Interpreting and language mediation for female victims of human trafficking for sexual purposes is a profoundly complex area with major human and professional ethical implications. Detention centres for undocumented migrants in Italy have been given much attention in the media recently in the wake of recent geopolitical events leading to a large influx of migrants and refugees. These centres have been particularly challenging for interpreters and language mediators for numerous reasons: linguistic/pragmatic, cultural, institutional, emotional and psychological, etc. This paper is based on data collected during a 6-month internship period at the CIE detention centre in Bologna and describes how working relationships are slowly and laboriously created and negotiated between institution, victim and interpreter/mediator. The paper describes the linguistic and pragmatic obstacles that emerge, especially in the use of Nigerian English, along with Arabic the most frequently used languages.

KEY WORDS Intercultural Language Mediator, Interpreter Role, Detention Centres (Centro Identificazione e Espulsione CIE), Human Trafficking, Alignment, Nigerian English

Interpreting and Language Mediation for Victims of Human Trafficking: The Case of CIE, Detention centres for undocumented migrants in Bologna, Italy

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La interpretación y la mediación lingüística para víctimas de la trata de personas: el caso de los CIE, centros de detención para inmigrantes indocumentados en Bolonia, Italia

La interpretación y la mediación lingüística para las mujeres víctimas de la trata de personas con fines sexuales es un tema sumamente complejo con importantes ramificaciones éticas humanas y profesionales. Los centros de detención para inmigrantes indocumentados en Italia han sido objeto últimamente de una gran atención de los medios de comunicación a raíz de los acontecimientos geopolíticos recientes que han dado lugar a una corriente significativa de inmigrantes y refugiados. El trabajo en esos centros ha resultado particularmente difícil para los intérpretes y los mediadores lingüísticos por muchos motivos: lingüísticos/pragmáticos, culturales, institucionales, emocionales y psicológicos, etc. Este artículo se basa en los datos recogidos durante unas prácticas de seis meses en el centro de detención (CIE) de Bolonia y describe cómo se establecen y se negocian, de forma gradual y laboriosa, las relaciones de trabajo entre la institución, la víctima y el intérprete/mediador. El artículo se refiere a los obstáculos lingüísticos y pragmáticos que surgen, especialmente en el uso del inglés nigeriano, una de las lenguas de uso más frecuente junto con el árabe.

PALABRAS CLAVE mediador lingüístico intercultural, función del intérprete, centros de detención (Centro Identificazione e Espulsione, CIE), trata de seres humanos, alineamiento, inglés nigeriano

I. IMMIGRATION IN ITALY

After a centuries-long history of emigration, Italy is now an important target for immigration. This is partly due to the fin-de-siècle economic surge but primarily to its favourable geographical position facilitating access from North Africa, the Middle East, theBalkan states and many other countries in Europe and Asia. A long easily accessible coastline leaves the country particularly vulnerable to illegal immigration. Furthermore, the political unrest in Egypt and Libya and the Middle East, added to the long-standing conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and sub-Saharan Africa, has also led to a significant increase in 'emergency-migration' and had aggravated an already complex situation. The on-and-off economic crisis and a vulnerable labour market in the new century have lessened Italy's appeal as permanent migration goal and many migrants see the country as a transitional stepping stone from which to travel towards more robust economies in northern Europe. Media coverage by all main television and internet channels of the tragedy experienced by an increasing number of boatloads of migrants arriving on the Sicilian coast, many of whom are dead upon arrival or die as they attempt the last desperate crossing from boat to shore, has captured the public's attention profoundly and poignantly and has also become the focus of intense political debate and controversy. Despite the continuing and dramatic media attention that may suggest the opposite, the number of migrants to Italy actually decreased from 321,000 in 2012 to 279,000 in 2013. The largest number of immigrants were Romanian (58,000), Moroccan (20,000), Chinese (17,000), and Ukrainian (14,000) nationals.[1]

[1]   Source Istat, available at http://www.istat.it/en/

The oldest established migrant communities are those from North Africa, who speak a wide variety of Arabic dialects, but we also find large migrant African communities from Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria. The Chinese community is firmly established, especially in Lombardy and Tuscany, as are South- and South East Asian communities with languages such as Tagalog, Bangla, Sinhalese, Tamil, Hindi/Urdu and Punjabi.

Although there have been many laudable local and individual initiatives to meet the challenge of providing for incoming migrants, at national level the government has not risen to this challenge adequately and lack of funding and political and ideological constraints have proved to be major obstacles in the provision of adequate living accommodation, health and education services, legal assistance, employment and language assistance. Due to crime-related immigration and to its powerful impact on the public's attention, many security-oriented measures reflecting the political platforms of each individual government have been implemented. The response to immigration has also fluctuated widely hand in hand with changing governments, ideologies and local politics and policies. Until recently the measures adopted to regulate migration over the last decade have become increasingly restrictive and repressive, promoting a policy of deportation and forced repatriation vis-à-vis non-documented migrants. A range of different categories of reception and detention centres have been introduced to implement these policies: Reception centres - Centro di Accoglienza (CDA);

archive/141477. For more information on migration to Italy see Cesareo 2013, Cesareo 2014, Colombo 2012, Colombo and Sciortino 2004,Caritas 2014 and Spinzi 2013 specifically related to interpreting in the legal sector.

Reception centres for asylum seekers - Centro di accoglienza richiedenti asilo (CARA) and Centres of identification and deportation - Centro di Identificazione e espulsione (CIE). As stated in the «Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero» (T.U.), if the undocumented migrant is not repatriated with immediate effect, accompanied to the national border (art.14 T.U.), the chief of police (Questore) may restrain the migrant for a period of time that is 'deemed necessary' at the nearest 'CIE', Centre for Identification and Deportation. One might thus say that the detention centre is the last piece of Italian territory prior to repatriation. The migrants held at this centre are, albeit temporarily, deprived of their personal liberty while they are waiting to be identified and subsequently forcefully repatriated.

2. DETENTION CENTRES FOR UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS (CIE)

During the period of our data collection, detainees could be kept at the CIE for up to 18 months (legge 23 giugno 2011 n.89) while they were waiting to be officially identified, a significant length of time considering that many of the detainees have committed no crime (except for not having the required residence and/or work permits, often due to a simple bureaucratic error), have lived and worked many years in Italy and may have spouses and children living, working and going to school in Italy. The centres were originally used for temporary detention only, and often the material conditions in which detainees live are appalling with very limited access to basic services. To access those basic services that are to be found (health services and in some CIEs limited legal

and psychological support) detainees either need to master Italian sufficiently to converse, or require the use of a person who interprets between them and the service provider, usually in the form of a language/cultural mediator or sometimes other detainees. The crucial role played by this intermediary figure goes beyond the range of functions usually attributed to an interpreter/translator, as discussed below.

2.1. *Methodology and Data from the CIE*

The data for this paper stem from a 3-month period of voluntary work at the CIE of Bologna by one of the authors (Pesare)[2] and interviews with language mediators working at the centre by both authors separately, as well as recorded data from two interpreter-mediated sessions at the CIE recorded and transcribed by one of the authors and a colleague (see Rudvin and Spinzi 2014a). During this on-site observation period, data were collected regarding the language mediator's tasks, profiles, roles and self-perception as well as 'other-perception' (i.e. by others working at the centre). Subsequent to the period in which the data were collected, the CIE of Bologna has been closed, 'for 'restructuring', and has not yet been reopened.

3. LANGUAGE- AND CULTURAL MEDIATORS IN ITALY: TERMINOLOGY

The last decade or so, the issue of the interpreter's role has been recurring with increasing frequency in the international literature on Community Interpreting; the discussion is

[2]   For further details see MA thesis by Pesare «Aspetti della mediazione linguistico-culturale. Il caso del Centro di Identificazione ed Espulsione (CIE) di Bologna» presented at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Bologna in November 2012. Available at https://intranet.unibo.it/MioPortale/Pagine/AggiornaPro-filo.aspx?

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even more complex in Italy compared to many other countries because the profession of community interpreter is conflated with that of the language- and/or (inter)cultural mediator *(mediatore linguistico, mediatore culturale, mediatore interculturale, mediatore linguistico-culturale)* whose loosely defined mandate is more flexible and pro-active than what is usually suggested by the term 'interpreter'. Since we will be discussing the Italian situation, we will primarily refer to the terms 'language mediation' or 'intercultural language mediation', which should be understood in a broader sense than that of 'interpreter'. The prevalence of the term 'language mediation' and the wide use of this category in Italy, rather than the more specific 'community interpreter', has its roots in the history of Italian immigration and possibly in Italian culture itself, but the scope of this paper does not allow us to delve into this discussion. Suffice it to say that terminology is construed by use while at the same time it recursively impacts on professional role and identity. Thus, the recurrent use in Italy of a particular term ('mediation') associated with a professional role ('mediator') has led to the establishment of a professional category that is clearly different from that of the interpreter in a strict sense, but also one that meets the needs of its context, namely those public and private institutions it serves and that require communication between the institution itself and non-Italian speakers.[3]

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[3]   See Rudvin and Spinzi 2014*b* for a discussion on the use of the terminology of language mediation in Italy vs English-speaking countries; for a study on the use of English in cross-cultural communication in Italy see Guido 2008. For more information on the profession and practice of cultural and language mediation in Italy see Belpiede 2002, Belpiede and Luatti 2006, Castiglione 1997, Andolfi 2003, and Ceccatelli Gurrieri 2003. For more information on interpreting in the legal sector in Italy see Ballardini

3.1. *The Language Mediator's Role and Job Description*

Although in the early phases of migration the role of mediation was recognised as an instrument for social integration, it was only in 1996 that it was officially recognised in the Legislative Decree 286/96 Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione (Aluffi Pentini 2004). The Region of Emilia Romagna, where the CIE of Bologna is located, has been at the forefront in legislating for the clarification of the profession and the role of language mediators in this specific context as well as in other sectors (particularly health and education). The Region has promoted and funded training programmes for intercultural/language mediators and a range of other integration-related measures. These programmes train candidates in a broad range of activities that include pro-active measures such as conflict-prevention and project-planning and implementation, as well as translation and interpreting activities. In this model, language mediators are seen as 'bridging' figures, whose responsibility is not only to help interlocutors avoid misunderstandings and anticipate areas of conflict, but also to construct a shared basis or cultural-cognitive platform which facilitates a successful reciprocal understanding.

Although some progress has been made, the language mediator's profession is still precarious, fragmented and unregulated. The lack of national standards makes it highly dependent on local regional legislation and initiatives. End-users (the service providers) often consider the presence of mediators as an emergency solution (Favaro & Fumagalli 2004: 178) to bridge real or perceived gaps between interlocutors from different cultures. The fact that

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2012, Falbo 2013, Falbo e Viezzi 2014 and Rudvin and Spinzi 2013. For a discussion on social exclusion and migration see dal Lago 1999 and Losi 2010.

training programmes and other measures are not nationally standardized in terms of job-descriptions or professional role, has led to frustration among language mediators and service providers alike. Furthermore, given the blurred definition of that role, institutions from various sectors (health, education, law, welfare, etc.) tend to have different approaches. It is also true that nomenclature reflects national ideology and politics. Thus, as suggested above, role, terminology and ideology are intrinsically bound. Indeed, at the heart of this debate we find a conflict between the academic interpreter-focus (the interpreter as translator, language transmitter) and the institution-focus (the interpreter as a representative of the institution) (see Rudvin and Spinzi 2014*b*), i.e. a gap between academic categorizations and real-life perceptions by institutions.

4. BEING A DETAINEE AT THE CIE IN BOLOGNA: PRACTICAL, CULTURAL AND AFFECT-RELATED ISSUES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

During the period of data collection, the services of mediation and other detainee[4] advocacy measures were part of a federally funded 'Social Project' that aimed to support the detainees by providing language assistance, psychological assistance, legal assistance, medical assistance and practical information free of charge. During this period, the CIE in Bologna employed a group of intercultural language mediators to meet the needs of the most pressing communication barriers for the main language groups, especially Nigerian English

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4   We have decided to use the term 'detainee(s)', corresponding to the Italian term 'trattenuti', as it reflects both the status and the prison-like conditions of people held at the CIE in Bologna.

and Arabic. These mediators had an ample mandate ranging from translation related tasks to pro-active participation in planning and project implementation. The language/cultural mediator was seen in many of the services as an essential link to assist detainees who did not speak sufficient Italian to understand and/or make themselves understood. In the women's section of the CIE (other CIE centres are men- or women-only) a large number of the detainees were very young Nigerian women, due to the trafficking of Nigerian girls in Italy, whereas in the male ward the majority were men from Arab countries. This demographic distribution is also quite typical of other detention centres in Italy.

During the period of data collection, we identified various reasons which led to acute psychological distress in the CIE. Many of the detainees that were interviewed, some with direct experience of prison, stated that prison was emotionally and psychologically an easier burden to bear because at least they knew 'why they were there' and 'how long they were going to stay' and that there was 'a reason for the detainment' that they themselves were responsible for. This is in stark contrast to the perceived arbitrariness of their detainment at the CIE, a state of mind with serious implications at an existential level on their psychological and emotional well-being. This state of limbo, a physical environment representing what the French anthropologist Augé (2009) calls a 'non-place', is reified by the barracks, structure. The lack of organisation and efficiency, in dealing with the identification process, repatriation, information regarding their legal status and the period of time they will spend there, etc., but also the sleeping and eating arrangements, was a recurrent stress factor that emerged in interviews and casual conversations with detainees.

The female Nigerian language mediator, often perceived as a maternal, protective figure, was constantly being asked to help with practical things, to help them leave the Centre, to explain, to comfort, etc.

From the data collected through participant observation and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with language mediators and detainees a number of emotional issues emerged among detainees that could be summarised as: a strong sense of helplessness, frustration, anger, impotence and disempowerment due to the total arbitrariness of their internment; the failure of their 'life migration project'; the disappointment and economic distress they may have caused their families in their home countries or in Italy; a paralysing fear of the future. That psychological distress sometimes led to self-harm or other forms of protest such as hunger strikes. In such a Kafkaesque 'non place' the language mediator, as the only one who speaks the detainee's language and is familiar with their culture, becomes a key player both for detainees and CIE employees.

4.1. *Voodoo and social control*

Another little-explored and probably little-known phenomenon that profoundly adds to the distress of the Nigerian detainees, and also to the language mediator's role in the ethnic allegiance formation, is that of debit bonding (Rossilli 2009: 65), a form of intense social control that effectively stops they trying to leave a life of bondage and prostitution or to denounce their exploiters and traffickers. Through a series of voodoo-based rituals enacted before they leave Nigeria and strictly tied to the practical implementation of their 'emigration project' and earning potential (often made possible by a loan from village members) they become psychologically bound

to the creditor and 'manager', the 'madame', the *babalawo* and/or the powerful native doctor (Carrisi 2011). The strength of the psychological and physical dependence through the persuasive psychological power of spiritual and religious 'magic' leads to a bond of total control. The voodoo ritual thus becomes a powerful, almost indissoluble tie with criminal organizations (Carrisi 2011: 90).

The role of the language mediator thus takes on a much more powerful social, emotional and psychological function in a setting such as the CIE, but also an institutional one in that she serves as an information vehicle not only for the Nigerian women (explaining their legal rights as victims of human trafficking in Italy) but also for the Italian service providers (explaining the more subtle aspects of social control that they would otherwise have no way of knowing). As a co-national and co-Yoruba and/or Nigerian English speaker, the language mediator's impact was quite immediate (the women turned naturally and directly to her as the only figure of authority that shared their culture, history and language). The Nigerian language mediator working at the CIE during the period of data observation had a solid training background, a degree in the humanities and exceptional interpersonal and relational skills and sensibility; she was widely respected and looked up to as a 'mother' in the community; after many years of intense high-stress work in similar settings, she seemed to be struggling, understandably, with professional fatigue. One of the sources of professional fatigue and burnout for interpreters and language mediators in such settings is precisely the difficulty of maintaining a balance between one's social/private identity and the human/cultural/social aspects related to this level of identity, and one's professional/public identity – with expectations

of total impartiality. However that is not to say that these two aspects of professional and private identities are necessarily incompatible; indeed, as the Nigerian mediator explained, her 'human involvement' was not so much that of 'friend', but one that was embedded in her institutional role, enabling access to health treatment and basic services and for all detainees were treated equally.

In a setting such as that of the CIE, the pool of knowledge, competencies and skills required of the mediators is highly interdisciplinary - language and discourse transfer skills, interpersonal competence, knowledge of field-specific terminology, familiarity with the institutional structures and familiarity with laws and legislation relating to immigration. It also emerged in interviews with the language mediator and service providers that s/he cushions or even pre-empts tension and conflict, alert to any 'danger' signals that might arise. The mediator's work at the CIE is thus highly complex, indeed, s/he is a key player around whom a whole network of relationships and services are constructed and channelled. It is also clear, however, that a role as encompassing as this, and one that embodies such enormous responsibility, needs to negotiated constantly with the service providers (in the case of the Bologna CIE, the 'Social Project') and be able to count on their constant support to prevent burn-out. Adequate training is of course essential.

5. TRAINING AND PREPARATION OF THE LANGUAGE MEDIATORS

During the period of observation at the CIE in Bologna there were five intercultural mediators: Nigerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, Moldavian and Chinese, working 110 hours per week. Prior to their employment period at the CIE,

they followed brief courses provided by local governing bodies on immigration legislation, terminology, conflict prevention and notions of Italian culture, but no interpreter training.

5.1. The Tasks of the Language- and Cultural Mediator at the CIE in Bologna

- Meet the detainee not later than 24 hours after they have been admitted to the CIE and interpret for them at a preliminary interview where the detainees tell the operators their personal history (insofar as it is relevant to the institution); their medical history is also taken;
- Fill in a form that provides the detainee with information regarding people s/he can contact for medical, legal and other necessary assistance;
- Participate in briefing sessions with the other Italian service providers (for example psychologists or social workers) before sessions with detainee and service provider; here the language mediator gives the information s/he deems necessary regarding the detainee, foregrounding the aspects s/he considers salient or critical;
- Interpret all interviews with the Italian professionals when the detainees do not speak and/or understand Italian sufficiently well (unless the service provider speaks the detainee's language, usually in the case of lingua francas such as French or English);
- Translate documents for the detainees;
- Socialize regularly with the detainees (especially women) in their quarters.

5.2. Simplification of Language

In our data, the conversations revolved around a few key concepts around which the language mediator develops a more articulated discourse,

at the same time checking that the detainee has understood the message through various discourse strategies (see Pesare 2012). In this context, the mediator tends to adopt strategies of reformulation to convey the key elements of the speaker's message, often simplifying, adapting and facilitating the register to the specific needs of the interview (as mentioned, many, but not all, of the detainees have low literacy skills and feel challenged by Italian sectorial and bureaucratic language). The language mediator is frequently called upon by both service provider and detainees to explain and clarify key concepts and aspects of the institution.

In this context, the mediator, taking her cue also from the interlocutor's language proficiency and ability to articulate clearly (many of the detainees are understandably in a state of fear and confusion which may be reflected in their language), concentrates on the 'core message' during the interview with the service providers, and this leads to a rendition that privileges context-processing strategies and other discourse strategies such as simplification, repetition of core words, explanation, paraphrase, accommodation,[5] voice and gaze management. At the same time, the mediator engages in 'reassurance discourse' and institutional role-marking as the authoritative 'mother' figure, especially for the younger detainees. This should be, and in our data generally was, explained to and negotiated with the service provider beforehand so that

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[5] By accommodation we mean the process by which a speaker adjusts his or her accent, register, lexis, intonation etc. according to the speech style of the interlocutor; this is usually done to facilitate comprehension for the listener so that he or she can process the information more easily and quickly and with less cognitive effort. One aim of accommodation (especially convergence, see footnote 8) is thus to enhance and optimize communicative collaboration between the interlocutors by lowering the degree of cognitive stress.

s/he did not feel that s/he was losing control of the situation, be it a therapy session or a medical or legal interview. Here, as argued in Rudvin and Spinzi (2014a), discourse as communication and intelligibility largely takes precedence over discourse as a group identity strategy.

5.3. Language Issues at the CIE in Bologna and the Use of Lingua Francas: Nigerian English

Nigeria hosts a large number of ethnic groups and frequently communication between the different ethnic groups is facilitated by the use of lingua francas, especially various forms of 'Nigerian English' ranging from standard 'high' English to broken pidgin. At the CIE in Bologna the largest mother-tongue Nigerian language groups were Igbo and Yoruba. Although English is a crucial vehicle for communication among Nigerians and between Nigerians and other English speakers, the use of standard English can pose a major problem, and the need for a language mediator who also masters the 'non-standard' varieties of Nigerian English is crucial. The need to calibrate the level of English (i.e. the 'levels' of Nigerian English from 'high' to 'low', as the mediator expressed it) depends to a large degree on the educational level of the non-Italian speaker. Many of the women with whom both authors were in direct contact had a perfectly adequate command of standard or quasi-standard Nigerian English to interact with us as well as with the Nigerian language mediator and this allowed them to access basic services in the detention camp even when the Nigerian mediator was not on duty. In the men's ward most of the detainees were Arabic speakers, and here too the issue of language varieties and Arabic as a lingua franca was complex.

The literature on English as a lingua franca (ELF) demonstrates how lingua francas can sometimes be an instrument of hegemonic prestige-related power (see e.g. Jenkins 2009) vis-à-vis less prestigious varieties and may in itself enact a power asymmetry between interlocutors. In a context such as that of the CIE, however, such issues become merely academic, we argue, and the urgent need to communicate takes precedence, leading also to various strategies of language accommodation in order to enable and optimize mutual comprehension (lexical, morphological and syntactical simplification, repetition, intonation and stress/emphasis, etc.) asssited by non-verbal communication forms (tone of voice, gaze, etc).

5.4. Language and Discourse Strategies in the CIE

As discussed in Rudvin and Spinzi (2014a), in a setting such as the CIE we find a combination of professional and legal discourse embedded in a number of different sectors (legal, medical, bureaucratic, social, employment-related, etc.) in a reasonably predictable ritualized format (often a question-answer structure with open and closed questions). It is worth noting that the institutional discourse as it emerges in a question-answer format may be reminiscent for many detainees of interrogation techniques of repressive regimes in their home countries, and is thus highly likely to lead to diffidence and hostility. The detainees' narratives, although usually conducted in a rather formal interview format, contained much spontaneous speech as well as more ritualized answers in a strict question-answer format (the data in Rudvin and Spinzi 2014a stem from interviews with a psychologist). The more emotional elements of the conversation, however, complicated the rendering of the more ritualized discourse format and challenged the global discourse-management and coordination. Thus the language mediator had an important mitigating, trust-creating and distancing function through her language and ethnic positioning as well as through her interactional skills.

In addition to the information-gathering discourse function the need to establish a rapport of trust was crucial due to the degree of distress inherent in the situation itself. The Rudvin-Spinzi 2014a data show how the detainees' fear and vulnerability (witnessed by intermittent bouts of crying) invited and elicited affect-governed accommodation strategies by the language mediator (and sometimes by the service provider). These strategies were often played out very subtly though a collaborative, unthreatening and unassertive tone of voice, reassuring gaze and smile and collaborative body directionality; the use of such affect- and relationship-building strategies were further confirmed in an interview with the Nigerian mediator.[6]

Maffei (2013) notes how in other contexts that are as highly emotionally charged as this (such as the flying squad Squadra Mobile, the police units dealing with drug users, prostitutes, etc.), the service providers totally depend on the collaboration of their non-Italian speaking interlocutors, and the input of the language mediators is thus crucial. Thus one of the main functions of communicative accommodation strategies is to persuade through 'convergence' (see Rudvin and Spinzi 2014a).[7] As Maffei

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[6]   Needless to say, the narratives that unfold in these sessions are narratives of torture, rape, war, loss of relatives, exile, crimes and suffering caused by the arbitrary deprivation of freedom in the CIE detention centres.

[7]   See Spinzi and Rudvin (2014a) for a description of how the language mediator's discourse strategies were governed by marked accommodation and divergence strategies driven by the relationship between detainees and service

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(Vice Chief of Police of the city of Bologna) notes, this form of convergence is essential in order to establish trust, empathy, collaboration and communication. Only through the establishment of a rapport of trust can the police forces act on the information that emerges, protect the victims of these crimes and charge those responsible (Maffei 2013).

6. ethics, alignment, in/out group identity and emotional stress

In our data from the Bologna CIE centre, many of the young women in the women's ward turned to the female language mediator (older by a generation) as a mother figure. Indeed, the Nigerian mediator often referred to herself as 'mother' and encouraged the younger girls to do just that, taking upon herself an enormous responsibility and emotionally daunting and draining task. The 'mother-daughter' relationship in this context mirrors the cultural, social and age-related hierarchy found in the home country and expressed through numerous communicative discourse strategies (politeness, kinship markers). Thus, in addition to being a bilateral vehicle of information and discourse transfer between Italian- and non-Italian speakers the Nigerian language mediator clearly has a hugely important unilateral role for the non-Italian speakers, especially, but not only, for the Nigerian community.

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provider. It also addresses the role alignment between professional-institution affecting social, cultural and legal identities and the balance between convergence and the need for distance.

Convergence is the most common form of accommodation through which the speaker adapts his or her language to fit the style of the other speaker as opposed to *divergence* through which a speaker creates distance through various discourse strategies that emphasize the difference between the two speakers' speech styles.

She is also in a position to advise the other professionals at the CIE if she sees that there are detainees who need special, urgent assistance (there are indeed numerous cases of mental health issues, other serious illnesses and drug dependence). Indeed, the coordinators of the 'Social Project' actively encourage this highly participatory and advocacy-assuming role of the intercultural language mediator. At the same time, however, they desire to maintain strict control over (and knowledge of) what is said and what takes place in the other languages and communities to which they have no access.

A delicate point relating to interlocutor alignment and positioning emerged from one of the interviews with the Nigerian language mediator, namely that the language mediator felt that she must not give the other Italian professionals the impression that she was creating an inappropriate alignment as detainee-advocate, creating distance between herself and service provider, because by doing that she would render herself an out-group member, putting at risk her own professional credibility, her socialization in the Italian community and effectively disempowering herself professionally and socially. This became even more complex when disagreements emerged regarding the management of detainees and other professional issues. This was a highly delicate and complex process because the Italian professionals' objective was apparently the 'good' or the 'interests' of the detainee; however, without direct participation based on a shared language and culture this was possible only through a mediator. The negotiation of allegiances, conflicting identity-construction processes and communication exchanges seemed, understandably, to be a source of stress for the language mediator as her commitment to the clients as well as to the institution was very high.

In those cases where conflicts emerged among the detainees, as they frequently did, in various forms of protest or self-harm, it was important that the language mediator was not actively seen as a supporter or agitator, endangering not only her professional role, her in-group position in relation to the other Italian professionals, but – in a politically charged context such as the CIE – also her own safety. She was thus fluctuating between self-described 'mother', for the detainees, to institutional point of reference for the service provider, 'multi-tasking' in terms of her professional, social and cultural role.

7. MEDIATION FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING – 'SUI GENERIS'. SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND SPECIFIC NEEDS

The women at the CIE who were victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation had a number of (legal and administrative) options open to them that were not open to the other detainees; for example, according to Art. 18 T.U., these women may apply for residence permits through the process of «international protection». Indeed, one of the tasks of the language mediator, in a briefing session prior to being interviewed by a permanent staff member, was to explain to the women the legal-administrative process for submitting the application and the role of other institutions she can turn to for support.

In this context the language mediator thus becomes a key player in assisting the women in making difficult choices by informing and advising them of their rights and options and allowing them to make these important and difficult choices autonomously. Language and cultural-mediation in an area as dramatic and full of human suffering and danger as the CIE is naturally quite different from language and cultural mediation in other less delicate and complex areas, and legal, as suggested above, many of the core issues regarding interpreter conduct and ethics need to be negotiated according to different parameters and principles taking on board the specific human needs of the people involved.

As argued in Rudvin and Spinzi (2014a), in certain sensitive domains involving severe trauma and vulnerable clients (this also includes victims of violence and sexual abuse), a more client-centred approach will tend to prevail. Mediation and interpreting in a context as delicate as the one described here is thus a fluid rather than a static activity and process.

8. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have tried to show that the role of the language mediator in detention centres in Italy, taking Bologna as an example, is marked by a number of highly complex human and ethical features (both at the private and professional ethical levels) that are mandated and negotiated in very different ways compared to most other legal domains (from translator/interpreter to provider of practical information to emotional and psychological support). These features are recurrent in other in legal domains involving human suffering and trauma such as prisons, emergency migrant reception centres, victim protection, and work with the police in the preliminary phases of drug and human trafficking investigations. The paper has attempted to illustrate the crucial role of the language mediator in places in which human suffering and trauma is played out daily if not hourly at many different levels, showing how s/he is often the only point of contact between Italian and non-Ital-

ian speakers (not all detainees are non-Italian speakers, of course, since many have lived in Italy for many years and master the language well). In the context of the CIE, it was also an invaluable resource in the exchange of information as well as in the delicate task of relationship-building and the running of the centre, prone as they were to dramatic episodes of detainee protest, detainee self-harm, media coverage and as the object of intense local and national political rhetoric.

Although Bologna has a sizeable immigrant population, the situation is not nearly as dramatic as it is in Southern Italy with the steady flow of migrants from across the sea, received on land in utterly inadequate conditions. The role of the language mediator is as crucial for the non-Italian speaking detainees (indeed, also for those who speak some Italian, but are reassured by the presence of a fluent Italian speaker from their own country) as it is for the institution. We have quoted a high ranking representative from the police forces who tells us how crucial the work of the language mediator is to instil trust and thus create a constructive relationship between detainee (or in the case of the police victim and/ or witness, especially in the realm of human trafficking) and police in order for them to have access to essential information and protect the victim. There is a subtle if slightly worrying ideological parameter in this statement that this paper does not have the scope to address, but would be interesting for future investigation: i.e. the language mediator/interpreter as a police informant vs. the language mediator/informant as a means of victim protection and the safeguarding of basic legal rights.

The paper has also examined how the language mediator aligns him/herself, or is aligned with or whose alignment is attributed by others, on both sides, and how this is played out in a delicate balance that is actively and self-reflexively construed hour by hour, day by day, week by week. The mediator's alignment with the institution/staff is crucial for her own professional well-being, but it puts at risk her alignment with the other detainees (Rudvin and Spinzi in their work of 2014*a* show how this is done in terms of specific language strategies). The risk of burn-out in the constant negotiation of this delicate balance – pulling the language mediator back and forth to the poles of his/her own migration experience, professional identity and private/social identity – is significant.

We have also shown how the specific trauma-governed context – in order to respect the extreme vulnerability of many of the detainees and thus to enable reciprocally comprehensible communication – requires interpreting strategies that are more fluid than in many other interpreter-mediated situations and that may go against the tenets of codes of ethics in most legal settings: adopting strategies of reformulation to convey the key elements of the speaker's message, often simplifying and adapting and facilitating the register to the specific needs of the interview. The scope of this paper has not allowed us to deepen the discussion on the deontological and practical aspects relating to text-adaptation in interpreter-mediated communication; indeed, many trauma-survivor centres in other European or North American, Canadian or Australian settings justifiably train interpreters to render close renditions and thus empower and assist the service provider in having full access to accurate information. We argue that the flexible and empowering mandate of language or intercultural language mediators in Italy is different from that in many other countries and departs from mainstream Anglo-Saxon and Northern European deontology for very specific historical and cultural
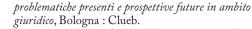
reasons. If managed well, language and cultural mediation can thus be a significant channel of empowerment and of opportunity for the detainees: for the institution it is also an opportunity to challenge their own stereotypes and limited knowledge of the detainees' and other migrants' life experiences.

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