

Master thesis:

“Interpreters as Agents in the Refugee Crisis”

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the master degree in Transcultural Studies at:

Heidelberg University
Faculty of Philosophy
Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”
M. A. Transcultural Studies

First supervisor: Prof. Dr. Daniel König
Second supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kerstin Kunz

Submitted by:
Sabrina Schider
Student ID number: 3289565
Im Neuenheimer Feld 661, 69120 Heidelberg
schider_sabrina@hotmail.com
Number of words: 30,091

Abstract

The so-called refugee 'crisis' could not be managed without the help of volunteers, on a global as well as on a local scale. The focus of this thesis is on one particular group of people whose commitment is crucial for handling the situation: interpreters in the refugee context in Germany. Since most of the refugees speak neither German nor English, it would be impossible to go through the different processes to obtain asylum, but also to provide social support, without the help of interpreters. They play a very significant role and are confronted with highly challenging tasks. They are the linguistic and cultural mediators between two parties and they can be considered as agents of transculturality. They have to be able to adapt to different situations because depending on the context, where and for whom they work, different qualities and strategies are expected from them. In this dynamic and complex situation, the interpreters have to discover and define their own agency and role, while trying to meet the expectations of their employers as well as those of the refugees. Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness, create a dialogue, analyse the different perspectives, and provide adequate training to prepare the interpreters for the challenges.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 1.1. Transculturality, Agency and Context | 4 |
| 1.2. Sources, Settings and Scales | 6 |
| 1.3. The Discipline of Interpreting | 8 |
| | |
| 2. Expectations and Perspective of the Institutions | 10 |
| 2.1. Interpreting for Public Authorities | 11 |
| 2.1.1. Analysis of the BAMF Brochure for Interpreters | 14 |
| 2.1.2. Interpreting for the Police | 19 |
| 2.1.2.1. Interviews with Police Officers | 20 |
| 2.2. Interpreting for Social Organisations | 23 |
| 2.2.1. Recruitment, Languages and Availability of Interpreters | 24 |
| 2.2.2. Challenges and Expectations from the Social Workers' Perspective | 25 |
| 2.3. Interpreting for Psychotherapists | 28 |
| 2.3.1. Culture and Psychotherapy | 29 |
| 2.3.2. Interpreting for Refugees in Psychotherapy | 32 |
| 2.3.3. Abdallah-Steinkopff: Guidelines for an Efficient Collaboration | 35 |
| | |
| 3. Reality and Perspective of Interpreters | 39 |
| 3.1. Who are the Interpreters? | 39 |
| 3.2. Problems and Challenges in Context | 45 |
| 3.2.1. Linguistic Problems | 45 |
| 3.2.2. Cultural Problems | 49 |
| 3.2.3. Emotional Problems | 53 |
| | |
| 4. Assessment of Workshop and Training Programme | 55 |
| 4.1. Workshop for Interpreters of Freundeskreis Asyl | 56 |
| 4.1.1. Content and Introduction | 56 |
| 4.1.2. Types of Interpreting, Settings and Technical Strategies | 57 |
| 4.1.3. Expectations and the Role of Interpreters | 58 |
| 4.1.4. Suggestions for Specific Situations | 59 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 4.2. The UNHCR Training Programme Recommended by the BAMF | 61 |
| 4.2.1. Module 1: Professional Interpreting | 62 |
| 4.2.2. Module 2: Language Issues | 64 |
| 4.2.3. Module 3: The Interpreter’s Toolkit | 65 |
| 4.2.4. Module 4: It’s Interpreting Time | 66 |
| 4.2.5. Module 5: Basics of Self-care | 68 |
| 5. Evaluation and Conclusion | 69 |
| 5.1. The Agency of Interpreters | 70 |
| 5.2. Important Aspects to Consider for the Employers | 71 |
| 5.3. Suggestions for Training Programmes | 72 |
| 6. Bibliography | 75 |

Appendices:

Appendix I: BAMF Brochure “*Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz*”

Appendix II: CD-ROM with Conducted Interviews

Appendix III: Declaration against Plagiarism

1. Introduction

The conflicts in the Middle East, along with the so-called refugee ‘crisis’, pose a major challenge to the world. Worldwide, a total of about 60 million people are fleeing because of war, discrimination, human rights violations, persecution, lack of perspective, unemployment or for ‘economic reasons’. Some are fleeing because the effects of climate change, for example droughts, increasing sea levels, etc., have made it impossible for them to live in certain regions. Syria has replaced Afghanistan as the main country of origin of refugees. However, there are also many refugees from other countries like Iraq, Eritrea, Gambia, or the Balkans trying to come to Europe or Germany. Recent developments have completely thwarted their possibilities of entering the European Union and the overall situation for the refugees is marked by a constant aggravation. The EU member states have divergent opinions on how to deal with this situation and, more often than not, their national interests prevail. Hence, there is no joint solution for the ‘crisis’ and the victims who have to pay for it are – again – the refugees. Even though, on a global scale, EU countries are by far not the top host countries, many refugees have come to Europe as well. Therefore, it is even more important that there are many unpaid volunteers as well as paid employees who commit themselves to help the refugees in their tragic and desperate situation.

The focus of this thesis is on one particular group of people whose commitment is crucial for handling the situation: interpreters in the refugee context. Since most of the refugees speak neither German nor English, it would be impossible to go through the different processes to obtain asylum without the help of interpreters. The three main aims of this thesis are the following: First, to give insight into who the interpreters are and illustrate their agency. Special emphasis is put on the important role and transcultural function of the interpreters. Since the interpreters are the linguistic and cultural mediators between two parties, they can be considered as agents of transculturality. Interpreters need a high degree of transcultural awareness and the ability to transform meanings, e.g. of culture-specific expressions, into another cultural context through language. They have to be able to adapt to different situations and develop an awareness of their own agency, as well as the agency of the parties they interpret for in a specific context. Second, the different situations described in this paper are to shed light on the highly challenging tasks interpreters face. Depending on the context, where and for whom they work, different qualities and strategies are expected from them. Working at the German Federal Office

for Migration and Refugees BAMF¹ (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*) or the police requires other qualities and qualifications than working for psychotherapists or social services like Diakonie² or Freundeskreis Asyl³. The analysis of the conducted interviews is intended to create a dialogue and examine whether the expectations of the institutions are compatible with the reality interpreters are confronted with. This can increase the mutual understanding which improves the collaboration and benefits everyone: the institutions, the interpreters and especially the refugees. Third, the knowledge gained through this thesis should serve as basis for the development of new workshops and training programmes or for the improvement of the existing ones.

The meaning of the mentioned concepts ‘transculturality’, ‘agency’, and ‘context’ will be explained in the following subchapter. Afterwards, the sources applied, the settings and the scales of analysis will be expounded. The last introductory subchapter will familiarise the reader with the discipline of interpreting. The main part will present and analyse the expectations and the perspective of the institutions, the reality and the perspective of the interpreters, as well as a workshop and an available online training programme.

1.1. Transculturality, Agency and Context

Cultures are not limited by national frontiers, they are not homogenous or isolated groups, but heterogeneous, hybrid and entangled with each other. Our world is strongly interconnected and cultural borders are increasingly dissipating. There are different reasons for this development, for instance, migration, new communication systems and economic (inter-)dependencies. Hence, cultural circumstances are very dynamic and subject to constant change⁴.

There are different subcultures that connect people from supposedly different cultures, determined by, for example, gender, social class, profession, age, residence (urban or rural), or civil status. Academics, vegetarians, sportsmen, musicians, mothers, etc. from different cultures might have more in common than people with different professions or lifestyles from the same culture. A person’s agency, thus, is formed by different circumstances, living conditions and

¹ ‘BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - Welcome Page’.

² ‘Über Uns - Diakonie Heidelberg’.

³ ‘Freundeskreis Asyl Karlsruhe e.V.’

⁴ cf. Welsch, ‘Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today’, 197 et seqq.

individual preferences or inclinations. Interpreters have to be aware of the agencies of the people they are working with and, additionally, frequently have to switch their own agency according to the context they are working in. In order to be able to ascribe the specific agency to the person they interpret, it is not enough to know the nationality or the culture, but many other aspects have to be considered as well.

An awareness of the transcultural world we live in is essential for interpreters. They need a broad knowledge of the dynamics of macro- and micro-levels and the ability to connect them, i.e. knowledge about the geopolitical situation and the ability to place an individual agent on a micro-level into the macro-level. The interpreters have to be very flexible and need a high level of cultural empathy. However, the historical perspective is also highly significant because the historical memory of a particular culture or nation influences the mindset of the people and thus, depending on who uses a specific term, the meaning of it might change. For instance, if a British, French or Spanish person uses the word 'colonisation', it could have a different meaning or other connotations than if members of American indigenous groups use it, especially if they are still being discriminated by colonial power structures. For many indigenous people this term simply continues to be connected to oppression and genocide. For a Briton, on the other hand, depending on the ideological or political disposition and attitude, it might be connected to a sensation of superiority, guilt, or simply indifference. Another example that could be mentioned is the term 'prosperity'. For members of the industrialised countries, prosperity is just commonplace, whereas it seems to be unreachable for inhabitants of developing countries. Hence, the meaning of words and expressions change according to the agency of the people.

The context in which certain terms are used also plays a very important role. This can be illustrated with the example given before. If a Briton uses the term 'colonisation' at a conference for human rights, for example, the meaning probably is congruent with the connotations indigenous people might have. Other examples are the German terms '*Rasse*' ('race') or '*Führer*' ('leader'), which have a particular negative connotation in Germany, mainly because of the holocaust of the Second World War. The usage of such terms is generally problematic and, particularly for interpreters, it is necessary to be aware of the specific connotations that have been shaped by the historical memory of one society.

Linguistic diversity unites and opposes at the same time⁵: It unites the speakers of one linguistic community and at the same time separates them from others, those who do not speak the same language. Therefore, interpreters are needed as transcultural agents who can unite people from different linguistic communities. However, it is important to consider that the interpreters also have their own agency, a specific cultural background, a particular mindset and living circumstances, which all influence their interpretations. Conclusively, apart from the required language skills, it is only possible to assess and interpret a statement correctly if one is aware of the agency of the speakers, the own agency, and the context in which the interpretation takes place. The importance of these concepts in the refugee context will be illustrated on different scales.

1.2. Sources, Settings and Scales

A variety of sources were used for this research that allowed for the comparison of different scales and perspectives. These sources include scientific books and articles, informative material like a brochure (see appendix I) and a recommended training programme provided by BAMF, the content of a workshop for interpreters, and, above all, the results of the conducted interviews with interpreters and employees who need interpreters for their work (see appendix II). These different sources draw a broad picture of the situation and enable to relate theory to practice. Correlating theory and practice is a particularly important issue in the discipline of interpreting, since interpreting is a very practice-oriented course of study and the importance of the scientific approach is sometimes undervalued. Through the evaluation of the conducted interviews, the practical conditions and real circumstances for interpreters in the refugee situation will be examined, and, finally, compared and contrasted to the theory, which encompasses the expectations of the institutions and the content taught at the workshops or training programmes.

The selected method was in-depth-interviewing, which is “a data-gathering technique used in qualitative research when the goal is to collect detailed, richly textured, person-centered information from one or more individuals”⁶. This method was chosen to gain insights into what

⁵ cf. Coşeriu and Loureda Lamas, *Lenguaje y discurso*, 49.

⁶ Kaufman, ‘In-Depth Interviewing’, 123.

is meaningful to each individual interpreter⁷. Thus, the interviews can be regarded as field reports and constitute the practical approach of this thesis, the depiction of the reality the interpreters, the social workers and the police officers experience in their work. Mrs. Abdallah-Steinkopff, a psychotherapist at Refugio München, shares her personal work experience in her article and in her lectures, which is why this material was used as field reports for this study as well. The secondary literature, as well as the brochure of the BAMF, constitute the theoretical part of this thesis because they scientifically illustrate different aspects of the discipline of interpreting and define what is theoretically expected from the interpreters. In this context, there is a danger that police officers, BAMF officials or other employers might not be sufficiently aware of particular problems that can occur in practice, especially when it comes to important concepts like agency or neutrality, but also cultural tensions. Ideally, theory and practise should be combined in the workshops and the training programmes. Therefore, the content of a workshop organised by Freundeskreis Asyl, as well as of the UNHCR training programme for interpreters in a refugee context recommended by the BAMF will be examined in the last chapter. The object of the analysis is to determine whether the content taught is compatible with the underlying theory, the requirements and the challenges interpreters and employees face or if amendments and new approaches would be necessary. Analysing only one kind of source would be a rather futile and unsatisfactory method. By using this selective material, it is possible to develop a comprehensive understanding of the situation, correlate theory with practice and conclusively develop suggestions for improvement.

Depending on where and for whom interpreters work, different qualities and strategies are expected from them, as will be demonstrated in this thesis. These different expectations can also be related to the scale on which the institutions operate. The BAMF and the police are federal institutions, whereas the social organisations are organised locally. Thus, the function can be connected to the scale. Federal institutions act in the name and the interest of the state, on a national scale, whereas social organisations act in the interest of the refugee, on a local scale. Accordingly, the offered support is adapted to the local circumstances, e.g. the admission requirements for refugees at the university in Heidelberg might differ from the admission requirements at the university in Munich, or the housing market situation might be different, etc. The smallest scale certainly is the psychotherapeutic setting, because it is geared towards the individual needs of the patients. Thus, according to the scale, the context and the agency, the associated demands and the agency of an interpreter change. The focus on these different

⁷ cf. Rubinstein cited in *ibid.*

scales enables the analysis and connection of different perspectives, providing a broad picture of the situation.

1.3. The Discipline of Interpreting

This introductory chapter serves to illustrate and explain the discipline of interpreting. First of all, it is necessary to understand the difference between translating and interpreting. Translating refers to the written translation of different text types, such as books, certificates, manuals, websites, etc. Interpreting is the oral kind of translation in different settings. As Roderick Jones⁸ also explained, interpreting is more than sheer translation, but also communication. The task of the interpreter is to enable people to communicate with each other. People primarily need interpreters because of the linguistic barrier, but also because – as they usually come from different countries – they “have behind them different bodies of knowledge, different education, different cultures, and therefore different intellectual approaches”⁹. In the 18th century, Wilhelm von Humboldt already recognised that the cultural background determines the world view, the thinking, and the language of each individual¹⁰. According to Jones, these differences can manifest explicitly or implicitly¹¹: Explicitly if the speaker refers to, for example, institutions or other specific data that do not have an equivalent in the language of the addressed person. In this case, it is the interpreter’s task to recognise these differences and explain them in order to transfer the meaning as clearly as possible. Implicitly, the interpreter must be able to understand the means used by speakers to express their ideas, such as understatement, hyperbole, or irony, depending on the cultural background. This explanation of the tasks of interpreters illustrates the meaning of the term ‘interpreting’ because it is necessary to actually *interpret* what was said and not just translate words or sentences literally. Jones correctly states that “interpreters must bridge the cultural and conceptual gaps separating the participants in a meeting”¹² or in any other setting.

Interpreting can be divided into two main subcategories: conference interpreting and community interpreting. Most master programmes offered at universities are mainly designed

⁸ cf. Jones, *Conference Interpreting Explained*, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ cf. Werlen, *Sprachliche Relativität*, 131 et seqq.

¹¹ cf. Jones, *Conference Interpreting Explained*, 3 et seq.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

to train conference interpreters. Conference interpreters work for international organisations, ministries, political parties, trade unions, numerous private companies, or scientific and academic conferences¹³. Conference interpreting is subdivided into two categories: simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting. As the designation already reveals, in simultaneous interpreting the interpreter speaks at the same time as the original speaker. In order to be able to do so, the interpreter ideally is seated in a sound-proof booth with the necessary technical equipment like headphones and a microphone. The listeners who depend on the interpretation only have to choose the right channel and put on their headphones in order to listen to the interpretation. In consecutive interpreting, the interpreter first waits until the speaker finishes the speech, or a part of the speech, and renders the interpretation in the other language consecutively. In the course of their training, interpreters develop their individual note taking system and strategies. Since it would be impossible to write down the whole speech because of the speed, notes basically serve as a memory aid. Notes can be symbols, like a simplified sketch representing an ear instead of writing down the verb ‘to hear’, abbreviations, signs borrowed from other writing systems, like the Greek alpha for ‘work’, which is used by many interpreters, mathematical characters, etc. Even though specific classes for note taking are offered, each interpreter has to find the best method for himself and develop his own notes (– for the sake of simplicity, the masculine form is used throughout this document, but should be taken to refer to persons of both genders). Therefore, constant training is essential. In any case, the interpreter is supposed to slip into the role of the speaker and thus reproduce the speech in the first person as if he was the speaker himself, even if the gender of the speaker and the interpreter differ¹⁴. Furthermore, “the conference interpreter must be able to provide an exact and faithful reproduction of the original speech. [...] Additional information should be provided only if it is indispensable to bridge the culture gaps referred to above”¹⁵. In simultaneous interpreting, there is no time to add detailed explanations in the first place and in consecutive interpreting, the interpreter’s reproduction should never be longer than the original speech.

Interpreting in the refugee context is part of community interpreting. There are major differences to conference interpreting in the settings and the audience, but also in the tasks. The settings range from the hospital, the court, the police, a lawyer’s office, ministries, to social institutions, and welfare offices¹⁶, but also psychotherapy. On the contrary to conference

¹³ cf. *ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ cf. Hale, *Community Interpreting*, 26.

interpreting, where the audience generally is rather large, community interpreting usually takes place between two people and the interpreter interprets for both sides, whereas at conferences the interpreter basically interprets longer speeches instead of dialogues, except when there are Q&A sessions and plenary discussions. However, “community interpreting takes place in settings where the most intimate and significant issues of everyday individuals are discussed”¹⁷. The clients have to share their most private stories with the employees of the institutions and, additionally, the interpreters. Hence, it should be assured to them that they can trust the interpreters, either with previous trust-building measures or confidentiality agreements. The tasks community interpreters carry out partly differ from those in conference interpreting. In conference interpreting, for instance, presentational skills play a significant role, particularly in consecutive interpreting, but also in simultaneous interpreting where the presentation of the speech basically happens through voice modulation. Furthermore, it is essential to possess the ability to reproduce the speech as fast as possible and, particularly in simultaneous interpreting, there is no possibility to raise a query to the speaker. In community interpreting, presentational skills and speed are only of secondary importance and the interpreter generally has the possibility to ask questions if he is not sure – or is even expected to do so.

2. Expectations and Perspective of the Institutions

In this chapter the expectations of the various institutions that need interpreters for their work with refugees will be analysed. These institutions are public authorities like the BAMF, the police or the court, social organisations such as Freundeskreis Asyl or Diakonie, but also organisations that provide psychological support to refugees. Different sources will be used for this chapter, including six interviews. Since the names of the interviewees are not significant and would not improve the illustration of the content of the interviews, the interviewees will remain anonymous.

In the first subchapter, the expectations on a national scale of the BAMF, which is the most significant authority for all refugees, and the police will be examined. The applied method is the analysis of the BAMF brochure that is provided to the interpreters who want to work for said institution. Another possibility would have been to conduct interviews with BAMF employees. However, apart from their lack of time, the employees from public authorities seem

¹⁷ Ibid., 25 et seq.

to be quite suspicious and fear reprisals for publishing confidential information or revealing their mistakes. Moreover, the interviews conducted with two police officers, which will be used as examples later on, revealed that there is a lack of awareness of the role of interpreters among them. Therefore, the information value of the brochure and further articles presumably is higher.

In the second subchapter, the situation of social organisations in the refugee context on a local scale will be illustrated. Apart from the public authorities, this is the setting where most of the interpreters for refugees work. The interviews depict the perspectives of employees from Freundeskreis Asyl in Karlsruhe and Mannheim, and Diakonie in Heidelberg. The third subchapter zooms in to the smallest and most individual scale possible: psychotherapy with refugees and interpreters. Many refugees need psychotherapy because of the traumatic experiences they have made in war or during their flight, but also because of the loss of family members, the loss of home, and the displacement. The particular focus on Barbara Abdallah-Steinkopff's work serves to establish a more profound understanding of the situation of the therapists and the interpreters.

2.1. Interpreting for Public Authorities

In this chapter, two specific settings will be depicted: the BAMF and the police. This is of particular significance because all refugees have to present themselves at the BAMF for the official hearing that determines the future course of their life. Furthermore, many refugees have to deal with the police at some point, e.g. when they arrive or when they get deported. Some of the refugees make the experience of having to present themselves at the court for different reasons. In all of these settings, the refugees have to defend themselves, e.g. to obtain the residence permit or an acquittal in the case of the court. Hence, as Sonja Pöllabauer¹⁸ also illustrated, there is a huge power imbalance between the refugees and the officials who conduct the asylum hearings. She particularly examined asylum hearings in Austria, but since the German language, the setting and the existence of power imbalances are similar, her observations and conclusions are valid for the German context as well.

As Pöllabauer presents throughout her work, the role of interpreters has been discussed from different perspectives of various disciplines, such as sociology, communication, law,

¹⁸ cf. Pöllabauer, *I don't understand your English, Miss.*, 179 et seq.

psychology, and translation. The definitions range from neutral, impartial translation machines to mediating, conflict-resolving intercultural agents¹⁹. Ikuko Nakane states that interpreters are widely regarded as mere conduits and ascertained that

[t]he view of interpreters as conduits may come from: first, a misunderstanding of interpreting in which interpreters are regarded as translation machines, and an associated inadequate understanding of the nature of mediated interaction; and second, the impact of the interpreters' code of ethics, which obliges interpreters to maintain impartiality and provide renditions faithful to source utterances.²⁰

The main hypothesis of Pöllabauer's work is that the interpreters in asylum hearings have an active role, interfere in this dynamic process, and take their own decisions²¹. The interpreters are not detached, neutral mediators but have an influential position in the prevailing power structures²². Thus, it is problematic that they are officially expected to be neutral. However, the importance of neutrality is taught in the academic training for professional interpreters and the institutions that work with interpreters also expect neutrality from the lay interpreters they engage. As Pöllabauer also observed in the context of court interpreting, interpreters cannot be neutral, but the loyalty of interpreters rather constantly changes during the interaction²³. The interpreter "is [...] at the centre of the turn-taking and is the one who needs to monitor and manage interaction"²⁴.

Furthermore, as the pragmatic intentions of the speakers change, the register has to be adjusted as well, particularly if the refugees have a lower educational level²⁵. The narrative style often is adjusted by the interpreter because in their interpretation, stuttering or other signs of insecurity would not be reproduced²⁶. Depending on the situation, the adjustments can be advantageous or disadvantageous for either side, but they certainly influence the dialogue. Additionally, "[i]nterpreters are also social beings with their own professional and personal ideologies which could affect their decisions on interaction management and renditions"²⁷. Thus, the interpreters have their own agency and automatically and quite often unconsciously interfere in the process. However, on the other hand, both sides expect this interference from the interpreters. For many refugees, the interpreters are the first persons of trust outside of their

¹⁹ cf. *ibid.*, 180.

²⁰ Nakane, *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews*, 21.

²¹ cf. Pöllabauer, *I don't understand your English, Miss.*, 179.

²² cf. *ibid.*

²³ cf. *ibid.*, 182.

²⁴ Dimitrova et al. cited in Nakane, *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews*, 21.

²⁵ cf. Pöllabauer, *I don't understand your English, Miss.*, 182.

²⁶ cf. *ibid.*

²⁷ Nakane, *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews*, 21.

home countries²⁸ because they speak their language and ideally even come from the same cultural background. This is a critical aspect that will be addressed in more detail later on, because frequently, the interpreters are from different countries or belong to a different ethnic group, which can cause further tension.

The police officers, on the one hand, sometimes even expect the interpreters to deny and contain themselves and to not show any emotion²⁹. They fear that the interpreters could ruin their interrogative strategies³⁰. This is a justified fear since, since the interpreters are social beings who can intentionally or unintentionally influence the dialogue. Since the other parties cannot communicate with each other and only understand one of the languages, the interpreters definitely have a certain amount of power over them. An article of the German newspaper *Die Welt* with the title “*Die gefährlich große Macht der Asyl-Dolmetscher*”³¹ (English: the dangerous power of interpreters in asylum procedures) demonstrates and promotes the perception of interpreters as too powerful or even dangerous agents. The expectations at court are quite similar to those of the police. The court representatives often regard the interpreters as ‘transcoding machines’ whose task is the mere translation and not the interpretation of laws³². The reason for this attitude again is the fear of losing power³³.

On the other hand, they regard the interpreters as cultural experts and expect them to provide profound information to police officers, for example³⁴. Nakane also confirmed that “they may be asked to offer explanations as an expert on the culture of the witnesses or interviewees”³⁵. Conclusively, the interpreters are situated in a field of tension: On the one hand, they are expected to be neutral, and on the other hand, their help and partiality is expected by both parties, who have different interests and expectations. Hence, it is necessary to create awareness among the officials about the complex tasks and the roles the interpreters have to adjust to. In the next subchapter, the brochure of the BAMF will be analysed in order to examine what their expectations are and which aspects can be problematic or are ignored.

²⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 28.

²⁹ cf. *ibid.*, 25.

³⁰ cf. *ibid.*

³¹ Kirst, ‘Die gefährlich große Macht der Asyldolmetscher’.

³² cf. Pöllabauer, *I don’t understand your English, Miss.*, 182.

³³ cf. Morris cited in *ibid.*

³⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 25.

³⁵ Nakane, *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews*, 21.

2.1.1. Analysis of the BAMF Brochure for Interpreters

The brochure for BAMF interpreters is sent to all interpreters who are recruited by the ministry. It consists of the following parts: 1. explanation of the context, the ministry, and its tasks; 2. information about the complex situation during the hearings; 3. statement about the role of interpreters and expectations by the BAMF, and finally, two links to the recommended UNHCR training programme. In the following, a brief description of the first two parts is given before examining the most relevant part about the role of interpreters in more detail.

The first part only consists of one paragraph in which the interpreters are informed about the necessity to prepare themselves properly, i.e. to acquire sufficient knowledge about the BAMF and the asylum procedures³⁶. They recommend two further brochures and one video about the function of the BAMF and the asylum procedures. However, the interpreters who came to Germany as refugees themselves, probably already have – or believe to have – sufficient knowledge about the tasks and procedures. This could be problematic because it could induce the interpreters to not read the recommended brochures and, since asylum law is frequently changed, this results in a situation in which the interpreters do not have the right information. Hence, the significance of studying the brochures in order to obtain a broad knowledge about the context should be emphasised stronger. Otherwise, there is the risk that the interpreters are not well informed, particularly because for most of them, interpreting is not their main profession. Furthermore, the interpreters should be actively updated by the BAMF about changing laws or other relevant circumstances on a regular basis.

The second part describes the context and the content of the hearings³⁷. It begins by highlighting the significance of the hearing for the refugee, as this is where important decisions are made about his future. It is very important to raise awareness of this fact in advance. Subsequently, the participants of the hearings are listed. In every hearing there is the decision maker, the refugee and the interpreter. In some hearings there might be additional people, such as special representatives, representatives from the UNHCR or legal guardians for unaccompanied minors. The typical topics discussed in the hearings are the description of the course of life, the personal circumstances, the reasons for and conditions during flight, the flight route, the history of persecution, and the information about the possible dangers if the applicant

³⁶ cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz*, 3.

³⁷ cf. *ibid.*, 4 et seq.

has to return to the country of origin. Furthermore, the required sensitivity of the decision maker and the necessary empathy of the interpreter are mentioned. Finally, the usual procedure of the hearings is illustrated: 1. first contact; 2. introduction and briefing; 3. presentation of the case by the refugee; 4. questions; 5. conclusion. It is emphasised that stage three is the most significant one for the refugee because it is his only possibility to explain his story and convince the decision maker of the need for asylum. Therefore, as is also mentioned in the brochure, it requires full concentration by the interpreter who should try not to interrupt the applicant. Note taking strategies are recommended in the brochure. However, a great amount of training and involvement is needed to develop adequate and individual note-taking skills. Professional interpreters have to work constantly on their notes and improve their strategies for four semesters in academic training and often even after graduation. Therefore, it would be urgently necessary to train lay interpreters in note taking.

Another important point, mentioned in the second part of the brochure³⁸, is that a protocol of the hearing will be taken, which has to be translated back to the refugee after the hearing. However, it has become common practice to ask the refugees if they are willing to refrain from the retranslation, which is very problematic and often has significant disadvantages for the refugees. Pöllabauer states that there have been complaints from numerous asylum applicants because they had the impression that the interpreters had pressured them and changed the content of the reports³⁹. Consequently, quality management procedures were introduced and the interpreters were verified⁴⁰. In the course of these procedures, it has been discovered that in numerous cases the retranslation was waived because – particularly in the case of English – the officers believed that they had understood enough to make their judgement⁴¹. As a consequence, neither the refugee nor the interpreter had the opportunity to correct possible mistakes or misunderstandings⁴². The interviews conducted for this thesis also have revealed that, particularly during the so-called ‘refugee-waves’, when the BAMF and other institutions are confronted with a heavy workload, refugees are frequently asked to renounce to their right to a retranslation. Since a huge power-imbalance prevails, many refugees fear to anger the decision makers and are not aware of their right to a retranslation. This puts the interpreters in a very difficult position because many of them would like to inform the refugees about their rights but they are not supposed to give any advice. Hence, in order to improve the situation for the

³⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ cf. Pöllabauer, *I don't understand your English, Miss.*, 26.

⁴⁰ cf. *ibid.*

⁴¹ cf. *ibid.*

⁴² cf. *ibid.*

refugees and the interpreters, and to ensure a better quality of the results of the hearings, it would be better if the BAMF officials were not entitled to ask the refugee to waive his right to a retranslation, but instead ensured that a retranslation is provided without exception.

The third part of the brochure explains the role of interpreters from the perspective of the BAMF. First, the interpreters are informed about the different perspectives of the participants in the hearings, such as differences in world views, experiences, knowledge, and education⁴³. This certainly is an essential point to mention. However, it is not sufficient. A culture-specific, profound analysis could be facilitated to the interpreters in advance to confront them with these differences. Certainly, in the course of their work, the interpreters will gain more and more experience. Nevertheless, prior preparation is indispensable. Otherwise, the refugees who are assigned to unexperienced interpreters would be highly disadvantaged and would serve as training objects. In the brochure, interpreters are defined as '*Sprachrohr*' (English: 'mouthpiece' or 'conduit', as cited from Nakane before). However, the oral translation is only one part of the interpreters' tasks and the definition could be extended to e.g. '*Sprachrohr und Kulturmittler*' (English: 'linguistic conduit and cultural mediator') in order to increase the awareness about the role of interpreters.

According to the brochure, the BAMF is convinced that the interpreters know about their responsibilities and are aware of the general, professional, ethical, and technical interpreting standards such as confidentiality, high command of both languages, neutrality, reliability, and social skills⁴⁴. However, this conviction is quite surprising since the huge majority of the interpreters in the refugee context are laymen with no professional training. How could they know, what, for instance, neutrality means in this context and which challenges are connected to this concept? The situation is very complex and there is a broad discussion in interpreting studies and other disciplines about the role of interpreters and the true meaning of neutrality. As has been explained before and will be analysed in detail later on, interpreters are human beings with emotions, experiences, personal world views etc., and therefore, it is hardly possible for them to be absolutely neutral. Furthermore, a high command of both languages is expected. However, as the interviews revealed as well, this does not correspond to reality. For instance, some interpreters do not feel secure enough about their German skills, even those who have been working for the BAMF for a relatively long time. Additionally, it is problematic that in some cases the hearings are conducted in a third language that is not the mother tongue of

⁴³ cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz*, 6.

⁴⁴ cf. *ibid.*

the refugee. As a result, asylum applicants appeal against the decision if it turns out to be negative⁴⁵, claiming that misunderstanding occurred because they had to speak in a foreign language. This in turn causes that the decision has to be reassessed, sometimes even from authorities at second instance⁴⁶, which means more workload for the authorities and thus slower processes and longer waiting times for the refugees, and ultimately, a general decrease in quality.

Subitem “3.2. *Vor der Anhörung*”⁴⁷ is supposed to give advice to the interpreters about how they should prepare themselves before the hearings. However, the recommendations are too vague, might be comprehensible to professional interpreters, but presumably not be very useful for lay interpreters. The first problem is mentioned in the brochure itself: The interpreters do not get any information about the refugee except for the name and the mother tongue⁴⁸. The basis for a good and professional interpretation is a comprehensive preparation which, of course, includes having as much details as possible about the speakers’ agencies. Therefore, it would be highly significant to receive more information than the name and the mother tongue. The question is why the necessary information is not provided in advance. The disclosure of confidential information should not be the reason, since the interpreters will also hear the private information during the hearing. It would make more sense to provide sufficient background information instead of the name. The name certainly is not the most relevant information for the interpreters.

The three further recommendations are: to call important terms to mind, to refresh relevant knowledge, and to become aware of the communicative situation⁴⁹. The important terms and concepts could be provided in German attached in a separate list, since the lay interpreters might not know which terms are really important in this context, especially when they just started working for the BAMF. Similarly, it could at least be explained what kind of relevant knowledge is expected to be refreshed, e.g. knowledge about the political situation, knowledge about the conflict parties in the country of origin of the refugee, knowledge about the oppression of minorities, knowledge about human rights standards in the country, etc. An adequate preparation of the interpreters would, above all, ease the work of the officials. Furthermore, in the brochure it is mentioned that the interpreter will pick up the refugee together

⁴⁵ cf. Pöllabauer, *I don't understand your English, Miss.*, 172 et seq.

⁴⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 173.

⁴⁷ Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz*, 7.

⁴⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁹ cf. *ibid.*, 7.

with the BAMF employee and thus demonstrate his neutral position in the hearing⁵⁰. It is added that the interpreter could not be neutral if he had talked to the refugee in advance. However, the fact that the interpreter presents himself together with the BAMF employee from the very beginning rather creates the impression that he is on the BAMF's side and therefore not impartial. Keeping in mind the prevailing power imbalance, this situation can be intimidating to the refugee. Hence, neutrality cannot be displayed under these circumstances.

The first point in the guidelines for the hearing is that the interpreter should ensure that he speaks the same language or dialect as the refugee and inform the decision maker about any communicative problems during the hearing⁵¹. This certainly is a very important point. However, some of the interviews and conversations with refugees themselves revealed cases in which the interpreters, as well as the decision makers, nevertheless accepted divergent languages or dialects to the disadvantage of the refugees. The decision makers are supposed to stop the hearing if they discover communicative problems⁵². The reality, though, marked by a high workload and time pressure, apparently is different.

Another point that could be verified is the demand to translate the statements literally⁵³. One point, on which the vast majority of the researchers in translation and interpreting studies agree, is that a literal translation often does not deliver the content of what was meant by the speaker adequately. Therefore, as the term 'interpreting' also reflects, the interpretation of what was meant has to be done by the interpreter. The decision makers probably do not possess the necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge to be able to interpret the meaning of the statements themselves. Furthermore, languages like Arabic are rich in specific expressions and common phrases which are literally untranslatable. The literal translation of one translatable Arabic expression from an Arabic textbook is: Dark and entertaining and not blond and serious⁵⁴. The meaning is that outward beauty is not important. Finding the right translation for such expressions is even challenging to professional Arabic teachers. Decision makers who are not familiar with this kind of culture-specific expressions would not be able to interpret the meaning of such a statement, and this is only one example of many. Therefore, it is not realistic to expect from the interpreters to deliver literal translations. They are no translation machines but cultural mediators whose task it is to interpret the meaning of what was said and find the cultural

⁵⁰ cf. *ibid.*

⁵¹ cf. *ibid.*

⁵² cf. *ibid.*

⁵³ cf. *ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁴ cf. Aldoukhi, Procházka, and Telič, *Praxisnaher Einstieg in den Dialekt von Damaskus*, 174.

equivalent in the target language. This is a highly sophisticated task that must be recognised and appreciated.

Finally, the brochure recommends to reflect about technical and linguistic problems after the hearing⁵⁵. As a tool to encourage the interpreters to really undertake such a reflection, it could be useful to establish a personal assessment sheet for them, which could be handed out to them and perhaps completed together after the hearing. Furthermore, the interpreters are encouraged to look for stress management opportunities if the hearings are emotionally challenging to them. However, stress management programmes or free psychological support could as well be provided to the interpreters. Many of them might not even be aware of the fact that the tasks are a psychological burden for them, they might not know the right strategy to manage their stress or they might not be able to afford the participation in such programmes. If each interpreter had the chance to consult an expert in stress management once a month, for example, depending on how often he works as interpreter, it would be helpful and constitute at least a basis for further personal measures. Furthermore, the psychologists could assess the problems the interpreters face and with their insights, they eventually could also contribute to the improvement of the conditions for all parties at the hearing procedures.

2.1.2. Interpreting for the Police

Police officers are powerful agents in the refugee context because they are the executive power and deal with the displaced people in different situations and settings. Whether it is at the borders where they enter Germany by foot, at the airport where asylum applicants arrive by plane, or in the camps where the police executes deportations. As prior research has shown and has been confirmed by the two interviews with police officers that have been conducted for this thesis, there is a lack of awareness among this group of professionals regarding the work and the role of interpreters. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect upon the tensions and difficulties in these situations.

Pöllabauer observed that the collaboration with interpreters is generally perceived as problematic by police officers⁵⁶. One problem that can be identified is the police officers' perception of the interpreters as obstacles to their work. But the real obstacles are the linguistic

⁵⁵ cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz*, 10.

⁵⁶ cf. Pöllabauer, *I don't understand your English, Miss.*, 25.

and cultural barriers, and it is precisely the interpreter who can act as a mediator to overcome these obstacles. Nakane observed that the “interaction [in courtroom and police interviews] is viewed as a process of ‘reconstructing realities’, in which competing versions of events are presented”⁵⁷. This context also contains an enormous imbalance of power. One of the main questions is which impact the interpreter’s mediation has on the reconstruction of the realities and on the questioning strategies of the police officers. In police interviews, the interpreter is not expected to be neutral but an investigating assistant⁵⁸. He is even expected to engage the defendants in conversations during the interrogation breaks in order to find out information they would not give otherwise⁵⁹. Based on the results of various empirical studies, the interpreters can be regarded as third parties who act autonomously⁶⁰. In some cases, they even asked the defendants their own questions in order to clarify the statements and understand the whole context, and only interpreted back their – sometimes summarised – interpretation to the police, when they themselves felt that they had received sufficient information⁶¹. The interrogation strategies often become ineffective if the defendant does not speak German, because linguistic nuances that can be decisive for a judgement can be lost during the interpreting process⁶². Furthermore, since the defendant has the right to remain silent and stop the interrogation process at any point, there is a structural dominance in favour of the defendant⁶³. Thus, the police would like to have interpreters who act autonomously on behalf of the police and have received criminological training. Quite clearly, neutrality is not expected in this context either.

2.1.2.1. Interviews with Police Officers

To obtain insights into the personal perspectives of police officers, two of them were interviewed for the purposes of this research paper. The first one was conducted in person with an officer who works with refugees and interpreters in the criminal investigation department in Frankfurt and is responsible for crimes committed by foreigners, for illegal and undocumented immigrants, and for deportations. Her department works closely together with the German

⁵⁷ Nakane, *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews*, 33.

⁵⁸ cf. Kranjčić, ... *dass er treu und gewissenhaft übertragen werde.*, 44.

⁵⁹ cf. Ackermann cited in *ibid.*

⁶⁰ cf. *ibid.*, 45.

⁶¹ cf. *ibid.*

⁶² cf. Donk cited in *ibid.*, 46.

⁶³ cf. Jogerst cited in Kranjčić, ... *dass er treu und gewissenhaft übertragen werde.*, 45 et seq.

Foreigners Authority. They also conduct house searches if human trafficking is suspected. Before every mission, the interpreters have to sign an obligation to secrecy and truthful interpretation. They recruit their interpreters through a language services provider and have a list that is frequently reviewed. Interpreters who have been found to be unreliable are eliminated from this list. It contains a heterogeneous group of interpreters of different ages, some are only 18 and others have already attained old age. Most of them are native speakers but she did not know whether they have migratory background. Most of them are lay interpreters. She assumes that the main reason is that there are not enough professional interpreters for the required languages. The languages they mostly need are Arabic, Kurdish, Macedonian, and Serbian, but also African languages such as Twi. Frequently, police officers who speak the needed languages are asked to interpret for their colleagues. Apart from possible financial and temporal advantages, the main reason for this presumably is the aforementioned preference of using interpreters who are trained in criminology. However, this can be very problematic for the refugee, because the police officers are not trained and usually have no or little interpreting experience. Furthermore, they are not neutral, which amplifies power imbalances instead of balancing them out. As has been ascertained by Nakane, “the nature of mediated tripartite interaction endows interpreters with power to influence suspects’ attempt to make their side of the story heard. The impacts of interpreting may or may not be produced intentionally”⁶⁴. Furthermore, she observed that “each party in interpreter-mediated police interviews has their own interests. This seems to make the mediated interaction a site of power struggle among the three parties, including the interpreter who is caught in the middle”⁶⁵. The fact that the interpreter is caught in the middle also implies that he is in the position to mitigate power imbalances. However, if the interpreter is a police officer himself, his interpretation of the defendant’s testimony may be influenced by his agency as a police officer which could be prejudicial to the defendant.

Answering the question about problems and challenges that arise in the collaboration with interpreters, the police officer explained that sometimes they are not able to get an interpreter with the necessary language skills. For instance, once they had an Afghan refugee who spoke Dari and no interpreter was available. Another aspect is that everything the refugee states to them can and will be used against them at court. Therefore, according to her, it is important that the interpreter is trustworthy, interprets the content correctly, and does not try to protect his compatriots. However, she seems to ignore that if the interpreter is supposed to be

⁶⁴ Nakane, *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews*, 105.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

neutral, he should not act as interrogating officer either. The interviewed officer stated that sometimes the wrong interpreters are recruited who, for example, speak a different dialect of the same language, giving rise to communicative problems. Sometimes, even interpreters who speak the entirely wrong language are appointed, for example Bosnian interpreters for Bulgarians. In any way, she observed that they cannot control what the interpreters say. She has the feeling that most of the interpreters are neutral. Impartiality is an important aspect to her. Therefore, it is only permitted for minor issues that, for example, family members interpret for a refugee. Conclusively, neutrality and impartiality from the police's perspective is biased because the meaning of those concepts for them is that the interpreters should not try to protect their compatriots. Hence, with such a definition or perception of neutrality, the right for trustworthiness, impartiality and neutrality is not granted to the refugee.

The second interview was conducted as an anonymous written questionnaire submitted by e-mail. The answers were very short and thus do not provide much information. However, it was possible to draw the conclusion that it would be urgently necessary to increase awareness of the work of interpreters among police officers. First of all, the police officer apparently is not aware of the difference between professional and lay interpreters. The responses of the interviewee were contradictory. First, he said that the only difference between lay interpreters and professionals was the level of experience and later on he mentioned that they are not allowed to work with lay interpreters, which certainly is not true. The literature and the interviews prove that most of the community interpreters in the refugee context are laymen. The problems this police officer identified are compassion and lack of experience. Presumably, he meant that too much compassion might influence the interpretation because the interpreter could try to help the refugee, which was also identified as problematic by the first interviewee. She, however, explicitly stated that emotions were not a problem and most interpreters seemed to be able to perform their role as language-mediators well nonetheless. She did not mention the problem that some of them did not have enough experience either, but rather considered the missing dialects or languages in general, and the sometimes wrong recruitment of interpreters as problematic. Hence, the perceptions and the assessments of both are different. It is questionable whether they have the necessary knowledge to adequately assess the work and the role of interpreters.

To summarise, the public authorities act in the name of the state and thus advocate for the interests of the state. In the hearings at the BAMF, and at the court, or during interrogations at the police, the refugee has to defend himself. In this context, there is a huge power imbalance

that places the interpreter in a particularly challenging position between both sides. However, this is not the only setting in which interpreters are needed. The next chapters depict other contexts in which interpreters work under different circumstances.

2.2. Interpreting for Social Organisations

Whereas the public authorities work on a national scale and in the name of the state, social organisations are active on a smaller, more local scale. The main difference is that these organisations all have the aim to help the refugees, especially with their asylum procedures, but also with financial issues, applications for work or university, search for accommodation, etc. They give them legal advice in different situations, for example to prepare for applications and hearings, provide information about family reunification, and assistance if they received a negative response or a deportation decree from the BAMF. Therefore, both the employees and the interpreters want to help the refugees in this setting.

The content of three conducted interviews with employees from Freundeskreis Asyl Karlsruhe e.V. and one interview with the consultant for families, children and pregnant women at Diakonie Heidelberg illustrates their perspective. Freundeskreis Asyl is an NGO that was established in 1987 and is financed by donations, the City of Karlsruhe, and the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg and it is not affiliated to any religious group or political party⁶⁶. The employees work on a local level in the refugee camps and the human rights centre in Karlsruhe, but also in the reception camp Benjamin Franklin Village in Mannheim. Diakonie Heidelberg is part of the Protestant church in Germany and apart from their assistance for refugees, they offer support to pregnant women, families, children, the elderly, mentally ill, etc. They are financed by the City of Heidelberg, the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg, the State Welfare Association Baden, but also by the federal government and the European Union, and they receive further financial support from the Protestant church and donations⁶⁷. Hence, considering the funding, Diakonie is an organisation that exists throughout Germany and performs on a local level while being financed from various institutions, whereas the Freundeskreis Asyl is a much smaller organisation that exclusively concentrates on asylum seekers. The fact that both organisations are financed by the federal states, the federal government or even the European Union,

⁶⁶ cf. 'Freundeskreis Asyl Karlsruhe e.V.'

⁶⁷ cf. 'Finanzierung - Diakonie Heidelberg'.

demonstrates their significance in the refugee ‘crisis’. Even though there are numerous other organisations, such as Caritas or Asylarbeitskreis Heidelberg, the results of the interviews can be regarded as representative because the settings and the challenges are similar.

Based on the interviews, the following subchapter deals with the recruitment, the availability of interpreters, and the required languages. In the next subchapter, the challenges the social workers face when working with interpreters and refugees, and the expectations they have are presented.

2.2.1. Recruitment, Languages and Availability of Interpreters

According to the interviewed employees from Freundeskreis Asyl, it is not necessary to actively recruit interpreters because numerous people contact them and offer their help. If they need interpreters, they can access the interpreter pools of the KIT (Karlsruhe Institute for Technology)⁶⁸ or the IB (*Internationaler Bund*)⁶⁹. At the Diakonie, Ute Martin is the coordinator for interpreters. If an employee needs an interpreter, he has to notify Ms. Martin one week in advance and she will request the appropriate interpreter. They have a list of volunteer and semi-volunteer interpreters and in specific situations, e.g. medical or legal contexts, they turn to professional interpreters.

At Freundeskreis Asyl, they have one professional and sworn interpreter for Arabic who also works at the court and the hospital. It is the same interpreter who conducted the workshop at Freundeskreis Asyl, which will be analysed in chapter four. Most of the interpreters are migrants themselves. One employee said that these are the interpreters who put their hearts and souls into their work. The interpreters are all native speakers who have lived in Germany for a long time or went to a German School, e.g. in Egypt. Some of the consultants at Freundeskreis Asyl are native speakers themselves and thus also work as interpreters sometimes. In the reception centres, where refugees are accommodated when they first arrive, even the asylum applicants themselves act as interpreters, which is quite problematic because they are not prepared for this task at all. However, at Freundeskreis Asyl, all interpreters are paid, which demonstrates that the work of the interpreters is appreciated, even though many of them would probably be willing to work voluntarily as well. Only in rare cases, the interpreters interpret

⁶⁸ Schaller, ‘KIT-Flüchtlingshilfe - Startseite’.

⁶⁹ ‘IB: Dolmetscher Pool’.

minor issues via telephone or quickly accompany a refugee to medical appointments without remuneration. Their interpreters have different professional backgrounds, from bus drivers to academics. They have also employed one female Kurdish interpreter because they recognised that in some cases, it is important to provide a female interpreter for women. Most of the interpreters at Diakonie are also native speakers with migratory background from very different professions, and some of them are housewives.

All interviewees from Freundeskreis Asyl and Diakonie stated that they almost always have to recruit lay interpreters for financial reasons. At Freundeskreis Asyl they remuneration for interpreters is approximately 10 euros per hour, many professional interpreters would demand much more. One employee also mentioned that professional interpreters would not have time to work for social organisations, especially if they can earn much more at conferences. Another employee thinks that the task would not be challenging enough for professionals. None of the interviewees thought about the fact that there might not be enough professional interpreters who speak the required languages. After asking them directly about their opinion, all of them said that they do not know but assume that there are not enough professionals. For instance, there is a master programme for conference interpreting in Arabic at the University of Leipzig. It is furthermore possible that there are interpreters in Germany who have completed a programme for conference interpreting in Arabic in another country, e.g. in Granada in Spain. However, for the other languages and various dialects that are needed, it is very unlikely to find professional interpreters; presumably because there are no programmes offered anywhere for the various dialects. The languages mostly needed are Arabic, Farsi, and Kurdish. At Diakonie, Turkish and sometimes Romanian or Bulgarian are also in demand. At Freundeskreis Asyl, sometimes there are refugees who speak English and accompany another refugee to interpret for him. However, according to two employees, this is problematic because it is a third foreign language for both sides and, as their experience has shown, a lot of information gets lost in translation.

2.2.2. Challenges and Expectations from the Social Workers' Perspective

The first interviewee at Freundeskreis Asyl is responsible for legal advice. She said that she is not a lawyer but she has gained broad knowledge in this area. It is sometimes difficult to impart the meaning of the legal content to the interpreters, but it is crucial that the interpreter

understands the exact content. Sometimes, she is not sure whether it was interpreted correctly. According to her, one problem is that the interpreters are not fluent enough in German yet. Another problem for her are the different dialects. She observed that sometimes the interpreters and the refugees are ashamed to admit that they are not able to fully understand the other's dialect which automatically leads to misunderstandings and mistakes. Furthermore, it sometimes happens that the interpreter and the refugee belong to different religious groups and, as a result, the refugee does not dare to tell everything. According to her, this is particularly problematic at the BAMF because there the refugees are not allowed to demand another interpreter if they are not from the same cultural background. She thinks that the advantage of a professional interpreter would be that he would be better prepared and informed about the legal terminology and focus on the content. The interpreters she works with are highly motivated. They want to help and engage with the refugees and often talk about other things with them while they interpret. However, in this context this is not a significant problem and sometimes the employees even receive further information through these additional conversations. The interviewee is Russian and sometimes works as an interpreter herself. She observed that when she interprets, she also has questions of her own that come to mind. However, as she participated in a workshop for interpreters at the IB and learned that it is important to not let the own opinion influence the interpretation, she refrains from doing so.

The second interviewee from Freundeskreis Asyl is the head of the counselling centre of a refugee camp in Karlsruhe. He mainly mentioned emotional problems for the interpreters because they realise how burdened the refugees are. In these situations, he recommends the interpreters to have a dialogue with the refugees and afterwards go on with the interpretation. In very rare cases, interpreters can be annoyed because the refugees are not grateful enough. Another problem he mentioned was that sometimes he cannot be sure if the interpreters interpret correctly because some need ten minutes to interpret two sentences. One reason for this might be the cultural differences or differences in the – for example legal – system which have to be explained in detail. However, since the topics in the refugee camps can be dealt with in colloquial language, the language problems are rather irrelevant in his opinion.

The third interviewee from Freundeskreis Asyl works in the counselling centre in Mannheim and Karlsruhe and is responsible for the recruitment and training of interpreters. For her, it sometimes is problematic that the interpreters openly question the advice she is trying to give to the refugees and argue instead of passing on the information. She thinks it is necessary to train the interpreters and clarify that they have to cooperate because they work for

Freundeskreis Asyl and should identify themselves with their employer. Therefore, she holds an introductory session for new interpreters, in which she explains the general guidelines, for example that they must not refuse to interpret for homosexuals, which had happened previously. They have to be neutral and if they feel emotionally burdened they should try to talk about it with the consultants after and not during the consultation. Furthermore, she realised that the interpreters sometimes only summarise what she said but are supposed to interpret every detail. There was one interpreter they had to dismiss after one month because he was too lazy and did not have the necessary German skills. Others are so motivated that they organise their own language classes to improve. According to her, political aspects are also very influential. Sometimes, the refugees do not accept the interpreter because he is from another political group or another nation. Then she feels sorry for the interpreter who actually wants to help. Another issue is that some interpreters would like to be consultants themselves and already know some answers because of their experience. However, she is the consultant and the situation is very dynamic. The laws concerning refugees and asylum seekers are subject to frequent change, depending on the overall situation. Therefore, it is important that the interpreters do not answer the refugees' questions themselves because they might not have the right information. Sometimes, it is hard to explain that to them. Furthermore, it is important that the interpreters are not afraid of asking questions if they have not understood a statement. She thinks that the advantage of professional interpreters would be that they might be faster and would not need so much help to describe specific terms. However, she believes that in this context it is better to have lay interpreters because it is easier for them to establish a personal relationship with the refugees and do not act like translation machines. Hence, in this context, the opposite agency is expected from the interpreters than in the BAMF or police setting.

The last interviewee was the consultant for families, children, and pregnant women at the Diakonie. For her, it is particularly important that the interpreters understand the meaning of what was said and read between the lines instead of merely translating the words. This coincides with the prevailing opinion at Freundeskreis Asyl that the interpreters are supposed to be more than mere translation machines. She emphasised that the interpreters have to be sensitised before they start to work. First of all, they have to become aware of the fact that the clients might be victims of domestic violence or that Muslim women might be jealous because their husband has a second wife. The interpreters have to be able to explain the German system in these situations. The interviewee further explained that she has the necessary psychological background knowledge and when she looks into the clients' eyes she tries to find out what burdens them. But interpreters do not necessarily have these skills. For pregnant women, she

only accepts female interpreters. She thinks that during her counselling sessions, there often are emotionally challenging situations for the interpreters because sometimes people get very aggressive and even physically violent. From a professional interpreter, she would expect that he can fully cope with this kind of stress because the remuneration would be much higher as well, whereas she is more lenient towards lay interpreters who mostly work voluntarily at Diakonie. On the other hand, she reasons that if interpreters were paid adequately, it probably would increase their sense of duty and, ultimately, improve the quality of the interpretation.

2.3. Interpreting for Psychotherapists

Since many refugees unfortunately had to make very traumatic experiences during war or their flight, there is a high need for psychotherapeutic support for them. This is the most intimate setting because the refugees tell their most private and often embarrassing stories to a therapist with whom they have to build a foundation of trust first. And the presence of an interpreter means the presence of an additional strange person they have to trust. Hence, a high level of empathy and sensitivity from both, the therapists and the interpreters, is required. Interpreters are necessary, even if the refugees have basic German skills, because therapeutic processes include very complex emotions, which have to be expressed in a very complex way⁷⁰. However, the mediation through an interpreter can also be an opportunity because, as a transcultural agent, he can facilitate and improve mutual understanding and the trust-building process between the refugee and the therapist.

Since cultural differences in behaviour and medical practice play a particularly significant role in psychotherapy, this aspect will be analysed in the first subchapter. Subsequently, the second subchapter deals with interpreting for refugees in the psychotherapeutic setting, before the focus is shifted to the work of Barbara Abdallah-Steinkopff, a psychologist from the organisation Refugio⁷¹ in Munich, a consultation and treatment centre for refugees and victims of torture. This will serve to create a more profound awareness of this situation and provide some guidelines.

⁷⁰ cf. Cagala, 'Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung', 221.

⁷¹ 'REFUGIO München - Beratungs- und Behandlungszentrum für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer'.

2.3.1. Culture and Psychotherapy

The analysis of the role culture plays in multilingual psychotherapy is indispensable because traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices, as well as healing or preventive strategies and methods, determine the disease and the perception of the disease within a society⁷². In the world view of Islam, for instance, illness and health are natural phenomena that take turns in the life of a human being⁷³. In each culture, different organs, such as the liver, are at the core of illness and are also associated to complex notions of grief and pain⁷⁴. Furthermore, in western cultures, it seems that there is a predominant lack of a holistic understanding of the body, whereas in other cultures body and soul are understood as one unity and it would be unimaginable to consider only one part of the body as ill⁷⁵. Cultural differences can exist in magical, religious, and popular medical perceptions, in cultural taboos or gender-specific aspects⁷⁶: In some Asian societies, for instance, diseases that do not manifest in clear symptoms can be assumed to be of magical origin⁷⁷. To regard psychological problems as a disease is a taboo in many Islamic countries and, particularly if they are related to sexuality, Turkish families live a culture of silence⁷⁸. Hence, one important aspect is, that the patients bring their own personal world view that has been shaped by their cultural background with them to the psychotherapeutic setting of another culture.

However, not only the patients have been shaped by cultural influences.

Medical knowledge is constructed, communicated and used in a great variety of contexts and situations, ranging from the highly specialized and interdisciplinary teams of researchers involved in ground-breaking projects, to health professionals of all kinds working together in clinical settings, to patients and the general public in their everyday lives. Knowledge mediation between communities of practice, social groups, languages and cultures has become a critical activity in medical and health care settings.⁷⁹

It is essential to know “that the world, as perceived by scientists, is largely determined by what they have been trained to look for, how they go about looking for it, and what they consider to

⁷² cf. Borde cited in Uluköylü, “...manchmal streite ich auch.” Sprach- und Kulturmittlung für türkische Migrantinnen im medizinischen Bereich’, 177.

⁷³ cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 178.

⁷⁵ cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 179 et seqq.

⁷⁷ cf. *ibid.*, 179.

⁷⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 180.

⁷⁹ Montalt, ‘Medical Translation and Interpreting’, 79.

be important topics in social science”⁸⁰ and “[t]he same situation pertains to any attempt to enumerate ‘issues’ in cross-cultural psychology: perspectives, philosophies, research priorities, and related factors are quite variable”⁸¹. Thus, the way psychotherapists operate, the diagnoses they make, as well as the applied strategies or healing methods are shaped by the cultural background they were trained in. Traditionally, religion offers people a way of dealing with traumatic experiences⁸². In most modern societies, however, psychotherapy has taken over this role while in many others it is yet unknown⁸³. Thus, there are variations of psychotherapy in different cultures. Wen-Shing Tseng and Jing Hsu determined the following four variations: supernaturally oriented healing systems in which “it is assumed that possession by an evil spirit, soul loss, a sorcerer’s curse, or taboo violation are the causes of problems”⁸⁴; naturally oriented healing practices in which “the nature of problems are explained in terms of imbalance or disharmony with the natural principles that rule the universe”⁸⁵; medical-physiologically oriented treatment practice, which is “primarily based on the medical-physical concept that weakness, or exhaustion of the nervous system, or an imbalance of physiological conditions are the causes for mental disorders”⁸⁶; and socio-psychologically oriented treatment systems to which “most of the modern psychotherapeutic methods belong”⁸⁷. Thus, the diagnosis and the healing method strongly depend on the cultural variation. “[T]he nature of sophistication of certain healing systems parallels the degree of the development of their social structure”⁸⁸:

Namely, in simple food-gathering societies, the systematic organization of theories of healing systems is absent, and the healing practice is dominated only by simple magic methods; in more complex fishing-hunting societies, medical beliefs are more elaborated, and religious-medical therapy is available; in agricultural societies, illness is attributed more to sick individuals rather than to supernatural causes, and the healing system is more specialized.⁸⁹

This is crucial knowledge for the psychological treatment of refugees as they originate from different societies with different social structures and “the need for a certain style of therapy is closely related to the sociocultural system”⁹⁰. In this context, as has been pointed out before by

⁸⁰ Lonner, ‘Issues in Cross-Cultural Psychology’, 17.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² cf. Cagala, ‘Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung’, 230.

⁸³ cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Tseng and Hsu, ‘Culture and Psychotherapy’, 334.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 334 et seq.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 335.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁸⁸ Kiev cited in *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 337.

Uluköylü, religion plays an important role too, as well as gender issues, e.g. whether it is socially acceptable that a woman is treated by a male therapist or vice versa.

One particular aspect, which is necessary to mention in this context, are the cultural differences in expressing and perceiving emotions. Emotions are revealed by facial expressions or other nonverbal behaviour, such as body language. Especially in the psychotherapeutic setting, very careful and sensitive interactions are required. The anthropologist “Birdwhistell (1963) argued, that both, body motion and facial behaviour, can be studied as a system directly comparable to spoken languages and are therefore specific to a given culture”⁹¹. This observation illustrates that the work of the community interpreter goes far beyond the mere translation of what is uttered verbally. In fact, he has to read the intended message based on the facial expressions, nonverbal behaviour, and the actual verbal statements and interpret the meaning accordingly. For instance, “[a] ‘smile’ in one society portrays friendliness, in another embarrassment, and, in still another may contain a warning that, unless tension is reduced, hostility and attack will follow”⁹². In Arabic countries, it is considered impolite and disrespectful to direct the sole of a shoe, while crossing the legs, to someone who is sitting next to you. In Germany, nobody would even notice it. Thus, there are examples for nonverbal behaviour that are particular for one culture but do not have any meaning in another. To a certain extent, it is possible for psychotherapists to obtain this cultural knowledge. However, since the core of their studies certainly lies elsewhere, it is primarily the interpreter who is responsible for recognising and handling those differences.

Thus, both, the refugees and the psychotherapists are influenced and shaped by their cultural background and social structures. The interpreters’ task is to facilitate communication between them. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the interpreters are also shaped by their own cultural background and the experiences they have made in their life. The influence of the personal world view and value system of the interpreters on their interpretation must not be underestimated⁹³. Therefore, it is necessary for any interpreter to study cultural variations, deal profoundly with his own worldview and try to broaden his horizon, and thus become a cultural mediator rather than a mere linguistic translation machine. However, the awareness of

⁹¹ Boucher, ‘Culture and Emotion’, 166.

⁹² Birdwhistell cited in *ibid.*

⁹³ cf. Cagala, ‘Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung’, 238.

cultural stereotypes and the avoidance of these are just as important. The interpreters have to be able to distinguish between cultural and individual causes for particular behaviour patterns⁹⁴.

2.3.2. Interpreting for Refugees in Psychotherapy

As has been illustrated, the knowledge about cultural differences in diagnosis and healing methods plays a significant role in the work of interpreters for refugees in psychotherapy. The diagnoses, i.e. the reasons for the need of psychological support for the traumatised refugees, are the experience of war, persecution, imprisonment, and torture in the countries of origin, as well as pending asylum procedures, difficult living conditions and problems with acculturation in the host countries⁹⁵. Abdallah-Steinkopff recognised the role of interpreters as intercultural mediators. Furthermore, she emphasised another crucial aspect, namely that psychologists must be culturally sensitive too if they treat patients from different cultural backgrounds.

The presence of a third person influences the therapeutic relationship between the patient and the therapist and the process of the therapy⁹⁶. A particular disadvantage was observed when family members, friends, or neighbours interpret because anonymity and confidentiality can no longer be guaranteed and it could be embarrassing for the patient to reveal his most intimate problems in front of the people he knows⁹⁷. In the triad of the refugee, the interpreter, and the therapist, each has his own expectations and evaluates the situation from his personal perspective. Abdallah-Steinkopff refers to Samson and Nakajima⁹⁸, who conducted a problem analysis about the cooperation between interpreters and advisors. They found out that, in spite of a generally high willingness to cooperate, both sides of the interviewees stated problems concerning the collaboration. The interpreters criticised confrontational therapeutic procedures, formulations by the therapists that are hard to translate, and a lack of cultural empathy by the therapists. The therapists particularly criticised that the interpreters do not translate the exact words or phrases but include their own expressions or interpretations. The

⁹⁴ cf. Uluköylü, “...manchmal streite ich auch.” Sprach- und Kulturmittlung für türkische Migrantinnen im medizinischen Bereich’, 197.

⁹⁵ cf. Abdallah-Steinkopff, ‘Die Rolle des Dritten - Dolmetscher in der Einzel- und Gruppentherapie mit Flüchtlingen’, 281.

⁹⁶ cf. Cagala, ‘Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung’, 236.

⁹⁷ cf. *ibid.*

⁹⁸ cf. Abdallah-Steinkopff, ‘Die Rolle des Dritten - Dolmetscher in der Einzel- und Gruppentherapie mit Flüchtlingen’, 282.

reasons for these problems are that the interpreters are not able to recognise necessary therapeutic strategies, such as the confrontational procedure, and the therapists are not sufficiently aware of the role of the interpreter⁹⁹; they do not know that some expressions require a more comprehensive explanation in the target language. Experts warn about the employment of non-professional interpreters in psychotherapy because they lack the necessary specific knowledge in psychotherapy and the professional interpreting skills¹⁰⁰.

Uluköylü conducted interviews in her research as well. Most of the interpreters who were interrogated see their role far beyond translation machines but consider themselves as agents who give advice and suggestions to the patients, defend them, interpret their statements, and ask their own questions¹⁰¹. However, many of the interpreters were not able to define their role or distinguish it from the role of community interpreters in other settings but, when asked, rather tended to hide behind the excuse that they are not professional interpreters¹⁰². However, it is very important that the interpreters are aware of their own role and agency. The vast majority of the interviewees came to the conclusion that interpreters should explain cultural aspects that otherwise would go unnoticed¹⁰³. Thereby, they should first translate what was said, subsequently give their explanation of the content and indicate that it is a remark or amendment by the interpreter¹⁰⁴. However, the same contradiction that has already been detected in other settings, particularly in police interviews, was identified in psychotherapy as well: on the one hand, it is expected from the interpreters that they translate exactly what was said, whereas, on the other hand, they are also expected to provide a – linguistic and cultural – interpretation of the statements and reformulate these statements, indications, recommendations, etc. autonomously¹⁰⁵.

Furthermore, the interpreters are caught in a field of tension between the expectations of the refugees and the therapists¹⁰⁶: On the one hand, refugees regard the interpreters as compatriots who can understand and support them. Frequently, the power and the agency of interpreters, e.g. the influence they have on public authorities, is overestimated by the refugees.

⁹⁹ cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ cf. Cagala, 'Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung', 236.

¹⁰¹ cf. Uluköylü, "'...manchmal streite ich auch.'" Sprach- und Kulturmittlung für türkische Migrantinnen im medizinischen Bereich', 214.

¹⁰² cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰³ cf. *ibid.*, 197.

¹⁰⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 179 et seq.

¹⁰⁵ cf. *ibid.*, 212.

¹⁰⁶ cf. Abdallah-Steinkopff, 'Die Rolle des Dritten - Dolmetscher in der Einzel- und Gruppentherapie mit Flüchtlingen', 286.

The refugees generally want to establish a relation of friendship with the interpreters. On the other hand, therapists expect neutrality, as well as linguistic and intercultural skills. A relation of friendship between the patient and the interpreter would endanger the principle of neutrality. However, if the interpreter acts as a neutral agent, it can be perceived as impoliteness or lack of helpfulness by the refugees. Thus, interpreters face the difficult task of meeting the professional expectations of the therapists and the moral expectations of the refugees, which can lead to a conflict of loyalty¹⁰⁷. It is vital that the therapists are mindful about this tension and support the interpreters accordingly. Only under this precondition, the interpreters can collaborate and be loyal to the therapists.

The interpreters who Abdallah-Steinkopff works with meet the following criteria¹⁰⁸: They come from the same country as the patients and have lived in Germany for years. She cannot accept interpreters whose residence permit is still pending because they would not be able to establish the necessary distance to the patients since they are affected by the same problems. The interpreters have different professions or are students. Most of them do not have medical or psychological knowledge. A certain language level is the precondition for the acceptance of interpreters, but their linguistic skills nevertheless vary. The interpreters are often regarded as a cultural bridge between the client and the patient¹⁰⁹. Since interpreters have experienced socialisation processes in the same cultural context, it is easier for them to understand the patients¹¹⁰. This is of particular importance at the beginning of the treatment when interpreters have proven to be very helpful in the recognition of the educational level and the social and ethnical origin of the patients¹¹¹. However, ethnic and religious affiliations also determine whether sympathy or antipathy dominate the relationship between the interpreter and the refugee¹¹². If both originate from the same country, it is still possible that they belong to hostile groups who fight against each other in their home country. In such a case it is necessary to investigate whether a relationship of trust can nevertheless be established or whether it is necessary to appoint another interpreter. However, if there are no such obstacles, the relationship between the interpreter and the refugee frequently is more intimate and closer than the rather neutral relationship between the therapist and the refugee¹¹³. It is important that the therapist does not evaluate such a situation as personal incompetence or unprofessionalism of

¹⁰⁷ cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 285.

¹⁰⁹ cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ cf. *ibid.*

¹¹¹ cf. *ibid.*

¹¹² cf. *ibid.*

¹¹³ cf. *ibid.*, 285 et seq.

the interpreter, but recognises the potential of the intimate relationship for the therapeutic process¹¹⁴.

Important skills for interpreters in the therapeutic setting are empathy and differentiation, the ability to work in teams, flexibility, psychological resilience, and the ability to reflect about personal opinions and qualify these¹¹⁵. Basically, the therapists expect that the interpreters should not change the statements of the therapist or the patients¹¹⁶. If the patient does not understand the formulation of the therapist, it is his own responsibility to ask for clarification, and it generally is the task of the therapist to adapt his statements to the educational level of the client¹¹⁷. In many therapeutic treatments, it is not wished that the interpreters take notes¹¹⁸. In these situations, other strategies are needed, e.g. simultaneous interpreting¹¹⁹. The interpreter should, however, be able to concentrate on the content and need as little capacities as possible for linguistic communication¹²⁰. There are five typical mistakes committed by lay interpreters: complete or partial elimination of information, amendments, summaries (simplifications or explanations), substitution of expressions, and change of role (interpreter takes over the discourse moderation)¹²¹.

2.3.3. Abdallah-Steinkopff: Guidelines for an Efficient Collaboration

For Abdallah-Steinkopff¹²² the work with interpreters in psychotherapy can only be successful if the therapist and the interpreter strive to build a harmonic relationship and cooperate: Professionalism in this context is based on teamwork. In order to achieve this, it is necessary that the interpreter provides his cultural knowledge to the therapist and thus becomes an intercultural mediator and transcultural agent. Furthermore, the therapist has to be willing to question his own professional knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary that the therapists and the interpreters hold briefing and debriefing meetings. Nevertheless, as Abdallah-Steinkopff

¹¹⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 286.

¹¹⁵ cf. Cagala, 'Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung', 238.

¹¹⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 242.

¹¹⁷ cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 243.

¹¹⁹ cf. Gentile et al. cited in *ibid.*

¹²⁰ cf. *ibid.*

¹²¹ cf. Vasquez cited in *ibid.*

¹²² cf. Abdallah-Steinkopff, 'Die Rolle des Dritten - Dolmetscher in der Einzel- und Gruppentherapie mit Flüchtlingen', 296 et seq.

emphasised, the therapist is responsible for handling the situation in a culturally sensitive way. Hence, the therapists must be aware of their own culture and associated paradigms and bear in mind that they are not universal. Instead, they should accept and be open to alternative moral concepts deriving from different cultural backgrounds. It is not about focusing on differences, but about overcoming self-established boundaries with the consciousness that there may be differences, as well as commonalities and similarities. An essential aspect of intercultural competence is the ability to accept confusion, ambiguities, or contradictions¹²³. As the study from Teegen¹²⁴ has revealed, apart from the burden of having to translate dramatic stories about war and imprisonment, there is one particularly burdensome aspect for the interpreters: The fact, that they do not have any influence on the course of conversation seems to be a major stress factor for them. If the therapist does not possess the necessary cultural sensitivity, the probability that the interpreter experiences a conflict of loyalty increases. Thus, according to Abdallah-Steinkopff¹²⁵, the therapist is responsible for the well-being of the interpreter too. This kind of awareness is essential in all professional settings where employees have to collaborate with interpreters. Therefore, developing training programmes for both, the employees, such as therapists, police officers, BAMF officials, or social workers, and the interpreters, is vital. Abdallah-Steinkopff has developed some guidelines and important factors for an efficient and successful cooperation between the interpreter and the therapist. These guidelines can also be applied, perhaps after some modifications, to other settings.

First of all, as has also been revealed by Uluköylü's study, it is necessary to clearly define the role of each participant¹²⁶: The therapist is the dialogue partner of the patient and is responsible for the therapeutic process of the conversation. Therefore, it is also his responsibility to build a trustworthy and stable relationship to the patient. The interpreter is responsible for the translation of the statements of the patient and the therapist, whereby the translation is supposed to be as literal as possible. However, the expectation of keeping the translation as close as possible to the source discourse is problematic, because of cultural variations, as has been explained before. Furthermore, Abdallah-Steinkopff¹²⁷ points out that the interpreter has to ensure a respectful and trustworthy relationship to the refugee. The refugee has to acknowledge the roles of both participants. One method to clearly define the roles is the

¹²³ cf. Platzdach cited in *ibid.*, 297.

¹²⁴ cf. *ibid.*

¹²⁵ cf. *ibid.*, 298.

¹²⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 287.

¹²⁷ cf. *ibid.*

seating arrangement. Abdallah-Steinkopff¹²⁸ suggests that the patient and the therapist face each other, whereas the interpreter should sit a little bit behind and shifted to one side of the therapist. Such an arrangement demonstrates that the interpreter belongs to the therapist and has the advantage for the refugee that he does not have to change his line of vision throughout the conversation and decide whether to look at the therapist or the interpreter. However, this firm demonstration, that the interpreter belongs to the therapist, could also be an obstacle for the trust-building measures between the interpreter and the refugee. An alternative would be that the interpreter sits behind the refugee, which would also enable the refugee to focus on the therapist while listening to the interpreter. However, there is the danger that the refugee turns around to see the interpreter while he is speaking. There are further possible seating arrangements which all have possible disadvantages and for Abdallah-Steinkopff this former arrangement has proved most successful.

Abdallah-Steinkopff states possible problems that might occur and should be recognised and solved before the therapy starts¹²⁹: First, there is the possibility that the interpreter and the refugee belong to different religious or ethnic groups, as has already been mentioned before. Second, the gender of the interpreter might be crucial. Interestingly, if the refugees suffered traumatic experiences in which their dignity has been violated, both, men and women, tend to prefer female interpreters, whereas the gender of the therapists is not as important. Third, addressing topics that are considered taboo in specific cultures can be problematic for all three participants. Apart from an unclear description of what happened by the patient, there is the risk that the interpreters circumscribe direct questions asked by therapists because in their culture it would be impolite to ask the refugee directly. Furthermore, sometimes therapists feel uncomfortable to ask questions directly and circumscribe them instead, which leads to the situation that it becomes the interpreters' task to address the topic and thus take control over the conversation. Fourth, refugees who also suffer from diseases like schizophrenia show very specific conversational patterns that might be confusing to the interpreters, but crucial for the diagnosis. They often are not able to focus and thus frequently switch between topics. If the interpreters do not possess sufficient medical knowledge, they might be afraid to translate directly what was said by those patients because the therapist could doubt their skills, which leads to the attempt to produce more logical statements. However, this disables the therapist to make the adequate diagnosis. Fifth, if the patient asks the interpreter to not translate a particular statement he made, the interpreter might experience a conflict of loyalty. Therefore, it is

¹²⁸ cf. *ibid.*

¹²⁹ cf. *ibid.*, 288 et seqq.

necessary to determine in advance how the interpreters should react in such situations. However, Abdallah-Steinkopff did not mention the fact that the refugees also have the right to receive a translation of everything that is said by the therapist, even if it is a conversation between him and, for example, a receptionist, because if the refugee spoke their language, he would understand it too. Sixth, it is crucial that the interpreters are well informed about therapeutic strategies and their aims in order to understand the methods of the therapist. Seventh, some terms and concepts, such as ‘therapy’, ‘psychologist’, ‘depression’, or ‘grief’, cannot be translated directly into other languages. Furthermore, the expression of abstract terms in substantives in German is not transferrable to all languages. This means that the interpreters have to circumscribe those terms, often needing several sentences more. If the therapists are not aware of these structural linguistic peculiarities, they might suspect the interpreter of adding information to the content, which endangers the relationship between the therapist and the interpreter. According to Abdallah-Steinkopff, all these aspects should be clarified in advance.

Abdallah-Steinkopff identifies the following cultural aspects as relevant knowledge for therapists in the collaboration with interpreters¹³⁰: First, as has been explained before, diseases are perceived differently in different cultures. Second, the expectations of the patients are connected to their perception of diseases and therefore, particularly at the beginning of the therapy, the expectations of the patients might not be met. Third, because of their common cultural background, it is easier for the interpreters to determine whether a statement is true or not. Fourth, the definition of oneself and the identity depend on whether one comes from an individualist or collectivist culture, whether personal interests or the interests of the community have priority¹³¹. Fifth, the behaviour towards authority figures is shaped by the cultural background as well. In this context, Abdallah-Steinkopff also mentions the differences in nonverbal behaviour. She uses the example of eye contact, which is interpreted differently in different cultures: In many African and Asian countries, direct eye contact is evaluated as a sign of indiscretion and disregard. Thus, avoiding eye contact can be a sign of respect, whereas it is perceived as uncertainty and dishonesty in Western European cultures. Furthermore, in many cultures it is considered impolite to burden others with personal problems. Therefore, many western therapists have the feeling that the patients would ‘beat about the bush’. Sixth, it is important to recognise whether in the refugees’ culture communication tends to be ‘high-context’ or ‘low-context’. Individualist societies tend to use low-context communication, whereas high-context communication is more common in collectivist societies. For instance, in

¹³⁰ cf. *ibid.*, 292 et seqq.

¹³¹ cf. Hofstede and Hofstede, *Lokales Denken, globales Handeln*, 97.

some cultures, silence has a meaning that can be interpreted according to the context, which is particularly difficult for western therapists. Other cultures avoid saying ‘no’ and instead use variations of ‘yes’ to express negation. In this context, the meaning of the interpreter as ‘cultural bridge’ becomes obvious. This can also be problematic at court, because western judges sometimes suspect that the refugees have something to hide if they do not come to the point as quickly as expected. Seventh, the language structure and terminology differ between cultures. This is reflected, for example, in the syntax or the usage of particular word classes like personal pronouns or conjunctions. Additionally, concepts like ‘self-realisation’ have a positive connotation in individualist societies, whereas they have a negative connotation in collectivist societies or do not exist at all. Seventh, the expression of pain can greatly vary between cultures and languages. In Turkish, for instance, there is a range of terms to express different kinds of pain, physical and emotional, which can all be translated as ‘pain’. Therefore, therapists often have difficulties in diagnosing the kind of pain a refugee is talking about and need the interpreter to find the right diagnosis. Hence, Abdallah-Steinkopff determined some very important cultural aspects that should be considered by both the interpreter and the therapist.

3. Reality and Perspective of Interpreters

This chapter depicts the realities the interpreters face in their work from their perspective. First of all, a description about the interviewees, including some general data about gender, nationality, and age will be provided. Afterwards, the short biographies of the interviewees serve to get an idea of the agency of each interpreter. Subsequently, the challenges and problems the interpreters face in their work will be analysed. These can be divided into linguistic, cultural, and emotional problems.

3.1. Who are the Interpreters?

Eleven interpreters were interviewed: six men and five women. Hence, the results are not influenced by a gender-specific point of view. The interviewees come from different countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, Urumqi in China, Iran, Lebanon, two from Syria and two from Germany. The results are therefore not based on the perspective of one culture but provide a

broader picture. The age range is between 24 and 60 years. Thus, the results neither are biased by the perspective of a particular age-group. Conclusively, the interviews encompass different perspectives and provide a comprehensive picture of the situation. Except for the two German interviewees and the one from Algeria, who answered the questionnaires via e-mail, all interviews were conducted in person.

The majority of the interpreters in the refugee context are laymen. From the eleven interpreters surveyed, only two completed an academic training programme for interpreting. Another interviewee obtained a bachelor degree in translation and could participate in some interpreting classes during his studies. Most of them are laymen because of two main reasons: First, the master programmes for interpreting are focused on conference interpreting and the languages that are needed in the refugee context are not offered in most of these programmes. As a result, there are almost no professional interpreters who speak the languages needed, such as Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Macedonian, Serbian, Bosnian, different African languages, but also Turkish, Romanian, or Bulgarian. Second, for many institutions, professional interpreters would simply be too expensive. The task of community interpreters in the refugee context could rather be compared to the task of court interpreters and not conference interpreters. The usual fee conference interpreters charge is between 600 and 800 euros per conference day. Court interpreters are normally paid by the hour. The German Ministry of Justice has fixed a rate of 70 euros per hour for interpreters, 75 euros if it is simultaneous interpreting¹³². Considering the high number of refugees in Germany in the year 2015 – estimated at one million – who had to be registered, heard, assisted, and deported, the costs would have been quite high, especially for social organisations, which often have a rather small budget.

Both professional interpreters are female and German citizens with no migratory background. They both have German and French in their professional language combination and speak English. Antje is 48 years old and the second one, who prefers to stay anonymous, is 25. Therefore, she will be called the young professional interpreter in this thesis. Antje furthermore speaks Spanish, Italian, Icelandic and some Russian. She has mainly interpreted in situations concerning asylum procedures at different institutions, such as the police, the court and for lawyers. Her remuneration is between 50 and 100 euros per hour plus VAT. However, she also offers her services on a pro bono basis. The young professional interpreter was not able

¹³² cf. 'JVEG - Gesetz über die Vergütung von Sachverständigen, Dolmetscherinnen, Dolmetschern, Übersetzerinnen und Übersetzern sowie die Entschädigung von ehrenamtlichen Richterinnen, ehrenamtlichen Richtern, Zeuginnen, Zeugen und Dritten'.

to give specific information about where she works but stated that it is mainly in refugee camps. She receives between 55 and 75 euros per hour plus refunds for travel expenses.

Dani is from Syria and is 28 years old. He came to Germany in October 2012 to study. He has a bachelor's degree in architecture and a master's degree in urban planning. He is fluent in Arabic, English, and Turkish and has a good command of German. He volunteers as translator and interpreter at the immigration service of Diakonie Heidelberg. The refugees go there to talk about their problems and to obtain assistance for issues with German institutions such as the BAMF, health insurance agencies, or the Jobcenter¹³³. The Jobcenter manages the financial support for refugees, e.g. for accommodation and language classes. According to Dani, the employees of the Jobcenter claim that they are not allowed to speak English at work and therefore interpreters are always needed. In this context, Diakonie supports the refugees in various situations. For instance, the Jobcenter only pays German classes up to level B1. But in order to get accepted at the University of Heidelberg they need C1. Among others, Diakonie helps them to find alternative funding. Hence, the refugees tell Dani which problem they have, Dani interprets it to his supervisor, and then she gives advice to the refugees and Dani interprets it back to them. However, they also help them find solutions concerning family reunification and contact the German embassies in countries like Turkey or Lebanon, where many Syrian refugees are waiting for an appointment to claim asylum or family reunification. Once a week, they have a meeting with a legal consultant, a lawyer who is specialised in right of residence. Furthermore, the network in Heidelberg is very well established and Diakonie cooperates with other social organisations like Caritas¹³⁴ and Asylarbeitskreis¹³⁵.

Muhannad is also from Syria and is 29 years old and came to Germany in 2012 as a refugee. He studied business administration, trade and banking. He worked as an accountant in Aleppo for four years. The languages he speaks are Kurdish, Arabic, German and some English. Muhannad volunteers as an interpreter for Diakonie, e.g. accompanies refugees to the Jobcenter, and, as most of the other interpreters, helps the refugees he knows personally with medical appointments, when they go shopping, etc.

Sulaiman is from Afghanistan and is 27 years old. He came to Germany as a refugee in 2011. In Afghanistan, he studied medicine. He has become quite famous in the region around Heidelberg and beyond, because he is very involved in the refugee work. He has been invited

¹³³ 'Jobcenter Heidelberg'.

¹³⁴ 'Caritas Heidelberg: Startseite'.

¹³⁵ 'Asylarbeitskreis Heidelberg e.V. - Home'.

to various panel discussions in Germany and has been interviewed by local newspapers¹³⁶. He had to flee because the Taliban wanted to force him to join them and since this was no option for him, he decided to come to Europe. The alternative would have been his probable death. After paying 18,000 US dollars to the people smugglers, he arrived in Frankfurt by plane with a false passport. When the police boarded the plane to detain him, it was the most embarrassing moment in his life. Since he could prove with letters that he was personally threatened by the Taliban, his asylum procedure was relatively uncomplicated and fast. As all refugees in Germany, he first had to learn the language of the country before being admitted to the university. To earn some money, he worked as lifeguard at the public swimming pool. Additionally, he has worked as interpreter for the Youth Welfare Office, the BAMF, the police, and social organisations such as Diakonie and Asylarbeitskreis. Some of his work is paid, but he also is very active as a volunteer. He is available for the refugees 24/7 and wants to help as much as possible. For the paid work, he has earned between 20 euros per hour and 300 euros per day. Through his work as interpreter he became a full-time social consultant for unaccompanied minors. Last summer semester 2016, he was finally admitted and started to study medicine at the university in Heidelberg, while still working as a part-time consultant and thus being able to earn some money to finance his studies.

He is 24 years old and was born in Iraq. She came to Germany as a refugee with her parents when she was four and a half. She speaks Kurdish, German, English, and French. She studied law and sociology in Germany. During the last semester of her studies, she was contacted by the State Ministry of Baden-Wuerttemberg and they offered her a job as an interpreter in “The Special Quota Project for Vulnerable Women and Children from North Iraq”¹³⁷. It is a relocation project by the federal government of Baden-Wuerttemberg for women and children who had been captured by the self-proclaimed ‘Islamic State’, ISIS, after the massacre in August 2014, when ISIS raided the Sinjar region. Women and children were separated from the men, who were killed immediately. The women were grouped into virgins, beautiful women, etc. and many of them were raped. The boys were trained as soldiers. Some of those women and children escaped and fled to the refugee camp in Dohuk or other camps. The project started in March 2015 and the last mission was in January 2016. In sum, a team consisting of the project leader, physicians, psychologists, visa commissaries, and interpreters travelled fifteen times to the refugee camp in Dohuk to choose the most vulnerable women and

¹³⁶ cf. Schnur, ‘Heidelberger Schüler befragten geflohenen Studenten aus Afghanistan’.

¹³⁷ cf. ‘IOM Assists in Relocation of Vulnerable Women and Children from Iraq to Germany | International Organization for Migration’.

children and take them to Baden-Wuerttemberg. Hes participated in this project eight times as an interpreter. Her mother and her sister also participated as interpreters. Now she is working full-time for the State Ministry in Baden-Wuerttemberg in the same project. The 1,000 quota refugees from this project have been allocated in 21 communities in Baden-Wuerttemberg. Since different agents – the State Ministry, the districts, the cities, and communities – have to cooperate, Hes visits these different authorities and the accommodations of the refugees. She assesses what is working well and what not and tries to improve the communication between the different actors.

Anwar was born in 1964 in Urumqi, China. He came to Germany in October 2000 as an asylum applicant for political reasons. The asylum got granted after eight months. He speaks Uygur, Chinese, Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, German, Turkish, Tartar, and English. He studied pedagogics and language and has two master degrees in journalism and sinology. He worked as translator, journalist, editor and photographer for a newspaper. When he arrived, he took German classes for six months and immediately afterwards he did three internships through the Jobcenter. One of the companies where he did an internship, the PTV Group, offered him a permanent position, so he worked there from 2007 until 2012. In this company, he often had to interpret for Asian partners. But it was hard for him to work with the Chinese partners because, according to his observations, their intention was not a long-term partnership but only their own profit. Therefore, he decided to work in Munich for some time. Afterwards he returned to Karlsruhe and now he works for Freundeskreis Asyl as a social assistant and procedural advisor for refugees. Furthermore, he has worked as an interpreter for the BAMF and for the police at Frankfurt airport for seven years. He earns approximately 1,000 euros per year with interpreting. But his main position is at Freundeskreis Asyl. He would earn more for interpreting if he was a sworn interpreter, but he is not willing to pay the fee for the swearing in. He mainly interprets in legal settings, such as the first hearings at BAMF, legal counselling, passport issues and penal institutions. After signing the required declarations of commitment at the BAMF, his statements are legally valid. He stated that through his work at the BAMF, he is always informed about recent political changes concerning asylum, which is an advantage for Freundeskreis Asyl because he and his colleagues need this information in order to be able to provide helpful service and information to the refugees. For him, his main duty as an interpreter is to save the refugees and help them, but also being fair and impartial.

Mona is 43 years old and came from Lebanon to Germany in 1986 as a refugee with her family. She speaks Arabic, German and some English. Her profession is medical-laboratory

assistant and she has worked in this sector for 23 years. She works pro bono and against payment as an interpreter and advisor for refugees for the Youth Welfare Office, for the public service broadcaster ARD, and social organisations like Freundeskreis Asyl or Herxheim Bunt. For the paid work, she receives 30 euros per hour plus a mileage reimbursement of 30 cents per km.

Hossein was born in 1956 in Iran. He came to Germany in 1985 to study. He has more than one profession, namely printing industry technician, bookbinder, artist, and entertainer. Currently, he works as a magician for children and entertainer at different events. He speaks Farsi, German, Spanish, Italian and some English. He works voluntarily as an interpreter for Diakonie and at the hospital in the reception camp for refugees in Heidelberg, the Patrick Henry Village.

Passant is 37 years old and is from Egypt. She came to Germany to study and work 12 years ago. She speaks Arabic, German, English, and some French. She has a master's degree in vocational education and a doctorate in vocational education in developing countries. She has worked at *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ* (the German corporation for international cooperation) for three years, in the programme Migration and Development¹³⁸. She volunteers as an interpreter for refugees at Caritas and Diakonie Heidelberg. She accompanies refugees to the Jobcenter and helps them find apartments once they get accepted. Furthermore, she gives cultural and language training for refugees.

Kha Lid is 32 years old and is from Algeria. He came to Germany in 2013 to study translation. His mother tongues are Berber and Arabic, but he also speaks German, English and French. He was trained as an office clerk and worked for six years at the Goethe-Institute in Alger in the field of management, customer service, etc. He studied translation at the University of Alger and in Germersheim, Germany. He volunteers as an interpreter for refugees as part of the interpreters pool project "*Dolmetscherpool*"¹³⁹ in Germersheim, Mannheim, Ludwigshafen and Landau.

¹³⁸ cf. 'Expertise. Migration and Development'.

¹³⁹ cf. 'Dolmetscherpool'.

3.2. Problems and Challenges in Context

The core question in the interviews was: *Which problems and challenges are you confronted with in your work as interpreter for refugees? This can be linguistic or communication problems, but also cultural differences and emotional challenges.* As has already been revealed from the perspective of the institutions, linguistic, cultural, and emotional issues can be regarded as the three main challenges for the interpreters. Therefore, this chapter is divided into these three sections. This analysis provides a basic knowledge about the reality of interpreters. On this basis, the content of the workshop and the training programme can be further analysed in chapter four and, finally, suggestions for improvement can be established.

3.2.1. Linguistic Problems

Hes described one important aspect about linguistic problems in detail: the various Kurdish dialects. At the beginning, it was difficult for her because the dialects are so different that sometimes they seem to be different languages. She said that the reason for those differences is the geopolitical situation. Since the Kurds do not have their own country but are distributed throughout parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, the languages of those countries influence the Kurdish dialect in each region. For instance, in Syria and Iraq, it is influenced by Arabic, but in Northern Iraq, there are various other influences as well. In Erbil, the capital of the autonomous region of Kurdistan, the Sorani dialect is spoken. Even though it is only three hours from Hes' home city Dohuk, where the Kurdmanji dialect is spoken, the dialects are very different. And the women who come from the Sinjar region speak yet another dialect. Sometimes, the words are completely different and not recognisable or derivable. Hence, she started to write her own Kurdish – Kurdish dictionary and with every mission, she learned more words and it got better and easier each time. Fortunately, she had time to ask if she did not know a term and write it into her dictionary because her boss was very understanding. She mentioned that it generally is very difficult to find Kurdish interpreters, because the dialects are so different. According to her, the situation is similar with the Arabic dialects. She explained that most of the Yazidi women learn Arabic at school but they had great difficulties communicating with the Lebanese women. Another example is the Moroccan dialect, which is hardly understandable for Arabic speakers from other countries, except for the adjacent countries.

Sulaiman also sees the various languages and dialects in Afghanistan as a challenge. Even though he feels that he is sufficiently experienced and speaks all languages he needs quite fluently, he could remember some linguistic problems. For instance, Pashtu is one language with different dialects. The very important words 'yes' and 'no' are completely different in the north and in the south. Pashtuns in the south say 'okay' for 'yes' and 'nya' for 'no'. In the north they say 'au' for 'yes' and 'na' for 'no'. There are not enough interpreters from the south of Afghanistan. The refugees who come from the south thus have problems if the interpreters come from the north. Sulaiman knows the differences and is able to understand all the dialects because he grew up in Kabul with different people speaking different dialects. In very rare occasions, it happens that he does not know a word. But in general, the different dialects are no problem for him. However, according to him, most of the interpreters do not have enough experience. When he starts talking to the refugees, he tries to create a cheerful and relaxed atmosphere by making jokes. According to Sulaiman, this strategy has proved very successful with all refugees. But he also knows that there are still many problems that are also caused by the lack of awareness in the institutions. He provides a very recent example: An Afghan friend of his who speaks Pashtu had his hearing at the BAMF in Karlsruhe. The BAMF assigned an Afghan interpreter to him. The problem was that he could understand Pashtu but not speak it actively and thus not translate what the BAMF official said to the refugee. Additionally, this interpreter did not grow up in Afghanistan, but in Iran, where people speak Persian, which is a completely different language. Fortunately, Sulaiman had told his friend in advance that if he received an interpreter who cannot speak Pashtu, he has the right to refuse the hearing under these circumstances. This refugee exercised his right even though, according to him, the BAMF employee wanted to convince him to conduct the hearing. However, not every refugee is as lucky and one can imagine the consequences such a hearing might have. In the worst case, the refugee would be sent home by mistake and be killed by his persecutors.

Another linguistic problem Hes mentioned were the long sentences the refugees make. This was a challenge for her, especially when she just started working as an interpreter. She stated that most of the refugees only wanted to talk to someone about their experiences. When they realised that she is Kurdish, they started to talk non-stop and she often had to interrupt them in order to interpret what they said to the project leader. Partly, the sentences were very long and additionally, there sometimes were up to three or four words she did not know in one sentence. This was an obstacle and it was necessary for Hes to ask the refugees to describe the words she could not understand.

Anwar mentioned two linguistic problems. First, he stated that it is harder for him to interpret for illiterates, particularly when the activity also includes filling in forms, e.g. at the BAMF. According to him, many refugees from Gambia or Nigeria are illiterate. The second problem he mentioned was that sometimes it is hard to find the exact equivalent term in German. Then he tries to explain it as well as possible until both parties agree on the meaning. He feels that his German is not good enough and that he does not have enough opportunities to improve it. Muhannad has the same feeling. For him, the language problem is that he is not proficient enough in German.

Hossein usually interprets at the hospital. He realised that the main linguistic problem there is his lack of knowledge of medical terminology. Hence, he has to ask the doctors to explain the meaning of a disease or a medication in simple German and not in Latin terminology. Furthermore, some of the medication that is used and prescribed in Germany does not exist in other countries where the refugees come from. For instance, in some countries, there are no suppositories. Hence, he cannot just translate what the doctor has said but has to describe the medicine, the usage, and the effects to the refugees. Kha Lid also mentioned that he often faces terminological problems, mainly with legal terminology. The problem for him, however, consists not only in the terminological differences between German and Arabic, but also in different terminology among the different Arabic dialects. He is from Algeria and mainly interprets for refugees from Syria. Furthermore, many of the refugees do not speak Standard Arabic. This can be a challenge for the Arabic interpreters if they come from different countries. Kha Lid also states that there are no Arabic equivalents for German institutions like *Jobcenter*, *BAMF*, *Sozialamt* (English: Social Welfare Office), etc. However, in this case he is able to use the German names because the refugees generally are familiar with them. They also know the meaning of the German term *Bescheid*, which is an official notification, e.g. the letter of recognition for refugees issued by the BAMF. Kha Lid observed that the refugees have developed their own language. Missing terms from German and the German legal system are adopted by Arabic speakers, but also by the refugees from all the other countries. Thus, cultures get linguistically enriched and parts of the German language travel back to the countries of origin with the refugees. Hence, the refugee situation creates a transcultural contact zone in Germany for German, Arabic, and other languages and cultures, which is reflected in the development of the language.

A particularly interesting comment Hossein made was that interpreting could also be from German to German because it is about understanding the meaning of what was said and

what the speaker wanted to say. Hossein's statement is proved by Jones¹⁴⁰ who examined the communication difficulties that might arise between an Englishman and an American because of their different cultural background and the different ways of communicating. Hossein observed that the right way to interpret is to analyse the content and explain it subsequently. Hence, his observations are consistent with the *Théorie du Sens* of Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer¹⁴¹ who advocated for a free and analogous translation, detached from the source discourse. He further noticed that it is important to know the meaning of particular metaphors because they are different in each culture and the interpreters either have to find the idiomatic equivalent in the target language or explain the meaning as adequately as possible with their own words.

Hossein also observed the importance of nonverbal and paraverbal communication. He mentioned that the way in which one says something, the body language, and facial expressions are highly significant aspects for interpreting, too. From his point of view, the interpreters should not be shy or ashamed of making use of nonverbal communication. He noticed that there is no perfect interpretation, but if the interpreter has the right charisma, confidence and sympathy, the clients will still believe that the interpretation was perfect. He knows from his profession as entertainer that a little stage fright is essential, but one should always be confident that one can handle the situation. The young professional interpreter also mentioned that through the observation of the body language and facial expressions, it is possible to detect if a refugee is lying or telling the truth.

Mona did not mention any linguistic problem. According to Dani, there are only few linguistic problems, he could not think about a particular one. For Passant, there are no linguistic problems. Perhaps they are very confident and comfortable speaking both languages because they have lived in Germany for a long time or perhaps they have a particular talent for languages. On the other hand, the possibility that some interpreters are not aware of linguistic problems they face must not be denied. Therefore, possibly, if the interpreters were trained and thus became aware of possible linguistic problems, they could be able to detect them and subsequently improve their interpretation and communication in general.

¹⁴⁰ Jones, *Conference Interpreting Explained*, 3.

¹⁴¹ Seleskovitch, 'Simultaneous Language and Cognition'.

3.2.2. Cultural Problems

Anwar explained that he has enough experience with refugees who come from his country and he has enough experience in Germany and as an interpreter to explain everything properly. However, when he has to interpret for people from a different cultural background, e.g. from Nigeria or Gambia, problems are more likely. According to him, refugees from Africa behave less responsibly and sometimes are impolite to him. For instance, when he helps them to fill in forms, they only tell him their age and say that he can calculate their birth year himself. From his perspective, these are intercultural problems because refugees with a certain cultural background do not respect him enough. Furthermore, working as interpreter he sometimes feels like a doctor. He points out that it is very important to know how a refugee feels. For instance, he mentions that Kurds are afraid if a Turkish interpreter is assigned to them because of the political tensions and the consistent oppression of Kurds in Turkey. He has observed that it is essential that the refugees can trust the interpreter. From his experience, this is particularly important in the first hearings at the BAMF because this is the most decisive situation for the refugees. He is aware of the fact that any mistake he might make could change the whole future of the refugee. Hence, an interpreter should be very sensitive. Anwar emphasised the high significance of empathy and a broad knowledge about the geopolitical situation. According to Anwar, unfortunately, the decision makers often do not have sufficient knowledge about the political and economic situation in the countries of origin of the refugees and therefore they sometimes make the wrong decisions. In this case, Anwar tries to intervene and inform them about missing considerations.

Sulaiman adverts to the same problem Anwar mentioned. Referring to the various different ethnic communities in Afghanistan, he states that sometimes tensions occur when he has to interpret for Hazara people for example, because he is Pashtun and they are in conflict with each other. Hence, when he is interpreting for Hazara people, they very frequently offend Pashtuns and claim that they are the reason why they had to leave Afghanistan and come to Germany. Sulaiman is aware about these tensions and he has developed his individual strategies to handle the situation. But he has observed that other interpreters act differently and have a wrong approach because the first question they ask the refugees is from which part of Afghanistan they are and thus categorise them into a specific ethnic group, such as Hazara, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns, etc. With this categorisation, they automatically create boundaries between the refugees and themselves if they do not belong to the same ethnic group, because

in Afghanistan these groups are enemies. However, Sulaiman discerned that in Germany they are all Afghans and belong to the same group and therefore must support each other instead of continuing with their discrepancies. For him, we are all humans and we should perceive each other as humans and not as Muslims, Germans, Hazara, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Pashtuns, etc. This awareness is essential for all interpreters. The cultural problems connected to this example manifest in the following manner: If the refugees notice that the interpreter is from a different ethnic group and additionally very serious and tense, they try to say as little as possible. If the interpreter is relaxed and conveys the feeling that he is there to help the refugees, they start to trust him and feel more secure and thus share their experiences and opinions. Sulaiman's main strategy is to make jokes and make them laugh, as this relieves the refugees from stress. He shows them that he is there to help them and not to manifest his power over them. Therefore, it would be necessary to train the interpreters to become aware of the possible tensions and teach them strategies to handle the situation.

A second point Sulaiman mentioned is the gender issue. He explained that it would be highly recommendable to assign female interpreters to female refugees and male interpreters to male refugees. The reason is that in many cultures, especially among Muslims, it is very common that women are attended by female physicians or hair dressers, etc. and men by males. Refugees often have to tell very private stories and in this context many of them are not used to interacting with a person from the opposite sex. He is convinced that a woman definitely would talk more openly to a female interpreter. He said that at the BAMF, they usually do not take this into account, even though it would be very important and could improve the overall situation for the refugee, the institution, and the interpreter. However, he has never witnessed any problem if a female interpreter was assigned to a male refugee. Hence, it is particularly important to provide female interpreters for female refugees. Kha Lid also referred to the gender issue in the context of cultural challenges and mentioned that women always have to be treated by a female doctor and frequently demand a female interpreter, too. Sometimes they have to wait very long to get an appointment with a female doctor. Furthermore, there are differences in the treatment. Kha Lid, for instance, interpreted for a pregnant woman and her husband would not authorise the physicians to give her peridural anaesthesia. In these situations, the function as cultural mediator of the interpreter is needed. In order to alleviate the pain of the woman, he could attempt to convince the husband of the benefit and harmlessness of a particular treatment. However, the question is whether it is or should be the interpreter's task to intervene in culture-specific decisions. On the one hand, in this particular case, an intervention could cause conflicts between the husband and his wife or the husband and the doctor. On the other hand, if the

interpreter is supposed to be a cultural mediator, a comprehensive explanation of the German doctor's practice and the advantages of the unaccepted treatment could contribute to a better understanding of the other's perspective and thus even enhance integration. The interpreters can contribute significantly to integration if they share their knowledge as often as possible and explain as much as possible to both sides. In this manner, they are the agents who can increase the awareness for the perspective of the other. Of course, this task is much more demanding and challenging than a 'simple' translation. Therefore, adequate training programmes and adequate payment are very important.

Concerning the gender issue, Hes explained that the women were not afraid of the men working in their team because they were German beardless men with light skin and hair. Mr. Blume, the project leader, has a high level of cultural awareness and was rather like an uncle than a boss to Hes. The appearance of the ISIS fighters who had captured the women was completely different. They were afraid of Mediterranean or Middle-Eastern looking men with beards. Therefore, nobody is allowed to enter the accommodations where they live in Germany without permission. However, there was one team member who was not culturally sensitised. For instance, he asked one woman directly if she really had been raped. Hes immediately felt that it was impossible to interpret it to the woman in this way and asked her if she was really supposed to interpret it like that. When he answered 'yes', she nonetheless realised that she could not do it, especially not in the presence of the man. Hence, she decided to ask the woman if the ISIS fighters disturbed her in any way. In such situations, when she noticed that they were willing to talk openly about it, step by step, she asked more concrete questions. For Hes it is essential to build a relationship of trust first. Mainly young women like Hes were selected as interpreters for this project because the victims were approximately her age too. This can be assessed as very positive because it demonstrates that the project planners have considered significant aspects in the recruitment of the interpreters. Hes felt that the young refugee women could identify themselves with her, making it easier to build up trust. Furthermore, she was an inspiring example for them. She told them her own story, how she came to Germany, what she achieved in the meantime and tried to bolster their morale. Seeing their eyes shine full of hope was very rewarding and hope-inspiring for her as well, therefore it was a benefit for both sides.

From Passant's perspective, the refugees cause cultural problems because they are not flexible enough. For instance, they do not want to live together with other religious groups or do not want to live in the countryside or in an attic flat. She thinks that some refugees are too demanding, which also has a negative effect on her interpretation. However, she also observed

that a reason for this attitude is the wrong information refugees receive from the people smugglers who make false promises, e.g. that after a few years they would automatically receive German citizenship or, as Abdallah-Steinkopff explained in a lecture she held in Heidelberg in summer 2016, that they would be accommodated with families in their house and not the inhospitable refugee camps. However, Passant has also observed problems induced by the host culture and claims that there are Germans who are not able to accept other cultures. They expect a ‘copy and paste’ integration, which is not possible. She believes that the deficient placement and distribution of refugees lead to those cultural differences or even clashes. For instance, she said that two thousand refugees were accommodated in a small village where a relatively small number of migrants had lived before. Or sometimes Germans were forced to leave their social housing because the government needed it for refugees. According to Passant, these practices can cause fear within society, which is further fuelled by political party disunity in Germany. Hence, there is an observable connection between cultural problems, systemic procedures, and the political situation.

From Dani’s point of view, he is not confronted with cultural problems. However, in another context he mentioned that the refugees sometimes do not understand the German system yet. For instance, there are Muslim male refugees who are married to four women, which is permitted in Muslim countries. Hence, some of them want to bring their four wives to Germany through family reunification, but this is not possible because polygamy is not legal. Hossein shares Dani’s opinion. For him, cultural aspects do not play an important role, but he also mentions that it is necessary to explain these differences in the German system to the refugees. Thus, interpreters need solid knowledge of the legal systems.

Antje feels that through her intercultural academic training at the SDI München¹⁴², the Munich-based institute for languages and translation studies, she has been sufficiently sensitised and thus does not face cultural problems. She is able to recognise communication problems caused by cultural differences and explain the situation to both the judge and her client. The young professional interpreter also obtained an academic degree as certified interpreter at the IFA¹⁴³, the institute for foreign languages and international studies of the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg. However, she could mention some cultural differences that are challenging for her as interpreter. For instance, part of her work also is to interpret explanations about how waste has to be separated into paper, plastic, and

¹⁴² ‘SDI München: Willkommen im Bildungsnetzwerk SDI München!’

¹⁴³ ‘Institut für Fremdsprachen und Auslandskunde: Willkommen am IFA’.

residual waste in Germany, how the sanitary facilities should be used properly, how one should behave when disputes arise, e.g. that it is not allowed to hit others in Germany, or how to respect other religions. For her, it is annoying how some of the refugees behave. However, she did not consider that the host society also has to respect other religions, which has proven to be quite problematic, too. The attitude and perception of the young professional supports the assumption that it might be better to recruit interpreters who come from the same cultural background and are not annoyed by supposedly cultural differences.

3.2.3. Emotional Problems

Through the direct, physical contact, emotional problems are of particular significance in community interpreting, especially in the refugee context. One of the main reasons is that the refugees often are traumatised and the interpreters have to interpret their tragic stories. Mona only mentioned emotional challenges. She could not think about linguistic or cultural problems because according to her, she knows both cultures well enough. But it is hard for her to unwind after work. She has to talk to someone about her experiences and the stories she heard in order to digest everything. She mainly works with children and teenagers and she feels strongly connected to them. Many refugees have become her friends and one refugee girl is like a daughter to her. For example, if she realised that someone was involved in the war, it would be hard for her to assess in which way he was involved and to decide if she should report it to the authorities or not. Another emotional problem is caused by the treatment of some children by their parents. Some parents seem to not care enough and, for example, smoke in their small apartments in the refugee camps when their children are there too.

However, there are numerous other emotional challenges. Dani explained that there are many bureaucratic obstacles that slow down the work of social organisations. For instance, the responsible employees at the Jobcenter often are on holiday and there is no substitution. Thus, the processes take a very long time and he has to try to explain this situation to the refugees, even though he himself cannot understand why the organisation is as bad. Sometimes it is not even clear who the responsible person is. Therefore, the conversations with employees from the Jobcenter can be very tense and harsh which in consequence is emotionally challenging.

For Hossein it is emotionally challenging how the refugees are treated by some people. He mainly works as interpreter at the hospital. Sometimes, he already accompanies the refugees

on their way to the hospital by taxi. He observed that some taxi drivers have no respect for the refugees and treat them like animals. He blames the media for spreading hatred towards refugees. The situation at the hospital is challenging too. According to Hossein, some doctors do not have enough knowledge of human nature, which would be essential in their profession. They often do not talk enough to the refugees and are unprofessional.

For Muhannad, the behaviour of some refugees causes emotional stress. Anwar mentioned impoliteness in the cultural context, which has been explained in the previous chapter. Muhannad categorises it as an emotional problem, which illustrates the connection between both. He explained that the refugees sometimes are not aware of the appropriate level of politeness. Some are, for instance, impolite to the employees at the Jobcenter and demand immediate money for language classes. In such situations, he explains to them that he perceives them as too impolite and that he will not interpret for them anymore if they continue behaving in this way. He thinks it is connected to the fact that they do not understand how the system works. Additionally, he mentioned that the refugees regard him as their responsible assistant and blame him if something goes wrong.

The young professional interpreter explained that the emotional burden is significant but nonetheless does not cause any stress in particular to her personally. She considers the refugees the reason for emotional stress. She said that sometimes it is hard to see what the refugees receive, such as accommodation, money, clothes, etc., and still demand more, e.g. apple juice instead of orange juice, bigger beds or their own bike. Even though these demands annoy her, she knows that as an interpreter she has to try to stay neutral. However, she observed that, especially in this context, the interpreters are not invisible and not only there to translate because the refugees cling to any person who speaks their language and communication goes far beyond interpreting.

In the context of the projects in North Iraq, Hes probably is confronted with the greatest emotional challenges of all interviewees. First of all, because she had to interpret the horrible stories of the women who had been raped and tortured by members of ISIS during their captivity and the children who were captured and trained to become soldiers after having witnessed how their fathers got killed. For instance, there was a woman who was so desperate that she could not stop beating her head against the floor. Or a seven year old boy, who had already been in the line, supposed to get executed by ISIS. He only survived because the corpses of the other men, among them probably his father, fell on him and fortunately, they did not check if there were any survivors left. Hes explained that it is different if one hears these stories from a

distance or if one is sitting in front of this boy, looking directly into his eyes. Afterwards, she often locked herself in the bathroom and just had to cry for some minutes in order to relieve herself a little bit of this emotional burden. The second issue was that they were there to select the most vulnerable women and children, but in this camp with approximately 20,000 refugees, there were numerous people who came to the team in the hope of receiving help. For example, they told the team that many members of their family were still in ISIS captivity and begged them for their help. It was very hard to refuse to help them and to explain that they can only take 1,000 women and children who had no prospect for a future in North Iraq anymore. The external conditions also caused emotional stress. Power blackouts frequently occurred. During the summer they had to bear 40 degrees centigrade in the shade. The women often had to wait for many hours for their interviews, the children started to cry, and there was constant noise. During the projects, Hes lost five to six kilograms. According to her, one reason for her weight loss was that as an interpreter, one has to be concentrated all the time, particularly during conversations with political content – even when they were having lunch or dinner together. The project leader always told her to take a break and focus only on her meal, but she was unable to do so. As a second reason for her weight loss, she cited losing her appetite because of the emotional stress and the heat. The combination of the required concentration, the emotional burden from the stories she heard, and the external conditions posed extraordinary challenges to Hes.

Sulaiman explained that thanks to his broad knowledge and experience about the situation, he does not face many problems. He grew up in the same situation as the refugees he interprets for. He has made the same tragic experiences as most of the refugees and has been confronted with the situation in Germany for many years. According to him, it has become his everyday life, normality. He is able to dissociate himself from his work and the refugees' problems.

4. Assessment of Workshop and Training Programme

As has already been proven in detail and from different perspectives, it is highly important to provide adequate training programmes or workshops for the interpreters to build awareness about their role and teach them strategies they can apply in different situations. In order to create an idea of what has been offered to the interpreters so far, this chapter illustrates the content of

a workshop that was organised by Freundeskreis Asyl in the social setting, as well as the UNHCR training programme that is recommended by BAMF for the official setting. The following analysis gives an insight into both settings and perspectives, and furthermore, provides the basis for suggestions, improvements, and the development of new workshops.

4.1. Workshop for Interpreters of Freundeskreis Asyl

In March 2016, the organisation Freundeskreis Asyl in Karlsruhe held their first workshop for their interpreters. Other organisations, like Diakonie, have offered workshops for their interpreters too. The workshop was held by Chafik Tibari from the organisation Pro Asyl. He is an experienced and sworn liaison interpreter for Arabic. He has worked for 15 years as an official interpreter for the community hospital, the police and the aid organisation *Bahnhofsmision*¹⁴⁴, which is situated at German railway stations. The participants came from Egypt, Syria, Sri Lanka, Morocco, Kurdistan, and Iran. They were all active interpreters for refugees with different degrees of work experience. Mr. Tibari shared his experiences with the participants and they could ask questions. Therefore, this interactive workshop revealed some of the most crucial issues in the reality of the interpreters.

4.1.1. Content and Introduction

After the introductory words from the manager of the organisation, Mr. Tibari first presented the agenda of the workshop: interpreting in general, history, kinds of interpreting, note taking, refugees and asylum applicants, qualitative interpreting, values and obligations, and tips and questions. However, since the workshop was very interactive and dynamic and the topics changed frequently, the content has been re-arranged for this chapter.

In the introductory part, Mr. Tibari explained that interpreting is the oral translation from one language into another. He pointed out that an interpretation is an explanation of what was said, endorsing free interpretation instead of a literal translation. He emphasised that, at the authorities, it is particularly important to deliver a correct interpretation. However, what is

¹⁴⁴ 'Bahnhofsmision: Start'.

considered to be a 'correct' interpretation depends on the perspective and the assessment of the different agents. Additionally, he explained in which settings interpreters work. The history part can be considered as part of the introduction as well. He stated that interpreting has existed for a long time. As example he mentioned the *enfants de langue*, also known as *Sprachknaben* in German (literally translated to English: the 'children of the language'), in the European governments¹⁴⁵. However, the documented history of interpreting and interpreting studies started after the Nuremberg Trials in the 20th century, when simultaneous interpreting was professionally used on this scale for the first time, as Mr. Tibari expounded as well.

4.1.2. Types of Interpreting, Settings and Technical Strategies

Mr. Tibari presented the difference between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, pointed out the advantages and disadvantages, and focused on the work of community interpreters. For instance, he stated that simultaneous interpreting does not require additional time but is more expensive than consecutive interpreting because of the necessary equipment. In consecutive interpreting, which is also used in community interpreting, the advantage is that the interpreter has time to ask questions. Subsequently, he elaborated on the issue of whether community interpreters are professional interpreters or not. His answer was that they are non-professionals but that academic training (like for conference interpreters) would not be necessary either. However, he emphasised that the work for community interpreters nevertheless is very exhausting because it requires a high degree of adaptability (because different situations require different kinds of interpreting), emotional distance and social skills. Therefore, comprehensive training is also necessary for community interpreters.

He presented the possible settings for community interpreters, such as court, police, prison, social organisations, or hospitals. From his experience, the setting in the hospital is particularly difficult because it is very important to understand the different world views and ways of thinking of the people. This has already been explained in detail in the chapter 2.3. Interpreting for Psychotherapists. Furthermore, he mentioned that community interpreters mostly interpret between two different kinds of clients: On the one hand, there are the refugees or other migrants, i.e. people with a low social status in the host country, and on the other hand, there are the officials, doctors, and social workers, who have a high social status. Hence, he

¹⁴⁵ cf. Schneider, 'Cécile Balbous'.

referred to the existing power imbalances. In this context, one participant asked the question whether an additional social education for interpreters would be necessary. He did not give a direct answer but pointed out that all people have to be treated equally, prisoners as well. Mr. Tibari described community interpreters as cultural advisors and mediators between two sides, who act in the interest of the community and have a therapeutic role.

He went on to explain that the interpreters are supposed to be invisible. They should not interrupt the refugees when they are telling their stories. Therefore, it is recommendable to take notes. He showed an example for note taking and explained that notes can be symbols, abbreviations, or others; that they are individual and not based on one language; and that they should be brief and precise. Indeed, note taking can be a very helpful tool for community interpreters since they do consecutive interpretations all the time. However, a high degree of concentration is needed to take notes and keep listening to the speaker at the same time. Students of the master programmes usually have four hours training per week in note taking and consecutive interpreting. Hence, it takes time and requires training to develop an individual style. Therefore, in this workshop, the part about note taking was too narrowly considered and cannot even be considered as an introduction to the topic. This is not a criticism about the presenter but rather a suggestion to develop additional workshops which are particularly designed to train note taking. Also because, as Mr. Tibari mentioned, notes sometimes even have to be handed in, e.g. after a police interrogation.

4.1.3. Expectations and the Role of Interpreters

In another part of the presentation, qualitative interpreting and the required skills were defined: multitasking, linguistic and cultural competence, self-discipline, the ability to cope with stress and frustration, mental flexibility, and the ability to listen (process the heard information) and speak (or take notes) at the same time. Mr. Tibari said that, regardless of the situation, the interpreters should always observe the basic principles: neutrality and objectivity. However, he pointed out the difficulty to combine neutrality and emotion and said that interpreters are supposed to repress their emotions. However, this is one of the major challenges. At this point, participants gave examples for emotional challenges. For instance, one participant said that it is very hard if they are working at a hospital, had a very long waiting time, finally get attended and the doctor is very unfriendly and insults the refugees. Mr. Tibari clarified that the interpreter

has to accept that, but can complain about the doctor afterwards. However, the insults should not be translated to the refugee. An interview with Johanna González, a German-Spanish-English interpreter, who worked for physicians and psychotherapists in Mexico, proves this statement. She said that in such situations, the patient has to be protected and rudeness should not be mediated to the patients¹⁴⁶. In this context, the interpreter slips into the role of a protector. Furthermore, the ambiguity is illustrated very clearly: Generally, interpreters are supposed to interpret everything and be neutral. However, in this situation their agency changes completely. The social or humane responsibility becomes more important than the professional. As Mr. Tibari said, there are no clear lines in community interpreting.

Furthermore, he stated that a high degree of empathy is needed. He said that every language has its own peculiarities and sometimes there are no adequate equivalents in the other language. This is particularly true for culturally shaped concepts. Apart from the language, the refugees are not familiar with the judicial system, the culture, and the new environment. Therefore, the interpreters are also cultural mediators. Furthermore, the aforementioned hierarchical structure and the content of the often tragic stories of traumatised refugees can be a burden. A participant asked if the interpreter is allowed to reformulate questions. Mr. Tibari's answer to that was that they have to be very careful with that because the message could be distorted. In difficult situations, e.g. stories of rape, it might be necessary to 'culturally reformulate', as Mr. Tibari called it. In case of doubt, they should clarify it with the social worker or official first. Furthermore, nothing should be left unsaid by the interpreter. He said that it is important to participate in workshops and similar events on a regular basis. Another recommendation was to continuously cultivate the languages one works with because languages and dialects change over time. For instance, Mr. Tibari can no longer understand the youth jargon in Algeria.

4.1.4. Suggestions for Specific Situations

During the course of the workshop, a lively discussion about how to react if a refugee is not telling the truth ensued, which demonstrates the importance of this aspect. The answer was very clear: It depends on the context and the situation. In the context of court interpreting, the

¹⁴⁶ cf. '„Zuerst an das Wohl der Patienten denken“. Interview mit der Dolmetscherin Johanna González | Medical Mission Network'.

interpreter is sworn and supposed to deliver an interpretation that is as literal as possible. If the setting is a police interview, the interpreter is sworn and the police expect the interpreter to help them to find out the truth. Sworn interpreters have to pledge that they will tell the truth, which, as Mr. Tibari explained, also means that the officials or judges believe what the interpreter says. In social organisations, the refugee can be asked directly if the interpreter suspects that he was lying, so in the end, it is only the refugee's problem if he lies. At this point, Mr. Tibari emphasised the power interpreters have, e.g. if the interpreter tells a BAMF official that he does not have a good impression of one refugee, this judgement could completely change the refugee's future. The perhaps unconscious judgement by the interpreter can be very subjective and influenced by his personal worldview. Therefore, at the very least, it is of the essence to ensure that interpreters and refugees do not belong to hostile ethnic groups.

One participant asked whether the interpreter can interrupt the refugee if he notices that the refugee is only telling irrelevant stories or constantly repeating himself. One answer was that the interpreter should directly tell the refugee that he already translated this statement. The social worker who organised the workshop, mentioned that from her perspective it is very difficult for the social workers if the refugees start private conversations with the interpreters or the interpreters try to give advice to the refugees about issues they assume they know themselves. Another participant remarked that it is important to explain the task of interpreters to the refugees, to clarify that they are not advisors or friends, but interpreters. Mr. Tibari added that a certain distance between the interpreter and the refugee should be ensured and that the interpreters should not give out any personal data to the refugees, such as religion, nationality, or even their telephone number. They should explain in a diplomatic way that it is not about the refugees personally, but that their data should be protected because of professional reasons. In prison, for instance, Mr. Tibari is not even supposed to give his name to the prisoners.

A participant asked about what to do if a refugee asks questions about the asylum procedures in the waiting room. Mr. Tibari answered that the interpreter should tell the refugee to come to the office and ask the social worker. It is always important for interpreters to define their own role and ask themselves, who they are working for. Another participant remarked that the refugees then get the impression that they would not be interested in them. Mr. Tibari suggested talking about other issues with them instead, such as food, health problems, or others. Another participant adds to this statement that it is very difficult to separate the roles because sometimes they cannot avoid becoming friends with the refugees. And from a social

perspective, it is very important for the refugees to build friendships in their new environment they are forced to live in.

Finally, Mr. Tibari gave the following tips to the interpreters: adapting a confident posture, a secure voice, keeping eye contact, being friendly and respectful help the interpreter to be perceived as a professional, reliable person. He mentioned that it is important to be aware that religious or ethnic values influence not only the statements of refugees, but also the interpretation of the interpreters. Furthermore, interpreters are under the obligation of maintaining data privacy concerning name, place, time, and date. He recommends all interpreters to get publicly appointed and sworn in. The organiser of the workshop remarks that the interpreters can come at any time to the social workers, ask them for advice or talk about the burden. However, it would be vital to provide free professional psychological support to all interpreters who work with refugees, as it is already common practice for social workers. Additionally, it is essential that the interpreters accept and admit it if they are not able to do a job.

4.2. The UNHCR Training Programme for Interpreters in a Refugee Context

In this chapter, the UNHCR training programme for “Interpreters in a Refugee Context”¹⁴⁷ will be presented and evaluated, as this is the training recommended by BAMF in the brochure and, apparently, is the only kind of training BAMF interpreters receive. However, the document consists of 112 pages and thus is quite comprehensive. It is not possible to present the whole content in this thesis, neither is it necessary, as many points have already been touched upon. Thus, an overview of the different modules will be provided while focusing on the particularly significant aspects and those which have not been discussed so far.

It is divided into five modules: 1. Professional Interpreting: Understanding the Context and Ethics of Interpreting; 2. Language Issues: My Language Profile and Language in a Social Context; 3. The Interpreter’s Toolkit: The Process of Interpreting and Memory Issues; 4. It’s Interpreting Time: Basic Interpreting Procedures and Practicalities; and 5. Basics of Selfcare: Take Care of Yourself. At the end of each module, there are some self-study questions.

¹⁴⁷ Division of International Protection Services of the UNHCR, *Interpreting in a Refugee Context - Self-Study Module 3*.

Furthermore, the Code of Ethics for Interpreters is provided in appendix I and in appendix II, a model for a training workshop.

4.2.1. Module 1: Professional Interpreting

In the first chapter, the aim of the module is defined as follows:

To perform efficiently, professionally and ethically as an interpreter, you need to be aware of the purpose and content of your work, particularly in relation to the institution for which you will be working, its mandate, scope of action, and objectives. Further, you need to know that the task of an interpreter in a refugee-interview context is challenging in any circumstances. The conditions in which you work may be difficult. People might expect from you what you cannot, and possibly should not, give them. Your own personal values might conflict with your Code of Conduct. The circumstances in which you find yourself might make it difficult to take decisions according to the Code. This module is based on the notion that being aware of obstacles to your work is the first step toward overcoming them.¹⁴⁸

In order to raise awareness about the agency of the employer, first the history, the function, and the aims of the UNHCR are described in this chapter. These are¹⁴⁹:

- securing the admission of asylum-seekers, especially when States are tempted to close their frontiers indiscriminately
- preventing *refoulement*, which implies opposing measures that expel or return refugees to a country where their lives or liberty may be threatened
- assuring that the treatment of asylum-seekers corresponds to certain basic humanitarian standards; it is UNHCR's duty to encourage governments to make adjustments to their national laws and regulations, and make sure they are properly applied
- ensuring that asylum-seekers have access to refugee status determination
- protecting asylum-seekers/refugees from arbitrary detention
- promoting the reunification of separated refugee families

Furthermore, a definition of who can obtain refugee status according to the 1951 Convention and a distinction to asylum seekers and economic migrants is provided¹⁵⁰. They also emphasise that the national context is very important, because the legal situation differs depending on the country, e.g. whether the country has signed the 1951 Convention or not¹⁵¹. However, there are

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁰ *cf. ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵¹ *cf. ibid.*, 15.

several other situations in which the UNHCR acts as advisor and supporter for expelled refugees, returnees, stateless persons, or internally displaced persons¹⁵².

Subsequently, the different settings in which the UNHCR needs interpreters are listed¹⁵³: registration procedures, refugee status determination, resettlement interviews, collecting information for monitoring, participatory assessment, counselling sessions, medical interviews, and screening survivors of violence or torture. Finally, it is mentioned that the interpreters play a key role in these procedures, that they are the channel of communication, should be professional and interpret correctly, and that “interpreters are in a position of significant influence and power over persons of concern”¹⁵⁴.

In the second chapter, the ethics of interpreting are presented. First, the meaning of community interpreting and the different roles of community interpreters are dealt with¹⁵⁵. It is pointed out that there might be individual definitions of meaning for each interpreter, which is a very interesting point: Depending on the personal history, disposition, and self-perception, each person might have different reasons for and conditions while working as an interpreter. Next, the different expectations of interpreters – from the language community (i.e. the refugees), the interviewers, but also the expectations interpreters have of themselves – are pointed out and the perception of interpreters as “translation box”¹⁵⁶ is defined as “idealization”¹⁵⁷. There can be pressure on interpreters exerted from both, the refugees and the interviewers. Depending on the personal circumstances, the agency of the interpreters changes according to his personal background. Different scenarios are provided to transmit an idea of these possible situations¹⁵⁸. Finally, the importance to set professional boundaries, i.e. to define for oneself what one is able to do and what not, is emphasised¹⁵⁹. In this context, a definition of professionalism is provided as well:

Someone who is aware of what she/he can and cannot do, and does not try to ignore or cover up his/her limits is professional. Someone who is prepared to learn, starting with the very basics and aiming to achieve competence, is professional. Being clear on your attitude and conduct as an interpreter, that is, drawing boundaries, is also a sign of professionalism.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² cf. *ibid.*, 15 et seq.

¹⁵³ cf. *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵⁵ cf. *ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 19.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 20 et seq.

¹⁵⁹ cf. *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 22.

The main subjects addressed in the code of conduct are: impartiality and neutrality, confidentiality, competence, transparency, accuracy in translation and boundary-drawing¹⁶¹. Through questions and exercises, the interpreters are encouraged to thoroughly deal with and think about those concepts. Further concepts discussed are integrity, accountability, care, trustworthiness, and respect¹⁶².

4.2.2. Module 2: Language Issues

The first chapter¹⁶³ encourages the interpreters to reflect profoundly about their linguistic skills by asking themselves questions like: Am I really fluent in that language? Am I able to understand everything? How long have I not spoken a language? Do I only speak a specific jargon? Do I speak a dialect of one language, e.g. Egyptian Arabic? Hence, it is important to define the working languages before starting to work as an interpreter. Furthermore, questions and exercises to prepare them for different situations and further tips are provided.

In the second chapter, the multiple meanings of words are discussed. In this context, it is necessary to decide, based on one's own knowledge, which is the meaning of the speaker's words¹⁶⁴, that is, his intention. It is important to transform what was said into a statement that holds the same meaning, perhaps expressed with other words, in the target language. They provide the example 'sister'¹⁶⁵, which can mean a family member, a nun, or just a very close friend. Depending on the context and the agency of the speaker, the correct meaning has to be identified. Furthermore, the possibility of untranslatability of culture-related concepts or things is explained. The strategy of paraphrasing is suggested as a solution for those situations, but also as a general interpreting technique¹⁶⁶. According to the UNHCR, a

[w]ord-for-word interpretation should be applied with care. Although it is usually preferred in a legal context, such as a courtroom or a refugee status determination interview, it can be extremely misleading, particularly if the two people you are interpreting for know nothing about each other's language and use a lot of idioms, as people normally do when they speak.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ cf. *ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶² cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶³ cf. *ibid.*, 23 et seqq.

¹⁶⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 43.

¹⁶⁵ cf. *ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 49.

Interestingly, Mr. Tibari advocated being careful with reformulations, whereas the UNHCR warned of literal translations. Hence, the interpreters have to develop a sense and an intuition for the right strategy according to the context. Finally, the training programme recommends building glossaries with relevant terminology and provides some helpful guidelines for it.

4.2.3. Module 3: The Interpreter's Toolkit

The first chapter depicts the difference between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, again with a focus on the latter. The importance of concentration and active listening is emphasised, because only when the interpreters listen carefully are they able to understand the meaning¹⁶⁸. The “first step in analyzing what people are saying is to identify the main and secondary ideas in the narration. The second step is to work out how the main and secondary ideas are linked to one another”¹⁶⁹. Again, exercises and questions serve to prepare the interpreters for the challenging task of listening, understanding and translating at the same time¹⁷⁰.

In the second chapter, memory issues, such as memory capacity or short- and long-term memory, and note taking as a technique are discussed. Thereby, the necessity of training memory capacity and concentration, as well as the needed ability to associate ideas and images, is pointed out. Exercises and further tips to train the memory are provided. Furthermore, the difference between awareness and consciousness – and the importance of the latter – is defined: “Awareness is about having knowledge, even temporary, or understanding of things. Consciousness is the condition of being able to think, feel, understand, and acquire knowledge of what is happening”¹⁷¹. The part about note taking contains important explanations¹⁷² and examples for possible abbreviations are provided as well. However, it would be necessary to extend this part since this can only be considered as a brief introduction to the topic. For instance, there are no examples for hand-written or drawn symbols, which many interpreters use. To refer to the term ‘industry’, for instance, many interpreters draw a simplified chimney

¹⁶⁸ cf. *ibid.*, 57 et seq.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷⁰ cf. *ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, 62.

¹⁷² cf. *ibid.*, 64 et seqq.

with smoke. In any case, note taking and the corresponding presentational skills should be trained in specific workshops on a regular basis together with other interpreters.

4.2.4. Module 4: It's Interpreting Time

The first chapter of this module deals with correct and transparent interpreting behaviour. According to the UNHCR, the primary task is “*to enable the two parties to put what they have to offer at each other's disposal, without manipulating, controlling, modifying, improving, demeaning, or reducing its substance*”¹⁷³. The interpreters are supposed “*to accurately reflect, not replace, the meaning behind the speaker's words*”¹⁷⁴ and only inform about cultural differences, if a statement could not be understood otherwise. They warn: “Never assume the role of anthropologist, sociologist or historian. You must draw a line between explaining the cultural value of a word and providing information or an explanation about cultural, political or religious issues”¹⁷⁵.

Furthermore, punctuality, good manners, and (self-) respect are required¹⁷⁶. Subsequently, a list of the most common obstacles while interpreting is provided¹⁷⁷, some examples are: the speakers use metaphors, the interpreter misunderstands the speaker and realises it after the translation, the refugee addresses the interpreter instead of the interviewer, the speaker's words express culturally inappropriate or even insulting language, or the *pronominal reversal*. This last point means that the interpreter has to put himself into the shoes of the speaker and thus produce the interpretation by using the first person (instead of ‘he’ or ‘she’), whereas using the third person when talking about himself, for instance: ‘The interpreter does not understand’ or ‘The interpreter wants to remark ...’. In any case, if the interpreter realises that he made a mistake or he does not understand the speaker, he should inform both parties as soon as possible¹⁷⁸. A special situation occurs if one of the speakers is rude or starts to insult the other party. This is particularly difficult for the interpreter, who actually is supposed to translate everything. However, in such a situation, the UNHCR recommends to ask the speaker directly, if it really is his intention to say that and if he really wants the interpreter to

¹⁷³ Ibid., 74 - emphasis in the original.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. - emphasis in the original.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 82.

¹⁷⁶ cf. ibid., 76.

¹⁷⁷ cf. ibid., 77.

¹⁷⁸ cf. ibid., 78 et seq.

translate it and thus encourage the speaker to think twice¹⁷⁹. Furthermore, some terms, such as ‘family’ may have different notions in different cultures. This can be demonstrated by using Hofstede’s cultural dimension ‘individualism vs. collectivism’¹⁸⁰. In societies classified as individualist, the connotation tends to be only the nuclear family (parents and children), whereas in collectivist societies, the connotation rather includes uncles, aunts or cousins too.

In the second chapter, the question of space and seating arrangements, specific cultural differences, as well as gender issues are addressed. Regarding the seating arrangement, the UNHCR suggests to “sit to the side of both the interviewer and the interviewee, and slightly apart from both”¹⁸¹. Hence, their suggestion does not coincide with the recommendation of Abdallah-Steinkopff (explained in chapter 2.3. Interpreting for Psychotherapists). However, as mentioned before, each arrangement entails advantages and disadvantages, and depending on the context, might express partiality. This is also illustrated in further seating possibilities that are discussed subsequently in the training programme¹⁸². If one of the parties engages the interpreter into a conversation, the interpreter should try to avoid that the other party feels excluded and provide a brief summary of the conversation afterwards¹⁸³. Further issues discussed in this context are the accepted length of fragments, i.e. when should the interpreter interrupt, and the appropriate tone of voice¹⁸⁴. Finally, the specific settings for interviews, for example at physicians’, psychiatrists’ or counsellors’ offices, and the particular emotional and cultural challenges that they entail, are described. In the psychological context,

[t]here is a tendency among interpreters to diagnose on behalf of the interviewer during medical/counselling sessions. This occurs as a result of the interpreter’s willingness to be of assistance, her/his knowledge of the patient’s medical history, her/his sense that the counsellor/physician doesn’t understand what the patient is saying (or what the interpreter is saying), and a misunderstanding of the interpreter’s role.¹⁸⁵

Thus, the interpreters have to be very conscious about their role. However, there is a thin line because it might not always be clear how much *interpretation* is needed. Subsequently, some advice about the different fields of terminology an interpreter should learn, such as medical or political, is given¹⁸⁶.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 80 et seq.

¹⁸⁰ cf. Hofstede and Hofstede, *Lokales Denken, globales Handeln*, 97.

¹⁸¹ Division of International Protection Services of the UNHCR, *Interpreting in a Refugee Context - Self-Study Module 3*, 85.

¹⁸² cf. *ibid.*, 86.

¹⁸³ cf. *ibid.*, 87.

¹⁸⁴ cf. *ibid.*, 88.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 92.

¹⁸⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 93.

Interestingly, there is one topic discussed which has not emerged in any other chapter and was not mentioned by any interviewee or in the literature used so far: interpreting for children. The reason for this particular focus of the UNHCR is that

[w]orking with children and adolescents requires special care because: children are extremely strong and vulnerable at the same time. Knowing how to deal with children is essential, since they might be afraid of anyone who is not family; the interviewee might have been a child soldier and/or forcibly separated from her/his family. The fact that her/his relationship with adults, in general, has probably been shaped by this experience may require an interpreter who is familiar with the issue; children sometimes express themselves in their own way, which requires both a high level of cooperation between interpreter and interviewer and the interpreter's ability to understand children's experiences; children may unconsciously reject their language, and therefore their culture, if they have been prevented from experiencing affective, social, and cognitive development within a community because of displacement.¹⁸⁷

The UNHCR therefore suggests to let the children speak as much as they want without interruption, to allow a conversation and build a rapport with the children¹⁸⁸.

4.2.5. Module 5: Basics of Self-Care

This last module provides information and guidelines to the interpreters about how they can take care of themselves and avoid being traumatised. Since interpreters often have made similar experiences as the refugees they interpret for, they might suffer from flashbacks while interpreting because memories of trauma can come back¹⁸⁹. The interpreters might also experience secondary traumatic stress disorder, which means that “[t]hey often become subject to a psychological phenomenon called counter-transference. This means relating someone's experiences/feelings to your own”¹⁹⁰. In both cases, the consequences are the danger of losing neutrality, thus, the interpretations become too subjective¹⁹¹. It is important that the interpreters reflect about these emotions and get psychological support. Otherwise, the experience of stress can lead to a burn out, which is also explained in the training programme¹⁹². Other diseases that might affect the interpreters are vicarious trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder¹⁹³. Each

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁸⁸ *cf. ibid.*, 95.

¹⁸⁹ *cf. ibid.*, 100.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹¹ *cf. ibid.*, 100 et seq.

¹⁹² *cf. ibid.*, 101 et seq.

¹⁹³ *cf. ibid.*, 102.

individual reacts differently and has a different capability to deal with those symptoms. However, if an interpreter is suffering from one of them, perhaps only while interpreting for particular refugees with a similar story, he should step down and let someone else interpret, at least until he is able to act as a ‘neutral’ mediator again, because otherwise it would not only be for his own disadvantage, but also have negative consequences for the refugees.

5. Evaluation and Conclusion

As it was already stated in the introduction of the training programme, the UNHCR’s core work is “protecting and seeking durable solutions for refugees”¹⁹⁴. Furthermore, the “UNHCR’s work is humanitarian and non-political in character”¹⁹⁵. The BAMF acts in the name of Germany and its function is to judge about the future of the refugees. It certainly differs from the UNHCR’s agency. The UNHCR acts on a global scale, whereas the BAMF is an agent on a national scale and thus has different aims and interests. Even though the UNHCR’s brochure certainly provides a vast amount of significant information for any community interpreter, a training programme that is particularly designed for BAMF interpreters would be recommendable. Because, as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, if the function of the employer changes, the expectations on and the role of the interpreter changes too. The UNHCR workshop model includes many role plays with different topics and focus areas. Particularly for community interpreters, these role plays are very helpful. Therefore, they could also be included in workshops that might be organised by social organisations like Freundeskreis Asyl. Interestingly, on all scales, except for the national scale, refugees are supposed to be supported and protected: on a global scale by the UNHCR, on the local scale by social organisations, and on the individual – and most intimate – scale by the therapists. Only the national institutions as the BAMF and the police aim to protect the interest of the state while the refugees confront them with anxieties. The following subchapters include a conclusion about the role and the agency of interpreters, important aspects that should be considered by the institutions, and suggestions for the development and improvement of training programmes.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

5.1. The Agency of Interpreters

As the interviews have revealed, there are some common problems the interpreters face. However, how the different situations and linguistic, cultural or emotional challenges are perceived, certainly depends on the personality and the individual experiences of each interpreter too. The interpreters are not translation machines, but have their own agency and perspective that influence their interpretation of what was said and impedes the often expected neutrality. The aim of a good interpretation should certainly not be to deliver a literal translation since it often would be impossible for the employees to decode and interpret it themselves. Even though we live in a transcultural world, cultural differences cannot be denied. Therefore, it is the interpreters' task to break down barriers and build transcultural bridges.

The interpreters frequently find themselves caught in the middle of power imbalances. They have to be aware of their own agency as powerful actors. The contradictory expectations of the employees of the institutions and organisations where the interpreters work can cause confusion about their own role. The employees and the refugees have different, often opposing expectations of the interpreters. Are they supposed to be neutral and keep distance to the refugees or should they try to build a relationship of trust? It is vital that the employees are aware of this tension and support the interpreters. As Uluköylü observed as well, neither the employers nor the interpreters are aware of the different roles and different skills needed in the different settings of community interpreting¹⁹⁶. It is essential to raise awareness about the necessary role-switching in the setting of community interpreting. The lay interpreters who interpret for the different institutions must be trained in this area. Daniel Gile also explained that if “the interpreter works alternately for opposing speakers, his or her *loyalty* shifts from one to the other as he or she interprets them”¹⁹⁷. The interpreters have to be prepared.

Mikkelson mentions that “[m]ost of the codes of ethics contain provisions asserting that interpreters should not accept assignments for which they are not qualified (e.g., Article 5 of the Austrian code)”¹⁹⁸. As has been demonstrated in this thesis, most of the interpreters in the refugee context are untrained lay interpreters who often are not even able to assess whether they are qualified for an assignment or not. For instance, Sulaiman's example about the Afghan interpreter who spoke Persian instead of Pashtu proves this fact. Therefore, it would be

¹⁹⁶ cf. Uluköylü, “...manchmal streite ich auch.” Sprach- und Kulturmittlung für türkische Migrantinnen im medizinischen Bereich’, 213.

¹⁹⁷ Gile cited in Mikkelson, *Introduction to Court Interpreting*, 51 - emphasis in original.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

necessary to offer adequate training to the interpreters and to inform them about their responsibilities as interpreters beyond the act of interpreting.

5.2. Important Aspects to Consider for the Employers

Since interpreters with the same cultural background have proven to be the best cultural mediators, the active recruitment of immigrants as interpreters is recommendable. On the one hand, this could be a great professional opportunity for many refugees who are not able to find work in Germany, which in turn also benefits the state and the German society, because it gives them a new professional perspective and fosters integration on a high level. The interpreters could be trained to become cultural mediators for refugees and Germans. Their expertise would not only be useful during the hearings at BAMF or consultations in social organisations, but could influence society as a whole, since they constitute a part of it too. They can spread their knowledge in everyday conversations in their leisure time, and probably would do so automatically. In this way, they could contribute to a more transcultural society.

Furthermore, the interpreters could be encouraged to create glossaries, perhaps in teamwork, for each language. There are platforms, e.g. interpretershelp.com, which are particularly designed for that. Usually, they are not for free. However, institutions like the BAMF could ask for free access for interpreters in the refugee context since interpreting students, for example, also get free access. Alternatively, a reduced member fee could be negotiated and the costs might be paid by the State since a professional preparation and cooperation among the interpreters particularly benefits the procedures at the BAMF. However, training is not only necessary for interpreters, but could also be provided to, for example, police officers or psychotherapists, who need or want to know more about the work and the agency of the interpreters. Through informative lectures where the audience also has the opportunity to ask questions and exchange experiences, more awareness could be raised.

The social organisations have enough interpreters, mostly they do not even have to recruit them actively, whereas the police officer mentioned that they cannot always find the needed languages. Most of the interpreters are migrants themselves and, as was mentioned by one social worker, put their heart and soul into the work. They have compassion and want to help their compatriots and therefore probably prefer to work in the social setting. Therefore, if the officials are not trained accordingly and do not adapt their expectations, they might face an

increasing shortage of interpreters in the future. Thus, not only the training for interpreters, but also the awareness of the institutions and the recruitment of interpreters could still be improved. Especially in the case of the different dialects, such as Kurdish, Arabic, or Pashtu, etc., it is important to at least attempt to provide an interpreter from the same region who speaks the same dialect and has the same cultural background, and is not only 'Arabic'. There is not *one* Arabic language such as there is not *one* Arabic culture. The necessity to create more awareness among officials has also been demonstrated by Anwar's example. If they make the wrong decisions because of lack of knowledge about the political situation, Anwar tries to intervene and inform them about missing considerations. If the officials are open to this kind of intervention and recognise its necessity, cooperation will work. The interpreter should be acknowledged as an intercultural mediator. Especially in the setting of the BAMF, the court, and the police, the officials sometimes seem to lack cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Therefore, the role of the interpreter as a cultural mediator is even more important than in the social setting. Furthermore, particularly in the BAMF hearings, the interpreters need more prior information than just the mother tongue and the name of the refugee so they can prepare themselves accordingly. As has been explained, they must understand the agency of the refugee; otherwise, the quality of the interpretation might decrease. Additionally, the retranslation of the protocol at the end of the hearing necessarily has to take place in any case.

Last but not least, there is an urgent need to adequately remunerate the interpreters for their work. Even if it is not possible to pay the same amount as to conference interpreters, the highly challenging task should be valued and appreciated. For experienced interpreters, a constant wage increase might be considered as well.

5.3. Suggestions for Training Programmes

Interpreting is a communicative act. Therefore, it cannot be practised exclusively alone at home. Regular interactive workshops in which the interpreters can practice together with others are crucial. The interpreters can only perceive themselves as professionals if enough training is provided to them. And only if they receive this training, they will be able to define their role as interpreters. A problem can be solved easier if the person confronted with it knows about it and has had time to think about possible solutions in advance. A workshop series could help the interpreters to prepare for the highly challenging tasks. First, introductory topics could be

provided to new interpreters. Furthermore, workshops that are particularly designed for the work at BAMF or the police setting would be necessary, because in these settings, the power imbalances, tensions, and different expectations on the interpreters are particularly challenging. However, other workshops which are particularly designed for other settings, such as psychotherapy, are vital for lay interpreters too. The “most conceptual networks, terminological repertoires, text genres, social contexts and resources are specific to medical and health care settings. Competence in medical translation depends on being familiar with them all”¹⁹⁹.

Afterwards, the different topics should be focused on. One of the most essential parts of training programmes is note taking. The task is very challenging because the interpreter has to listen actively to what is being said while writing down the notes and simultaneously making decisions, for example whether he uses symbols or abbreviations, or takes the notes in the original or target language. All while the speaker is continuing with his speech, which requires full attention of the interpreter. At the same time he also already has to think about how he could translate specific terms or transfer ideas or expressions into the target language. If the interpreters are not trained adequately, it becomes very probable that – perhaps significant – information will be lost in the process of note taking. Hence, it is not sufficient to tell the interpreters that they should take notes but a comprehensive training programme is required in which the interpreters can learn specific strategies, get ideas for symbols, and practice. Therefore, comprehensive note taking workshops for beginner, intermediate, and advanced interpreters could be offered. Furthermore, workshops in which presentational skills, which have been defined as important by Mr. Tibari as well as by Hossein, could be developed.

Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach is recommendable for these workshops, because the knowledge from various disciplines, such as linguistics, communication, cultural science, sociology, psychology, etc. is relevant for interpreters too. Classes about the German legal system including important legal terminology could be provided. For instance, books like “*Gerichts- und Behördenterminologie*”²⁰⁰, contain special information about the work for interpreters at court and public authorities. These could be used and adjusted to the requirements of the refugee context. Classes with a focus on the medical and psychotherapeutic setting could be offered as well, for instance, with a particular focus on therapeutic methods and specific terminology. Additionally, language pair related classes, e.g. Arabic-German, could help to find solutions for specific cultural and linguistic problems. The interpreters could choose which

¹⁹⁹ Montalt, ‘Medical Translation and Interpreting’, 79.

²⁰⁰ Daum, *Gerichts- und Behördenterminologie*.

workshops they need or want to attend, i.e. which workshops are relevant for the contexts they work in. Some interpreters perceive that their German skills are not advanced enough. The same was mentioned as a problem by the social workers. Hence, advanced German classes could be offered to the interpreters, perhaps also as part of a workshop series. Aspects like non- and paraverbal communication could be included as well because they play a particularly important role in community interpreting. Since most of the lay interpreters have not received professional communication training, they presumably are not aware of the effects of non- and paraverbal communication. If they were trained adequately, it could be used as a valuable tool in conflict situations. On the other hand, if the interpreters are not aware of the effects of these other dimensions of communication, they run the risk of exacerbating the situation. Another suggestion is to provide workshops that are designed to teach the interpreters how they can handle different emotional challenges.

Additionally, an online platform for community interpreters could be established, where they can post the problems they experienced, discuss them with the others, and give advice to each other. This could prepare the interpreters for possible problems they might face or enable them to detect difficulties. Furthermore, it could be a great relief to be able to talk about emotional challenges to the like-minded people in a relatively anonymous context at any time. One possibility to organise the platform could be to choose the setting (e.g. BAMF, hospital, etc.), the type of problem (e.g. language, culture, emotional etc.) or the language (e.g. Arabic, Kurdish dialects, etc.), among other categories. The discussions of the interpreters could be assessed after a certain amount of time and used to improve the platform, but also to develop, amend, or improve existing workshops and training programmes.

6. Bibliography

- Abdallah-Steinkopff, Barbara. 'Die Rolle des Dritten - Dolmetscher in der Einzel- und Gruppentherapie mit Flüchtlingen'. *Gruppenpsychotherapie und Gruppendynamik* 42 (2006): 280–302.
- Aldoukhi, Rima, Stephan Procházka, and Anna Telič. *Praxisnaher Einstieg in den Dialekt von Damaskus*. 2nd edition. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016.
- 'Asylarbeitskreis Heidelberg e.V. - Home'. Accessed 9 November 2016. <http://www.asyl-heidelberg.de/>.
- 'Bahnhofmission: Start'. Accessed 7 November 2016. <https://www.bahnhofmission.de/Start.3.0.html>.
- 'BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - Welcome Page'. Accessed 9 November 2016. <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Startseite/startseite-node.html>.
- Boucher, Jerry D. 'Culture and Emotion'. In *Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Psychology*, edited by Marsella Anthony J. and Roland J. Tharp. New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press, 1979.
- Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. *Hinweise für einen Erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz*. Paderborn: Bonifatius GmbH Druck-Buch-Verlag, 2015.
- Cagala, Elfi. 'Eine Frage der Menschlichkeit? Psychotherapie traumatisierter Flüchtlinge mit Dolmetscherinnenbeteiligung'. In *Kommundolmetschen: Probleme - Perspektiven - Potenziale*, edited by Nadja Grbić and Sonja Pöllabauer. TransÜD. Arbeiten zur Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens und Dolmetschens ; 21. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2008.
- 'Caritas Heidelberg: Startseite'. Accessed 9 November 2016. <http://www.caritas-heidelberg.de/cms/>.
- Coşeriu, Eugenio, and Óscar Loureda Lamas. *Lenguaje y discurso*. Colección lingüística. Pamplona: Eunsa, 2006.
- Daum, Ulrich. *Gerichts- und Behördenterminologie: eine gedrängte Darstellung des Gerichtswesens und des Verwaltungsverfahrens-Materialien für Dolmetscher*. Schriften des BDÜ. Berlin: BDÜ, 2005.
- Division of International Protection Services of the UNHCR. *Interpreting in a Refugee Context - Self-Study Module 3*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2009.
- 'Dolmetscherpool'. Accessed 7 August 2016. <http://www.fb06.uni-mainz.de/ikk/180.php>.
- 'Expertise. Migration and Development'. Accessed 7 August 2016. <https://www.giz.de/expertise/html/9697.html>.
- 'Finanzierung - Diakonie Heidelberg'. Accessed 6 November 2016. <http://www.diakonie-heidelberg.info/%C3%BCber-uns/finanzierung/>.
- 'Freundeskreis Asyl Karlsruhe e.V.' *Freundeskreis Asyl Karlsruhe e.V.* Accessed 29 August 2016. <http://freundeskreis-asyl.de/>.
- Hale, Sandra Beatriz. *Community Interpreting. Research and Practice in Applied Linguistics*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Hofstede, Geert, and Gert Jan Hofstede. *Lokales Denken, globales Handeln: interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit und globales Management*. Munich: Dt. Taschenbuch-Verl., 2011.
- 'IB: Dolmetscher Pool'. Accessed 6 November 2016. <https://www.internationaler-bund.de/angebote/standort/202301/9516/>.
- 'Institut für Fremdsprachen und Auslandskunde: Willkommen am IFA'. Accessed 7 November 2016. <http://www.ifa.uni-erlangen.de/>.

- 'IOM Assists in Relocation of Vulnerable Women and Children from Iraq to Germany | International Organization for Migration'. Accessed 5 August 2016. <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-assists-relocation-vulnerable-women-and-children-iraq-germany>.
- 'Jobcenter Heidelberg'. Accessed 9 November 2016. <http://www.jobcenter-hd.de/>.
- Jones, Roderick. *Conference Interpreting Explained*. 1. publ. Translation Theories Explained ; 5. Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998.
- 'JVEG - Gesetz über die Vergütung von Sachverständigen, Dolmetscherinnen, Dolmetschern, Übersetzerinnen und Übersetzern sowie die Entschädigung von ehrenamtlichen Richterinnen, ehrenamtlichen Richtern, Zeuginnen, Zeugen und Dritten'. Accessed 7 November 2016. <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/jveg/BJNR077600004.html>.
- Kaufman, Sharon R. 'In-Depth Interviewing'. In *Qualitative Methods in Aging Research*, Eds. J. Gubrium and A. Sankar, edited by J. Gubrium and A. Sankar, 123–36. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1994.
- Kirst, Virginia. 'Die gefährlich große Macht der Asyl Dolmetscher'. Article. *Die Welt*, 2015. http://katalog.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/cgi-bin/titel.cgi?katkey=ext_FETCH-proquest_newspapers_16935280303&bestand=ext&sess=7a0e0c95df5296e1c1b6a457cbe15bde&query=dolmetscher%20asyl.
- Kranjčić, Christian. '... dass er treu und gewissenhaft übertragen werde.': zum Dolmetschen im Strafverfahren. Veröffentlichungen zum Verfahrensrecht 70. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.
- Lonner, Walter J. 'Issues in Cross-Cultural Psychology'. In *Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Psychology*, edited by Anthony J. Marsella and Roland J. Tharp. New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press, 1979.
- Mikkelsen, Holly. *Introduction to Court Interpreting*. Translation Practices Explained,. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2000.
- Montalt, Vicent. 'Medical Translation and Interpreting'. In *Handbook of Translation Studies*, edited by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer, Volume 2:79–83. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011.
- Nakane, Ikuko. *Interpreter-Mediated Police Interviews: A Discourse-Pragmatic Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Pöllabauer, Sonja. 'I don't understand your English, Miss.': Dolmetschen bei Asylanhörungen. Translationswissenschaft 2. Tübingen: Narr, 2005.
- 'REFUGIO München - Beratungs- und Behandlungszentrum für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer'. Accessed 10 October 2016. <http://www.refugio-muenchen.de/>.
- Schaller, Thomas (STN). 'KIT-Flüchtlingshilfe - Startseite'. Text, 26 July 2016. <https://fluechtlingshilfe.net.kit.edu/>.
- Schneider, Richard. 'Cécile Balbous: Das Sprachknaben-Institut der Habsburgermonarchie in Konstantinopel | UEPO.de'. Accessed 12 October 2016. <http://uepo.de/2016/09/14/cecile-balbous-das-sprachknaben-institut-der-habsburgermonarchie-in-konstantinopel/>.
- Schnur, Denis. 'Heidelberger Schüler befragten geflohenen Studenten aus Afghanistan'. *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 4 November 2015.
- 'SDI München: Willkommen im Bildungsnetzwerk SDI München!' Accessed 7 November 2016. <http://www.sdi-muenchen.de/>.
- Seleskovitch, Danica. 'Simultaneous Language and Cognition'. In *Language Interpretation and Communication*, 333–41. New York: Plenum Pr., 1978.
- Tseng, Wen-Shing, and Jing Hsu. 'Culture and Psychotherapy'. In *Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Psychology*. New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press, 1979.
- 'Über Uns - Diakonie Heidelberg'. Accessed 9 November 2016. <http://www.diakonie-heidelberg.info/>.

- Uluköylü, Sevgi. “...manchmal streite ich auch.” Sprach- und Kulturmittlung für türkische Migrantinnen im medizinischen Bereich’. In *Kommunaldolmetschen: Probleme - Perspektiven - Potenziale*, edited by Nadja Grbić and Sonja Pöllabauer. TransÜD. Arbeiten zur Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens und Dolmetschens ; 21. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2008.
- Welsch, Wolfgang. ‘Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today’. In *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, edited by Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash. 194–213. London: SAGE, 1999.
- Werlen, Iwar. *Sprachliche Relativität: eine problemorientierte Einführung*. UTB. Tübingen ; Basel: Francke, 2002.
- ‘„Zuerst an das Wohl der Patienten denken“’. Interview mit der Dolmetscherin Johanna González | Medical Mission Network’. Accessed 5 November 2016. <http://www.medicalmissionnetwork.net/blog/zuerst-an-das-wohl-der-patienten-denken-interview-mit-der-dolmetscherin-johanna-gonzalez/>.



Bundesamt
für Migration
und Flüchtlinge

Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz

Anhörung!

Bitte nicht stören.

Hinweise für einen erfolgreichen Dolmetschereinsatz

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Sie wurden vom Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge damit beauftragt, während der persönlichen Anhörung im Rahmen des Asylverfahrens zu dolmetschen.

Die Anhörung ist der wichtigste Termin des Asylantragstellers im Verfahren und stellt eine Kommunikationssituation dar, die für alle Beteiligten mit großen Herausforderungen verbunden ist.

Um diese erfolgreich zu bewältigen, finden Sie als neu beauftragter Sprachmittler im Folgenden eine Zusammenstellung mit nützlichen Hinweisen, die Sie bei Ihrer Vorbereitung und Tätigkeit unterstützen sollen.

Für die erfahrenen Dolmetscher unter Ihnen ist die Übersicht als Einladung gedacht, sich an der Weiterentwicklung des Informationsblattes in Form von Rückmeldungen zu beteiligen.

Nach einer kurzen Einführung in den Kontext, in dem Sie arbeiten werden, erhalten Sie Informationen darüber, welche Erwartungen an Sie gestellt werden.

Ihr Referat 412 - Qualitätssicherung Asyl

1. IN WELCHEM KONTEXT ARBEITEN SIE? - DAS BUNDESAMT UND SEINE AUFGABEN

Gewiss ist es für Sie als kompetenter Sprachmittler¹ selbstverständlich, sich vor einem Einsatz umfassend über die Thematik und die jeweiligen Beteiligten zu informieren. Daher haben Sie sich idealerweise bereits vor der Anhörung mithilfe folgender Publikationen² ein Bild über die Aufgaben des Bundesamtes im Allgemeinen und das Asylverfahren im Konkreten gemacht:

- Broschüre „Das Bundesamt und seine Aufgaben“
- Broschüre „Das deutsche Asylverfahren – ausführlich erklärt“
- Videofilm „Ablauf des deutschen Asylverfahrens“ und Begleitbroschüre.

2. DIE ANHÖRUNG – EINE KOMPLEXE KOMMUNIKATIONSSITUATION

Im Gegensatz zu vielen anderen Situationen, in denen Sie dolmetschen, erhalten Sie vor der Anhörung - außer dem Hinweis auf die Muttersprache des Antragstellers¹ sowie den Namen des Entscheiders - keinerlei Informationen zum genauen Gesprächsinhalt. Dennoch können Sie sich gedanklich auf Ihren Einsatz vorbereiten, wenn Sie sich folgendes bewusst machen:

2.1. WARUM FINDET EINE ANHÖRUNG STATT?

Die Anhörung ist die wichtigste Gelegenheit für den Antragsteller, seine Fluchtgründe ausführlich zu schildern. In diesem Rahmen hat er die Möglichkeit, alle Tatsachen vorzutragen, die seine Furcht vor Verfolgung begründen bzw. einer Rückkehr in sein Heimatland

¹ Für personenbezogene Bezeichnungen wird im Folgenden aus Gründen der besseren Lesbarkeit die männliche Form verwendet. Die weibliche Form ist selbstverständlich mit eingeschlossen.

² online abrufbar unter: www.bamf.de > Downloads und Publikationen

entgegenstehen. Auf der Grundlage dieses Vortrages und unter Hinzuziehung weiterer Erkenntnisse bezüglich des Herkunftslandes entscheidet der Entscheider, ob dem Antragsteller Schutz gewährt wird oder nicht.

2.2. WER IST AN DER ANHÖRUNG BETEILIGT?

An der grundsätzlich nicht öffentlichen Anhörung nehmen der Asylantragsteller, der Entscheider und Sie als Sprachmittler teil. Für besonders schutzbedürftige Personen stehen sogenannte Sonderbeauftragte als Entscheider zur Verfügung. Je nach Fall kann es sein, dass noch ein Rechtsanwalt oder ein Vertreter des UNHCR hinzukommen. Unbegleitete Minderjährige werden von ihrem Vormund oder Betreuer begleitet.

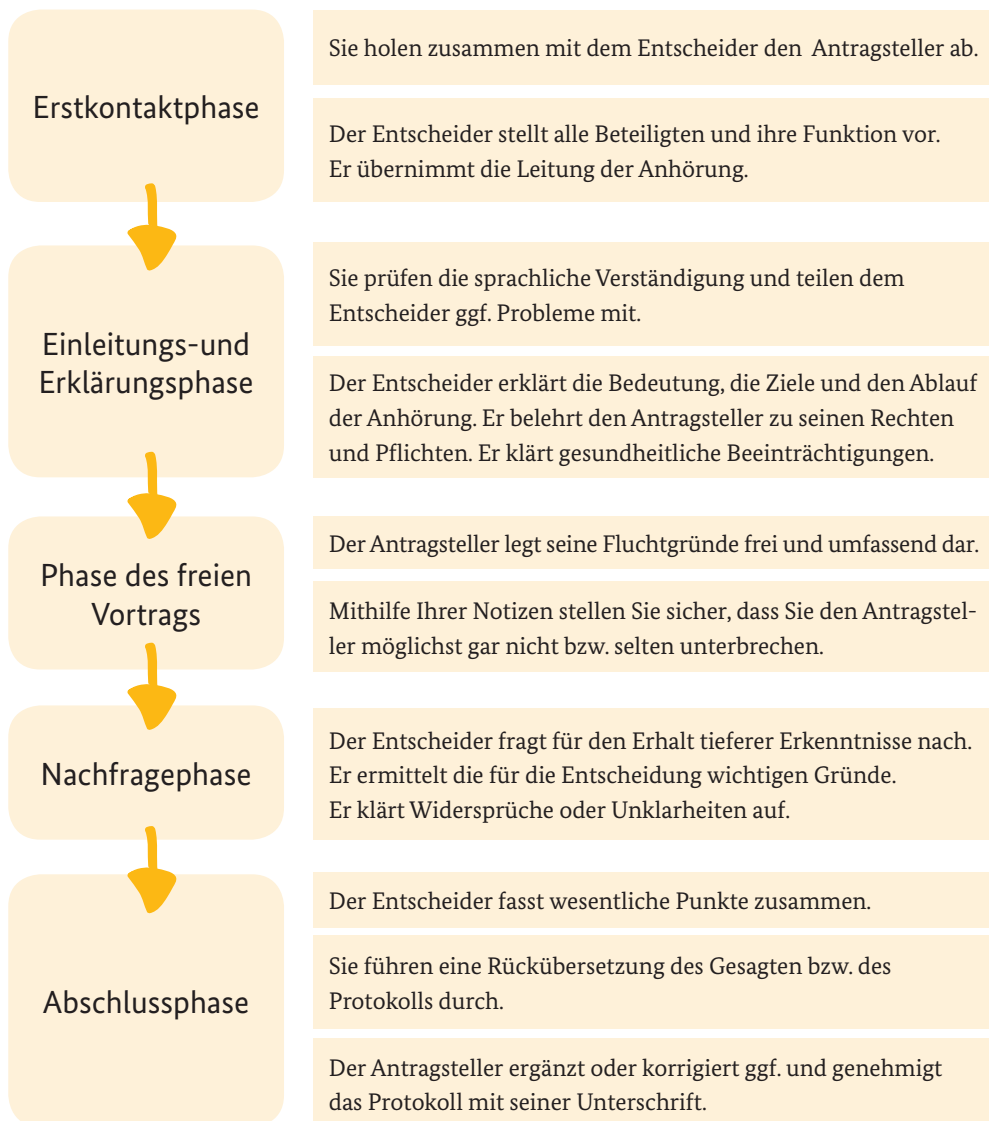
2.3. WORÜBER WIRD IM EINZELNEN IN EINER ANHÖRUNG GESPROCHEN?

Typische Inhalte einer Anhörung sind u.a. Lebenslauf, Lebensumfeld, Fluchtumstände, Reiseweg, Verfolgungsschicksal und Informationen darüber, welche Gefahren der Antragsteller bei seiner Rückkehr befürchtet. Mitunter kann es vorkommen, dass Sie bei besonders schwerwiegenden Verfolgungsschicksalen Inhalte dolmetschen müssen, bei denen nicht nur die Sensibilität des Entscheiders, sondern auch Ihre Empathie bei der Formulierung der Fragestellung erforderlich ist.

2.4. WIE LÄUFT EINE ANHÖRUNG AB?

Grundsätzlich lässt sich eine Strukturierung der Anhörung in bestimmte Phasen (siehe Übersicht) erkennen. Gegebenenfalls weicht der Entscheider, der stets die Leitung der Anhörung inne hat, von der Reihenfolge ab. Wichtig für Sie ist vor allem die Phase, in der der Antragsteller seine Fluchtgründe frei und umfassend darlegt. Denn diese verlangt von Ihnen Geduld und höchste Konzentration.

Ferner sollten Sie wissen, dass über die Anhörung eine Niederschrift, d.h. ein Protokoll, angefertigt wird, das Sie dem Antragsteller zum Schluss rückübersetzen.



3. IHRE ROLLE - WAS WIRD VON IHNEN ERWARTET?

3.1. ALLGEMEINES

Mit dem Entscheider auf der einen und dem Asylantragsteller auf der anderen Seite treffen während der Anhörung nicht nur unterschiedliche Sprachen, sondern auch unterschiedliche Ausgangspositionen, Lebenswelten, Erfahrungs-, Wissens- und Bildungshorizonte aufeinander. Für eine funktionierende Kommunikation sind Ihre fachlichen und sozialen Kompetenzen als Dolmetscher unerlässlich.

Sie sind das „Sprachrohr“ zwischen dem Entscheider und dem Antragsteller und helfen beiden Seiten dabei, die jeweils andere Seite zu verstehen. Von Ihrer genauen und neutralen mündlichen Übersetzung der Gesprächsinhalte hängen der Ausgang des Verfahrens und die Frage, ob dem Antragsteller Schutz gewährt wird, ab.

Wir sind davon überzeugt, dass Sie sich Ihrer Verantwortung bewusst sind und gemäß den allgemeinen, professionellen, berufsethischen und dolmetschtechnischen Standards wie

- Verschwiegenheit
- Beherrschen beider Sprachen auf hohem Niveau
- Neutralität
- Zuverlässigkeit
- soziale Kompetenzen, Umgangsformen

handeln.

Auf Grund der besonderen Bedeutung der Anhörung für das Asylverfahren und der Komplexität dieser Kommunikationssituation möchten wir Ihnen zusätzliche Hinweise zu den Erwartungen, die wir an Sie haben, mit auf den Weg geben.

3.2. VOR DER ANHÖRUNG

Wie bereits erwähnt, ist aufgrund fehlender detaillierter Informationen keine gezielte Vorbereitung auf die Anhörung möglich. Daher empfehlen wir Ihnen:

- sich wichtige Begriffe ins Gedächtnis zu rufen,
- relevante Kenntnisse zu aktualisieren,
- sich die Kommunikationssituation bewusst zu machen.

Nachdem Sie pünktlich und mit ausgeschaltetem Telefon zum Anhörungstermin gekommen sind, holen Sie zusammen mit dem Entscheider den Antragsteller aus dem Wartebereich ab.

Durch Ihr Auftreten zeigen Sie bereits hier, dass Sie eine neutrale Position im Rahmen der Anhörung innehaben. Neutral können Sie beispielsweise nicht mehr sein, wenn Sie sich noch vor Beginn der Anhörung auf ein Gespräch mit dem Antragsteller über sein Verfahren einlassen.

3.3. WÄHREND DER ANHÖRUNG

Da der Entscheider die Leitung des Gesprächs innehat, können Sie sich voll und ganz auf das mündliche Übersetzen der Anhörung konzentrieren, indem Sie folgendes prüfen bzw. beachten:

Sprechen Sie die gleiche Sprache?

Stellen Sie gleich zu Beginn sicher, ob der Antragsteller die angegebene Sprache bzw. den vermerkten Dialekt spricht und Sie ihn verstehen bzw. umgekehrt.

Informieren Sie den Entscheider über jegliche Verständigungsprobleme, auch während des weiteren Verlaufs der Anhörung.

Der Entscheider soll nämlich, wenn aus diesen Gründen eine ordnungsgemäße Anhörung nicht möglich ist, diese abbrechen.

Können Sie sich zwischenmenschlich verständigen?

Melden Sie dem Entscheider zu Beginn der Anhörung des Weiteren

- etwaige Interessenskonflikte familiärer, ethnischer, religiöser Art oder
- Probleme auf der zwischenmenschlichen Ebene.

Falls es sich bei dem Antragsteller zum Beispiel um einen Ihrer Verwandten oder Bekannten handelt, dann besteht ein Interessenskonflikt familiärer Art, der Ihre Neutralität in Frage stellt.

Konsekutivdolmetschen

Die Anhörung soll in Abschnitten gedolmetscht werden. Das bedeutet, dass Sie Informationen aus größeren Redeabschnitten, die nicht unterbrochen werden sollten, wie dem Vortrag zu den Fluchtgründen, idealerweise mit Hilfe von Notizen festhalten. Im Anschluss übersetzen Sie den Redebeitrag mündlich in direkter Rede.

Gewissenhafte Übersetzung

Zur guten Praxis eines Dolmetschers gehört es, alles gewissenhaft zu dolmetschen: ohne Auslassungen, eigene Kommentare, Zusammenfassungen oder Ausschmückungen.

Während Ihres Einsatzes in einer Anhörung ist diese Arbeitsweise noch wichtiger. Denn häufig sind gerade Details entscheidungserheblich. Eine ungenaue mündliche Übersetzung kann Einfluss

darauf haben, ob einem Antragsteller Schutz gewährt oder ob er abgelehnt wird.

Auch alle Dialoge mit dem Antragsteller zu Verständnisfragen oder die Kommunikation zwischen Ihnen und dem Entscheider sowie Anmerkungen von anwesenden Dritten sind mündlich zu übersetzen.

Sprachlich spiegeln

Dabei geben Sie das Gesagte wortwörtlich wieder und spiegeln Sie den Antragsteller sprachlich. Das heißt, dass Sie z.B. keine Ungenauigkeiten und sprachlichen Unvollkommenheiten in der Rede des Antragstellers glätten oder Halbsätze in Eigenregie vervollständigen.

Bedenken Sie, dass der Entscheider aus dem von Ihnen mündlich übersetzten Inhalt auch Faktoren wie etwa das Alter, den sozialen Hintergrund und den kulturellen Kontext des Antragstellers feststellt.

Respektvolles Auftreten

Viele Antragsteller haben ein schweres Fluchtschicksal erlitten und schildern während der Anhörung intime Inhalte. Ihr respektvolles und sensibles Auftreten hilft ihnen dabei, dem Entscheider psychisch belastende Details vorzutragen.

Pausen einfordern

Denken Sie daran, rechtzeitig um Pausen zu bitten, falls es für Sie oder auch den Antragsteller notwendig sein sollte.

3.4. NACH DER ANHÖRUNG

Ein herausfordernder Arbeitstag ist für Sie zu Ende gegangen. Geben Sie bitte alle Unterlagen und Mitschriften, die Sie während der Anhörung gemacht haben, an den Entscheider ab.

Wie bei jedem Ihrer Aufträge kommen Sie auch nach der Anhörung Ihrer Verschwiegenheitspflicht nach. Der Antragsteller vertraut darauf, dass keine der sensiblen Informationen (wie z.B. über eine Vergewaltigung, von der selbst der Ehepartner nichts weiß) nach außen dringen. In diesem Zusammenhang haben auch Sie Anspruch auf Wahrung der Verschwiegenheitspflicht. Das bedeutet, dass der Entscheider und auch das Bundesamt keine Informationen zu Ihrer Person an Dritte weitergeben.

Als guter Sprachmittler bewerten Sie Ihren Einsatz und setzen sich mit Problemen fachlicher bzw. sprachlicher Art, auf die Sie während der Anhörung evtl. gestoßen sind, auseinander.

Mitunter haben Sie Anhörungen gedolmetscht, in denen Antragsteller traumatische Ereignisse vortragen. Achten Sie in diesem Zusammenhang auch auf sich selbst und kümmern Sie sich ggf. um Möglichkeiten der Stressbewältigung.

Empfehlung

In die Erstellung der vorliegenden Handreichung sind viele hilfreiche Anmerkungen und Hinweise von den Mitarbeitern des UNHCR-Büros Nürnberg eingeflossen.

Wenn Sie sich in die Thematik vertiefen möchten, empfehlen wir Ihnen des Weiteren das Selbstlernmodul des UNHCR „Interpreting in a Refugee Context“ (<http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=49b6314d2>) und das Trainingshandbuch für Dolmetscherinnen und Dolmetscher im Asylverfahren (<http://www.unhcr.at/trainingshandbuch>), herausgegeben vom UNHCR

Österreich. Beachten Sie hierbei allerdings die unterschiedlichen Begrifflichkeiten im nationalen Verfahren.

Impressum

Herausgeber:

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Frankenstraße 210
90461 Nürnberg
E-Mail: info@bamf.bund.de
Internet: www.bamf.de
Tel. +49 911 943-0
Fax +49 911 943-1000

Stand:

Mai 2015

Druck:

Bonifatius GmbH
Druck-Buch-Verlag
Karl-Schurz-Straße 26
33100 Paderborn

Layout:

Tatjana Bauer, 114 - Zentraler Service, Publikationen,
Veranstaltungsmanagement, Besucherdienst

Bildnachweis:

Miramedia GmbH Hamburg: Titel

Text:

Referat 412 - Qualitätssicherung Asyl

Gesamtverantwortung:

Matthias Henning, Dr. Iris Schneider

www.bamf.de

Appendix II: CD-ROM with Conducted Interviews

Sabrina Schider
Matriculation no. 3289565
Im Neuenheimer Feld 661 – 03.02.0
69120 Heidelberg
schider_sabrina@hotmail.com

Heidelberg, 10th November 2016

Declaration against Plagiarism

I, Sabrina Schider, born 14th August 1982, hereby declare that my M.A. thesis on the topic of
“Interpreters as Agents in the Refugee Crisis”

a) is the result of my own independent work and

b) makes use of no other sources or materials other than those referenced, and that quotations and
paraphrases obtained from the work of others are indicated as such.

Sincerely,