because they want to add their own experiences to the client: "We realise that the interpreter is not neutral at all. When we express a concept, he adds a lot of his own, he adds his own experience. We say 10-second sentences and they speak for 5 minutes".

M/I2 specifies that the rules to respect are given by the organisations for which they work. As mediation is not a registered profession, the imperative principles that they have to follow are the same as those for humanitarian workers. HE5 also mentioned that mediation is not a profession and for this reason, it does not have a deontological code like the other professions. HE5 thinks that a code of ethics is a central tool for organisations and mediators, but she identifies the major problem not in neutrality or impartiality, but in the impossibility to punish those who violate the code.

M/I1	"I did not know about the existence of rules before I did the training course within the cooperative. I think these rules are useful. […] At first, we were told to be neutral and distant with the person we were talking to, but I couldn't do it. […] I remember an episode when a girl told me a very sad story and I started crying. In the environment I work in, it is difficult to keep the distance because you are human and wan to help people". (My translation)
M/I2	"Ethics is fundamental in the environment where I work. There is still no code because the mediator is not a registered profession. We have imperative principles and they are subject to the code of ethics of organisations we work with. It is very important to follow imperative principles. […] Neutrality and impartiality are mandatory". (My translation).

M3	"Ethics is fundamental. It is always possible to follow code of ethics because otherwise you cannot be a mediator. You always have to be impartial and do not take a side, neutral and rigid in order to be respected but at the same time you need to be sensitive". (My translation)
M4	"Compliance with the code of conduct is fundamental. In my opinion, if you respect it you can overcome all the difficult moments. […] To be impartial and neutral is important as all rules are important. You can't do this job without impartiality and neutrality". (My translation)
HE5	"The code of ethics is fundamental for us, is one of the central tools for organisations. Recognised professions have a code of ethics. For the social worker, the psychologist, the doctor it is not called code of ethics but deontological code and if you violate it you go against your ordine which can apply sanctions. The problem with the code for mediators is not so much enforcing it but the most fragile element is that the code of ethics for mediators has no value, it is not legal. For professionals it can be the end of a profession, they can get to disbar you while for mediators there is no consequence, if you violate it, I send you out of the organisation but the next day you can work in another organisation […]". (My translation)
HE6	"Certainly, in their training they are taught the code of ethics to follow, but it is not always adhered to. I realise that neutrality is one of the biggest difficulties. We realise that the interpreter is not neutral at all. When we express a concept, he adds a lot of his own, he adds his own experience. We say 10-second sentences and they speak for 5 minutes. This is not good because then it leaves no freedom for the person receiving the message to process the concept". (My translation)

Figure 21. The code of ethics

3.4.4.2 Trust

Through interviews and meetings, the interpreter and the mediator have the responsibility to create a relationship of trust in order to establish a comfortable environment and, consequently, effective communication. The humanitarian worker has to know what the needs of the newcomers are in order to help them, for example, whether they need

healthcare assistance, administration practices or information about the refugee status. In addition, migrants have to tell the interpreter/mediator about their experiences and the reasons why they fled their country of origin. Sometimes these stories are personal; they have worries, fears and this can complicate interviews and meetings. For example, M/I1 reports that she talks to girls who have been trafficked and lived through traumatic experiences and she has to create a comfortable environment so that they will open up. M3 and M4 also report that trust is basically the first thing that interpreters and mediators need to gain.

Due to COVID-19, meetings and interviews were carried out remotely for some time and this can cause difficulty to create a comfortable environment. M/I1 experienced it and she affirms that is very difficult to gain trust in front of a computer because people are generally frustrated, nervous and agitated and it is almost impossible for the mediator to gain their trust.

M/I2 declares that trust is even more important in healthcare settings. He adds that not only is trust between the patient and the professional or the linguistic expert vital, but also between the interpreter/mediator and the professional, especially in psychotherapeutic settings. The service provider is afraid that the third person may influence the conversation and this also happens in court settings during refugee status interviews because authorities may think that interpreters and mediators might embellish the applicant's statement.

M/I1	"Sometimes I have to treat girls who have been trafficked and I have to create a welcoming environment. They need trust because if they don't, they won't open up. You have to make them feel at home and comfortable and give them security. You have to prepare them mentally and make them gain confidence because their story is quite powerful. They don't open up right away, sometimes it takes several meetings. […] I experienced distrust during Covid because we did a lot of online work with zoom, and it's comfortable but it's not like in-person. In-person, I can get people to talk more, people are agitated and nervous and online you can't create an environment of trust like in-person". (My translation)

M/I2	"It is fundamental. […] The mediator and interpreter are key figures in building trust with the patient, there are techniques that can be developed so that the mediator can quickly gain trust with the patient. It is also important to have trust with the professional or consultant we work with. Without a trusting relationship we cannot do our work and provide a service. […] Distrust can happen especially with people who have made it through and feel strong and see you as someone who wants to stand in their way of achieving their goals. In fact, before talking to a person they must agree that I am the person who facilitates communication and does not hinder". (My translation)
M3	"It is the first thing the mediator does, to gain trust because without trust the person does not open up, does not trust you and does not tell you what they have to tell you and the important things. There are cases of vulnerability that could help in the asylum application to get it and if they don't tell you, you can't advise them to say this or that so the first thing to do is to establish trust. Gaining trust is the number one goal such that you get them to tell you about the person's journey or if they have problems. When people pass through Libya 90% have suffered violence and this violence or problems can help them get asylum or humanitarian protection so if they don't tell you this you can't refer them to an administration, to a hospital and you can't help them. However, if you have this relationship of trust, they can tell you certain things and you can advise them better and avoid certain problems because they listen to you and whatever you tell them they listen to you. For example, in the centers there are often fights, riots, and the mediator is the only one who must and can avoid these situations. [...] It has happened to me that people don't trust me, but they don't trust because they have other ideas in their heads and they use the mediator instead of listening to him". (My translation)

M4	"It is the first thing to be achieved. […] I experienced distrust but then I have always managed to make up for it". (My translation)

Figure 22.Trust

3.5 Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to underline that by analysing the interviews it is clear that the right to access information and to communicate is respected by humanitarian organisations mostly by using vehicular languages and not dialects or ethnic languages. In relation to that, it is possible to understand that languages may not be a primary concern for some humanitarian organisations, and this is seen also in the recruitment of linguistic experts, which are figures that are not always requested. However, the six stakeholders interviewed highlight that nowadays their role is beginning to be considered fundamental by the organisations, even if there is still confusion. Indeed, mediation is still not considered a profession and for this reason, there is no uniformity in training courses and a code of ethics does not exist for this specific employment.

From the interviews it also emerged that the major challenges that interpreters and mediators find while working in this context are related to the emotional sphere and not the linguistic one. Working in high-stress situations, the notion of neutrality and dealing with minors are identified as the main problems. In addition, although mediation is still not considered a profession, humanitarian interpreters and mediators have many responsibilities and one of them is to be the voice that speaks for their client's mind.

Discussions and conclusions

In this thesis, I have investigated the role that humanitarian interpreters and mediators play in providing assistance to asylum seekers and refugees through communication in the context of the current situation in Europe, particularly in Italy. In addition, I explored the function that communication and languages have in humanitarian agencies, and as a consequence, the relationship between interpreters and mediators and the organisations for which they work. Finally, I examined the challenges and responsibilities these figures have in highly stressful and emotional contexts. In order to do so, I conducted research by interviewing language experts who work in humanitarian agencies so as to provide some evidence for my thesis.

Major findings and limitations of the study

Thanks to my study of humanitarian interpreters and mediators' roles I had the opportunity to reflect on the work of those language experts who work for humanitarian organisations in emergency contexts. To be precise, the interviews with professionals working in the field enabled me to address my three research questions. The aim of this work was, in fact, first of all to investigate whether languages and communication are considered a priority in humanitarian organisation and, to explore the relationship that these organisations have with interpreters and mediators. Subsequently, I attempted to identify the responsibilities that language experts working in the field have, and the challenges they face on a daily basis.

Returning to the first research question, it is possible to say that, as emerged from the interviews, communication is clearly perceived as an important issue for humanitarian organisations. These agencies respect and attempt to ensure migrants' right to access information and need to communicate as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948). However, one limitation in their perception of languages and their role is that they rely on major world languages used either as the L1 or as vehicular languages (Arabic, English, French) and not other languages including so-called ethnic languages and various language varieties. In fact, the majority of the interviewees work mostly with Arabic and English without taking into consideration language minorities. Compared to that, humanitarian organisations tend to not hire professional interpreters and mediators because humanitarian workers are fluent in vehicular languages such as English, French,

Arabic or Portuguese, as underlined by the humanitarian employee working for Centro Stranieri "Sanzio Togni". In this respect, I noticed that the right to access information and to communicate is respected by humanitarian organisations by using mostly vehicular languages.

As far as the second research question is concerned, the interviews showed that the figure of interpreters and mediators has recently begun to be recognised by humanitarian organisations although there is still confusion and unclearness around their role and the activities they perform. The interviewees explained the difference between interpreters and mediators, which is still not clear at the institutional level. The mediator is considered a facilitator, a social worker able to achieve the understanding of the other, and his/her task is to facilitate integration and build a relationship with clients. On the other hand, the interpreter verbally translates the message as accurately as possible. In humanitarian contexts, the role of interpreters and mediators tends to mix because linguistic professionals are expected not only to interpret accurately but also to solve problems, explain concepts and solve cultural misunderstandings (Bancroft 2015). The reason why there is still confusion around the role of humanitarian interpreters and mediators is because the definition linked to humanitarian interpreting and mediating is quite recent. Interpreting and mediating in a refugee context is a practice that has for a long time been invisible to Interpreting Studies (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018).

As a result of the migratory movement and in particular the massive influx of Syrian refugees to Europe in recent years, this practice has become to be increasingly in demand, even though it has not been given specific attention in terms of research, status and training (Gentile 1997). In fact, due to limited training (Footit et al. 2014) the majority of the stakeholders interviewed do not have proper training or qualifications but just bilingual competencies. There are few universities that provide higher education options for humanitarian interpreters and mediators: in Europe, there exists the degree program organised by the Department of Interpretation and Translation of the University of Bologna and the Faculté de Traduction et d'Interprétation of the University of Geneva and the project developed by the University of Glasgow. In general, humanitarian organisations such as Translator Without Borders, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have developed their own

training courses covering the fundamental skills of interpretation and professional ethics (Fassetta et al. 2018).

The lack of professionalism and formal training may not only damage the conversation between the interpreter/mediator and the client but also make relations with the humanitarian staff difficult. However, what surprises me is that the interviews also revealed the positive aspects of working with untrained workers. For example, it is believed by the humanitarian employee working for Centro Stranieri "Sanzio Togni" that untrained interpreters and mediators put people receiving the message at ease, while trained interpreters/mediators tend to acquire an authoritarian position. Although working with untrained workers can provide benefits, the majority of the interviewees agreed that training is the ABC of interpreting and mediating in humanitarian contexts because their job is highly skilled and highly specific. To sum up, the role of humanitarian interpreters and mediators is beginning to be recognised and professionalised as it is in great demand because it helps humanitarian organisations to provide access to information and to communicate with asylum seekers and refugees. Nevertheless, two of the humanitarian workers interviewed thought that the work of interpreters and mediators provides not just benefits during the conversation but also disadvantages. For example, when the linguistic experts belong to the same ethnic group or share the same experience as the interlocutor, they tend to converse about private issues such as the intimate details of their life. The humanitarian employees reported the lack of neutrality of the third person involved in the conversation that may damage the dialogue, especially in psychotherapeutic environments.

By developing the third research question, there arose the issue that the main challenges faced by interpreters and mediators are emotional rather than linguistic. Humanitarian interpreters and mediators work mainly in four main contexts: the legal settings, such as judicial contexts, police stations and asylum hearings; healthcare settings (Fassetta et al. 2018) social services and search and rescue projects. In these environments interpreters and mediators find it very challenging working in high-stress situations and having to communicate under pressure. In addition, the general problem shared by the interviewees is the difficulty of creating a comfortable environment important to gain the trust of those you are talking to. Thus, creating an atmosphere of trust is essential to achieve confidentiality and encourage the newcomers to speak (UNHCR 2009). Another

challenge that interviewees face during their work is the difficulty of working with humanitarian staff because of the confusion that still exists about interpreters' and mediators' roles. As it is not clearly defined, the employees of the organisations are not sure about what are the main functions of these linguistic experts.

Finally, being neutral is conceived as one of the main problems during conversations. Neutrality is a principle set out in codes of ethics together with impartiality and humanity. Codes of ethics are made up of guidelines that interpreters and mediators need to respect. It is their responsibility to respect the rules written in the relevant code of ethics in order to carry out their job properly, but what emerged from the interviews is that humanitarian interpreting and mediating do not have any specific code of conduct to follow because is not considered as a profession. In fact, interpreters and mediators respect the same guidelines of the humanitarian employees dictated by the organisations for which they work (Moser-Mercer et al. 2014), but if they do not respect them, they cannot be punished for it. As stated before, such guidelines are essential for interpreters' and mediators' work, yet, the interpreting circumstances might make it difficult to take decisions following a code strictly (UNHCR 2009:11), especially in a humanitarian context. One of the interviewees underlined that it is not always possible to follow a code of ethics because "we are human". Thus, when interpreters and mediators share the same experiences as their clients, they are not always able to maintain the reqquired distance from them. In this case, there could be a tendency of the interpreter/mediator to allow his/her feelings to enter into the narration, particularly if they are refugees themselves.

Impartiality and neutrality are also difficult to respect when refugees and asylum seekers talk about their personal stories, which are usually traumatic and emotive. In Chapter Two, it was stated that people who hear traumatic and highly charged emotional material could suffer from various types of trauma at a psychological level and from syndromes such as burn-out, which includes symptoms such as disillusion, lack of motivation, apathy, loss of energy and frustration (Valero Garcés 2005). Despite that, none of the interpreters/mediators interviewed talked about traumatic situations or psychological consequences. Besides respecting a code of ethics, interpreters and mediators have the responsibility to enforce the rights of those who cannot communicate and make them independent. This means, explaining how the host country work, the

administrative and bureaucratic procedures and helping them to integrate into the new society.

In spite of the numerous themes discussed in this work, I would like to point out that this research may have two limitations. First, the results are extracted from a limited number of humanitarian organisations, and for this reason, the research is restricted to interpreters, mediators and humanitarian employees who work for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sos Mediterranee, The International Rescue Committee, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Cooperativa Eucrante and Centro Servizi per Stranieri "Sanzio Togni". An additional possible limitation of this study may be related to the fact that the respondents are mediators and just two of them are also interpreters. It is possible that the results that emerged from the interviews would have been different if more interpreters had been involved in the study. For instance, one of the challenges underlined by the interviewees is the difficulty to respect the principle of neutrality and this occurs because mediators need to establish a relationship of trust with interlocutors. It may be possible that if more interpreters had been interviewed the main problem emerging may not have been neutrality because their main activity is to convey the main message as accurately as possible. Another example is that the interviewees have identified their main responsibility as helping to make people independent, while interpreters are only in charge of verbally translating a message.

Implications and recommendations for future research

In the light of the findings of this study, I believe that the figure of interpreters and mediators plays a significant role not only in guaranteeing high-quality linguistic services but also in respecting human rights and dignity. For this reason, I deem it important to recognise the value of humanitarian interpreting and mediating as a profession, and, therefore, to carry out further research in this direction. Moreover, part of the findings of my research shed light on the training and education of these figures which I believe requires further investigation because there are few training courses in higher education organised by European universities. For this reason, humanitarian organisations provide training courses, but they do not provide uniformity in education among interpreters and mediators.

To conclude, I deem that research could do much to identify the importance that ethnic languages and language varieties have in emergency contexts such as the humanitarian ones. It shows that communicating effectively is vital although the knowledge about languages and people's linguistic repertoire is limited especially in humanitarian organisations. In addition, the research recognises the significant role of interpreters and mediators who work in humanitarian organisations and try to clarify the multiple tasks they perform. In the end, what emerge are the responsibilities and abilities interpreters and mediators need to have in order to carry out their job effectively, such as respect for codes of ethics, being able to work in a highly stressful environment and under pressure, and most importantly, being the "right" voice for those who cannot speak for themselves.

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APPENDIX

Sets of Questions in English

Sets of questions in English n. 1 (for interpreters and mediators)

1) Why did you decide to become an interpreter/mediator?
2) How long have you been working as an interpreter/mediator?
3) What kind of training did you undertake?
4) In your view, how important is training for interpreters and mediators?
5) What is or are your native language or languages and which other languages do you speak?
6) What are your working languages?
7) Who have you worked for? Where do you do your interpreting/mediating activity?
8) What do you think about codes of ethics?
9) Is there a code of ethics for your work?
10) Is it an important aspect of your profession?
11) Is it always possible respect the code of ethics?
12) How important are impartiality and neutrality? Are these possible to achieve?
13) How important is trust?
14) Have you ever experienced distrust from the newcomers involved in the interaction?
15) What are the main challenges and problems of your work?
16) What kind of responsibilities does your work have?
17) Have you ever felt under stress?
18) Have you ever had interviews with minors? Is it the same as with adults?
19) Do you think that your role is rightfully recognized?
20) What are the main differences between interpreters/mediators?

Sets of questions in English n. 2 (for humanitarian workers)

1) Which languages do you work with mostly?
2) Would the staff be sufficient to communicate with asylum seekers or is a language expert needed?

3) How are translators and interpreters/cultural mediators recruited?
4) Is it preferred using interpreters/mediators whose mother tongue is the same as the person interviewed or people that do not have the same mother tongue?
5) Does this organisation use professional interpreters and mediators or non-professional figures?
6) Are there any advantages and disadvantages to using mediators and interpreters? (i.e economic loss, obstacles to communication)
7) Do you have any draft codes of ethics to follow for mediators/interpreters or do they have to follow a general code of ethics?
8) In which settings do you usually work?

Sets of questions in English n. 3 (for program director of TWB)

- Why does language matter in humanitarian contexts?
- What approaches and tools has TWB employed to overcome linguistics' barriers?
- Do interpreters and mediators need to know dialects and language varieties, or is a lingua Franca sufficient?
- Do humanitarian organisations give the right importance to language, and, in consequence, to interpreters and mediators?

Sets of questions in Italian n. 1 (for interpreters and mediators)

1) Perchè ha deciso di diventare un interprete/mediatore?
2) Da quanto tempo lavora come interprete/mediatore?
3) Che tipo di formazione ha seguito?
4) Secondo lei, quanto è importante la formazione per gli interpreti/mediatori?
5) Qual è la sua lingua o le sue lingue madri e che altre lingue parla?
6) Quali sono le sue lingue di lavoro?
7) Dove ha svolto la sua attività di interpretazione/mediazione?
8) Cosa pensa dell'etica?
9) Esiste un codice etico per il suo lavoro?
10) È un aspetto importante della sua professione?
11) È sempre possibile rispettare il codice etico?

12) Quanto sono importanti l'imparzialità e la neutralità? Sono possibile da raggiungere?
13) Quanto è importante la fiducia?
14) Ha mai sperimentato sfiducia da parte della persona coinvolta nell'interazione?
15) Quali sono le principali sfide e problemi del suo lavoro?
16) Che tipo di responsabilità ha il suo lavoro?
17) Si è mai sentito sotto stress?
18) Ha mai avuto colloqui con minori? È lo stesso che con gli adulti?
19) Gli interpreti e i mediatori vengono considerati come fondamentali dalle organizzazioni internazionali?
20) Quali sono le principali differenze tra interprete e mediatore?

Sets of questions in Italian n. 2 (for humanitarian operators)

1) Con quali lingue l'organizzazione lavora principalmente?
2) Il personale del centro è sufficiente per comunicare con i richiedenti asilo o è necessario un esperto di lingue?
3) Come vengono reclutati i traduttori e gli interpreti/mediatori culturali?
4) Si preferiscono interpreti o mediatori che condividono la stessa lingua della persona intervistata o locali o persone che non condividono la stessa lingua?
5) L'organizzazione utilizza interpreti o mediatori professionisti o figure non professionali?
6) Esistono vantaggi e svantaggi nell'utilizzo di mediatori e interpreti? (ad esempio, perdita economica, ostacoli alla comunicazione)
7) Esiste una bozza di codice etico da seguire per i mediatori/interpreti o seguono un codice etico generale?
8) Dove svolge la sua attività di lavoro?

Sets of questions in Italian n. 3 (for program director of TWB)

1) Perché le lingue sono importanti nei contesti umanitari?

2) Quali sono gli approcci e gli strumenti utilizzati dalle TWB per superare le barriere linguistiche?

3) Gli interpreti e i mediatori devono conoscere i dialetti e le varietà linguistiche o è sufficiente una lingua franca?
4) Le organizzazioni umanitarie danno la giusta importanza alla lingua e, di conseguenza, agli interpreti e ai mediatori?

Interviews

Interview n. 1 – mediator/interpreter 1

1. Io sono un membro del gruppo di africani e ci incontriamo in chiesa. Una volta ho accompagnato mia sorella, una mia compaesana, a un ufficio a Rimini e lì ho conosciuto una ragazza che mi ha detto che potevo fare questa cosa come lavoro. Io non sapevo che esisteva, ha preso il mio numero e qualche mese dopo mi ha cercato un'operatrice di Eucrante e ho cominciato con loro. Mi piace molto questo lavoro, mi piace aiutare con quello che so fare nel mio piccolo.

2. Io lavoro come mediatrice dal 2018

3. Non ho nessun tipo di formazione. Ho conosciuto una ragazza che lavora per la cooperativa Eucrante e mi ha detto che potevo iniziare subito a lavorare.

4. Si è importante ma non sapevo neanche esistesse come lavoro.

5. Io vengo dalla Nigeria e parlo il pidgin English chiamato anche Brocon English che è un inglese un po' più sporco. Noi usiamo molto questa lingua tra di noi.

6. Io parlo tre lingue e lavoro con queste e sono l'italiano, l'inglese puro, quello britannico e il Brocon English.

7. Io lavoro per Eucrante e faccio diversi servizi come interviste, aiuto le persone con pratiche burocratiche negli uffici e anche nei tribunali, per esempio nei processi per il diritto allo status di rifugiati.

8. Non sapevo dell'esistenza delle lingue guida prima di aver fatto il corso di formazione all'interno della cooperativa. Penso che siano utili queste regole.

9. Si certo.

10. Si avere delle linee guida sicuramente aiuta.

11. Mi ricordo un episodio che quando una ragazza mi ha raccontato la sua storia, una storia molto triste, mi sono messa a piangere perché non sono rimasta indifferente. Da quel momento in poi ho provato ad essere più distante anche se c'è sempre del sentimento. Nell'ambiente in cui lavoro è difficile rispettare il codice etico perché sei umana e vuoi aiutare le persone in tutti i modi.

12. All'inizio ci hanno detto che dovevamo essere neutrali e distanti con la persona con cui parlavamo. All'inizio non riuscivo a fare questa cosa, e penso che non si possa essere totalmente imparziali e neutrali.

13. A volte devo trattare le ragazze che hanno fatto la tratta e bisogna creare un ambiente accogliente. Hanno bisogno della fiducia perché se no non si aprono. Bisogna farli sentire a casa e a loro agio, dargli sicurezza. Bisogna preparare mentalmente l'individuo e fargli acquisire sicurezza perché la loro storia è abbastanza potente. Non si aprono subito, a volte passano diversi incontri.

14. Si mi è capitato con il covid perché abbiamo fatto molto lavoro online con zoom, ed è comodo ma non è come in presenza. In presenza riesco a far parlare di più, le persone sono agitate e nervose e online non si riesce a creare un ambiente di fiducia come in presenza.

15. Un problema potrebbe essere quello comunicativo, però prima dell'incontro chiamo le persone e facciamo una chiacchierata per telefono. Se riescono a capirmi accetto l'appuntamento, se no no. Un altro problema è lavorare in tribunale. Lì ci sono molte responsabilità e io devo essere un computer, se mi dici A devo dire A perché se no poi se qualcosa va storto viene data la colpa all'interprete. Un altro problema è anche essere neutrali. Le persone con cui lavoriamo hanno esperienze difficili alle spalle e spesso sono storie molto tristi.

16. Ci sono tante responsabilità. Lo noto molto quando accompagno le persone a fare un appello in tribunale. Se qualcosa va storto l'80% dà la colpa al mediatore

perché dicono “io sono arrivata non capivo niente, il mediatore parlava solo inglese e non mi ha capito, io ho detto così e lui ha interpretato così”. C’è molta responsabilità in una frase non detta bene, infatti prima di andare in commissione ripassiamo bene le frasi così davanti al giudice non sarà un problema mio.

17. Si, negli ambienti come i tribunali

18. No, solo con gli adulti

Interview n. 2 – mediator/interpreter 2

1. Questa è una cosa abbastanza complessa. Volevo appunto lavorare in un ambito umanitario e soprattutto ci tenevo. Quando ho deciso anche di studiare mediazione se ne parlava poco a quei tempi di civiltà, c’era una tensione politica e sociale e per vari motivi ritenevo che una figura come quella del mediatore potesse aiutare a comprendere e aiutare una comunicazione interculturale.

2. Circa 12 anni.

3. Ho fatto varie cose. Un corso professionale per mediatore interculturale, quindi un corso riconosciuto nell’abilitazione e ultimamente ho fatto anche un corso universitario.

4. La formazione è fondamentale, non ci si può improvvisare anche perché ci possono essere danni.

5. Io parlo arabo.

6. Arabo e inglese. Con l’inglese faccio più l’interprete.

7. Io lavoro con Médecins Sans Frontières e principalmente lavoro a bordo delle navi di salvataggio, nei punti di primo aiuto e negli uffici.

8. L’etica è fondamentale nell’ambiente dove lavoro.

9. Abbiamo dei principi etici, non esiste ancora un codice, la mia non è una professione riconosciuta, non esiste un albo. Il fatto che non abbiamo un codice deontologico non vuol dire che non esistono principi imperativi, bisogna lavorare sul codice etico e questo va in parallelo con il riconoscimento ufficiale della professione. In ambito sanitario come principi siamo sottoposti al codice deontologico con i professionisti e l'organizzazione con cui lavoriamo.

10. Si ho fatto formazione su questo. È imprescindibile per fare questo lavoro
11. Si perché se no non si potrebbe lavorare in questo ambiente.

12. Sono molto importanti e si devono raggiungere per forza.

13. È fondamentale. Mi concentro sull'aspetto sanitario che è quello che conosco meglio e poi è applicabile in realtà a tutti perché la fiducia è importante anche per i mediatori che lavorano in altri ambiti. Noi abbiamo l'approccio in cui il paziente è al centro della comunicazione e per garantire supporto medico è necessario che ci sia il mediatore. È una figura chiave per costruire relazione di fiducia con il paziente, ci sono tecniche che si possono sviluppare perché il mediatore possa acquisire velocemente fiducia con il paziente. È importante avere fiducia anche con il professionista o il consulente con cui lavoriamo. Senza relazione di fiducia non possiamo svolgere il nostro lavoro e garantire un servizio.

14. La sfiducia può capitare soprattutto con le persone che ce l'hanno fatta ad attraversare e si sentono forti e ti vedono come una persona che vuole ostacolarli a raggiungere i propri obiettivi. Infatti, prima di parlare con una persona questa deve essere d'accordo che io sono la persona che facilita la comunicazione e non ostacola.

15. I mediatori possono essere formati, avere skills e capacità per svolgere il proprio dovere come è richiesto, ma manca una formazione totale degli operatori. La grossa difficoltà è che c'è una scarsa conoscenza della figura del mediatore da

parte degli operatori con i quali i mediatori lavorano e spesso c'è confusione rispetto al ruolo tra interpretariato e mediatore, poi c'è il tutto fare soprattutto nei centri di accoglienza. Un'altra difficoltà è che non è molto chiaro per i mediatori gli obiettivi fondamentali, ovvero che il nostro ruolo è quello di dar sollievo alle persone. Anche difficoltà che il nostro ruolo non è chiaro a livello istituzionale.

16. La responsabilità maggiore è quella di rendere le persone autonome. Il mediatore deve dare sollievo alle persone, dar loro le conoscenze base affinché siano indipendenti.

17. Spesso, sempre. Ho lavorato nella ricerca e soccorso nel Mediterraneo e avevo un ruolo chiave. Ero la prima persona che parlava con le persone sul barcone sovraffollato, la prima persona che li deve approcciare per poterli calmare e far si che si eviti qualsiasi tipo di incidente, dare messaggi brevi e chiari. È una situazione stressante. Lo stress management è fondamentale. I mediatori sono formati e hanno una supervisione psicologica. Io ho lavorato con vittime di tortura, violenza, sopravvissuti ai naufragi. Facciamo training e formo persone perché è fondamentale saper aver a che fare con lo stress.

18. Si ho lavorato con i minori e dipende dal vissuto delle persone, a volte è più complicato con gli adulti che arrivano da esperienze traumatiche.

19. Ora la mia figura è riconosciuta dalla mia organizzazione anche se abbiamo avuto difficoltà iniziali. Abbiamo diversi progetti in cui la mia figura serve ed è sempre più riconosciuta. Si sta piano piano consolidando sia in MSF che nelle altre organizzazioni e anche in contesto pubblico. Ancora però c'è molta strada da fare.

20. Bisogna distinguere in maniere netta e chiara interprete e mediatore, bisogna che il mediatore abbia delle conoscenze in ambiente di comunicazione interculturale e cosa vuol dire. Non si parla di comparazione di due figure, ma semplicemente il mediatore deve essere più consapevole del proprio ruolo e avere conoscenze culturali e delle persone che va a supportare. Avere conoscenze interculturali nel

contesto in cui si lavora è fondamentale e non necessario nell'ambito dell'interpretariato. Il mediatore però fa anche l'interprete in certe situazioni.

Interview n. 3 – mediator 3

1. Io praticamente essendo di origine algerina ed essendo venuto giovane, a 14 anni, sono stato aiutato da persone in Italia quando sono arrivato. Ho iniziato a fare questo lavoro perchè ho avuto l'idea di aiutare anche io le altre persone quando arrivano come sono stato aiutato anche io. Ecco, diciamo, la ragione più importante per fare questo lavoro è questa.

2. Non faccio più il mediatore da un paio di anni ma l'ho fatto per 8 anni.

3. Quando ho iniziato a fare il mediatore non c'erano questi corsi e non chiedevano la laurea in mediazione culturale, bastava essere residenti in Italia e aver vissuto un paio d'anni in Italia, conoscere bene la cultura e la lingua de paese di origine. Ora chiedono una formazione e bisogna essere iscritti all'albo.

4. Questo è meglio perché prima prendevano qualsiasi persona di origine straniera e gli chiedevano di fare il mediatore che è una cosa che non è facile da fare, non è fatta per tutti bisogna avere esperienza di un certo livello e quando ho iniziato prendevano qualsiasi persona straniera, dicevano vuoi fare il mediatore? Si vieni, e invece qualsiasi persona può fare da interprete ma non da mediatore perché la mediazione è più complessa, devi avere diplomazia devi fare un po' di psicologia, un po' di tutto.

5. Io vengo dall'Algeria quindi parlo arabo e francese.

6. Ho lavorato con l'arabo il francese e l'inglese e ovviamente l'italiano.

7. In ong e associazioni che si occupavano di accogliere rifugiati. Ho fatto l'assistente sociale e ho lavorato in amministrazioni, questure e prefetture.

8. Penso che sia fondamentale.

9. Si, la mia organizzazione ha linee guida da seguire.

10. Si certo, senza di questo non potrei svolgere questo lavoro.

11. È sempre possibile perché se no non puoi fare il mediatore, è la prima regola essere imparziale.

12. La mia opinione personale è che si dovrebbe fare un giuramento perché devi essere in mezzo a tante persone e amministrazioni e devi sempre essere imparziale non puoi prendere una parte, sei un legame. In più il mediatore è una figura come il grande fratello anche perché le persone che arrivano sono molto giovani. Loro ti rispettano perché vedono che sei della stessa cultura e che vivi qui da tanti anni e ti ascoltano e ti danno retta. Se percepiscono che che vai verso una parte o l'altra l'istinto di sopravvivenza li spinge ad approfittarne quini devi dimostrare che sei neutrale e rigido ma allo stesso tempo sensibile così ti danno retta e puoi evitare certe situazioni.

13. È la prima cosa che fa il mediatore, acquisire la fiducia perché senza la fiducia la persona non si apre, non si fida e non ti racconta quello che ti deve raccontare e le cose importati. Ci sono casi di vulnerabilità che potrebbero aiutare nella richiesta di asilo ad ottenerla e se non te lo racconta tu non puoi consigliarli di dire questo o quello quindi, la prima cosa da fare è instaurare un rapporto di fiducia. Ottenere la fiducia è l'obiettivo numero uno tale da farti raccontare il percorso di viaggi della persona, se hanno problemi. Quando le persone passano dalla Libia il 90% ha subito violenze e queste violenze o problemi possono aiutarli ad ottenere l'asilo o protezione umanitaria quindi se non ti raccontano questo non puoi indirizzarli verso un'amministrazione, verso un ospedale e non puoi aiutarli. Però, se si ha questo rapporto di fiducia ti può raccontare certe cose e tu puoi consigliare meglio ed evitare certi problemi perché ti ascoltano e qualsiasi cosa gli dici ti ascoltano.

Per esempio, nei centri succedono spesso delle risse, delle minirivolte e il mediatore è l'unico che deve e può evirare queste situazioni.

14. Mi è capitato che le persone non si fidino ma non si fidano perché hanno altre idee in testa e sono figure che usano il mediatore invece di ascoltarlo.

15. Questo lavoro presenta tante sfide e una di queste è proprio la fiducia. Se non si forma un ambiente di fiducia il lavoro, qualsiasi tipo di lavoro, non viene portato a termine correttamente. A volte è anche difficile farsi rispettare però questo caso riguarda persone che vogliono usare il mediatore per i propri interessi.

16. Dipende dal contesto. Se fai il mediatore nei centri di accoglienza il mediatore deve spiegare il funzionamento perché quando una persona arriva fresca fresca in Italia non conosce le leggi, le usanze ecc, quindi dobbiamo spiegare loro come funziona questo paese, spiegare loro le varie procedure con le amministrazioni per la richiesta di asilo, soggiorno, accompagnamento nelle strutture sanitarie, questo nei centri di prima accoglienza. In altri centri come i centri per i rifugiati bisogna accompagnarli a fare richieste di lavoro, curriculum. Chi lavora nei centri detenzione bisogna spiegare come bisogna spiegare come fare la richiesta asilo, fare ricorso al tribunale. Nei contesti di navi di soccorso è totalmente diverso, è un insieme di tutto e sei la prima persona che incontrano in cui devono avere fiducia perché è un contesto particolare.

17. No, non molte volte.

18. Si mi è capitato spesso. I bambini sono una categoria speciale, se con un adulto la fiducia la puoi avere più o meno facilmente, puoi avere una discussione tra adulti e spiegargli le cose facilmente naturalmente, con un bambino è molto più difficile e non gli puoi spiegare le cose come un adulto perché gli devi spiegare con i sensi. Gli puoi anche spiegare ore e ore se non ha fiducia non ti ascolta e sono molto più vulnerabili bisogna andare con cautela.

19. No. diciamo che questa figura di mediatore è molto più sviluppata in Italia. L'Italia si è inventata questa figura del mediatore a fine anni '90 e inizio anni 2000, invece in altri paesi è molto raro trovare un mediatore. Ora cominciano anche in Grecia o altri paesi ad assumere queste figure. Molto spesso le organizzazioni internazionali assumono, in paesi africani, mediatori locali ma non c'entra perché non conoscono l'altro, il paese e l'organizzazione, quindi non è logica come cosa. In Italia esiste questa figura inizialmente perché lo stato non conosceva bene lo straniero anche perché l'Italia non ha un passato coloniale come Francia, Inghilterra o Germania. Oggi viene usata soprattutto per conoscere lo straniero e rassicurare il migrante.

20. Interprete devi solo interpretare invece il mediatore è un facilitatore perché devi, diciamo, sei il primo legame tra i migranti quando arrivano in Italia e il resto della società. Devi facilitare l'integrazione, aiutarli a capire la società e come funziona. Il mediatore è assistente sociale per stranieri, è un legame tra amministrazione e autorità e migrante.

Interview n. 4 – mediator 4

1. La mia è stata una scelta casuale e anche una scelta per aiutare l'altro. Io mi sono trovato casualmente ad aiutare gente che stava sul territorio e che aveva bisogno di fare documenti e mi sono trovato a supportarli e aiutarli. Poi è stata una scelta mia di farla diventare una professione per aiutare le persone arrivate via mare.

2. Lavoro come interprete e mediatore dal 2002 ho iniziato a Lampedusa con i primissimi sbarchi che erano appena arrivati dalla Libia i primi flussi.

3. Si, ho fatto un corso non di interpretariato ma di mediazione. All'inizio erano pochi i corsi ora sono molti soprattutto online, questa figura si è allargata e alcune regioni hanno fatto l'albo del mediatore.
4. La formazione è l'abc di questo tipo di lavoro, avendo la formazione puoi svolgerlo nel miglior modo. Senza si può danneggiare il processo di mediazione.

5. Ho lavorato prima come volontario per uno sportello a Palermo, autorità giudiziarie, tribunali finanza e a bordo delle navi. Poi dal 2007 in UNHCR.

6. Io parlo arabo.

7. Arabo, francese e italiano. Con l'arabo copro tutti i dialetti.

8. Penso che il rispetto del codice di condotta è fondamentale.

9. Sì, assolutamente, abbiamo delle lingue guida da seguire.

10. Importantissimo. All'interno c'è tutto, la lista è lunga quindi riconoscere e rispettare il codice è fondamentale. Secondo me, se lo rispetti puoi superare tutti i momenti difficili, i principi sono quelli se porti professionalità e rispetto alla diversità hai già portato tanto.

11. A volte no, ma deve essere sempre possibile.

12. Essere imparziali e neutrali è importante come è importante rispettare tutte le regole. Sono sempre possibili da raggiungere perché se no non si può fare questo lavoro.

13. È la prima cosa da raggiungere.

14. Si, mi è capitato ma poi sono sempre riuscito a rimediare.

15. Sono tante e una è quella di capire qual è il ruolo del mediatore e che cosa rappresenta. Uno fa il mediatore o l'interprete però a seconda dell'attività che svolge cambia il ruolo. Se uno svolge ruolo per un'organizzazione umanitaria viene identificato come operatore che vuole aiutare e supportare. Se svolgi il lavoro di mediatore per asl asp sei un operatore che supporta in aspetto sanitario. Se svolgi l'attività per la polizia o la squadra mobile vieni identificato come la

persona che sta investigando sull' obiettivo della polizia. Qua si crea confusione sia per la persona che riceve mediazione sia per chi lavora perché si crea confusione sul ruolo.

16. La responsabilità principale sta nel rispettare il codice di condotta.

17. Questo sempre perché comunque vai a affrontare qualcosa e non sai cosa trovi. Stamattina stanno arrivando 250 persone e cominci già a capire nazionalità, se sono vulnerabili, situazioni in cui hanno viaggiato quindi c'è sempre una provocazione su cui vai a affrontare e cosa ti aspetta. Non vai in fabbrica dove c'è la macchina collaudata ma vai a incontrare persone che hanno bisogno e non sai quali sono i suoi bisogni e cosa hanno affrontato. Puoi trovare un naufragio davanti, vittime di tortura che voglio raccontarti, il caso particolare vulnerabile che ha bisogno di supporto psicologico quindi ogni giorno è una sfida nuova.

18. Si, molti bambini arrivano via mare e molto spesso sono minori non accompagnati. Parlare con loro a volte può essere difficile per questo spesso ci sono psicologi che assistono.

19. Parlo per la mia organizzazione e riporto poi anche altre esperienze. Questo ruolo all'inizio era un po' non chiaro e non definito ma col tempo si è capito il ruolo. Il mio è molto riconosciuto dalla mia organizzazione, mi portano stima e c'è grande riconoscimento. Qualsiasi team di organizzazioni umanitarie è composto da figure professionali affiancati dal mediatore: psicologa e mediatore, legale e mediatore, educatore e mediatore e anche all'interno di ufficio immigrazione stanno lavorando mediatori.

20. Interpretare vuol dire fare una traduzione, invece il lavoro di mediatore è quello di fare l'interprete ma mediando tra due culture e due aspetti, quindi, non è solo una traduzione ma ha un approccio diverso.

Interview n. 5 – humanitarian worker 5

1. Noi abbiamo un team di 7 mediatori che comprendono circa 15 lingue. Non usiamo solo lingue veicolari ma diamo importanza anche ai dialetti e alle cosiddette lingue etniche perché le linee guida ci dicono che la lingua deve essere scelta dal paziente. Noi seguiamo persone che spesso arrivano dalla tratta del mar Mediterraneo e quindi la maggior parte viene dall'Africa e abbiamo lingue come il Bambara o il Pidgin English.
2. Allora il nostro lavoro è proprio un lavoro di linguistica perché il centro clinico si occupa di supporto e psicoterapia straniera e in ambito umanitario, quindi, sia per persone immigrate sia per rifugiati e richiedenti asilo. Diamo molta importanza alla lingua abbiamo molti mediatori più che interpreti perché ci serviamo di persone che non solo sanno la lingua del paziente ma che condividano anche un background in quale modo simile al paziente che noi ascoltiamo.

3. I mediatori fanno parte del nostro team e dell'organizzazione, non ci serviamo di esperti esterni perché lavorando nell'ambito della psicoterapia abbiamo bisogno di persone che creino un percorso continuativo. Durante la selezione guardiamo l'esperienza ma anche se hanno una formazione di base.

4. La lingua è anche lingua del corpo, del pensiero, delle abitudini e dei valori. Ci sono tecniche del corpo che sono le abitudini con cui si porta il corpo, il gesticolare, toccarsi capelli, sono cose che in un setting psicologico sono importanti. Se il paziente è di un'altra cultura il terapeuta può fraintendere essendo di una cultura differente e così anche il mediatore se è della stessa cultura del terapeuta. Un interprete o mediatore italiano fa fatica a cogliere tutte le sfumature di un'espressione che è integrata a un'altra cultura, ma non solo i modi di dire che un bravo interprete può anche avere familiarità, ma parliamo proprio di quello che il linguaggio copre, i messaggi indiretti. In psicoterapia devi andare in fondo a svelare il sintomo, la sofferenza, poi in ambito umanitario si tratta di andare a parlare di situazioni molto dolorose, stupri, abusi. Bisogna capire e intendere il detto e il non detto per queto per noi è importante che le sfumature della lingua le percepisca qualcuno che è nativo e che sappia la lingua originaria.

5. Questo è il grande dilemma di chi lavora in ambito umanitario, nel senso che purtroppo la figura del mediatore è poco riconosciuta e questo implica un buco enorme sulla formazione che sia uniforme. Per cui spesso i mediatori hanno delle formazioni molto varie perché ci sono dei corsi di formazione organizzati dalle singole organizzazioni. Noi quando reclutiamo valutiamo anche la formazione ma poi chiediamo loro di partecipare e formarsi su temi di cui ci occupiamo per esempio la violenza di genere, lo sfruttamento sessuale e lavorativo, il codice etico, la salute mentale e sui temi della psicologia.

6. I vantaggi sono tutti quelli elencati finora, sono essenziali figure che condividono lo stesso background del paziente per evitare fraintendimenti e aiutare il terapeuta a capire meglio. Io sono una grande sostenitrice della presenza del mediatore, però in effetti in alcuni casi può essere o può diventare un impedimento, almeno nella mia esperienza mi è capitato che una psicoterapia di lungo periodo ad un certo punto si è svincolata dalla mediazione per il volere del paziente. Nella psicoterapia vera, quella elaborativa avviene in un setting individuale col terapeuta. Naturalmente tutto dipende da situazione a situazione, non dipende dalla mediazione in sé ma dalla scelta del mediatore se appartiene allo stesso gruppo o ad etnie diverse e limitrofe.

7. Il codice etico per noi è fondamentale, è uno di quegli strumenti centrali per le organizzazioni. Le professioni riconosciute hanno il codice deontologico. Per l'assistente sociale, lo psicologo, il medico non si chiama codice etico ma deontologico e se lo violi vai contro il tuo odine il quale può applicare delle sanzioni. La problematicità del codice per i mediatori non è tanto farlo applicare ma l'elemento più fragile è che il codice etico per i mediatori non ha nessun valore, non è legale. Per i professionisti può essere la fine di una professione, possono arrivare a radiarti mentre per i mediatori non c'è una conseguenza, se lo violi io ti mando fuori dall'organizzazione ma l'indomani puoi lavorare in un'altra organizzazione. Le questioni sono due, una che il codice etico da solo non basta, non basta la firma ma serve che tu professionista colga l'importanza e il senso

dello strumento, per cui noi facciamo dei corsi sul codice etico. Soprattutto l'altro elemento fondamentale è la supervisione. Ci sono cornici molto evidenti da non violare scritte nel codice però nel codice ci sono mille altri comportamenti più ingannevoli che hanno a che fare con violazioni rispetto al paziente. Un esempio può essere quello dei suggerimenti. Non vanno dati perché violi non il codice etico ma soprattutto empowerment e il processo di autodeterminazioni e quelli che sono i principi guida dei sopravvissuti. Violi il rispetto della persona, non puoi dire ad una donna purtroppo che subisce violenze devi denunciare tuo marito, va ascoltata va capita le va fatta l'informativa ma non va spinta. In presenza di minori è tutto diverso. Deve essere un luogo safe dove tutti si devono sentire a loro agio per poter condividere tutto con il cliente.

8. IRC lavora in tantissimi ambiti dal salvataggio in mare a zone di guerra. Inoltre, crea anche ambienti di orientamento e servizi integrativi. Nel mio caso io lavoro solo in ambienti di psicoterapia.

Interview n. 6 – humanitarian worker 6

1. La comunicazione avviene con le lingue veicolari inglese, francese, arabo e portoghese.

2. Gli operatori parlano le principali lingue veicolari e la larga maggioranza degli utenti è fluente in almeno una lingua veicolare, quindi gli operatori sono sufficienti. Poi, per questioni delicate, sensibili e faticose capita che il registro da affrontare sia quello della propria madre lingua, quindi, sono necessari interpreti e mediatori, anche se la figura del mediatore è difficile da trovare.

3. Noi non abbiamo interpreti e mediatori che lavorano all'interno del centro, per questo ci affidiamo ad un'agenzia che quando abbiamo bisogno ci manda delle figure esperte.

4. Gli interpreti o i mediatori solitamente sono stranieri e sono della stessa area geografica e linguistica della persona. Uno degli svantaggi è che è difficile

relazionarsi a persone che sono state selezionate ma che hanno un livello di istruzione medio basso e hanno passato o stanno passando le stesse difficoltà nell'integrazione che stanno passando le persone accolte. Ci sono svantaggi anche quando gli interpreti hanno una formazione più sostanziosa perché si pongono in posizione di potere e questo mette in soggezione l'interlocutore e ciò che a noi interessa è che le persone capiscano ciò di cui parliamo. Ovviamente ci sono anche vantaggi linguistici perché con l'interprete che parla la lingua madre dell'interlocutore è prima di tutto più facile capire e far capire il messaggio, poi solitamente l'intervistato si sente più a suo agio. Vedere una persona della propria nazionalità "dall'altra sponda" ovvero dalla sponda dell'autorità tranquillizza molto.

5. Vengono utilizzate figure professioniste e non in modo intercambiabile. Da un lato avere mediatori o interpreti non professionali porta degli svantaggi perché molte volte non sono stati formati per fare questo lavoro e hanno anche un'istruzione medio bassa, quindi è anche difficile lavorare. Poi, molte volte adducono alla loro esperienza e credo che sia un limite che derivi dalla mancanza di formazione professionale. Dall'altro lato, se l'interprete si presenta in modo meno formale mette a proprio agio, invece vedere il professionista crea soggezione proprio per il rapporto con l'autorità. Soprattutto durante le interviste online fatte in periodo di covid, ho notato che gli interpreti poco professionali mettono a proprio agio la persona che riceve il messaggio.

6. Ho riscontrato degli svantaggi soprattutto nell'interpretariato perché non tiene conto di una serie di aspetti legati alla percezione del problema, alle sensazioni delle persone e anche l'autorità. Molte volte il professionista si pone "superiore", di potere rispetto all'interlocutore e per persone che provengono da situazioni difficili e hanno un rapporto difficile con l'autorità non è il massimo. Servirebbero più mediatori, anche se sono figure difficili da reperire, mi rendo conto che è una figura utopica, soprattutto perché pensiamo che il mediatore sia la chiave di volta per raggiungere la comprensione dell'altro che non riusciamo ad avere. Altri svantaggi derivano dal fatto che a volte impediscono di svolgere bene il proprio

lavoro perché si mettono a parlare di cose private con la persona, raccontano la propria esperienza e quando facciamo dei discorsi brevi e la loro traduzione dura il doppio capiamo che c'è qualcosa che non va. La mancanza di neutralità è sicuramente un problema.

7. Sicuramente nella loro formazione gli viene insegnato il codice etico da seguire, ma non sempre viene rispettato. Mi accorgo che la neutralità è una delle difficoltà maggiori che si hanno. Ci accorgiamo che l'interprete non è per nulla neutrale. Nel momento in cui esprimiamo un concetto il veicolo aggiunge molto del proprio, adduce alla propria esperienza. Noi diciamo frasi di 10 secondi e loro parlano per 5 minuti. Non va bene perché poi non lascia libertà alla persona che riceve il messaggio di elaborare il concetto.

8. Centro Stranieri è un centro di accoglienza quindi principalmente lavoro li, poi lavoro anche in uffici amministrativi e nei tribunali.

Interview n. 7 – Program advisor 7

1. It seems really obvious, and the interesting thing is that it doesn't happen very often but basically if you going to provide life saving aid people you need to be able to understand where to go to get it and need to be able to understand how to use it, so I mean to be able to give feedback on whether or not that what they mean, whether is need to assess the humanitarian aid, you need to be able to go on what emergency service they need and none of that is possible if you don't speak the same language. We also know very well that there are plenty of humanitarians who behave badly and if you can't communicate with people it means they can't report bad behavior either. So, all of those things depend on speaking people to the language they understand and in the format people understand. You also need to have this mechanism with people who are not literate. So, it is a completely crucial and neglected area. Most humanitarian organizations don't speak to people the language they know basically.

2. Technological ones. For technology we do number of different things, one is that where there is reasonable mobile phone connection, we invest in quite a lot into chat box. There are different types of chat box but the ones with artificial intelligence allow people to ask their questions using their own language and their own dialects and to get an answer again in their own language or dialect. We are really trying to invest in that kind of technology. In some contexts, is not appropriate but in some contexts it can be really effective. We are also trying to work on the build machines translation capacity. One of the big issues is about half the world population don't have internet not because they don't have data or technology but because the internet is not in their languages, that means that information that they can access is really minimal, it stands much more risk to disinformation if they can't have full amount because they can't triangulate this information to check a source. They can't go online to verify what would be the correct information. We are working a lot to have more effective machine translations. This small process needs huge amount of data, and we are doing it with some of the biggest languages but it really takes a lot of time to build up machine translations and if you use google translation is just rubbish coming out. We are trying to help people who have no literacy access large amount of information so we got this project which is like an internet in a box where you can put an audio speaker and the microphone with a solar power computer behind it. People can ask questions and it will read out the information inside it and it can load that computer with Wikipedia and all the kind of big world resources. So people can begin to have access to information through a voice responding assistant. It is a really important way of trying to get people access to internet without actually be online.

3. There are two things, well one is the actual spoken language and there is a huge assumption that the lingua franca is sufficient, but it is not. The biggest issue beyond and before dialects is the fact that people will assume that in Nigeria people speak English, it is not true, the most people in Nigeria are not going to speak English, particularly women and particularly older or more vulnerable groups, so the more vulnerable somebody is, the less can speak on the official

dominant language. So that's the primary concern. The second issue around dialects is depending on the language that can be so different, and the comprehension no longer exists. If you just take Arabic, there are spoken various of Arabic are so diverse that different Arabic speakers won't be able to understand each other. The same is also true from different points of Swahili and there is just a general assumption that if you are going to use Kenyan Swahili is going to be enough and that's not true. We have done some comprehension testing to demonstrate with evidence that this is not true that one dialect is sufficient for communication. We are struggling even to get the humanitarian organizations to think they may want use Swahili, at that really basic level they still think that French and English are sufficient for Kenya and Nigeria so we can't even get them to use even just one form of Swahili let alone convince them that dialect matters. We keep writing our searching on it but very few people aren't prepared to listen.

4. We are spending a lot of our time on advocacy trying to explain to the bigger organizations but at the very minimum they need to track language so now nobody is thinking to run humanitarian program without looking agenda. They would always work out how many men and how many women are using different services, how many women come to the house center compared to how many men. How many boys just compared to how many girls. We are asking them to do the same for languages and is our biggest demand. You need a map on the languages in your area and then you need to understand who is using your service because if the Kurdish speakers never come to your service, your service is not adequate and if no Kurdish ever reports a complaint is that they do not have a complaint, but mechanism are not able to listen. Less you gather data and measure by language you are not gonna know who is excluded from your service, so we are working very hard but with really low success.

Riassunto in italiano

Introduzione

Durante il mio corso di studi in lingue per la comunicazione e la cooperazione internazionale ho sviluppato un forte interesse per la cooperazione e per il diritto internazionale e umanitario e mi ha sempre incuriosito la centralità della comunicazione nei contesti di emergenza umanitaria.

L'introduzione della tesi si apre presentando un contesto di emergenza umanitaria che verrà considerato durante tutto l'elaborato, ovvero la crescente crisi di flussi migratori irregolari che di recente ha colpito l'Europa, in particolare l'Italia. Per contribuire a garantire una corretta gestione della migrazione e fornire assistenza ai rifugiati e ai richiedenti asilo, il lavoro della comunità internazionale e delle organizzazioni umanitarie è fondamentale. Infatti, il personale delle organizzazioni deve essere preparato e pronto a seguire le complicate dinamiche dei rifugiati e dei richiedenti asilo. Due delle figure più significative che operano in collaborazione con le organizzazioni umanitarie sono gli interpreti e i mediatori, i quali forniscono strumenti per superare le profonde differenze linguistiche e culturali che esistono tra i rifugiati e la comunità che li accoglie. Inoltre, gli esperti linguistici sono le uniche figure che possono capire i bisogni dei nuovi arrivati e consentire l'accesso ai loro diritti soddisfacendo le loro necessità.

Lo scopo di questa tesi è quello di indagare il ruolo degli interpreti e dei mediatori che forniscono assistenza ai richiedenti asilo e ai rifugiati in difficoltà, attraverso la comunicazione, nel contesto dell'attuale realtà europea. Inoltre, un ulteriore obiettivo dell'elaborato è quello di esplorare gli ostacoli che gli interpreti e i mediatori affrontano per sviluppare adeguatamente il loro lavoro e le responsabilità che l'impiego prevede. È importante sottolineare che il loro compito non è solo culturale e linguistico, ma anche emotivo, in quanto lavorando in contesti di emergenza, affrontano situazioni difficili e stressanti. In fine, il terzo obiettivo proposto nella tesi è quello di analizzare il rapporto tra gli interpreti e i mediatori umanitari e le organizzazioni per cui lavorano.

Capitolo Uno

Il primo capitolo delinea la cornice teorica alla base del lavoro e inizia soffermandosi su tre temi tra loro connessi: globalizzazione, migrazione e comunità internazionale.

La globalizzazione, secondo il dizionario di Camdridge (2022), è quella situazione in cui beni e servizi, influenze sociali e culturali diventano simili in tutte le parti del mondo. Il termine fu coniato per la prima volta da Theodore Levitt che, come la maggior parte degli studiosi, enfatizza solo l'aspetto economico e tecnologico del fenomeno (Turner 2010). Certo è che grazie allo sviluppo delle tecnologie e alla nascita di internet, il mondo comincia ad essere interconnesso diventando un villaggio globale (Mcluhan 1964). Lo sviluppo della comunicazione e della tecnologia ha facilitato la nascita della globalizzazione politica visibile attraverso le organizzazioni intergovernative. In particolare, dopo la Prima Guerra Mondiale, si è concretizzata l'idea di dare alla cooperazione internazionale un'espressione istituzionale con la fondazione delle Nazioni Unite (Steger 2017). Il fenomeno della globalizzazione non solo integra regioni e continenti attraverso la comunicazione senza fili, scambi commerciali e istituzioni intergovernative, ma anche grazie a relazioni interculturali che sono il risultato dei crescenti flussi migratori e della mobilità delle persone. Mobilità e migrazione sono due degli aspetti più visibili e significativi della globalizzazione: da un lato la mobilità si riferisce a persone privilegiate che beneficiano di risorse e accesso ai viaggi. Dall'altro lato, il termine migrazione è usato, nel discorso politico e pubblico, per indicare persone meno privilegiate in cerca di opportunità o di rifugio.

Dopo aver fornito una panoramica sulla globalizzazione, il capitolo si concentra sulla migrazione che è un fenomeno legato alla globalizzazione, ma che dura da secoli (Williamson 2006) a causa di guerre, conquiste e disastri naturali. Il movimento delle persone attraverso e all'interno dei confini, storicamente e geograficamente, ha svolto un ruolo fondamentale nell'evoluzione del mondo sociale e fisico (Inghilleri 2017:3) perché ha plasmato e struttura tuttora paesi e società (Sisk 2017:3). È dalla fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale che la migrazione ha subito cambiamenti fondamentali sotto l'influenza della globalizzazione, della decolonizzazione, dei cambiamenti demografici, della crescita economica e delle guerre. In particolare, con l'ultimo flusso migratorio iniziato nel 2008 in risposta alla Primavera araba, la natura e la portata della migrazione sono cambiate dal momento che ha prodotto milioni di rifugiati e migranti provenienti

principalmente dal Medio Oriente e dall'Africa che, senza documenti, viaggiano su larga scala in Europa (Sisk 2017). I fattori che affrettano i richiedenti asilo a fuggire dal proprio paese sono diversi, come l'accesso a uno stile di vita migliore o spinti da conflitti. In base alle cause della migrazione i migranti vengono divisi in volontari, ovvero coloro che decidono di spostarsi per cercare migliori opportunità, oppure involontari, forzati da crisi umane o ambientali. Fanno parte di quest'ultimo gruppo i richiedenti asilo, persone che cercano protezione internazionale dai pericoli del loro paese d'origine (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). Sono migranti involontari anche i rifugiati, ma a differenza dei richiedenti asilo hanno già ottenuto la protezione internazionale perché soddisfano i criteri previsti dalla Convenzione di Ginevra del 1951. Per ottenere lo Status di Rifugiati, i richiedenti asilo devono trovarsi al di fuori del paese di origine a causa di un fondato timore o di persecuzioni dovute alla loro razza, religione o nazionalità e non possono o non vogliono avvalersi della protezione di quel paese (OIM 2019). Oggi l'Europa è diventata una delle principali destinazioni della migrazione umanitaria e la migrazione irregolare si è rivelata una questione centrale per gli stati europei (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015). Le motivazioni che spingono le persone a scegliere l'Europa come destinazione sono molteplici. Per esempio, il costo del viaggio, l'economia del paese di destinazione, la percezione da parte del migrante di fattori economici come l'occupazione e i salari del paese sono i fattori principali (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015:55). Inoltre, ciò che influenza la scelta dei migranti è la politica migratoria del paese di destinazione. Anche l'accesso alle informazioni e i contrabbandieri svolgono un ruolo chiave fondamentale per la decisione. I contrabbandieri sono diventati una parte integrante del viaggio migratorio e, come indicato da Robinson e Segrott (2002), una volta che i migranti decidono di utilizzare un contrabbandiere per affrontare il tragitto, diventano limitati nella scelta della destinazione in base alle rotte con cui operano (Kuschminder, De Bresser 2015). Le rotte attraverso cui i migranti senza documenti arrivano in Europa sono tre e attraversano il mar Mediterraneo. La rotta del Mediterraneo occidentale, che parte dal Marocco e arriva in Spagna, la rotta del Mediteranno orientale che ha origine in Turchia e va verso la Grecia e la Bulgaria e in fine la rotta del Mediterraneo centrale che coinvolge i movimenti migratori dal Nord Africa all'Italia e rappresenta il maggior numero di fonti delle rotte migratorie irregolari.

In seguito, ho deciso di dedicare qualche parola alla comunità internazionale che si occupa della gestione delle crisi umanitarie con lo scopo di proteggere le vite in pericolo e salvaguardare i diritti umani. I principali attori della comunità internazionale che mettono a punto piani di risposta per le crisi umanitarie sono gli attori statali e quelli non statali, cioè le organizzazioni governative e non governative e gli attori del settore privato. Gli attori statali, ovvero i paesi che popolano il globo, affrontano la migrazione involontaria attraverso norme di protezione dei rifugiati e dei richiedenti asilo definite dal diritto internazionale. Gli stati hanno la responsabilità di difendere i diritti umani di chiunque chieda asilo nel loro territorio (IOM 2017). Gli attori non statali, invece, sono reti cooperative formate dai governi. Esistono diverse organizzazioni che possono essere suddivise in organizzazioni governative e non governative e hanno l'obiettivo di portare pace, solidarietà uguaglianza nelle comunità. Le organizzazioni governative sono un gruppo finanziato dal governo degli stati attraverso trattati multilaterali (Boland 2022). Diversamente, le organizzazioni non governative sono un'entità che opera a livello regionale, nazionale e internazionale in modo indipendente da qualsiasi altro governo. Oltre a questi due tipi di organizzazione, le crisi umanitarie vengono gestite anche a livello locale da parte di agenzie territoriali che operano limitatamente ad uno stato e in una area geografica specifica dello stato. Le politiche delle agenzie locali dipendono dalla legislazione del paese e non sono regolamentate a livello internazionale. In Italia, ad esempio, queste organizzazioni fanno parte del Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione (SAI) e garantiscono interventi di accoglienza integrata ai richiedenti asilo e ai titolari di protezione internazionale (Ministero dell'Interno 2020). Il SAI prevede due livelli di servizi. Uno è riservato ai richiedenti asilo e si basa sull'assistenza legale, sanitaria e linguistica. Il secondo livello è riservato alla protezione dei titolari e ha anche funzioni di integrazione e orientamento al lavoro. Quando i sistemi di prima e seconda accoglienza sono esauriti, le prefetture possono prevedere l'istituzione di Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria (CAS) e affidarli a soggetti privati attraverso le procedure degli appalti pubblici.

La priorità di ogni risposta umanitaria è quella di salvare vite umane, soddisfare i bisogni umanitari e fornire assistenza. Per fare ciò la comunicazione è fondamentale in quanto tutti hanno diritto di ricevere informazioni e aiuti in una lingua che possono comprendere. Il diritto di accesso alle informazioni, infatti, è un principio fondamentale

della Dichiarazione Universale dei Diritti Umani. Per garantire i diritti linguistici come diritti fondamentali, l'interpretariato e la mediazione stanno diventando necessari per le organizzazioni che si occupano di gestire crisi umanitarie (Vojko, Morel 2012).

Capitolo Due

Il secondo capitolo è dedicato alle figure del mediatore e dell'interprete che svolgono il proprio lavoro all'interno di organizzazioni umanitarie. Ciò di cui hanno bisogno le persone in caso di emergenza sono informazioni nella loro lingua, perciò, per superare le barriere linguistiche, garantire una comunicazione efficace e il conseguente accesso ai diritti umani, gli attori internazionali assumono professionisti in grado di parlare la lingua dei rifugiati e dei richiedenti asilo (MICIC 2017). Questi personaggi svolgono un ruolo essenziale e sono chiamati interpreti e mediatori umanitari. Per interpretariato e mediazione umanitaria si intende il lavoro di interpretariato e mediazione in situazioni di disastri naturali, conflitti, aree post-conflitto, emergenze e crisi (Fassetta et al. 2018). Il termine "interpretariato umanitario" è stato adottato dall'organizzazione Translators Without Borders, un'organizzazione no-profit che supporta le ONG e le organizzazioni negli interventi umanitari fornendo lingua e traduzione (Fassetta et al. 2018). La definizione è piuttosto recente perché l'interpretariato in contesti di rifugiati è una pratica che per molto tempo è stata invisibile non solo alle società occidentali ma anche agli Studi di Interpretariato (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). A seguito dei movimenti migratori, e, in particolare, del massiccio afflusso di rifugiati siriani in Europa dopo lo scoppio della guerra civile, l'interpretariato umanitario è al centro dei riflettori (Jiménez-Ivars, León-Pinilla 2018). L'interpretariato umanitario e la mediazione appartengono all'ampia categoria dell'interpretariato di comunità, poiché condividono gli stessi contesti di interpretariato, ovvero i contesti legali, sanitari e di servizi sociali. Tuttavia, l'interpretariato e la mediazione umanitaria sono più specifici dell'interpretariato di comunità perché rientrano nel quadro giuridico del diritto internazionale umanitario e del diritto internazionale dei rifugiati (Delgado Luchner, Kherbiche 2018:424). Il ruolo principale degli interpreti e dei mediatori è quello di consentire alle organizzazioni umanitarie e alle autorità pubbliche di comunicare con i rifugiati e i richiedenti asilo in modo che questi possano accedere ai propri diritti. Nonostante si usino in modo intercambiabile, i termini "interprete" e "mediatore" presentano alcune differenze.

L’interprete è una figura che traduce verbalmente e oggettivamente il materiale parlato da una lingua (lingua di partenza) a un'altra lingua (lingua di arrivo) (TWB 2017). Il mediatore invece è una persona che facilita la comprensione reciproca tra una persona o un gruppo di persone tenendo conto non solo della diversità delle lingue, ma anche dei fattori culturali. In effetti, mediare significa agire come intermediario in un conflitto tra due parti. Il mediatore non è un mero conduttore di parole, ma facilita l'incontro genuino tra esseri umani (UNHCR 2020). Un mediatore, oltre a essere un interprete, può essere definito anche come un informatore, una guida e può dare consigli a entrambe le parti riguardo a comportamenti culturali appropriati (TWB 2017). Per svolgere al meglio il proprio lavoro, queste due figure devono essere a conoscenza di tecniche specifiche e modalità di interpretazione. Infatti, l’interpretariato comunitario e umanitario si svolgono tipicamente in modo consecutivo dove l'oratore pronuncia un discorso nella sua lingua madre e l'interprete ascolta e rimane in silenzio per alcune frasi e poi pronuncia il discorso nella lingua di arrivo (Grbić, Pöllabauer 2006). L'interpretariato di comunità può anche comprendere casi di interpretariato eseguiti simultaneamente, oltre alla traduzione a vista e all'interpretazione verbatim. La prima è una traduzione che trasmette documenti scritti da una lingua all'altra, mentre l'interpretazione verbatim implica un'interpretazione parola per parola dopo ogni frase. Queste due modalità di interpretazione sono utilizzate principalmente in tribunale per trasmettere procedure precise e documenti legali (UNHCR 2009), come nei colloqui dei richiedenti asilo per ottenere lo status di rifugiato. In fine, l'interpretazione sommaria può essere utilizzata soprattutto per informazioni meno dettagliate. Consiste nell'ascoltare il discorso, prendere appunti e fornire un riassunto nella lingua del pubblico. Queste tecniche sono imprescindibili per portare a termine una conversazione senza incomprensioni linguistiche e culturali, ma solo i professionisti, ovvero coloro che hanno una formazione certificata, sono a conoscenza di queste procedure (Bancroft 2015). Tuttavia, molti linguisti che lavorano nel contesto umanitario non presentano nessun tipo di formazione; molte organizzazioni si servono di volontari o persone che parlano lingue limitatamente diffuse.

La seconda parte del capitolo si apre con un’analisi delle difficoltà che l’interpretariato e la mediazione umanitaria presentano, e le competenze necessarie per svolgere questo tipo di lavoro. Gli interpreti e i mediatori devono essere competenti in due lingue e conoscere entrambe le culture per cui si lavora in quanto i richiedenti asilo usano spesso

parole specifiche della loro cultura nel loro discorso (Pöllabaure 2015), soprattutto durante i colloqui per lo Status di Rifugiato. A volte gli interpreti e i mediatori non sono consapevoli delle sfumature culturali, soprattutto se sono gli interpreti del paese ospitante. Per questo motivo, alcune organizzazioni preferiscono utilizzare interpreti e mediatori che condividono lo stesso background dei nuovi arrivati (Schider 2016). Un'altra competenza base è quella di conoscere adeguatamente le tecniche di interpretariato. Infatti, le incomprensioni non sono sempre dovute a problemi culturali, ma sono causate anche dalla mancanza di accuratezza dell'interpretazione. Gli interpreti devono essere consapevoli dei diversi modi di interpretare e di quale sia il modo più accurato a seconda di ogni contesto. Inoltre, gli esperti linguistici umanitari devono avere familiarità con il sistema e con le procedure burocratiche della comunità ospitante e creare un'atmosfera di fiducia per incoraggiare i nuovi arrivati a comunicare (UNHCR 2009). Spesso, i richiedenti asilo e i rifugiati hanno vissuto situazioni traumatiche, hanno preoccupazioni e paure che non gli permettono di fidarsi dell'interlocutore con cui parlano. Questo può creare barriere e complicare i colloqui e gli incontri. A causa dell'esperienza dei migranti e dell'instabilità dell'ambiente umanitario, il grado di emotività che implica lavorare in questo contesto è particolarmente alto. Gli interpreti e i mediatori umanitari devono essere in grado di lavorare in situazioni di forte stress e di comunicare efficacemente sotto pressione. Gli interpreti sono emotivamente coinvolti nell'interazione (Pöllabaure 2015) e la ricerca ha dimostrato che lavorare con persone traumatizzate per un lungo periodo di tempo può avere effetti negativi su chi fornisce assistenza (McCann, Pearlman 1990). Un ulteriore difficoltà che presuppone l'impiego è lavorare con i minori. L'identificazione dei bisogni dei minori e il superamento dei loro problemi possono presentare maggiori problemi rispetto agli adulti. I bambini e i giovani faticano a esprimere sé stessi e i propri bisogni e a ricordare con precisione le situazioni (UNHCR 2009). Inoltre, possono aver subito violenze, abusi e traumi emotivi (UNHCR 2009), per questo tendono a non fidarsi di qualcuno che non sia un familiare. A tal proposito, dal momento che il contesto umanitario è carico di forte emotività, per svolgere il proprio lavoro in maniera sicura gli interpreti e i mediatori devono seguire delle linee guida descritte nel codice etico. I servizi di interpretariato e le organizzazioni non profit o non governative forniscono regole e standard specifici che gli interpreti e i mediatori devono rispettare a beneficio sia del cliente che dell'interprete (Fassetta et al. 2018). Le linee guida sono contenute nel codice

etico che affronta questioni quali i ruoli, i confini, le culture e la gestione del flusso comunicativo (Bancroft 2005). In Europa, i più grandi organismi internazionali che guidano gli interpreti all'etica sono AIIC, AITI e EULITA. La professionalità è un punto chiave che accomuna tutti i codici etici. Essere professionali significa essere consapevoli dei propri limiti. Un professionista è in grado di tracciare i confini (UNHCR 2009:22) senza abusare del proprio potere. Inoltre, gli interpreti e i mediatori non hanno solo la responsabilità di essere professionisti, ma anche di essere accurati, imparziali, neutrali e riservati. L'accuratezza sottolinea il fatto di essere fedeli, in modo da rendere esattamente il significato originale nella lingua di arrivo del discorso pronunciato nella lingua di partenza, senza censurare, aggiungere o sminuire le dichiarazioni del cliente (Crezee et al. 2011). Ulteriormente, gli interpreti e i mediatori devono tradurre verbalmente il messaggio senza influenzare il discorso del cliente e senza aggiungere le proprie opinioni o reazioni (Crezee et al. 2011) e non possono dare consigli o allinearsi con una parte e prendere posizione (Bancroft 2005). Tuttavia, i valori personali degli interpreti potrebbero essere in conflitto con gli standard etici delineati dal codice di condotta e le circostanze dell'interpretazione potrebbero rendere difficile prendere decisioni seguendo rigorosamente il codice (UNHCR 2009:11). Soprattutto in un ambiente umanitario, l'interprete e il mediatore potrebbero non essere in grado di mantenere la giusta distanza dal cliente e non rispettare i principi fondamentali di imparzialità e neutralità.

Il capitolo si chiude con l'analisi delle organizzazioni umanitarie per cui gli interpreti e i mediatori lavorano. Come già sottolineato in precedenza, le organizzazioni umanitarie devono trovare canali adeguati a comunicare in situazioni di emergenza. Per superare gli ostacoli a una comunicazione efficace, gli attori internazionali e locali si avvalgono di professionisti in grado di parlare la lingua del nuovo arrivato. Parlare la stessa lingua dei richiedenti asilo e dei rifugiati non solo li aiuta a soddisfare i loro bisogni, ma anche a consolidare i diritti umani fondamentali. Ciascuna organizzazione ha una politica linguistica che riguarda le lingue utilizzate per la cooperazione con gli attori che includono altre organizzazioni, stati e donatori (De Varennes 2012), le lingue di lavoro usate nella struttura interna dell'organizzazione e le lingue di comunicazione esterna. I mediatori e interpreti per essere assunti devono avere una formazione in minimo due lingue di lavoro (Fall, Zhang 2012). I requisiti linguistici sono obbligatori per tutti gli operatori umanitari che sviluppano il loro lavoro all'interno dell'organizzazione insieme

alle loro qualifiche, alle competenze dell'esperienza lavorativa e alle soft skills (Fall, Zhang 2012). In generale, le competenze richieste al personale sono una forte motivazione al lavoro umanitario, la capacità di lavorare sotto pressione in un ambiente potenzialmente pericoloso, un comportamento aperto e l'adattabilità a condizioni instabili. Inoltre, l'esperienza lavorativa, il livello di istruzione e le qualifiche sono necessarie per qualificare gli operatori nel trattamento delle crisi umanitarie che comportano rischi. Nonostante le qualifiche richieste per lavorare nelle organizzazioni umanitarie, queste ultime collaborano con una vasta quantità di volontari e non professionisti (Tesseur 2018), soprattutto che svolgono interpretariato e mediazione. Spesso, le agenzie ricorrono all'assunzione di esperti linguistici non professionisti a causa della presenza di lingue e dialetti limitati o per ulteriori motivazioni. Una di queste è che la lingua e una corretta comunicazione sono la principale priorità e per molte organizzazioni, spesso sono viste come un extra (Crack et al. 2016). Infatti, l'investimento nelle lingue richiede tempo e risorse e le organizzazioni sono solite a spendere solo il 7% del loro budget per l'interpretazione e la mediazione (Crack et al. 2016). In conclusione a questa ultima sezione, viene sottolineato come gli interpreti e i mediatori siano figure solitamente sottovalutate, non ben considerate dalle istituzioni nazionali e regionali nonostante il ruolo fondamentale che svolgono nelle società e in contesti di emergenza.

Capitolo Tre

Dopo aver illustrato gli aspetti teorici del ruolo degli interpreti, dei mediatori e delle organizzazioni umanitarie, il terzo capitolo si concentra sull'analisi tematica delle interviste svolte con sette partecipanti di cui quattro sono mediatori e interpreti, due operatori umanitari e in fine un consulente di programma di un'agenzia che forma mediatori e interpreti e li fornisce alle organizzazioni umanitarie. Prima di analizzare i risultati della ricerca, ho aggiunto qualche informazione di base sulle organizzazioni umanitarie per cui gli intervistati lavorano. Ho selezionato un'organizzazione governativa, l'Alto Commissariato delle Nazioni Unite per i Rifugiati e tre organizzazioni non governative, Sos Mediterranee, il Comitato Internazionale di Soccorso e Medici Senza Frontiere. Ho deciso di analizzare queste organizzazioni perché gran parte delle loro attività sono impegnate nel mar Mediterraneo. Le organizzazioni operano nella rotta del Mediterraneo centrale che va dalla Libia all'Italia, una zona che fa parte del progetto

SAR. Il termine SAR significa Search and Relief, cioè ricerca e soccorso e identifica le operazioni di salvataggio condotte dall'organizzazione umanitaria con specifici mezzi navali, aerei o terrestri, finalizzate alla salvaguardia della vita umana in ambienti ostili (ONU 1979). Le persone che arrivano attraverso rotte non autorizzate, come quella del Mediterraneo centrale, vengono poi inviate in centri di accoglienza in attesa della domanda di asilo o in centri di emergenza. Per questo motivo, ho scelto di esaminare due centri di accoglienza italiani, il Centro Stranieri "Sanzio Togni" e la Cooperativa Eucrante. Per concludere, ho intervistato anche la responsabile del programma di Translators Without Borders, un'agenzia che opera in contesti umanitari fornendo servizi e strumenti linguistici per superare le barriere linguistiche in situazioni di emergenza.

Successivamente, ho approfondito il concetto di metodo qualitativo, che è la modalità con cui ho condotto la ricerca e dell'approccio tematico. L'analisi tematica descrive i dati e implica l'interpretazione nel processo di costruzione dei temi (Kiger et al. 2020), che sono "risposte o significati strutturati" derivati dai dati che informano la domanda di ricerca (Braun e Clarke 2006: 82). Di conseguenza, le interviste sono state condotte in modo semi-strutturato dal momento che le domande sono state preparate seguendo un ordine ben preciso, lasciando comunque libertà all'interlocutore di potersi esprimere a suo piacimento.

Dai risultati ottenuti dall'analisi delle interviste, emerge chiaramente che il diritto di accedere alle informazioni e di comunicare viene rispettato dalle organizzazioni umanitarie utilizzando le lingue veicolari e non i dialetti o le lingue etniche. In relazione a ciò, è possibile capire che le lingue potrebbero non essere una preoccupazione primaria per le organizzazioni umanitarie, e questo è possibile notarlo anche dal reclutamento di esperti linguistici, che sono figure non sempre richieste. Tuttavia, gli intervistati evidenziano che il loro ruolo comincia a essere considerato fondamentale dalle organizzazioni, anche se ancora non è ben definito. Infatti, la mediazione non è considerata una professione e per questo motivo ci sono pochi corsi di formazione e non esiste un codice etico per questo specifico impiego. Inoltre, le interviste mostrano anche che le principali sfide che interpreti e mediatori devono affrontare lavorando in questo contesto sono legate alla sfera emotiva e non a quella linguistica. Lavorare in situazioni di forte stress, il concetto di neutralità e il rapporto con i minori sono identificati come i problemi principali. Inoltre, sebbene la mediazione non sia ancora considerata una

professione, gli interpreti e i mediatori umanitari hanno molte responsabilità e una di queste è quella di essere la voce del proprio cliente.

Conclusione

Questo studio, che potrebbe essere ampliato con ulteriori ricerche, mi ha permesso di concludere la tesi con alcune riflessioni personali. In primo luogo, è possibile affermare che, come emerso dalle interviste, il ruolo della comunicazione è percepito come secondario da parte delle organizzazioni umanitarie. Queste rispettano il diritto che hanno i nuovi arrivati ad accedere alle informazioni e di comunicare, ma vengono utilizzate principalmente lingue veicolari e non etniche. Inoltre, poiché le lingue e la comunicazione non hanno un ruolo prioritario, la figura del mediatore e dell'interprete è stata trascurata dalle organizzazioni, anche se stanno iniziando ad acquistare importanza nonostante il loro ruolo non sia ancora chiaro e ben definito. In fine, dalle interviste è emerso che le problematiche maggiori che interpreti e traduttori devono affrontare sono di natura emotiva e non linguistica. Lavorare in situazioni di forte stress, creare un ambiente confortevole e rispettare il codice etico sono le principali difficoltà riscontrate dagli intervistati. Il rispetto del codice etico è anche una delle principali responsabilità degli operatori umanitari, insieme alla capacità di creare fiducia e alla capacità di rendere le persone indipendenti e di soddisfare i loro bisogni.

In conclusione, ritengo importante riconoscere il valore dell'interpretazione come professione e, quindi, svolgere ulteriori ricerche in questa direzione. Inoltre, una parte dei risultati della mia ricerca ha fatto luce sulla formazione e l'istruzione di queste figure, che credo richieda ulteriori approfondimenti poiché nelle università europee sono pochi i corsi di formazione specifici per l'istruzione superiore. Ulteriormente, maggiore ricerca in questo campo è necessaria per identificare e definire il ruolo significativo degli interpreti e dei mediatori che lavorano nelle organizzazioni internazionali, e le responsabilità e le capacità che devono avere per sviluppare adeguatamente il loro lavoro.