

THE LINGUISTIC AND INTERPRETING NEEDS OF SECURITY FORCES IN GRAN CANARIA: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Abstract

This article investigates the interpreting needs of Spanish security personnel, their perceptions of their interactions with non-Spanish speakers, and considerations regarding the role of interpreters in their work for the various security forces in Spain. The contextual framework summarises the responsibilities of the Spanish security forces, examines the area of law enforcement as a public service sector in which interpreting is required, and explores legal issues in this field. An indication of the number of potential users of interpreting services in the security forces in the specific region studied (the Canary Islands) is followed by a description of the methodology used. We then present the results of our study, which was conducted by means of a questionnaire, drawn up and administered by the authors, on how members of the Civil Guard and the Spanish National and local police forces perceive their language and interpreting needs, as well as their experiences in these fields. As part of this preliminary study, survey respondents were encouraged to share difficulties they had encountered in relation to language mediation, thereby enabling the authors to present an overview of the interlinguistic and intercultural communication difficulties that need to be overcome in these services, as well as service professionals' impressions of the reality of working with interpreters.

Keywords: public service interpreting; community interpreting; legal interpreting; interpreting for law enforcement agents; interpreting for public security forces; communication difficulties; perception studies; survey.

LES NECESSITATS LINGÜÍSTIQUES I D'INTERPRETACIÓ DE LES FORCES DE SEGURETAT DE GRAN CANÀRIA: UN ESTUDI PRELIMINAR

Resum

Aquest article investiga les necessitats d'interpretació del personal de seguretat espanyol, les percepcions que tenen de les seves interaccions amb persones que no parlen espanyol, i les consideracions sobre el paper dels intèrprets que treballen per a les diverses forces de seguretat a Espanya. El marc contextual resumeix les responsabilitats de les forces de seguretat espanyoles, examina l'àmbit d'aplicació de les lleis com un sector dels serveis públics en el qual la interpretació és necessària, i explora els aspectes legals en aquest terreny. Es dona una indicació del nombre d'usuaris potencials dels serveis d'interpretació a les forces de seguretat de la regió específica estudiada (les illes Canàries) i, tot seguit, una descripció de la metodologia que s'ha fet servir. Després presentem els resultats de l'estudi, que es va dur a terme mitjançant un qüestionari, elaborat i administrat per les autores, sobre com membres de la Guàrdia Civil i la Policia Nacional i Local espanyola perceben les seves necessitats lingüístiques i d'interpretació, i també les seves experiències en aquest terreny. Dins d'aquest estudi preliminar, es va animar les persones enquestades a compartir les dificultats amb què s'havien trobat en relació amb la mediació lingüística, cosa que permet a les autores presentar una visió general de les dificultats de comunicació interlingüística i intercultural que caldria resoldre en aquests serveis, i també les impressions dels professionals del servei sobre la realitat de treballar amb intèrprets.

Paraules clau: interpretació als serveis públics; interpretació comunitària; interpretació legal; interpretar per a agents del servei de seguretat; interpretar per a les forces de seguretat públiques; dificultats de comunicació; estudis de percepció; enquesta.

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1 Introduction

Threats to public security are now global in nature and there is an increasing need for security forces to ensure that their messages reach increasingly diverse populations of citizens as well as non-local populations. Security forces need to understand these populations as urgently as they need to be understood by them. The term *security forces* is used in different legal jurisdictions, both domestic and international, to cover a variety of forces. In the context of this paper, the term is understood as the agencies controlling a “state’s virtual monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and intrusion” (Sammonds, 2010: 213), that is to say, police, military and intelligence units. In contemporary democratic societies, these agencies’ mandates include the provision of internal security and stability against predatory groups (Herbst, 2016). Apart from basic language training, which varies from force to force, their communication policy has only recently started to include the services of translators and interpreters. Input from professionals working in security forces regarding the frequency with which specific types of interlinguistic communication is required and the specific nature of those types of communication has been underexplored, both by their own agencies and in the Translation and Interpreting Studies field, which needs to become aware of translation and interpreting needs on the ground in order to guide both empirical research and training efforts.

This paper will shed some light on the issue by approaching agents who require interlinguistic and intercultural communication in their daily work. More specifically, our study examines these questions within the Civil Guard, the Spanish National Police Corps, and the Canary Islands’ local police forces, in all three cases on the island of Gran Canaria.

2 Responsibilities of the Spanish security forces

Under Article 104 of the 1978 Constitution (Constitución Española, 1978), the Spanish security forces are charged with safeguarding the free exercise of rights and freedoms and guaranteeing the security of citizens. We would clarify that the three security forces surveyed in this study are separate entities under Spanish law, each with clearly defined responsibilities, as laid down in the Spanish Security Forces Act 2/1986 (*Ley Orgánica 2/1986, de 13 de marzo, de Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad, 1986*). The jurisdiction of both the Civil Guard and the National Police Corps is national, and selection processes are conducted on a national basis. Local police forces are municipal and therefore dependent on their local council. The functions of each corps are outlined under the Security Forces Act, but no specific mention is made of any need for either languages or translation and interpreting. These functions are broadly summarised in the following paragraphs.

Article 11 of Spanish Act 2/1986 (*Ley Orgánica 2/1986, de 13 de marzo, de Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad*) specifies that the National Police Corps is charged with the functions presented in Table 1 below, in all the provincial capitals as well as in municipal boroughs and towns designated by the national government, while the Civil Guard will perform them out throughout the rest of Spain.

1. Helping and protecting members of the public and ensuring the conservation and protection of property or goods endangered for any reason.
2. Surveillance and protection of public buildings and facilities as required.
3. Ensuring the protection and security of dignitaries.
4. Where necessary, maintaining and restoring order and citizen safety.
5. Crime prevention.
6. Investigating crimes to identify and arrest any alleged perpetrators, safeguarding instruments, effects and evidence related to the offence, bringing them before the relevant judge or court, and drawing up any necessary technical and expert reports.
7. Gathering, receiving and analysing any data of interest for order and public security.
8. Studying, planning and executing crime prevention methods and techniques.
9. Collaborating with Civil Protection services in cases of serious risk, catastrophe or public disaster, pursuant to the terms stipulated in Civil Protection legislation.

Table 1. Functions assigned to the National Police Corps or the Civil Guard, depending on geographic location (under Spanish Act 2/1986).

Article 12 of Spanish Act 2/1986 goes on to establish additional functions for the Civil Guard and the National Police Corps. The Civil Guard is charged with the control of weapons and explosives; the fiscal security of the state; interurban traffic, except where jurisdiction has been devolved to the regional authorities; custody of communication routes, ports and airports; environmental protection; and the transferral of detainees between towns and cities. The same article of this Act assigns the National Police Corps the additional responsibility of ensuring compliance with legislation and other general provisions; immigration, including the control of Spanish nationals and foreign nationals entering or exiting Spain, and all functions relating to immigration, refuge and asylum, extradition, expulsion, emigration and immigration; investigation and persecution of drug-related crime; collaborating with and assisting police forces from other countries, pursuant to international treaties or agreements on laws, under the supervision of the Spanish Ministry of the Interior; the issuing of national ID documents and passports; monitoring gaming activities and inspecting compliance with gaming law; private security; and any other functions ascribed by the law in force.

The responsibilities of the local police forces are laid down in Article 38 of Spanish Act 2/1986 and constitute the functions shown in Table 2 below.

1. Directing traffic in urban areas.
2. Taking official statements from witnesses and parties involved in traffic accidents in urban areas.
3. Acting as administrative police in relation to municipal provisions.
4. Participating in the functions of the judicial police, within their municipality.
5. Rendering assistance in case of accidents, catastrophes or public disasters in accordance with the law, as provided under Civil Protection plans.
6. Conducting prevention inquiries and any other actions that could help to prevent crime.
7. Policing public spaces and collaborating with national and regional security forces (in those regions that have them) in case of demonstrations, and maintaining order when large groups of people congregate.
8. Helping to solve private conflicts when required to do so.

Table 2. Functions of the local police forces in Spain (under Spanish Act 2/1986, Article 38).

From this brief overview, we would point to the following areas as those most likely to involve some form of communication with foreigners and therefore require interlinguistic mediation, either by the officers themselves or by third parties:

- Immigration: National Police Corps and Civil Guard (ports and airports);
- Collaborating with and helping police forces from other countries: National Police Corps.

However, any interaction between a member of the security forces and a non-Spanish-speaking member of the public may require this type of mediation, which is equally the case whether the member of public in question approaches a member of the security forces in search of information, whether they are a witness, a suspect or perpetrator of a crime, or a detainee.

3 Law enforcement as a public service in need of interpretation services

In recent years, much has been written about public service interpreting (see, among many others, Roberts, 1995; Mikkelsen, 1996; Gentile, 1997; Hale, 2007; Valero Garcés & Martin, 2008; Pöchhacker, 2010; Wadensjö, 2013; Arumí Ribas & Vargas-Urpi, 2017). However, a much smaller body of literature focuses specifically on law enforcement agencies, and particularly on the needs on the ground within these agencies. In this respect, we could cite Krouglov's article (1999) on police interpreting in the context of linguistic discourse analysis and his findings regarding interpreters making pragmatic decisions while interpreting, as well as omissions, modifications of colloquialisms or obscene terminology used by interviewees, among other changes to modes of expression and levels of politeness. Further work on language service provision by non-professional interpreters in appellate cases in California, Florida and New York was carried out by Berk-Seligson (2000),

who highlighted the dangers of these practices in terms of detainees' rights. Takeda (2009), meanwhile, in the context of operations during the Pacific War and the occupation of Japan, studied questions such as trust, ethics of control, and identity among military interpreters required to use their language skills against either their own country or people whose cultural heritage is the same as their own. Martin and Taibi's article (2010) explores opportunities for the manipulation of translations and interpretations arising from lax recruitment regulations for law enforcement agencies on the hiring of language service providers, while Nakane's work (2011) examines how interpreters react to and render silences in police interviews, and the consequences for both police officers and suspects. Mulayim, Lai, & Norma's book (2015) provides a broad view of the factors to be taken into consideration when interpreting in police interviews, from the interpreter's perspective, and Monteoliva García's research (2017) looks at the practice and consequences of the intermittent use of interpreting in Scottish police interviews, where interpreters employed on a standby basis are called on by the authorities, at the authorities' discretion, to interpret only certain parts of the communication process, given that the interviewee has some degree of knowledge but not full proficiency in the official language used by the institution. Lee's study (2017) examines some of the consequences of using non-professional interpreters who lack specific interpreting competence and impartiality in police witness interviews, while Filipovič & Hijazo-Gascón (2018) explore meaning in interpreted police interviews through analysis of real transcripts from California (USA) and Norfolk (UK). Their findings focus on differences in semantic components of motion, and how these differences can lead interpreters to add, omit or modify elements of the message when interpreting; they suggest a number of strategies to improve the quality of interpreting practices in these settings. Finally, Määttä (2018) studied Finnish-French telephone interpreting, in the context of a police interview with a suspect, within a framework based on critical discourse analysis, identifying the constraints and choices that come into play in terms of language use in a particular situation. The focus on police interviews and other face-to-face situations requiring dialogue or liaison interpreting reflects the needs of those forces as perceived by TIS academics. While all these studies have enriched our knowledge of important facets of the reality of interpreting in law enforcement settings, scant attention has been paid to the perceptions of security forces' personnel in these situations, and it is in this area that we feel our study can make a small but significant contribution.

Dialogue interpreting¹ entails the interpreter working in and out of the two languages in question and requires an interpreter who is proficient at interpreting in both directions. This ability to work "both ways" has been explored in less detail in other modes of interpreting such as conference interpreting, given the dictates of major international organisations such as the European Union bodies and the United Nations, which require their staff interpreters and trusted freelancers to render into their mother tongue (their *A* or first language) what has been produced in another (usually their *B* or second language, or their *C*, their third and successive languages). Bilateral conference interpreting on the private market remains a much less-studied mode, despite the number of professional interpreters working largely as freelancers, and often offering bilateral services (Bovy & Adams, forthcoming). However, dialogue interpreting is certainly dominant in Public Service Interpreting (Hale, 2007: 25).

Public Service Interpreting is only gradually becoming a profession *per se*, (see Mikkelsen, (2013), as roles and expectations are only weakly defined and are highly contested. In this sense, the literature points to possible differences in the expectations of the parties involved in relation to the specific role of the interpreter (Wadensjö, 1998; Collados Aís, 2010). The first author states that, while liaison interpreters working in business meetings will often be expected to be on their client's side during negotiations, the situation in Public Service Interpreting is very different. Here both parties expect the interpreter to be on their side (Wadensjö, 1998: 50):

"Officials may count on the interpreter's loyalty, since the interpreter's salary is paid, as a rule, by the public organization. At the same time, the lay person may expect the interpreter to side with them. After all, language services fall under the individual lay person's public rights."

This conflict between monetary and justice-based fidelities has been widely addressed by academics and professionals in codes of practice (Ozolins, 2014). Notwithstanding, public service interpreting is still frequently practised on a voluntary basis, with obvious implications for security services. In Spain, where

¹ Dialogue interpreting may be referred to by a variety of terms, including liaison, bilateral, escort or accompanying interpreting (see Jiménez Ivars, 2002; Hale, 2007: 28).

a number of contexts rely on interpreting on an informal (voluntary and ad hoc) basis, it is interesting to note that the Directorate General of the Spanish National Police Corps not only issues calls for tender for translation and interpreting services, which we can take as an indication of its recognition of the need for these services, but these calls are accompanied by technical specifications that go into considerable detail regarding remuneration rates. Although not the central focus of our study, it is worth noting that the maximum hourly rate set in the 2018 call was 35.00 Euros (net of tax) (*Cuadro de características del pliego de cláusulas administrativas particulares*, 2018), down from 44 Euros (net of tax) in the 2013 call (*Pliego de prescripciones técnicas para la contratación del servicio de intérpretes en el marco de actuaciones del cuerpo nacional de policía (expte. 002/13/CO/05/ lote 1)*, 2013), a drop of 20%.

Apart from the stipulation of maximum rates for interpreting, the 2018 tender also specifies maximum remuneration levels for waiting periods, telephone interpreting, and interpreting using videoconferencing or other similar systems, at any time on any day. Regardless of whether or not these rates are considered reasonable, the fact that these different modes of interpreting, as well as waiting times, are all broken down and priced separately, demonstrates that the National Police Corps, as an institution, is aware of some of the practicalities involved in working with interpreters. In a similar vein, the 2018 tender specifies that interpreting both into Spanish from the foreign language and from Spanish into the foreign language is required, i.e. the interpreter must be fully bilateral. From this initial recognition of the range of services rendered, there is ample scope for translation and interpreting studies (TIS) to work hand in hand with policy makers to engender shared knowledge that can ensure best practices.

4 Interpreting in the security forces: Legal issues

Another reason why interpreting conditions have been established within security forces is that there is a legal framework, at international, European and Spanish levels, governing the established right to interpreting for non-Spanish speakers, which varies depending on whether they are detainees, residents or visitors. The following paragraphs will offer a brief overview of the main obligations of States to provide interpreting services as a safeguard for citizens' rights.

At international level, all EU Member States, including Spain, are signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UNGA, 1948). Articles 8 and 10 establish every person's right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts in violation of [their] fundamental rights, and to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of [their] rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against them in full equality (which implies the right to fully understand and be understood, regardless of any language barrier). Similarly, Article 14.3 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UNGA, 1966), in force since 1976, specifically mentions the following rights of any person charged with a criminal offence:

“(a) To be informed promptly and in detail in a language which he understands of the nature and cause of the charge against him; [...] ; (b) To have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing; [...] ; (f) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court.”

Similarly, Article 6 of the European Human Rights Convention (Council of Europe, 1950) reiterates the right of a defendant to be informed in a language that he or she understands and have free access to the services of an interpreter.

A key piece of European legislation in guaranteeing interpreting services to any person facing criminal law charges is Article 2 of EU Directive 2010/64, which requires Member States to establish whether suspected or accused persons require the services of an interpreter in order to understand the language of the court, to supply defendants with interpretation, not only during trial proceedings, but also during police questioning and any other interim hearings deemed necessary; interpreting services must also be made available to facilitate communication between suspects or accused persons and their legal counsel. These provisions also cover proceedings for the execution of a European arrest warrant. The Directive specifically stipulates that any interpretation provided shall be of sufficiently good quality to safeguard the fairness of the proceedings.

Two major instruments of Spanish legislation which refer specifically to the need for interpreting are the Criminal Procedures Act of 1882, as amended by Spanish Act 5/2015 in order to implement the above-mentioned EU Directive; and the Spanish Immigration Act 4/2000 (*Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre Derechos y Libertades de los Extranjeros en España y su Integración Social*, 2000). The current Spanish Criminal Procedures Act, in establishing the procedures to be followed in criminal cases, lays down the basis for guaranteeing the right to translation and interpreting in criminal trials, thereby including the provisions of EU Directive 2010/64 in the national legal framework. These provisions include the stipulation that, when any person is arrested, they must immediately be informed of their rights and the reason for their arrest, in a manner they understand. Although no explicit mention is made of interpreting services, if the security forces officer and the detainee are unable to communicate due to a language barrier, an interpreter may be needed in order to guarantee the detainee's constitutional rights (Article 17.3). Article 24.1 of the same instrument stipulates that every person's right to exercise their legitimate rights and interests will be effectively protected by the judges and courts, and that no person may be left in a state of defencelessness. Where no common language exists between a person and a judge or court, interpreter services will be required to ensure the protection of this right. More specifically, Article 123.1 lays down the rights of defendants who do not speak or understand Spanish or the official language in which the case is being conducted, such as the right to assistance from an interpreter in the defendant's own language whenever their presence is required, including during questioning by the police or the Public Prosecutor's office, at all court hearings as well as in consultations with their defence counsel, and the right to interpretation at all stages of the hearing. Article 520 of the same act deals with the right to defence, to assistance from a defence lawyer, and the treatment of detainees and prisoners. These rights include the right to free assistance from an interpreter for people who do not understand or speak Spanish or the official language in question, or for the deaf or hard of hearing, as well as other people with language-based difficulties. This is of particular interest as it applies to the treatment of detainees are treated, that is, how members of the security forces we have targeted in our study deal with detainees, during police questioning, for example, and not only in relation to their right to an interpreter during a trial.

Article 22.2 of the Spanish Immigration Act 4/2000, of 11 January (*Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre Derechos y Libertades de los Extranjeros en España y su Integración Social*), on the rights and freedoms of non-Spanish speakers in Spain and their integration in society, and its amended 2011 version, specifically stipulates the right to an interpreter where a person does not understand or speak the official language being used for any immigration procedures regarding their right to stay in the country. It also specifies that any interpreting services in this regard will be free of charge if the person in question is unable to pay for it themselves. Likewise, Article 26.2 provides for the right to an interpreter for would-be immigrants to Spain who do not fulfil the necessary requirements. This right is effective, according to the article mentioned, from the moment entry is denied at the border control. As part of the protection afforded to victims of gender-based violence, Article 31 of the act provides for the right to temporary residence and work for foreign victims, regardless of their administrative situation. Although no explicit reference is made to translation or interpreting services, the fact that these provisions are aimed specifically at female foreign nationals suggests that language mediation services will be required where the victim is a non-Spanish speaker. However, in contrast to other articles of the same act, and the above-mentioned articles of the Criminal Procedure Act, no details of the exact conditions under which such services will be contemplated are provided.

5 Potential extent of services needed

In this section, we will offer data to quantify the number of non-Spanish-speaking people who either live in Spain and the Canary Islands, or visit them as tourists.

According to figures provided by the Spanish National Statistics Institute for 2018 (INE, 2018a), a total of 4,719,418 foreign nationals were registered as residents in Spain. From this total we can subtract foreign nationals from countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean, where Spanish is the official language (even if a section of the population speaks an indigenous language and no Spanish). Based on Spanish-speaking countries only, the INE figures for Central America and the Caribbean on the one hand, and South America on the other, give a total of nearly 1,040,000 residents (250,993 and 788,988, respectively). If

we subtract these foreign residents, who may well speak Spanish, from the total number of foreign residents, we are left with a potential number of some 3,680,000 non-Spanish-speaking foreign residents living in Spain. In the Canary Islands, the same data source gives us a total foreign population of 259,791 residents, 14,414 of which come from Spanish-speaking countries in Central America and the Caribbean, and some 40,430 from Spanish-speaking countries in South America, leaving an official non-Spanish-speaking population of nearly 205,000 residents who will face language-based problems whenever they need to interact with the security forces in their place of residence.

The number of (non-resident) foreign visitors, in the form of tourists, is also relevant. The INE tourism figures for 2018 (INE, 2018b) reflect a total number of 82,773,156 foreign tourists for the country as a whole. If we break this down by region, the Canary Islands received 13,751,914 tourists in 2018. So, in addition to the 205,000 permanent residents who may need language mediation to interact with public service providers, including the security forces, the region also receives over 13.7 million tourists per year, many of whom will not be sufficiently proficient in Spanish to interact with local security forces. This gives us an initial idea of the potential demand for interpreters in this region.

6 Methodology

Against this background, we saw the need to take a first step in studying the interpreting needs of interlinguistic and intercultural communication between law enforcement agents and our current post-monolingual societies (see Monzó Nebot, 2018). Given the complexity of the issue, we focused on studying attitudes and perceptions of law enforcement professionals by conducting a survey which targeted the Spanish National Police, the local police and the Civil Guard.

Having previously identified officers from each of the forces willing to participate in the study, our results are based on a sample of 30 respondents, comprising 10 from each of the three forces in question. The survey was carried out in the first quarter of 2017, with all participants responding to the same 16-question questionnaire. Ten of the questions were closed-ended, permitting only yes/no answers (two of which included an option to specify where the answer was in the affirmative), and six were multiple-choice (see Appendix 1). We selected these more rigid question types in order to facilitate the quantification of the answers received, given the preliminary nature of the study in this particular geographic area, enabling us to form an initial view of how professionals employed by these forces in Spain, and specifically in the Canary Islands, deal with situations in which linguistic barriers come into play. Questions 1-5 referred to the participants' interactions, within their working roles, with non-Spanish-speaking people; questions 6-10 referred to the need for interpreters; and questions 11-15 referred to considerations in relation to interpreters.

7 Results

The responses to the first group of questions revealed that all the respondents (100%) had, at some point, dealt with a non-Spanish-speaking user of their particular public service. Seventy percent of our respondents reported dealing with these situations by speaking to the person in their own language, usually English. Only one respondent from the Civil Guard reported using an interpreter in these cases, while not one agent from either the National or local forces reported having done so. The remaining responses reflected attempts to remedy the situation by means of gestures and speaking in Spanish. All the respondents confirmed that command of English was not an entry requirement for joining their force.

Table 3 shows the frequency with which participants reported needing to communicate with non-Spanish speakers as part of their work.

	Civil Guard	National Police	Local Police
Never	0	0	0
Annually	0	0	0
Monthly	10%	30%	70%
Weekly	20%	70%	30%
Daily	70%	0%	0%

Table 3. Frequency with which law enforcement agents interact with non-Spanish speakers.

As we can observe, no cases of never needing to communicate with a non-Spanish speaker were recorded, underscoring the magnitude of this phenomenon. While the majority of respondents (70%) from the Civil Guard reported having to communicate with a non-Spanish speaker every day, the same proportion from the National Police reported doing so on a weekly basis, while the local police forces reported doing so on a monthly basis. These results highlight just how often command of a foreign language or mediation between languages is needed by these professionals. No members of any of the forces mentioned any dealings with anyone from outside the European Union, either in the category of tourists or residents.

Almost all the respondents, bar 10% of those belonging to the local police force, were aware that they could call on an interpreter's services if necessary, which demonstrates that, if they do not request such services, it is not because they are unaware of the possibility of doing so.

The majority (100% of Civil Guard, 80% of National Police and a more discreet 30% of local police officers) cited the arrest of non-Spanish speakers as the situation in which interpreters were most needed, while both the National and local forces mentioned the filing of complaints or reporting of incidents or crimes by non-Spanish speakers. Just 5% of Civil Guard, 40% of local police and none of the National Police respondents named telephone tapping. The moment of arrest and subsequent procedures are thus deemed of maximum importance, particularly to ensure that non-Spanish speakers understand the full extent of their rights at this time. The fact that telephone tapping, which is part of the National Force's remit, was not mentioned by any members of that or either of the other two forces, may be a consequence of the small sample group; further research would be required to support this possibility.

Table 4 shows the percentages of respondents from each security force who identified the need for language services or proficiency by language.

	EN	DE	IT	FR	RUS	ARA	CHI	Other
Civil Guard	100%	40%	0%	30%	0%	20%	0%	0%
National Police	100%	30%	0%	30%	0%	20%	20%	20%
Local police	100%	80%	20%	40%	0%	30%	20%	20%

Table 4. Languages required by security forces' personnel in their dealings with non-Spanish speakers.

Thus, we can see that, across all three forces, English was clearly the language most often required, followed by German and French. Demand for German was high among local police forces (80%) while the Civil Guard (40%), and National Police (30%) resported a significant, if lesser, need for this language, at similar levels to those pertaining to French, where the local police reported a slightly higher level of demand than the other two forces. A lesser demand was noted for Arabic, but was reported by all three forces, while Chinese was indicated by only 20% of respondents from the National and local forces, and not at all by the Civil Guard. A varying (but always less than 30%) requirement was observed for "other" (unspecified) languages across all forces.

In terms of any training or guidelines received regarding working with an interpreter, only 20% of the Civil Guard respondents replied that they had received some input on this subject during their periodic training programmes. The remaining 80%, along with 100% of the local and National Police force respondents, reported that they had received no such training or guidelines.

The types of centre or institution in which our respondents felt that translators or interpreters are most useful depended largely on the particular security force they belonged to, which is also coherent with the specific duties of each corps. So, for example, the Civil Guard participants all answered that ports and airports are key in this area, as we would expect, given that this force is responsible for these border areas. Local and national forces pointed to large police stations, with local force participants also highlighting specific complaints offices as very important. Only the National Police Corps mentioned telephone tapping units, as befits the force charged with this task; a smaller proportion of National Police officers also indicated the Internment Centres for Illegal Immigrants (CIE, from the Spanish).

Our participants identified only training and availability as criteria to be taken into consideration when hiring interpreters. The fact that they did not mention any others may be attributed to their not playing an active role in recruitment or finance policies within their forces (i.e. cost issues would not affect them). It is interesting to note that not one of them cited previous experience or referrals as a desirable criterion.

When asked whether the gender of interpreters working with victims of gender-based violence should be taken into consideration, all but one of the respondents from the National and local forces replied in the affirmative. All the members of the Civil Guard, however, believed that a male interpreter could be equally effective in this situation.

In line with their lack of experience in working with interpreters, none of the respondents from any of the three law enforcement agencies reported having any specific way to measure the skill or competence of the interpreters working with them. It was therefore only to be expected that not one respondent would have detected any incidence of an interpreter having failed to perform their functions correctly. Once again, lack of command of the foreign language in question, coupled with a lack of guidelines on how to work with interpreters, leave law enforcement agents in a position in which they are unable to judge the interpreter's level of competency.

All respondents indicated that they felt the interpreting profession does not enjoy sufficient professional recognition and all our respondents were of the view that media coverage does not reflect the true value of interpreting for law enforcement.

8 Discussion

This study set out to explore the interpreting needs of Spanish security personnel in Gran Canaria and gain an insight into their perceptions concerning their dealings and experience of interaction both with non-Spanish speakers and interpreters in the course of their work, as well as their views regarding the perceived professional status of interpreters working in their field. Our findings reflect that all the respondents had to deal with non-Spanish speakers at least once every month and, in the case of the Civil Guard, on a daily basis. Seventy percent of Civil Guard respondents indicated that they communicated in English in these circumstances, but since no foreign language proficiency is stipulated as an entry requirement for public security force professionals, we have no way of gauging their level of proficiency. This almost systematic need for interlinguistic communication sits at odds with the fact that no language requirement is stipulated for entry into any of the three forces, an issue that merits attention by those in charge of setting entry requirements. Only our respondents from the Civil Guard reported any efforts to improve their English, albeit in their own time and at their own expense. This may be because they perceive the need to improve their command of English in order to do their job, given their responsibilities at ports and airports and the frequency with which they reported contact with non-Spanish speakers, though no such perception was touched on in our questionnaire. The scenario in which law enforcement agents combine speaking Spanish with gestures in an attempt to make themselves understood is perhaps not the best way to convey a professional image, and may also constitute something that policy makers could address. Likewise, the gap between the generalised knowledge that interpreters could be called for, and the testimonial practice of doing so by only one respondent, is another area that merits attention. The level of demand for the different languages specified obviously reflects the languages spoken by the most numerous non-Spanish speakers either living in or visiting the region, so our results in this regard cannot be extrapolated to other regions

or countries, though English is likely to feature prominently in many parts of the world, given its status as *lingua franca*.

Most respondents agreed that interpreters are badly needed in the communication process when non-Spanish speaking people are arrested, to ensure that the dialogue is understood and, crucially, that the arrestee fully understands their rights. For this reason, it is of paramount importance that interpreters are based in police stations, or can be called upon to attend police stations, as well as in ports and airports, as the places where most of this type of communication and questioning of detainees takes place.

It is also worth noting that, of the three forces, only the Civil Guard received any guidelines on how to work with translators and interpreters. Research is needed to examine the guidelines provided and compare them with international best practices before recommending them for other police forces. Were this to be confirmed on a larger scale in subsequent studies, this best practice could be extended to the other forces. A similar generalised lack of understanding of any criteria other than training and availability (such as experience and recommendations of interpreting competence and ethical standards, as befits interpreters working in potentially delicate situations) as filters for screening potential interpreters aligns perfectly with our respondents' generalised lack of experience of working with interpreters and could lead to the adoption of inappropriate hiring criteria.

Of particular interest is the difference in perception between respondents from the National and local police forces, on the one hand, and the Civil Guard on the other, regarding the importance of using a female interpreter when dealing with gender-based violence. International organisations recommend same-sex interpreters for victims of gender-based violence, a recommendation reiterated by the authors for interpreting in the judicial sector as one of the criteria to ensure that the victim feels comfortable with the people involved in taking their statement. Their research also shows that specialised NGOs working in the field of gender-based violence reflect a preference for same-sex interpreters in this case, although non-specialised NGOs indicate no such preference (Borja Albi & Del Pozo Triviño, 2015). While the reduced size of our sample does not permit us to draw any categorical conclusions, it may be the case that the increased sensitivity to the sex of the interpreter in these cases shown by our respondents from local and National forces as compared to the Civil Guard reflects their experience in this area, which the Civil Guard, by virtue of its responsibilities, is less likely to have to deal with. Further research is required to determine (a) if these results would hold true over a larger sample group, and (b) if there is a root cause that leads professionals across the services to hold opposite views.

Given their overall lack of experience of working with interpreters, it was only to be expected that our respondents had no specific indicators with which to measure an interpreter's skill or competence. None of the respondents from any of the three law enforcement agencies reported having any way to measure the skill or competence of interpreters working with them. While not exactly surprising in itself, this reply gives pause for thought and underscores the need for top-level training and expertise on the part of interpreters working with the security forces, as it would seem that very little in-house quality control is available to ensure accurate rendering of the foreign language utterances in question and professional conduct at all times. Likewise, training for security forces members on how interpreters work, situation-specific aspects, expectations, interpreting ethics and codes of conduct would also help to enhance interprofessional cooperation.

The unanimous position of our respondents in favour of enhanced professional recognition for interpreters in general, and in the media in particular, would seem to indicate that language service providers and policy-makers in this sector could count on the support of law enforcement officers as allies in their attempts to gain broader recognition of their profession in general, and services rendered in particular.

Although the points of discussion mentioned here obviously refer to situations very similar to some of those mentioned in the literature cited above, the fact that our findings are based solely on the perceptions of security forces personnel, as opposed to those of interpreters working with the security forces or analyses of transcripts of interpreter-mediated exchanges, severely limits the extent to which we can draw parallels or establish differences with previous work carried out. Studies of a similar nature in other places or on a larger scale would give us more scope for comparison.

9 Conclusions

From the results obtained from this preliminary study, we can see that command of foreign languages is not a prerequisite for candidates for any of the forces and it does not appear that interpreters are regularly called upon, highlighting a lack of preparation for compliance with the current legislation in terms of the protection of the rights of non-Spanish-speaking people in Spain, as provided in national, European and international legislation. Likewise, insufficient provision is made for language training for security professionals who identify a need to communicate in languages other than Spanish in the course of their daily activities. The specific languages required will obviously vary depending on the influx and origin of foreign nationals into a specific geographical area.

Despite a general awareness that they could call on the services of an interpreter if necessary, respondents lacked knowledge of how interpreters work, factors that should be taken into consideration when recruiting interpreters, and criteria to assess the quality of interpreters' work. There would appear to be a gap here between the need for and provision of a service, and it actually being used. Initiatives within the security forces to encourage their agents to make more active use of interpreters, and to increase their awareness of how interpreters work, could help to compensate.

The results obtained from this preliminary study should be taken as a starting point for further research based on larger samples across the different security forces surveyed, as well as possibly the regional police forces, where applicable. Given the reduced size of our sample, the results obtained can only be taken as an indication of the possible need for and perceptions regarding interpreters working in this field. Although compliance with the legislation mentioned in terms of guaranteeing equal rights for non-Spanish speakers in their dealings with the security forces would appear to require specific, specialised training, larger scale research is required to quantify the demand and raise awareness of the skillset needed to flag up quality issues, among security forces personnel working on the ground as well as policy makers in charge of recruitment.

Notwithstanding its limitations, the study represents a snapshot of the perspective of security force professionals regarding the need for and perceptions of the provision of language services in general, and interpreting in particular, in their day-to-day dealings with non-Spanish speakers, which could help to inform future work by both TIS academics and policy makers. Further, scaled-up research is needed to enable our findings to be generalised, qualified or refuted, with a view to paving the way for policy decisions to enhance the quality of the public legal services offered to non-Spanish speakers in Spain as required by current legislation.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

1. Have you ever dealt with a non-Spanish speaker? Yes/No
2. What do you do in these cases?
 - a) I speak to them in their own language
 - b) I use an interpreter
 - c) I get by using gestures but speaking in Spanish
3. Was English a formal entry requisite when you joined the force? Yes/No
4. How often do you find yourself in the situation alluded to in questions 1 and 2?
 - a) Never
 - b) Daily
 - c) Weekly
 - d) Monthly
 - e) Annually
5. Are these users normally tourists or foreign residents in Gran Canaria/Spain?
 - a) Tourists from EU countries
 - b) Tourists from outside the EU
 - c) Residents from EU countries
 - d) Residents from outside the EU
 - e) I don't know
6. Did you know that the security force you work for can request an interpreter whenever one is needed?
Yes/No
7. In which of the specific cases given below do you think interpreting services are most needed?
 - a) When a non-Spanish speaker is arrested
 - b) When a non-Spanish speaker reports an incident or crime
 - c) Telephone tapping
8. Which working languages are most in demand?
 - a) English
 - b) German
 - c) Italian
 - d) French
 - e) Russian
 - f) Arabic
 - g) Chinese
 - h) Others
9. How often do you need the services of an interpreter?
 - a) On a weekly basis
 - b) On a monthly basis
 - c) A few times a year
10. Have you received any type of training or guidelines you should follow when working with an interpreter? Yes/No
11. Which centres/institutions do you think most need interpreters?
 - a) In all offices where complaints are lodged/citizens report incidents or crimes
 - b) Ports and airports
 - c) Large police stations
 - d) Telephone tapping centres

12. Do you think any specific criteria should be followed when hiring interpreters?

a) Yes (if so, specify) b) No

13. Do you think the sex of the interpreter should be taken into consideration in gender-based violence-related cases?

a) Yes, the interpreter should be a woman b) No

14. Do you have any indicators with which to measure the competence of an interpreter?

a) Yes (if so, please specify) b) No

15. Have you ever identified an interpreter who did not perform their duties correctly?

Yes/No

16. Do you think that interpreters enjoy sufficient professional recognition?

Yes/No

17. Do you think the media attribute sufficient value to this professional field?

Yes/ No

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