

Conflict zones: a training model for interpreters

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the status of conflict zone interpreters. It sheds more light on the sufficiency of interpreting skills in conflict zones. To achieve the purpose of this study, the method employed is based on interviewing interpreters working for non-governmental organizations which provided humanitarian services for refugees in Jordan in 2017. The findings reveal that these interpreters lack adequate training relevant to this particular field of interpretation, hence encountering numerous (non)linguistic challenges. Finally, the study concludes that conflict zone interpreters are in need of a relevant model of training. Therefore, the researchers propose a competency model of training that may help them with the aim of producing plausible interpretations.

Keywords

Conflict zones, interpreters, interpreting skills, training models, NGOs.

Introduction

The present study attempts to delve into the context of interpreting for the refugees flooding from the areas of turmoil in the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring. The paper tries to shed more light on the quality of interpretation provided and to consider the background and skills of conflict zone interpreters (hence-

forth CZIs). The paper argues that CZIs do not receive adequate training prior to embarking on their interpreting duties, despite the high demand for them in Jordan given the current crisis.

After the Arab Spring, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children sought refuge in several more peaceful countries, but the largest numbers of refugees flooded to conflict zone neighboring countries. Jordan, for instance, has received more than 727,000¹ refugees from Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Sudan among others. Concomitant to the movement of refugees is the presence of various bodies and organizations which provide humanitarian aid such as non-governmental organizations (henceforth NGOs). For the NGOs to provide their services efficiently, as most of them come from various non-Arabic speaking backgrounds, they rely on interpretation services to facilitate the fulfillment of NGO programs. Furthermore, the current instability in the Middle East is creating societies with poly-cultural differences. This, of course, requires linguistic mediation to bridge the communication gaps in such new societies. The people who fled their homelands require access to various statutory services including healthcare, education, legal protection, government, energy, community empowerment, durable solutions, shelter and non-food items, etc. and this can be achieved with the assistance of 'community interpreters' (Collard-Abbas 1981, cited in Roberts 1995).

Unlike conference interpreters who have traditionally received more scholarly focus, and thus a better status through training institutions and hiring bodies, community interpreters have to work in a very different environment whereby they may find themselves in close contact with both the parties which require assistance and the parties which provide this assistance (Gentile 1995). Interpreters in conflict zones are also involved in attempting to settle disagreements and allay fear, suspicion and worry. In spite of the tough and sometimes risky conditions they encounter, such interpreters usually receive little attention from their own governments who largely fail to set rules and regulations to protect them and provide them with training and support. This has been emphasized by Inghilleri (2010: 185) who propounds that "interpreters in war zones are not commanded by any institution, they are contracted to interpret, motivated by their nation, a social or a political cause or by necessity". In this regard, Zagolin (2015: 3) points out that these interpreters "put their life on the line" to perform the required tasks, hence, endangering their lives to help refugees and NGOs. What usually happens is that due to limited budgets, the organizations which need ad hoc interpreters tend to employ local civilians who most of the time lack the adequate training and/or experience to perform the required tasks professionally. If this is the case, these interpreters may lack a relevant code of ethics, hence causing grave repercussions to themselves, to the organization they work for and/or to the refugees.

Given this situation, CZIs must shoulder the responsibility for helping both the service providers and the service receivers. The role of interpreters in such heated areas is essential in three main aspects: (1) to help foreign troops and military per-

1 UNHCR Jordan fact sheet, January 2017, retrieved from <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/JordanFactSheetJanuary2017-FINAL.pdf>>.

sonnel in different facets and issues (Military Linguists/Interpreters); (2) to help journalists in negotiating and in arranging meetings with the fighting groups in some areas (Contract Interpreters); (3) to deliver humanitarian assistance to international organizations and bodies on the ground (Humanitarian Interpreters).

In the last few years, especially after the Syrian crisis and after hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees have sought refuge in Jordan, the need for well-trained and competent interpreters has arisen. Hence, there is growing academic and professional interest in studies related to interpreting in conflict zones, such as:

- multilingual communication in the field;
- needs and challenges;
- professional ethics in humanitarian interpreting;
- virtual and blended learning in complex contexts (InZone²).

However, there is no comprehensive training model *per se* for CZIs. They lack sufficient training when heading to areas of turmoil in different parts of the world, especially the Middle East, thus, this paper investigates existing training models or required qualifications.

1. Interpreting in conflict zones

'Conflict/war zone' has been defined by Merriam Webster's dictionary as "a zone in which belligerents are waging war; broadly: an area marked by extreme violence"³. Based on the definition quoted from the National Language Service Corps (NLSCorps), interpreting in conflict zones involves serving people affected by conflicts and may include humanitarian and military interpreting "and sometimes medical interpreting as well"⁴. The French military field hospital in the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan, for example, has hired several Jordanian interpreters to be able to communicate with patients and understand their conditions in order to carry out the required procedures and prescribe proper medications. Local government bodies and institutions also need interpreters to help communicate with these international and foreign organizations.

Conflict zone interpreting requires not only language skills but also the ability to work under pressure and hard conditions, the ability to tolerate heart-breaking and harsh circumstances, besides having decision-making skills and self-confidence. Despite this, Fitchett propounds that:

Interpreters contracted to work in conflict zones are often non-professional linguists yet play a key role in communications. Operating in high-risk environments, they are extremely vulnerable and require special protection. (Fitchett 2013: 1)

2 See InZone, University of Geneva: <<http://www.unige.ch/inzone/who-we-are/>>.

3 See Merriam Webster's dictionary: <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/war%20zone>>

4 See NLSCorps: <<https://www.nlscorps.org/>>

Furthermore, the role of interpreters and the organizations they work with remains blurry, i.e. the interpreters lack full awareness of their responsibilities and duties as do the hiring organizations. However, some bodies concerned with community interpreting in conflict zones have emerged.

1.1 Bodies dealing with CZIs

With the aim of regulating the profession and raising awareness on the part of interpreters, several bodies and organizations have started to enlighten conflict zone interpreters about their rights and duties and have set out to regulate their work around the world. These include:

- AIIC: Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence / The International Association of Conference Interpreters;
- INZONE: Center for Interpreting in Conflict Zones;
- NLSC: National Language Service Corps (USA);
- Red T: a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of translators and interpreters in conflict zones and other adversarial settings;
- FIT: La Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs / International Federation of Translators;
- TRF: The Rosetta Foundation;
- TWB: Translators without Borders.

Unfortunately, these bodies have failed to reach out to interpreters in the Middle East and in Jordan. They do not have branches in these areas of turmoil, neither do they have offices in this part of the world to help spread understanding of the nature of conflict zone interpreting. The above-mentioned bodies are mainly based in Europe and thus focus on the European context.

1.2 Interpretation competencies

The debate about translation/interpretation competencies is a thorny one. A few models have been suggested by various scholars and organizations, among which are: Campbell (1991); Schäffner/Adab (2000); Sim (2000); Pym (2003); Katsberg (2007); PACTE (2009); EMT (2009) PACTE, IATIS Yearbook (2010, 2011). According to the PACTE group (2011) model, the most important competencies include: *bilingual sub-competence, extra-linguistic sub-competence, knowledge of translation sub-competence, instrumental sub-competence, strategic sub-competence and psycho-physiological components.*

Though interpreting competencies have been covered by a limited number of models, the most important in our view is Albl-Mikasa's (2012) model which is based on Kalina's (2000) model, especially, when it comes to linguistics, culture, training workshops and interpreter training. This model (*ibid.*: 62-63) includes five main types of skills that every interpreter should have, including *para, pre, peri, in-process* and *post-process* skills distributed as shown in Figure 1 below:

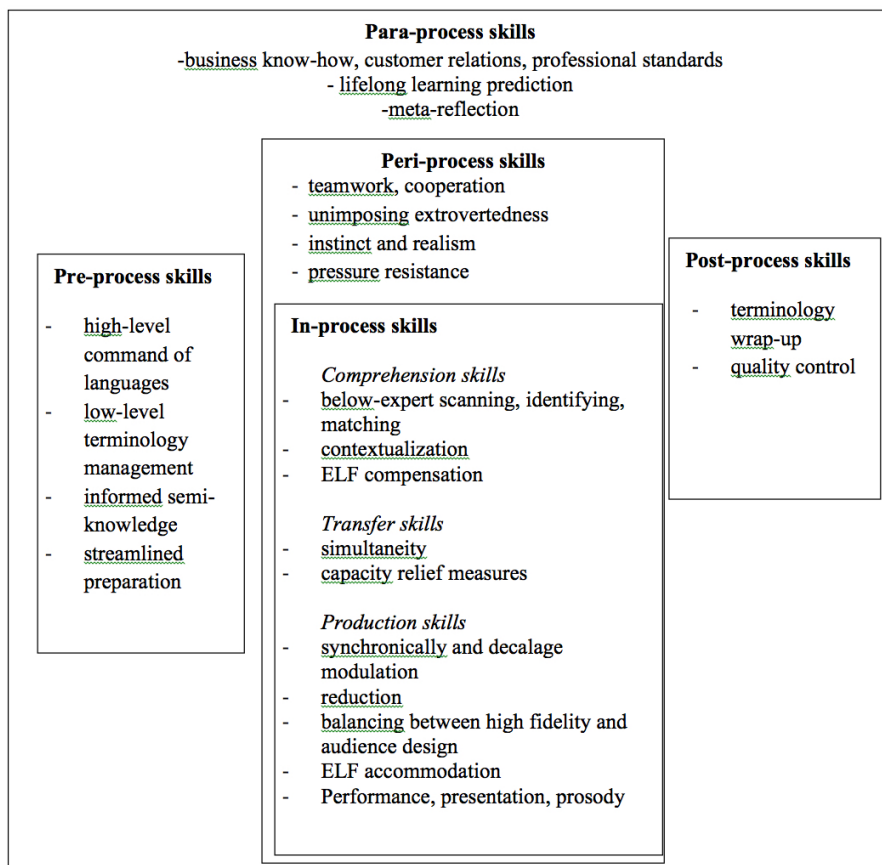


Figure 1. Albl-Mikasa's interpretation competencies (2012: 6)

The *pre-process* skills include the fundamental skills acquired by an interpreter throughout his/her life; *peri-process* skills include teamwork and a cooperative attitude, unimposing extrovertedness, professionalism between instinct and a sense of realism, pressure resistance and frustration tolerance; *in-process* skills relate to the fundamental translation processes of comprehension, transfer and production; *post-process* skills comprise terminology wrap-up, quality control; *para-process* skills encompass an important part of the interpreter's activity being of an entrepreneurial, customer relations and deontological nature (Albl-Mikasa 2012).

Albl-Mikasa's (2012) model focuses solely on conference interpreting. It is based on the experience of ten German interpreters working on the German market. It was adapted from Sylvia Kalina's (2000) model and was extended to include a new dimension; the *para-process* (Albl-Mikasa 2012: 89). This model is comprehensive when it comes to conference interpreting, because it includes competencies ranging from linguistic competencies to quality control, code of ethics, computer assisted terminology management, pressure resistance, frustration tolerance, business know-how, customer relations and professional standards or

service provision competency. However, it cannot be applied as such in order to train CZIs because of the different context of conflict zone interpreting.

Regarding competencies, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, NAATI (2016), which is a standards organization responsible for setting, promoting and maintaining high professional standards that issues accreditation for practitioners who would like to work as interpreters in Australia, provides interpreter certification. NAATI interpretation competencies include eight different types of competencies including language, intercultural, technological, thematic, transfer, service provision and ethical. For further illustration consider Table 1 below:

Competency	Knowledge	Skills	Attributes
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge Grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge Language trends knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer	Attentive-to-detail Desire-to-excel
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skill	Reliable
Research Competency	Research tools and methods knowledge	Terminology and information research skill Create and maintain a knowledge bank	Willing-to-learn Objective
Technological Competency	Interpreting technology knowledge	Interpreting through communication media Information and communications technology (ICT) skill	Respectful Collaborative
Thematic Competency	General knowledge Current events knowledge Subject-matter specific knowledge Institution-specific knowledge		
Transfer Competency	Interpreting modes knowledge	Discourse analysis skill Discourse management skill Meaning transfer Memory skill Rhetorical skill	Self-reflective Problem-solving Confident
	Interpreting standards knowledge	Self-assessment skill	
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of interpreting	Interpreting business skill Communication skill Interpersonal skill	
Ethical Competency	Ethics knowledge	Professional	

Table 1. NAATI Interpretation Competencies (NAATI 2016)

The NAATI model is an accreditation and certification project which started in 2011 “to ensure that translators and interpreters have the competence to engage in professional practice” (NAATI 2016: 4). Despite the fact that this model, besides language competency, covers intercultural competency, research competency, technological competency, thematic competency, transfer competency, service provision competency and ethical competency, it focuses only on a general level of competency. It provides a test taken by translators and/or interpreters who wish to become certified professionals in Australia. Yet, this type of training offered to interpreters is not specialized. Therefore, it could be modified and extended to include the competencies given in our suggested model to be used in training CZIs.

Drawing on the above examples and more, the existing models (e.g. Kalina 2000) which cover skills and competencies, do not refer to interpreting related to conflict zones. The only model related to the conflict zone interpreter context is the scalable virtual training model suggested by Moser-Mercer *et al.* (2014) which could fulfill several requirements, such as meeting the real needs of learners, being accessible, providing motivation, certification and supporting the development and maintenance of communities of practice. The model is offered by the Center for Interpreting in Conflict Zones (InZone), at Geneva University through online courses and discussions (see footnote 2).

In the light of limited consideration of conflict zone interpreting, a new specially adapted model seems to be needed for training interpreters who work in conflict zones to enhance their linguistic and cultural skills and knowledge. There is a clear need to consider also the role of translation in crisis communication and to facilitate the training of translators for crisis. The approach to training interpreters and translators within a crisis and on a volunteer basis, cannot be expected to replicate what is done during professional interpreter training due to limitations of both time and resources. Moreover, interpretation in crisis communication is different from traditional interpretation because content is generally concise, and time is a highly critical factor. Nonetheless, it is important that training for volunteers equips those volunteers with the necessary competences (O'Brien 2016: 96).

1.3 Conflict Zone Field Guide

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) has initiated a project to help translators and interpreters in conflict zones through issuing a guide entitled *Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of their Services* in collaboration with the Red T and the International Federation of Translators (FIT) to inform interpreters and translators of their duties and rights during their work in conflict zones.

Other attempts at training interpreters include: The Military Translation and Interpretation pilot program designed by the Monterey Institute of International Studies; the Translation and Interpretation Training Capabilities Project, which is a 3-week curriculum created by Cyacom International for the Defense Language Institute; and the U.S. Army's 09L linguist training program designed to train interpreters in the U.S. army.

1.4 Conflict zone interpreting qualifications

In Europe, unlike the Middle East, there are some bodies which offer certificates in humanitarian interpreting training. For instance, the InZone Center offers what is referred to as the “Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Humanitarian Interpreting” in cooperation with Red T, FIT and the AIIC. CAS is designed for field interpreters, interpreters working for humanitarian organizations and members of the Diaspora hoping to utilize their language and cultural skills. The courses offered during the training to obtain this certificate are delivered completely online. They include: Interpreting Skills, Interpreting Ethics, Core Skills for humanitarian interpreters and International Humanitarian Law for humanitarian interpreters. A specific module is relevant to the organization(s) the candidates work for (such as ICRC, UNHCR, UN, and MSF). Concerning admission requirements, the center requires candidates to have a Bachelor’s degree or equivalent professional experience, basic technological skills for an online course, and a good command of English and another working language. A short phone interview may be required to verify language proficiency to ensure acceptance.

Unfortunately, our region is still lagging behind with regard to regulating this profession and equipping interpreters with more relevant and specialized skills to provide interpreting services for the parties involved. As mentioned elsewhere, most of the CZIs in Jordan were hired only because they could speak foreign languages like for example, English, French and German.

2. About this study

The present research aims at providing a comprehensive training competence model for CZIs in Jordan that can address the strenuous circumstances under which they have to work, in particular, with people fleeing torture and turmoil. To know what is required of such a training model, the study first attempts to investigate both the linguistic skills and non-linguistic competencies of community interpreters or CZIs working in Jordan and secondly, ascertain the basic training skills they already have and which ones they need.

The methodological framework consists of interviewing the community interpreters and examining some existing training models in order to propose a purpose-built competence model to train them in order to fill in any gaps.

2.1 Method

2.1.1 The participants

To achieve its purpose, the present study has attempted to interview seven CZIs working for several service providers, namely NGOs operating in Jordan in 2017 (see Table 2 below). The participants who were interviewed were four females and three males, five of them holding master’s degrees (M.A.) in Translation, and one an M.A. in Conflict Resolution, while another has a bachelor’s degree (B.A.) in Translation.

The participants			
Gender	No.	Qualifications	No.
Females	4	M.A.	6
Males	3	B.A.	1
Total	7		7

Table 2. The participants in the study

2.1.2 The interviews

The interviews were held in the Department of Translation at Yarmouk University, Irbid, in Jordan. The duration of each interview was 30 minutes. The interviewees were asked about the linguistic and non-linguistic challenges they encountered in their field work. They were asked about the nature of the topics they interpreted; whether or not they received training from their employers; whether or not they received specialized linguistic training in the subjects they were assigned to interpret; whether or not they had an idea about conflict zone interpreting models; whether or not they knew about international conflict zone training bodies; and whether or not they recognized the ethics related to privacy and confidentiality (see Appendix).

To comply with confidentiality ethics, the participants were interviewed individually and were reassured that their identities would remain undisclosed. The participants explained the tough circumstances and embarrassing situations they went through during their assigned tasks. These include: *being unable to interpret specialized information including topics related to refugees, child and women abuse, counselling, and medicine; their lacking accurate terminologies; being unable to understand the dialect of the targeted people; encountering difficulties with the accents of some foreign NGO staff; lack of tolerance towards some cultural issues and taboos, to mention but a few.*

Drawing on the participants' responses and with the aim of designing a comprehensive training model for the CZIs, the study has also surveyed and examined several existing interpreting models such as: the InZone Certificate of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian Interpreting from Geneva University; the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC); the Conflict Zone Field Guide for Interpreters; the Military Translation and Interpretation Pilot Program from the Monterey Institute; and the National Language Service Corps.

3. Findings

The interviews have shown that most of the participants (5/7) revealed that their NGOs did not provide any kind of proper training at the level of interpreter training, or at the level of administrative training. Yet, two participants stated that they had received training by their organization, one on the main services

that are provided by the interpreter’s organization and the other on safety and security issues. Further, one of the participants indicated that their NGOs consider working in the field as a substitute for training. The study reveals that CZIs encounter four main types of challenges including ethical, linguistic, cultural, and administrative challenges. For more illustration consider Figure 2:

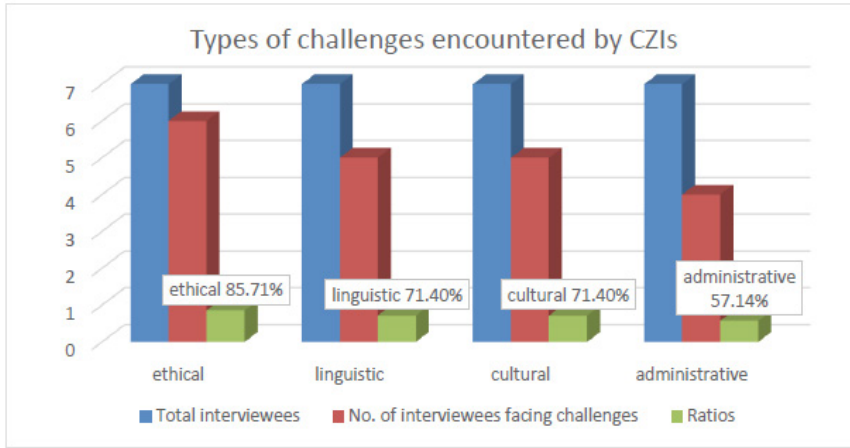


Figure 2. Types of the challenges encountered by CZIs

With regard to the issue of ethics, Figure 2 shows that 85.71% of the participants lacked awareness of interpreting ethics and were only aware of codes of ethics of the NGOs if they worked for more than one. Interestingly, 71.40% of the participants indicated that they encountered linguistic problems related to the various dialects they encountered as well as the cultural backgrounds of the refugees. Finally, 57.14% of the participants explained that they had problems with the administrative tasks they were required to undertake.

As for the strategies employed to cope with the challenges, the study reveals that in order to overcome the problem of lack of training, participants used various strategies such as: using previous work experience acquired through working for other NGOs; seeking clarification for difficult medical terminology from the medical staff as a substitute for their lack of training; searching on the internet; and reading leaflets and magazines related to the field of work.

3.1 Duties given to NGO interpreters by their organizations

Based on the interviews conducted with the participants of this study, it was revealed that the duties of the interpreters included two main categories: administrative and translation/interpreting duties. Interpreters/translators were required to undertake the following duties:

- assist in the representation and in the external communication of the organization;

- represent the organization, on request, at weekly/monthly meetings, workshops and events;
- relay the organization's messages to its partners, local authorities and other organizations in relation to the organization's mandate;
- update the organization with new policies, instructions or training courses announced or held by UNHCR or other NGOs. This is done through obtaining booklets and brochures, translating them if needed and disseminating them to the team of the organization;
- assist in the preparation of speeches and other presentations related to referral events under the Field Coordinator;
- actively participate in the practical organization of different events at base level;
- facilitate the transfer of information and documents at base level;
- translate (texts and speech) for the benefit of Program Managers and Field Coordinators which includes: translation (Arabic to English / English to Arabic) of internal or external documents and acting as interpreters during internal or external events.

3.2 Difficulties and obstacles facing CZIs

The overwhelming majority of the participants of this study had experienced some linguistic difficulties including: the use of unfamiliar colloquial terms and different Syrian dialects by some Syrian refugees; problems in understanding some of the accents of the NGOs' international staff; the use of specialized terminology, such as medical terms, which was considered one of the most difficult fields of translation due to their lack of training in this field, and the fixed technical use of some medical terms. Added to this, were the cultural difficulties faced by the interpreters/translators due to some cultural differences in the use of individual lexical items, language used in sensitive areas such as that related to religion and sex, and their unfamiliarity with some of the customs and traditions of some of the refugees, which made dealing with them more difficult.

An obstacle facing interpreters in conflict zones may be aggressive attitudes or behaviors demonstrated by some of the refugees, i.e. security threats, especially in the Zaatari refugee camp, as well as their own psychological state when meeting and dealing with refugees in their precarious situations. In this regard, Allen states that:

Interpreters who facilitate communication in conflict zones put themselves at great physical and psychological risk, and yet are mostly unknown to other interpreters, because they work in isolation from the rest of the profession. The service they provide is vital, and it is time our profession widens its reach to officially bring them into the fold. (Allen 2012: 1)

Maybe this could be one of the main factors that adds to increased sensitivity and awareness of the nature of CZIs' assigned tasks.

3.3 Missing points

Building on the current interpreting models discussed above and on the results of the interviews with the interpreters working for NGOs, the previously cited Albl-Mikasa (2012) interpreter training model designed for more traditional tasks, covers several aspects related to those situations mentioned above. However, the model lacks the following equally important points:

- lack of cultural knowledge or difficulty in understanding the dialects of people in conflict zones;
- challenges and risks encountered in conflict zone settings, which include violent attitudes or hostility from people in conflict zones;
- ethical issues related to conflicts and humanitarian aid: interpreters must be considerate toward the refugees and show a high level of courtesy to them as well as exhibiting loyalty and honesty. In this regard, Boéri (2010), De Manuel Jerez (2010) and Gill/Guzman (2010) argue that translators and interpreters have an ethical responsibility towards humanity and the wider community, over and above their responsibility to their clients;
- the psychosocial effects of such experiences on the interpreters through witnessing the tragedies of the refugees and the traumatic effects of working in the field, and particularly in field hospitals, which may have an adverse effect on both the interpreter and his/her interpreting.

Along the same lines, InZone highlights that interpreters often get hired by relief organizations solely because they may be familiar with a local dialect and can also speak English. Therefore, the selection criteria are more often than not, not based on experience or training in interpreting skills and/or interpreting ethics. Thus, this last point and the ones listed above, pave the way towards the need for an updated model of interpreter training.

3.4 Urgent needs

Considering the above discussion of existing models or programs of training for CZIs and the constant emergence of new conflicts, we must also add to these findings the results of a survey of humanitarian workers conducted by Businario (2012). The study revealed that 98.7% of the respondents believed that language barriers negatively affect humanitarian communication and consequently compromise delivery of aid. 42.9 % of the humanitarian actors in her survey believed that problems in message transmission are due to a lack of training in the interpreting skills of those carrying out the interpreting task (Businario 2012: 47-53, cited in Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2014: 146). This may be attributed to the following factors:

- the insufficient number of interpreters in conflict zones. "There is a chronic shortage of interpreters in zones of crisis and war willing to work in the line of fire or in areas of natural disaster" (Moser Mercer/Bali 2008: 1);
- the scarcity of studies and dearth of research about interpreting in conflict zones: Baker (2006), Palmer (2007), Palmer/Fontain (2007), Baker (2010), Moser-Mercer *et al.* (2014);

- the lack of professional training and education for field interpreters;
- the insufficiency of the existing training models for conflict-zone interpreters;
- the urgent need to deliver humanitarian aid to people in conflict zones;
- the challenges and risks caused by lack of training and experience which can have critical effects on the end users. As highlighted by Moser-Mercer/Bali (2008: 1):

Staff deployed in the field are often unable to communicate properly with the local population [...] lack of proficiency in English, misplaced loyalties, the need to assume roles that “empower” them to pass judgment during interrogations or asylum interviews, for example, without requisite deontological training, thus inadvertently participating in human rights violations.

4. A competence model for CZIs

Some basic skills which interpreters need to master, prior to embarking on the interpreting tasks between the parties involved and to ensure better communication, include mastery of the languages involved, cultural awareness, familiarity with the context of the situation involved and familiarity with a code of ethics. However, the delicate work environment, the diverse and sometimes different cultural, religious and political backgrounds of the parties involved including the trichotomy of NGOs, CZI, and refugees may cause some misunderstanding when trying to communicate. The most important element in the above trichotomy is CZIs who are the bridge between those who need help and the ones who offer it. Therefore, the role of the CZIs is crucial and is very sensitive (Baker 2012).

This means that training models ought to highlight both the *interpreting techniques* and the *sociocultural aspects* which make the interpreter a bridge between both the senders and the receivers (Gentile 2014: 96). Thus, in addition to the mastery of the necessary linguistic skills and familiarity with specialized jargons, there is the need for a deep and full cultural acquaintance, namely of the cultures of the countries involved including “political, economic, social and ethnic differences, administrative structures, community life [...]” (Kalina 2000: 3). Though from an academic viewpoint, the previous quote is relatively old, it includes significant concepts which are applicable to the conditions of interpreting in Jordan. Unfortunately, the interviews revealed that most interpreters lack awareness of these concepts which are essential especially with the huge flux of refugees arriving from so many different countries.

Along the same lines, Cohen (2001) propounds that familiarity with the local context plays a significant role in achieving the goals intended by humanitarian organizations as the service providers do not usually speak the language of those in turmoil. This may sometimes lead to mistakes and unintended errors which may negatively affect both parties, namely in the fields of medicine and/or law where mistakes could have far reaching consequences. Therefore, equipping interpreters with the necessary skills to mainly combine both linguistic and cultural skills would create a solid basis to rely on for good communication, on the one hand, and to avoid complications as much as possible on the other.

Kalina (2000: 4) defines *competence* as “the ability to perform cognitive tasks of mediation within a bi-/multilingual communication situation at an extremely high level of expectations and quality [...]”. Kalina (*ibid.*) adds requirements to this definition which include knowledge of culture and communication skills with the aim of efficiently processing the text. Along the same lines, the present paper has attempted to define competence as the multiple encompassing various types of skills of both linguistic (linguistic systems, dialect, register, context of situation, terminology, semantics, pragmatics, conveying the true meanings of the speakers etc.) and extra-linguistic nature (culture, confidentiality, punctuality, patience, tolerance, etc.), which CZIs need to master when engaging in conversations between the members of the NGOs and the refugees. Likewise, Moser-Mercer *et al.* (2014) stress the idea of knowledge of the subject and cultural competence when interpreting.

Of course, testing the mastery of these skills can be described as a rather difficult task. It requires a diligence and tireless follow-up based on the feedback from all of the parties involved in the action of interpreting, including stakeholders, NGOs and the communities which are in need of foreign assistance in various aspects of life when there is war or turmoil.

4.1 Suggested CZIs’ training model

To resolve the problems caused by the gaps and omissions in the models discussed above, the present paper proposes a model for training CZIs which sheds more light on both the linguistic and extra/non-linguistic skills that CZIs need to master. These areas include the following competencies exhibited in Tables 3 and 4 respectively:

Linguistic competencies	Know-how	Testing
- English (SL/ TL)	- Listening, speaking, reading, writing - Dialect awareness	Conduct the necessary tests which guarantee that the candidate has mastered the required skills.
- Arabic (SL/ TL)	- Listening, speaking, reading, writing - Dialect awareness	
- Interpretation (English- Arabic- English)	- Accuracy, clarity, fluency, memory skills, concentration, note-taking, specialized interpretation training	
- Vocabulary	- Wide lexical repertoire in the fields of conflict zone and community interpreting	
- Terminology	- Adequate use of specialized terms	
- Handouts	- Distribution of various specialized handouts for background reading	
- Testing	- A comprehensive test for the required language skills competencies	

Table 3. CZIs’ linguistic competencies model.

Non-Linguistic competencies	Know-how	Testing
– Culture	– Familiarity with the culture (beliefs, social classes, religion, education, ethnicity, and gender of the people in turmoil) – Familiarity with the culture of the hiring body	Conduct the necessary tests which guarantee that the candidate has mastered the required skills.
– Psychology	– Cope with sensitive cases, maintain a professional level to effectively handle the situation	
– Human relations	– Develop good communication skills	
– Ethics	– Not breach: confidentiality, rules, regulations, equal opportunities – Cast aside all forms of discrimination	
– Patience	– Show tolerance of hard working conditions and unexpected reactions by nervous and disorderly victims	
– Safety and security	– Secure oneself in violent situations	
– Administrative skills	– Arrange appointments, write reports, use computer assisted translation tools (CAT tools), develop time management skills.	

Table 4. CZIs’ non-linguistic competencies model.

Tables 3 and 4 show the linguistic and non-linguistic competencies that CZIs need to master prior to joining the NGOs which target people fleeing areas of turmoil. All of the items mentioned ought to be equally taken into consideration by training centers and the trainees.

Finally, in this part of the world, the field of conflict zone interpreting has suffered from marginalization and there still remains a lack of efficient and sufficient training models and programs despite the world having witnessed scores of events which have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of refugees. Thus, the existing training programs require further evaluation and reassessment through more studies and research, in order to better understand their current status. The academic institutions which offer degrees in interpretation and translation also need to revise their study plans taking into consideration the labor market and the requirements sought by the stakeholders, as well as using authentic resources in teaching interpretation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the difficulties faced by CZIs working for NGOs coincide with those raised by Moser-Mercer *et al.* (2014: 143) “Challenges faced by field interpreters essentially fall into three categories: language- and culture-related challenges, role-related challenges and emotional challenges”. It is obvious that there is need for the preparation of a well-established training model for interpreters so that they can act effectively and professionally while working in conflict zones. Thus, a comprehensive and holistic review and reform should be undertaken to establish a new interpreter training curriculum based on feedback from practitioners in conflict zones.

Finally, the current study paves the way for other scholars, organizations or bodies to work earnestly on establishing new innovative models or to take into consideration the model recommended in this paper and adopt or adapt it if and as needed. As such, interpreting and translation departments and institutions ought to reconsider designing new study plans which equip interpreters with the necessary skills to help them better fulfil their tasks, especially in the context of conflict zone interpreting. Furthermore, based on our findings, the present paper recommends establishing an in-conflict zone center for interpreting in the Middle East to give intensive and specialized training to all kinds of interpreters and other personnel to facilitate their activities in conflict and war situations.

Last but not least, the present study proposes the following recommendations:

- to foster a specialized course related to the field of humanitarian interpretation to be taught in the departments of translation in Middle Eastern universities;
- to create collaboration and cooperation between departments of translation and NGOs to introduce translation students to the different types of translation used in such organizations;
- to build channels of communication and cooperation with the international conflict zone interpreting bodies like InZone, AIIC and Red T, for instance;
- to build a platform that will help establish a regional training center based, for example, in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey, to train community interpreters.

The authors wish to conclude by clarifying that this is only the start of a process and the model suggested in this paper is preliminary requiring further elaboration and amendment.

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APPENDIX: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

We (the researchers) would like to inform you that we are conducting this interview for academic purposes and we would like to reassure you that what you say here will remain confidential and your identities will not be revealed, and you have the right to withdraw from this interview at any time; also, you have the right to request deleting some/all of the information that you provided us with when you responded to our questions.

This interview aims at investigating the status of community interpreters to provide them with necessary assistance and training skills.

Gender: M/ F

Age:

Academic degree(s) and major:

Years of experience:

Languages:

The Questions

1. Have you ever worked as an interpreter before joining your organization?
If the answer is Yes, for how long?
2. What are the missions and duties given to NGO interpreters by their organizations?
3. What are the linguistic and cultural challenges facing NGO Interpreters?
4. What are the ethics of NGO interpreters in the field of community interpreting?
5. What kind of training was provided to NGO interpreters?
6. What kind of linguistic skills training have you received from your employer?
7. What kind of non-linguistic skills training have you received from your employer?
8. What kind of administrative training have you received from your employer?
9. Which embarrassing situations have you experienced when doing your job?
10. How did you handle (non)linguistic difficulties?
11. Which challenges have you encountered regarding specialized terminologies?
12. What kind of strategies have you employed to handle the challenges encountered?

Thank you