

# Linguistic Policies and Practices of Translation and Interpreting Services with Public Institutions



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By

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# 1. ARGUMENT

The present volume includes the findings of the postdoctoral research *A Study on the Linguistic Policies and Practices Regarding Translation and Interpreting Services Adopted by Public Institutions in Galati* (2014-2015), in continuation of the doctoral research on *Language, Power and Intercultural Communication. Translation Policies and the Politics of Translation* carried out between 2009 and 2012<sup>1</sup>. Updates have been added to indicate the changes having occurred over the past ten years in connection with language practices, marketing strategies and public communications.

## 1.1. Aim and rationale of research

The study is intended to generate knowledge regarding the procedures currently underway with local public institutions, adopted for ensuring efficient communication with and quality services for the foreign citizens they come into contact with. The findings are further employed to highlight the good practices and to pinpoint the existing flaws, as well as to propose viable solutions for eradicating at least some of the problems identified in intercultural communication within the public space. Overall, the topic chosen is relevant to the present-day European context. It makes research in the humanities serve societal goals and is likely to confer a proactive role to the University, which thus also gains visibility at national and international levels.

The stress is laid on the situational nature of linguistic interaction and on the ensuing discourses. The authentic circumstances which nonnatives may face while in Galati<sup>2</sup>, Romania are taken into consideration: requiring medical services; initiating lawsuits or being cited in court cases; applying for international study programmes or participating in exchange schemes; obtaining practical information related to travel, accommodation,

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<sup>1</sup> Recently published as *Language, Power and Intercultural Communication. The Policies and Politics of Translation* with Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2023).

<sup>2</sup> Galati is a town in the southeastern part of Romania. Situated on the border with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and an important port on the Danube River, it is frequently visited by foreigners and has numerous cultural exchanges and economic partnerships with people from various countries.

administration, etc. Texts, documents, sites and discourses characteristic of the situations mentioned are taken into consideration to analyse the practice of using English for specific purposes at the local community level. In addition, advertising local cultures and marketing communications via websites have been considered.

The areas covered by the research are linguistics, translation studies and cultural studies, while the eight institutions contacted for relevant data to be processed within the current research are:

- “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati;
- “Sf. Andrei” Hospital, Galati
- The Inspectorate of Police, Galati
- The Tribunal, Galati (The Court of Law, Galati; The Court of Appeal, Galati);
- The Town Hall, Galati;
- The Town Council, Galati;
- “V.A. Urechia” Library, Galati.

## **1.2. Research methods and stages**

The research integrates quantitative and qualitative data:

- the survey which uses a questionnaire as a work technique;
- the study of document content;
- the survey via interviews;
- the case study;
- the comparative analysis.

The stages covered are the following:

- formulating the argument;
- establishing the premises;
- synthesizing the existing theories;
- outlining the conceptual and terminological maps;
- defining the representative samples;
- selecting the investigation tools;
- obtaining and storing the data;
- interpreting the data;
- detailing the case studies;
- communicating the findings.

The approach employed for the realization of the demarche involves obtaining and presenting accreditation from “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, signing a declaration for the protection of personal data for the respondents taking part in the survey, and applying the questionnaire (documents presented in Appendix 2). The latter approaches translation and interpreting services, comprises twenty-four multiple-choice entries and two extra requests for information, being organised in keeping with the six focal points of the investigation: languages used, types of translation/interpreting services, selection and contracting, perception and evaluation, communication channels, websites, language strategy.

### 1.3. Structure of research

The study is structured along the following lines:

The argument and introductory section advance the framing notions that language and identity work together as one and that the power structures which are operative in translation as cultural mediation involve particular negotiation strategies, determining both the relationships established and the results obtained from the communicative act.

Chapter three, *Questioning Translation Services for the Community*, presents and develops on the questionnaire applied to the public institutions selected for the survey in view of highlighting the problems still preventing efficient international communication and collaboration, proposing improvement solutions, and raising awareness regarding the crucial role of translators and interpreters.

Chapter four, *Answers on Translation Services for the Community*, includes the findings of the survey carried out, with a special focus on the six areas mentioned above. The detailed presentation of each particular case supports the premises formulated and draws up particular areas of interest for decision-makers to involve themselves in as soon as possible.

Chapter five, *Marketing and Website-ing Public Translation Services. Pluses and Minuses*, analyses how/if the websites of the public institutions under scrutiny advertise translation and interpreting services, then considers two particular cases of coordination and subordination in the fields of law enforcement and education: the Romanian Inspectorate of Police and its local, Galati branch; “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati and one of its thirteen smaller educational structures, the Faculty of Letters.

Chapter six, *Linguistic Policies and Practices. Machine v Human. Private v Public*, deals with the promotion of local literature on the Internet, showing the downside of machine translation readily available to all, and discussing the strategies adopted by cultural institutions like “V.A. Urechia”

Library, Galati. For comparison and contrast, it also deals with the language and translation policies employed by the world of business, with emphasis on two multinationals: Vodafone and Unilever.

The final remarks summarise the conclusions reached at each stage of the research and round up the discussion on the linguistic policies and practices regarding translation and interpreting services adopted by public institutions in Galati.

The references and bibliography informing the demarche are mentioned in the respective sections, while the appendices give the graphic synopsis of results and include the official supporting documents.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

In the intercultural exchange, language and identity occupy a central position and function together, with identity reflected in language under various forms and with language both revealing and constructing identity. With translation as cultural mediation, the valences of the context generating the text and those of the text modifying the context by its intrusion become essential in deciphering the latent strategies of empowerment or disempowerment which are negotiated.

### **2.1. Translation and intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication is an all-encompassing, global phenomenon, which has become a hallmark of the contemporary situation. Flexible and unconstrained, it goes unquestioned or tends to be disregarded. However, the mechanisms which activate it, the forces which drive or obstruct it, and the actors which process or deviate it cannot go unnoticed. Mention should also be made of the fact that, despite appearances, cross-cultural dialogue is not at all disorderly or unpredictable. Regardless of how confused or confusing it might seem, its fundamental attributes give it consistency and coherence, while establishing precise, well-crafted policies and politics, taking on the status of dominants.

At the core of the dominants mentioned above, there are power structures, underlying all discourse and operating at the level of text (culturally specific), pretext (ideologically informing the text) and context (setting the text in motion). The power structures involved in representation and communication are directly dependent on the processes of relativizing and mediating both reality and truth. With reality understood as closer to representation than to truth and accessed via language, with truth seen as historically determined and contrived in discourse, cultural mediation takes on the roles of negotiation and the functions of communication.

Instrumental in communicating across frontiers and in negotiating cultural selves to others, translation may thus be considered an appropriate tool for bringing to light the relativization of reality characteristic of representation, a deliberate act of mediation, a power structure in and of itself. And yet, there are numerous challenges associated with the identification of reality in the kaleidoscope of linguistic representations, at

the intersection where identity and language collide, against the intervention of countless power structures.

Working with/in language, translation necessarily tackles the changes in the identity landscape, and is influenced by the associated theoretical perspectives developed throughout the years. The early approaches to linguistic identity mostly relied on social identity, and were contested for imagining that individual users of language are similar to, if not identical with all the other members of the larger community they were associated with, regardless of the many inherent markers of difference and/or hybridity. Other approaches were based on interactional theories, whereby identity and otherness are shaped by linguistic behaviour, being criticised “for using an untheorized concept of identity to explain language practice, for their failure to account for the possibility of speaker’s identity construction using language resources that do not belong to them and for ignoring the fact that identity is not the only reason for code-switching” (Jenkins, 2007, 200).

More recently, identity and language studies have focused primarily on the direct impact of power structures on how identity is negotiated. Language practice is recognised as validated by language ideology, language choice and language use. A renegotiation of the game rules becomes necessary once the power relations shift, “so that new identity options come into play and new values are assigned to the identity options which have previously been legitimised or devalued by dominant discourses of identity” (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004, 12-13).

Six points of view concerning linguistic identity originate in these newer theories, all of which have a strong impact on translation as a process/end product (Omoniyi and White, 2006):

- identity is constantly undergoing change;
- identity is context dependent;
- contexts, in their turn, are modified by social factors and communicated through language;
- communication involves identity representations;
- identity underlies social relations and the associated linguistic communication;
- multiple identities may inform one context, requiring careful management of language.

They not only delineate the present-day coordinates of the conceptual area, but support the thesis of the mutual interdependence between language, identity and power whereby the construction of identity

may be determined in language and through language (sometimes observing, some other times opposing inertia, authority or control) and, conversely, language contributes to creating identities through intentional strategies of empowerment or disempowerment – centre-front notions in discussing translation as cultural mediation.

## **2.2. Negotiating identities**

The negotiation of identity is rooted in the opposition self/other, although self and other are mutually contaminating factors which generate a hybrid. Its constituent parts are fluid, hence impossible to trace, especially in our contemporary world, where movement and exchange happen constantly and have forceful effects on the global community. Even the stable features of the self, identified by Paul Ricoeur as an ensemble of distinctive markers allowing the re-identification of an individual as being the same at any time (Ricoeur, 1992, 7) are backgrounded in favour of the unstable features, which are the result of the various projects that subjects are involved in during their existence, and which determine modifications of the self – significant in actual social interaction. Therefore, each individual's identity lies in their history and is articulated in their story.

This narrative of the self or “narrative identity” (Ricoeur, 1992, 114) displays its inner dynamics under the influence of the other. It is structured strategically to obtain the desired reaction or response. It follows that identity is contextually determined, highlighting the individual and the collective, affirming the uniqueness of the assumed ‘I’ and acknowledges the particulars of the associated ‘we’ or ‘same other’ (Ferreol and Jucquois, 2005). Consensually, personal identity assimilates social identity, with individuals taking on as many identities as affiliations, be they simultaneous or successive. Since affiliation to one or more groups is perceived in relation to (all) other groups, personal and social identity frequently undergo processes of re-evaluation and re-valorisation.

Taking into account the numerous avatars of identity and the difficulties in communicating and receiving a meaningful correlated message, the invitation to solve the puzzle is practically a provocation to dialogically represent the self in the mirror of the other. If the reflection is socially and environmentally accepted, affiliation is possible. If, on the other hand, refraction takes place, group identification is usually denied.

The dialogue ideally shapes a common ground for the real and the imaginary to merge, for the construction of identity to be assembled and create mental representations of partly copied, partly denied realities. Through mental representations, the complexity of the real is simplified,

their cognitive and social functions serving as reading, interpreting, as well as translating grids – vehicles for producing, disseminating or imposing cultural identities.

However, just as there is no personal or collective identity which does not change in time, there is no representation which remains unchallenged. It undergoes further (re)production and interpretative processes which, even if advocated as impersonal and impartial, carry inherent traces of subjectivity and political bias.

Language is inherent to both identification and representation. Besides the fact that it represents a vehicle of identity, language works towards identity construction and recognition. Shared as it is by the members of a group, language constitutes a particular dimension of the collective identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

Conventionally, languages represent an invariable, but they also presuppose variation, indicating a variety of affiliations: from belonging to a narrow group (jargon), to being part of a supranational community (Anglophone, Francophone, etc). Moreover, they require that personal and general strategies are adopted: from adapting speech to interlocutors or audiences to formulating and observing linguistic policies. Carriers of identity markers, linguistic features are interpreted in various ways, and generate various representations. In turn, representations engender attitudes and thus influence social interaction. On a global scale, international languages are more influential, yet they exist alongside minority languages, which are less impactful but will never actually be eliminated. The coexistence of international and minority languages gives rise to the manifestation of interlingualism and, with the ensuing interchange and blending of codes, the mingling of identities and cultural references is facilitated. This, in short, defines the contemporary status quo, defined by interculturality and necessitating constant negotiations of affiliations and oppositions. The recently developed hallmarks of identity specific to this relatively new reality redraw the map of power relations worldwide. In fact, identity has always taken shape within the compact net of power relations since, whenever they form or join a group, individuals make choices based on agency and power rather than on prior, distinguishable similar traits.

To sum up, it has been pointed out that the cultural, social and political components underlie the linguistic one and shed light on the identity of the speakers and that of their larger community, being traceable in the identity production process:

- practice – language as a habitual social activity, not merely as an abstract set of norms (Bourdieu, 1977);



- indexicality – the semiotic procedure of juxtaposition, with one entity or event pointing to another, and being applied to language use (Silverstein, 1984);
- ideology – centrality of power manifested as a social phenomenon (Blomaert, 1999);
- performance – particularly deliberate and conscious social display (Bauman, 2000).

These steps are further supported and attested by the dominant forces which set in motion the socio-cultural scene, taking shape in:

- validation and organization of cultural beliefs, practices and the derived power relations (Blomaert, 1999);
- recognition of identity – demanded, hence inherently political (Bauman, 2000).

Linguistic anthropologists add to the aforementioned semiotic processes of practice, indexicality, ideology and performance an intersubjectivity approach intended to provide a “full picture of identity as the socio-political distillation of cultural processes”. They put together a model of identity which “accommodates such issues as markedness, essentialism and institutional power as central components of identity” and posits that “sameness and difference, the raw material of identity, do not exist apart from the ideologies and practices through which they are constructed” (Bucholtz and Hall in Duranti, 2004, 387). Analysing the models of identity previously advanced, researchers in linguistic anthropology conclude that their main downside is not tackling the consequential matters of culture, power and agency. Thus, they advocate a thorough analysis of the relations created through identity work and promote ‘tactics of intersubjectivity’, where ‘tactics’ elicit “the local, situated and often improvised quality of the everyday practices through which individuals, though restricted in their freedom to act by externally imposed constraints, accomplish their social goals” and ‘intersubjectivity’ brings out “the place of agency and interactional negotiation in the formation of identity” (Bucholtz and Hall in Duranti, 2004, 381). These tactics contribute to the interpretation of text (cf. Fairclough, 2006, 30), as well as context:

- of “wordly texts” – texts consistent with ownership, authority, power and the imposition of force (Said, 1983, 32);

- of the contextual examination of mediation through translation as “positing a relationship of power (whether equal or unequal) between languages and cultures” (Baker, 2010, 267).

The consideration of texts in contexts opens the discussion on discourse, which cannot be analysed separately from other linguistic practices at work in society, and needs to be tackled from the standpoint of truth, power and knowledge – propelling discourse from within. As Michel Foucault suggested, “Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth, that is: the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (in Cahoon, 1996, 379-380). It follows that the construction and/or manipulation of truth generates dominant discourses, which indicate power (associated with politics) and which are omnipresent in social relations, configuring or restricting patterns of behaviour.

With regard to the individuals/speakers participating in sending and receiving constructed truths, they are seen as consequences of power affairs and power struggles, as bearers of mystified/mystifying knowledge – conveyed to discourses, employed (and frequently exploited) to promote views, to warrant deeds, to inflict policies and to advance ideologies which underpin power relations. Introducing people/ language users into the discussion places the cultural component of political economy under the lens: “economic and political ‘objects’ are also culturally conditioned and embedded – so, for instance, particular economic systems or forms of state depend upon and are closely interconnected with particular meanings, interpretations, narratives, values, attitudes, identities and so forth” and the circle closes thus with subjectivities as causes of “discourses which ‘translate’ into social relations, forms of power, rituals and institutions, beliefs and values and desires, and material practices” (Fairclough, 2006, 26, 34).

At the level of cultural political economy, critical discourse analysis (CDA) brings together a series of approaches which investigate social structures, practices and events, with emphasis on practices, understood as mediating between structures and events through discourses, genres and styles – which underscore the means of representing the various areas of social life, the strategies of (inter)acting and communicating, the discourse moments of a social or personal identity.

### **2.3. Translation as negotiation**

Translation as social practice and act of cultural mediation has the potential of ratifying the anthropological construction of self and other, and, as such, is gaining visibility. Translation facilitates intercultural social integration and permits linguistic and cultural identities to join in a dialogue. Translation frequently occurs as an invisible act, which is non-critical and places no responsibility on the translator regarding content fidelity and cultural appropriateness. By contrast, the unfortunately infrequent visible translation is a vocational undertaking, requiring more than service provision, which prioritises text proficiency and context awareness. For invisible translation to be reduced, if not eradicated, policymakers should be persuaded to implement changes at the level of the educational system and of the translation market so as to encourage the acquisition of cultural skills by translators, to aid the supra-cultural mission of translated texts, and to confer weight to translation as mediation. A prerequisite of communicating across cultural frontiers in a global world, mediation through professional translation needs effective supra-national political engagement for disruptions or interferences from various centres of power to be avoided. Translators too are expected to play an active role in educating themselves in order to observe the endless construction and reconstruction of cultural reality or truth in discourse and the strategies of representing or narrating the self and the other.

Besides the indisputable communicative function of in-group and out-group culture-bound texts, the former set is socially oriented for the most part, while the latter involves strategic, political positions to be assumed by their translator. Accordingly, the process of translation licences the agent with identity construction, and sanctions the object due to the fact that the product of translation is revealed as revision or rewriting. Process and product share a rhetorical purpose, in keeping with which “the appropriateness of translations can be judged”, together with “the whole matter of structural modifications and the degree to which they are permitted” (Hatim and Mason, 1990, 190).

Globalization has broadened acculturation, blurred cultural differences and brought additional provocations for translators, trapped between “ground[ing] a culture in their role as architects of vernacular languages and cultures, and creatively undermin[ing] and challeng[ing] these very cultures in their capacities as underground agents” (Cronin, 2003, 38). A way out might consist of adequate translator training focused on identity awareness and diversification by applying the principle of foreignization, hence giving minorities the possibility of expressing themselves in their own voice

(Venuti, 1995) and of conferring translation the status of a decision-making act, with the capacity to improve and widen translation studies (Hatim and Mason, 1990). Moreover, the critical analysis of the text and its translation (both context-generated and context-generating) has the potential to add relevant angles to translation theory, especially in connection with the newest research in the sociology of interculturality and the less explored manifestations of the postcolonial age – which call for explorations into power, politics and deriving policies.

### 3. QUESTIONING TRANSLATION SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY

Romania's joining the European Union in 2007 has given rise to the free circulation of Romanians across (broader) geographical spaces and has seen the introduction of legislation in force with all member states. Consequently, public institutions were compelled to take into account the wider community they are now addressing and to readjust their practices and strategies so as to fit the newer, changing context. Playing a major role in the process of internationalization, translation has nevertheless remained backgrounded, with almost no attention and credit, thus with no adequate financing and essential development policy. The goal of this chapter is to present a questionnaire devised to be officially applied to representative public institutions in Galati. Based on previous research I have carried out in the domain, it summarises the essential aspects of the recent downgrading of translation services and is intended to raise awareness, eventually to reconsider the status of the profession.

#### **3.1. Frame**

The translation market in Europe is framed by the supranational union of twenty-seven states, where commonly issued and implemented policies are enforced, including translation- and translator-related objectives, principles and guidelines. The benefits of this frame include easier travel and social interaction across national frontiers, the creation of transnational ties and the development of joint projects. The drawbacks are connected to excessive bureaucracy and the challenges it poses to translators, who are expected to observe the current legislation and undergo countless procedures.

As everywhere else, the practice of translation in the EU determines social status. In turn, status is attained through proficiency in language use in immediate speech situations and text decoding or encoding enterprises, as well as through familiarity with the institution of language in general and with the social institutions in which communication takes place in particular. The two should ideally function as one. In other words, personal qualifications and attributes are not enough for excellence in translation. Institutions have to acknowledge the necessity of quality translation

services and to contribute to translator training in various ways, as E. Wagner, S. Bech and J.M. Martinez suggest in a section dedicated to the impact of EU enlargement on translation:

translators should not be expected to work in isolation from other fellow professionals, without the possibility of networking and sharing terminology; inexperienced, overworked or badly paid translators are the wrong choice for the job; translators need to be provided with legal and technical advice from other specialists; translators should be offered the possibility of attending initial, periodical or conversion training courses held by professional, highly qualified teachers and sponsored by the employer; to be recruited, translators need a university degree, usually of four years of study; translators have to be highly trained in their mother tongue as well; translators are required to know at least two official languages of the EU besides their mother tongue; translators should contact the EU institutions and universities in EU countries to find out more about required translator training; to be best informed, translators are expected to take part in conferences and workshops on the translation matters (2002, 105-117).

In reality, however, things do not always go as expected. To reach an understanding of the pluses and minuses of social translation, as well as to allow the reconsideration of the translation profession, a survey has been initiated. The qualitative research involves the analysis of documents and structured interviews (based on a questionnaire and a couple of guided commentaries). The questionnaire conceived is intended for local public institutions providing services for the community, whose communication – accounted for by the current European circumstances – involves addressing the local, but also the international audience.

### **3.2. Proposed questionnaire**

The multiple-choice questionnaire consists of twenty-four entries with four answer variants (a, b, c and d), the first three offering specific solutions and the fourth asking for completion. The aspects targeted, which inevitably overlap at times, may be grouped under the categories specified earlier: languages used; types of translation/interpreting services; translators/interpreters; selection and contracting; perception and evaluation; communication channels, websites; language strategy. Mention must be made here of the fact that interpreting has been added to the list initially but the data collected indicates that requests for interpreting services are extremely rare in local public institutions. Also included in the

questionnaire are two requests to provide information on documents and situations where English is used.

The language items focus on translation/interpreting services proper, generally on communication with the public and particularly via the institution's web page. Reference has only been made to the mother tongue (Romanian in this case) and to English and French. Previous research has shown that, if any at all, these are the two foreign languages which are usually employed for intercultural communication in Romania. French is still perceived as either rare or aristocratic, while the myth about English is that everyone under forty speaks it relatively well – fuelled by the great exposure of the young to this international language taught in most schools, omnipresent on TV, widely used in the media and in virtual networks; emerging from the “entirely natural phenomenon” of English becoming a global language, with “the majority of non-native speakers us[ing] it as a lingua franca among themselves rather than as a ‘foreign’ language to communicate with native speakers” (Jenkins, 2007, xi).

Translation/interpreting services are most frequently requested for

- a. English
- b. French
- c. English and French
- d. other; please specify

Communication with the public is achieved

- a. in Romanian only
- b. in Romanian and in English
- c. in more foreign languages besides Romanian
- d. other; please specify

The institution's web page

- a. includes information in Romanian and in several foreign languages
- b. includes information in Romanian and in English
- c. does not include information in foreign languages
- d. other; please specify

A number of five entries are related to types of translation and interpreting services. The aim is twofold: to deduce whether public institutions conduct these activities themselves or whether they collaborate with others; to make further inquiries into the particulars of these activities, into the legality, reliability and professionalism of the end products. Since

the premise assumed is that translations are specialised, in keeping with the profile of each and every institution, of special interest here is also the sort of interpreting frequently needed and organised. This gives relevant information on how interactive, dynamic, real-time efficient and open to the international public the organization is.

Does the institution offer translation services?

- a. Yes. Its own services
- b. Yes. Through collaboration
- c. No
- d. other; please specify

Does the institution offer interpreting services?

- a. Yes. Its own services
- b. Yes. Through collaboration
- c. No
- d. other; please specify

The translations offered are

- a. recognised by the institution
- b. authorised, legalised, stamped through institution services
- c. authorised, legalised, stamped by the beneficiary
- d. other; please specify

The translations requested are

- a. achieved by an authorised translator, legalised by a public notary, stamped and super legalised by the competent court of law
- b. achieved by an authorised translator, legalised by a public notary
- c. achieved by an authorised translator
- d. other; please specify

The interpreting achieved is, more often than not,

- a. simultaneous
- b. consecutive
- c. simultaneous and consecutive
- d. other; please specify

An additional set of five items target the selection and contracting of translators/interpreters, being in close connection with the ones covering the



latter's perception and evaluation. The purpose here is twofold: in connection with those public institutions which do offer translation/ interpreting services, to find out if qualification/specialization in the domain is mandatory, perceived as a plus or considered irrelevant – standpoints which affect the organizational chart of the institution and influence the policy it adopts in relation to the evolution and management of human resources; in connection with the public bodies which appeal to services provided by external collaborators, to determine the selection criteria and the deriving procedures, as well as the documents presupposed by the venture, thus questioning the efficiency and efficacy of the service offered.

The institution's translation services are provided by

- a. qualified personnel
- b. unqualified personnel, whose job description includes translation
- c. any employee who comes in contact with foreign citizens
- d. other; please specify

The institution's interpreting services are provided by

- a. qualified personnel
- b. unqualified personnel, whose job description includes translation
- c. any employee who comes in contact with foreign citizens
- d. other; please specify

The translation services offered by external collaborators

- a. are based on permanent contracts
- b. are based on fixed-term contracts
- c. are occasional; based on agreements
- d. other; please specify

The interpreting services offered by external collaborators

- a. are based on permanent contracts
- b. are based on fixed-term contracts
- c. are occasional; based on agreements
- d. other; please specify

The selection of translators/interpreters in view of collaboration is achieved

- a. through contacting specialised agencies/ translation companies
- b. through contacting authorised persons

- c. through recommendations from third parties
- d. other; please specify

Three of the entries in the proposed questionnaire are dedicated to perception and evaluation. The first two interrogate the standard of the services offered, which is correlated with the professional credentials of the person mediating between languages and cultures. Feedback on activities is regarded as the best way to reconsider earlier practices and to restructure future ones so as to meet expectations, gain in credibility and, in short, build a positive image inside and outside the local community. The third foregrounds the previous education and training of specialists in the field – which is one of the problems signalled by scholars in translation studies, who propose that systemic changes should be operated.

In recent years, the study and practice of foreign languages have witnessed a worrying decline in interest. This is true even for English, increasingly becoming a second language rather than the foreign language of choice, as used to be the case not so long ago. And yet, job offers favour those fluent in least two foreign languages (European Commission, 2014). In connection to teaching, with the emergence of a European lingua franca, a shift to developing reading and translation skills has become imperative, replacing the previous educational goals of building speaking and listening skills. In this area of interest, and in close connection with the contemporary European multicultural space, David Katan's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (2004, 329-341) strategically places the emphasis on translator training in view of attaining intercultural sensitivity and fulfilling a supra-cultural mission.

Has there been feedback on translation/interpreting services?

- a. There has been positive feedback from beneficiaries.
- b. There has been negative feedback from beneficiaries.
- c. There has been no feedback.
- d. other; please specify

The positive/negative feedback mostly reflected

- a. linguistic form and content
- b. spoken language fluency
- c. meeting deadlines
- d. other; please specify

A good translator/interpreter is recommended by

- a. a BA/MA/PhD diploma in Philology
- b. a certificate issued by the Ministry of Justice
- c. his/her performance in the field of translation/interpreting
- d. other; please specify

Another group of three items concentrates on the communication channels used by public bodies, with specific emphasis on websites, which seem to be the most popular and the most commonly employed to transmit information to the public at large. Extra information is sought with reference to their content, in terms of conferring visibility to translation, subtitling, dubbing and voice-over (as and if the case may be). This would allow in-depth analysis of the intercultural dialogue facilitated by and of the localization policies at work in website design.

Communication with the public is mostly achieved

- a. through the institution's web page
- b. through the institution's spokesperson – in the written press
- c. through the institution's spokesperson – on TV
- d. other; please specify

The institution's web page

- a. mentions the translation/interpreting services offered
- b. gives details on the translation/interpreting services offered
- c. does not mention the translation/interpreting services offered
- d. other; please specify

The institution's web page

- a. includes text only
- b. also includes subtitled video material
- c. also includes audio-video material (with subtitles/dubbing/voice-over provided)
- d. other; please specify

Last but not least, the language strategy of the institution is placed under the lens. Of particular interest in this section of the questionnaire are: the documents, areas or situations in which foreign languages are used within the institution; the acquiesced role of certified proficiency and of sustained, recurrent practice in foreign languages; the actual formulation and implementation of a strategy involving the correct use of languages in official documents and formal interactions. For Romanian, two laws have already been issued and should be observed (not always the case,

unfortunately): Law 500/2004<sup>3</sup> – formulating requirements for using the Romanian language in public places, relations and institutions (Romanian Parliament, 2014); and Law 183/2006<sup>4</sup> – stipulating the standardised codification of the set of characters in electronic documents (Romanian Parliament, 2014). Regulations for foreign languages are still to be implemented in Romanian public institutions, although EU language policies are in place (European Commission, 2014).

The language strategy of the institution

- a. was formulated after joining the EU
- b. was changed after joining the EU
- c. was not changed after joining the EU
- d. other; please specify

The language strategy of the institution

- a. is adopted from the regulations issued by the respective governing authority/ministry
- b. is mentioned in the institution's own regulations
- c. its formulation is under way
- d. other; please specify

What is the status of foreign languages on employment in the institution?

- a. Knowledge of a foreign language is compulsory.
- b. Knowledge of a foreign language is not compulsory.
- c. Knowledge of a foreign language is not a selection criterion.
- d. other; please specify

What is the status of foreign languages within the institution?

- a. Beginner/Refresher courses are offered.
- b. Training programmes are organised.
- c. There are mobilities, international exchange schemes.
- d. other; please specify

The personnel use foreign languages to

- a. communicate and collaborate with similar institutions abroad
- b. carry out joint projects/partnerships/research with similar institutions abroad

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gu3dsnbt/legea-nr-500-2004-privind-folosirea-limbii-romane-in-locuri-relatii-si-institutii-publice>.

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/71963>.

- c. deliver papers/presentations at international conferences, symposiums, workshops
- d. other; please specify

The supplementary information requested asks the personnel participating in the survey to provide examples and, if possible, samples of documents frequently translated into English and of situations in which translation/interpreting from/into English is necessary. The respondents, authorised spokespersons, are nominated by the top administration of each institution, following the researcher's official accreditation by the alma mater and the written request formulated to this end. Their identity is confidential, in keeping with the declaration regarding the protection of personal data presented in view of carrying out the research on the premises of the public bodies in question<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.3. Conclusion

Broadly speaking, in Europe, translation is now performed for the European Union or in the European Union. Whereas translating for the EU has a markedly political dimension, translating in the EU is predominantly commercial, a service under contract. The translator operates as a supplementary filter, interposed between the sender and the receiver of the message, observing the restrictions imposed by the 'client', the goals envisaged by the 'product' and the ready expectations of the targeted 'buyer'. Despite this strategic position, the translator is still perceived as a person involved in secretarial work. As for translation, it has only gained a higher status in institutions whose object is research, education and training, whilst the necessity to promote social, cultural and intellectual 'goods' has become more stringent.

The questionnaire applied to public institutions in Galati is directed at this paradox and will hopefully reveal the neuralgic areas to be addressed by decision-makers in future so as to promote advanced translator training, avoid unprofessional contributions, reject below-standard translations, and actually place the respective institutions in the service of the community.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2.

## 4. ANSWERS ON TRANSLATION SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY

In a minority-language speaking country like Romania, also a member of the supranational organizations of the European Union, as well as of The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, explicit language policies and clear procedures to obtain assistance from institutions are indispensable. Translation and interpreting services addressing people who travel to, work or set up businesses, and take up residence here have become commonplace.

Nevertheless, their promotion remains problematic, as does the perception of the translator/interpreter. In the meantime, people are trapped in translation, with more or less serious consequences in matters of health care, law and legislation, community rights or educational prospects.

The focus of the present chapter is on local public bodies, the particular case chosen being that of the already mentioned representative institutions in Galati<sup>6</sup>. The section presents the findings of the survey carried out based on the data collected from the questionnaire administered to accredited personnel in the respective institutions, following the submission of a declaration stating the obligation of preserving the confidentiality of personal data, signed by the researcher.

### 4.1. Frame

Membership in a supranational organization like the EU involves a complex process of cohabitation, one of whose essential aspects is language. Emphasizing intercultural communication, the executive body of the European Union, the European Commission, promotes multilingualism, language learning and teaching, linguistic diversity, and language equality. Notwithstanding, what was prefigured in 2000, following the problems related to implementing new legislation and managing the wide-ranging international exchanges emerging – all supported by translation efforts – is

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<sup>6</sup> For concision purposes, the eight public institutions analysed are abbreviated in the reporting documents as: U = “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati; H = “Sf. Andrei” Hospital, Galati; P = The Inspectorate of Police, Galati; CL = The Court of Law, Galati; CA = The Court of Appeal, Galati; TH = The Town Hall, Galati; TC = The Town Council, Galati; TL = “V. A. Urechia” Library, Galati.