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Competence building through new generation resources: the SOS-VICS Website for training interpreters in the field of gender-based violence

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1. Introduction

For over a decade, Spain's public authorities have been showing increased concern about the complex problem of gender-based violence (GV). Evidence of this can be found in the enactment in 2004 of Spanish Act 1/2004 of 28 December, on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence (*Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género*) and the subsequent development of a comprehensive institutional response and system of assistance for victims of gender violence, in the social, legal and healthcare settings. However, in a country such as Spain, which has an increasingly multicultural population,¹ the language barrier can be an important factor in determining whether a woman will be able to benefit from such a system. When it comes to GV, the latest official reports confirm that foreign women are particularly vulnerable. In fact, in the period 2014-16 the prevalence of GV in Spain was three times as high among foreign-born women, with a higher incidence registered among African and European women (Observatorio Estatal de Violencia sobre la Mujer 2019: 386). As for the year 2017, the ratio of victims per 100,000 women over

¹ According to official sources (INE 2020) as of January 1, 2020, foreign nationals residing in Spain represented around 11% of the population (5.2 million out of 47.3 million). The main national groups (in descending order) are: Morocco, Romania, United Kingdom, Italy, Colombia, China, Venezuela, Germany, Ecuador, Bulgaria, France, Honduras, Ukraine, Portugal and Peru.

14 years-old was 1.1 among those born in Spain, 3.3 among those born in other European countries and 4.5 among those born in African countries (Observatorio Estatal de Violencia sobre la Mujer 2020: 6). Furthermore, in 2017 as many as 33.2% of GV victims under court issued protection orders or precautionary measures were foreign-born, a disproportionate figure given that foreigners have accounted for around 9.5-11% of the total population in the past years (INE 2020).²

One of the particularities of the comprehensive system that Spain has put in place is its emphasis on the specific training and specialisation of the professionals who provide assistance to GV victims in institutional settings (Consejo General del Poder Judicial, 2011). This specialisation is certainly vital in the case of translators and interpreters who provide this kind of victim with language services, at all levels. There are in fact several international precedents of specialized language services being provided for victims of GV, and also of specialized training programmes for interpreters in GV settings. One example is the *Language Interpreter Services Program (LIS)* operated by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI). Its origins go back to a pilot project implemented in the late 1990s to train and provide specialized interpreters to two Domestic Violence Courts and to the Women's College Hospital, in Toronto (Abraham and Oda 2000). Currently, LIS is a province-wide service that provides interpretation for victims of GV who need support to access the resources they require (i.e., legal education, social services or the justice system).³

Similarly, from October 2010 to November 2011 a far-reaching project was implemented in New South Wales, Australia, with government funding and under the title *Breaking through the language barrier: Empowering refugee and immigrant women*

² It must be noted that official publications referred to do not always report statistics for the same periods of time. It is therefore difficult to match data from different sources.

³ <http://languageinterpreters.on.ca/>

to combat domestic and family violence through cultural and language training. The project began with an in-depth analysis of existing needs and resources and continued with a program to train women from emerging language groups to work in the area of GV (Hale 2011).

Having specific interpreting services for victims of GV, such as the LIS programme in Ontario, would of course be ideal, but such a goal is perhaps unrealistic given the situation in Spain today. Based on our knowledge of the field of public service interpreting (PSI) (European Commission 2015: 60-63; Foulquié-Rubio, Vargas-Urpí and Fernández 2018, amongst others) and on specific experiences such as those described by Toledano-Buendía and Fernández (2012), we can confidently state that in Spain the interpreting provided in cases of GV usually follows the same pattern as found in PSI overall. That is, the solutions vary considerably depending on both the setting and the geographical area, and can range from assistance being requested from ad-hoc interpreters or even intercultural mediators to the hiring of professional interpreters. Furthermore, commonly the only requisite for being hired as an interpreter is to belong to a certain linguistic minority or to supposedly have a good command of the minority language in question (APTIJ 2016; Foulquié-Rubio, Vargas-Urpí and Fernández 2018).

Against this backdrop, a group of 9 Spanish universities co-ordinated by the University of Vigo saw an opportunity in the call for projects within the European Commission Criminal Justice Programme (2011-2012). The call specified that it would give priority to projects aimed at supporting victims of crime (VIC). This is how the *Speak Out for Support (SOS-VICS)* project was conceived with the objective of improving the communication with foreign-born GV victims in public service settings, and providing specialized training to interpreters providing services in GV contexts.

This paper discusses the main bases of the curriculum design (CD) process that led to the creation of training methods and materials within the SOS-VICS project, with special attention to one of the main tools developed, the SOS-VICS Training Website.⁴ First, the paper briefly reviews the need for specialized training in GV contexts. Second, it presents the bases of the CD process that informed decisions pertaining to the design of the training website described in section 4. Lastly, the paper puts forward a series of conclusions. Due to space constraints, the SOS-VICS project itself (partners, development, stages, work-streams, other results, etc.) is not addressed in depth in this contribution. Further information about the project can be obtained from Toledano-Buendía et al. (2015), Del-Pozo-Triviño et al. (2014a & b), and the project's official website.⁵ Likewise, Toledano (this volume) presents some of the results of the sociological research conducted within the project.

2. The need for specialized training for interpreters working in contexts of gender-based violence

The first stage of the SOS-VICS project was to identify and somehow ‘measure’ the need for and benefits of providing specific training in interpreting in GV contexts. The main sources of information at this stage were, first of all, a review of the scant literature on interpreting in GV contexts; secondly, an analysis of the experience of other countries in interpreting and training in GV –notably Canada and Australia, as described above; finally, the early stage of the SOS-VICS fieldwork, which entailed group discussions with agents and interpreters (see 3.1.1., below). These analyses allowed us to establish that

⁴ <http://sosvics.eintegra.es/>

⁵ Project JUST/2011/JPEN/AG/2912 under the auspices of the Criminal Justice Programme of the European Commission. Official website: <http://cuautla.uvigo.es/sos-vics/>

interpreting in GV requires specialized training for at least the following reasons (Toledano-Buendía et al. 2015: 146-48):

- a) Interpreting in GV contexts is a complex communication activity comprising elements from different public service settings and areas of knowledge.
- b) Communication occurs in different settings, stages and communicative encounters within public services, with different objectives and protocols.
- c) Communication includes emotional (stress) elements, adding to the complexity of the interaction.

3. Bases for Curriculum Design

Once the general need for specialized training had been established, the next phase could begin. This phase focused on choosing the most appropriate approach for the creation of specific training tools and materials. A general framework for Translation and Interpreting CD as presented by Kelly (2005), and adapted to PSI by Abril-Martí (2006), was selected. Kelly's model is an example of situated or contextualized CD, with a strong orientation towards competence-based training. As a contextualized approach, it involves a thorough analysis of the situational factors and agents defining the context where teaching and learning are to take place (Calvo 2011: 17; 2015: 308). This underlying philosophy clearly corresponds with the objectives of SOS-VICS as a project focused on specialized training for a very specific field.

From this perspective, the process of CD may be envisaged as a sequence of the following four stages: (1) planning and writing objectives/outcomes, (2) selection of curricular contents, (3) implementation of previous stage and (4) assessment and evaluation. What follows is a description of these stages with an emphasis on specific aspects of the training of interpreters in GV contexts.

3.1 Planning and writing global objectives/outcomes

A series of factors should be considered in order to make informed choices when it comes to planning objectives (Kelly 2005: 22). Amongst these factors, the following become particularly relevant: (1) the needs and views of society and the industry, (2) accepted competence models (based on industry standards and on academic research), and (3) potential trainee profiles.

3.1.1 Needs and views of society and the industry

Systematic approaches to CD establish their objectives with input from academic disciplines and research, but also ‘from the professional sector for which students are to be trained [and] from society at large’ (Kelly 2005: 2). In line with this perspective, the first stages of the SOS-VICS project were devoted to analysing the communication needs of all stakeholders involved in GV –victims, public service agents/providers, and interpreters– in the Spanish context. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained by means of a questionnaire survey of 586 public service providers, a Delphi survey of 27 interpreters with some experience in GV contexts, and interviews with 12 foreign victims and survivors of GV and with 12 experts in GV assistance (Del-Pozo-Triviño et al. 2014a, 2014b).⁶ Also, before designing the survey tools a series of 4 group discussions in two different locations (Vigo and Tenerife) were held with psychologists, social workers, health and legal professionals, forensic doctors and psychologists,

⁶ The authors are well aware of the existing debate in the field of sociology and some feminist movements around the terms *victim* and *survivor*. Although such debate exceeds by far the scope of this contribution, it must be noted that both terms are used. The term *survivor* has been suggested to replace *victim* (amongst others, Davis 2000), which would seem to represent abused women as passive individuals. However, while acknowledging the complexity of the debate, Matthews (2013) considers that by using the term *survivor*, the victimization suffered and its impact are implicitly denied. In his opinion, to overcome the victimization experience, women must identify themselves as victims, so that they can build a constructive response that will eventually allow them to face the situation. Moreover, from a legal standpoint, the Spanish legislation cited seems to have a preference towards the term *victim*.

representatives from institutions that provide information for victims or give them shelter, and interpreters. This research methodology was designed by the sociologists participating in the SOSVICS team,⁷ and allowed us to gather qualitative information which proved very useful to understand the needs, attitudes and expectations of providers.

SOS-VICS sociologists carefully planned these group discussions and provided uniform instructions and an interview guide (semi-structured questionnaire) for the facilitators, so they could steer the debates adequately. Notes were taken by a non-participant observer throughout the sessions. The comments collected were later analysed, manually tagged and classified following the most salient areas of interest/concern identified: attention to foreign female GV victims (barriers to provision of service and to communication, as well as solutions provided; most demanded languages) and considerations concerning interpreters (before, during and after meeting: qualifications and skills, role, need for specialized GV training). The analysis of those notes and comments proved to be particularly useful to fine-tune both the survey tools and the different training resources developed within the SOS-VICS project (the website included).

As the results of the needs analysis phase have been described in depth elsewhere (ibid.), only those with a direct impact on our CD considerations will be discussed here. Approximately 70% of the public service providers surveyed by SOS-VICS perceived that among the barriers that hinder effective assistance to foreign-born GV victims those of a cultural (67.7% of respondents) or linguistic (69.3%) nature are *important* or very *important*. Most of the agents also recognized that interpreting improves the services provided to victims (59.6%), and that professional interpreters are preferable to family and friends (45.8% vs. 14%). The languages for which a greater need for interpreters was

⁷ Dr. Pérez Freire and Dr. Casado Neira. See also Del-Pozo-Triviño et al. (2014a & b).

identified included Arabic (Moroccan dialects in particular), Romanian, Portuguese, English, Bulgarian, German, Chinese,⁸ Italian, and French. Both agents (47%) and interpreters recognized the importance of specialized GV training for interpreters, and, more specifically, in the following areas: contextual knowledge of public service settings (especially legal); specific knowledge of GV and of the network of public services that assist victims as well as the protocols used to do so; cultural differences; good practices/code of ethics in GV; and emotional stress management strategies. All of those involved underlined the need for the training to combine theory, field-specific knowledge and practical contents, with practicum periods. Furthermore, the interpreters interviewed pointed to a lack of specialized training and specific teaching materials and to the need for online practical training and the creation of websites with training materials (*ibid.*).

3.1.2 Competence models

Based on the premise that ‘interpreting is a skill-based profession’ (NCIHC 2011: 5), competence-based pedagogy seems particularly suited for the training of interpreters. The merits of this approach are best described by Hurtado (2007: 165):

CBT [competence-based training] proposes an integrated model for teaching, learning and assessment which gives a great deal of importance to formative assessment and reconciles earlier approaches such as cooperative learning, problem-based learning and task-based learning. The foundations on which CBT is based can be found in the theories of cognitive constructivist and socioconstructivist learning, which have operationalized research carried out in the last twenty years with the objective of providing more meaningful learning for the student.

⁸ No specific mention of Chinese dialects was made by participants.

For the purpose of our project, as already stated, the translation competence model proposed by Kelly (2005: 73-8) and adapted to PSI by Abril-Martí (2006: 666-71) and Abril-Martí and Martín (2008) was selected. Kelly's proposal defines seven areas of competence that identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes of professional translators: (1) communicative and textual; (2) cultural and intercultural; (3) subject area; (4) professional and instrumental; (5) attitudinal or psycho-physiological; (6) interpersonal; (7) strategic. In Abril-Martí's model (2008), these areas are redefined to reflect what public service interpreters should know and know how to do in order to perform an act of oral, interlingual and intercultural communication in interactions with a distinct participation framework, which occur in institutional settings and where issues of language, culture, context, asymmetry, power, and gender often challenge the interpreter's sense of role and ethics. This model has been validated by later research and projects addressing specific fields within PSI, amongst others the *Qualitas* and *Building Mutual Trust* projects for legal interpreting,^{9,10} or the NCIHC (2011) training standards in the case of healthcare interpreting, as they all identify similar sets of competencies.

Even if interpreting in GV contexts does share most of the features of PSI, it also displays inherent characteristics that place specific demands on interpreters. Particularly relevant are the need to understand the legal, social and cultural dimensions of GV and to view it from a gender perspective; the interdisciplinary nature of interventions with victims and survivors; the emotional impact that interventions with GV victims and survivors may have (Toledano-Buendía and Del-Pozo-Triviño 2015; Toledano-Buendía 2019).

Since the competence model described below was envisaged for PSI, the considerations that follow are applicable to most institutional settings where PSI occurs.

⁹ Qualitas project website & reports: <http://www.qualitas-project.eu/publications>

¹⁰ Building Mutual Trust project website & reports: <http://buildingmutualtrust.com/reports.html>

However, given that a detailed description of the complete model falls beyond the scope of this article, focus will be placed on identifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to respond to the said inherent demands of interpreting in GV contexts as identified by the SOS-VICS quantitative and qualitative research results for the Spanish case, and confirmed to a great extent by the Canadian and Australian training projects described above (Abraham and Oda 2000, and Hale 2011) and by the training project developed by Bancroft et al. (2016).

a) Communicative and textual competence

When working in public services, interpreters need to be able to interpret the specialized discourse of professionals as much as the discourse of victims with varying education levels and from different backgrounds and cultures. In the specific case of GV, service providers surveyed by SOS-VICS mentioned that interpreters must also be able to verbalize abusive language, and to translate references to body parts and types of aggression that may cause embarrassment. Furthermore, service providers expect interpreters to be particularly sensitive to the choice of words by victims in their testimonies; they do not need interpreters to ‘fix’ the speech of victims, because the latter's choice of words can reveal their state of mind and self-awareness as victims. Participants also underlined the importance of interpreters conveying non-verbal language and the emotions of victims when they are not apparent at first sight, as well as the relevance of recognising and respecting the meaning of silence. Pauses may be a sign of distress that the provider will need to be aware of for his/her evaluation of the victim, and therefore interpreters should respect them (Bancroft et al. 2016: 59; Toledano-Buendía and Del-Pozo-Triviño 2015: 216).

b) Intercultural competence

When asked about difficulties in assisting foreign victims of GV, 67.7% of the service providers surveyed by SOS-VICS identified cultural barriers as *important* or *very important*, confirming the need for interpreters to be competent in communicating across cultures.

Defining (inter)cultural competence is a challenging task. Traditional approaches to the development of this competence place a strong emphasis on acquiring general, declarative knowledge about the cultures associated to the translator's or interpreter's working languages (Tomozeiu et al. 2016: 253). In this context, learning about the dimensions and levels of culture as discussed in seminal works from different fields of study can provide a solid base for cultural competence. However, we understand culture 'not only as a set of levels or frames but as an integrated system, in a constant state of flux' (Katan 2009: 88), and we consider interpreters not only as decoders of cultural information, but rather as mediators between at least two such systems (Katan 2009: 75). In this regard, 'simply' acquiring cultural know-how (Kelly 2005: 74) does not really address the need to communicate *between* and *across* cultures (Tomozeiu et al. 2016: 253). Thus, the concepts of cultural awareness and sensitivity become relevant. Cultural awareness means understanding that culture shapes our experience of the world and the way we respond to it (NCIHC: 2011: 28); it includes acknowledging 'the possibilities and relevance of differences between cultures' (Grosman 1994: 51), and the influence such differences may have on the success or failure of communication (Yarosh and Muies 2011: 43). Cultural sensitivity involves the ability and willingness to understand and appreciate cultural differences and similarities in a way that fosters effective interaction with diverse individuals while avoiding stereotypes or bias (NCIHC 2011: 28; Bancroft et al. 2016: 250). The integration of cultural knowledge, awareness and sensitivity

facilitates effective handling of differences between the cultures involved in a mediated communicative situation through a process that includes, on the one hand, the application of conscious strategies to handle such differences and, on the other, the ability to identify and manage the consequences of strategic choices (Tomozeiu et al. 2016: 255).

In the field of GV, as in other PSI contexts, it is especially relevant for the interpreter to be able to discern whether, when and how to apply strategies to handle culture-bound information. Sometimes providing a brief explanation integrated in the interpreter's rendition is an acceptable choice that maintains the flow of communication and avoids interrupting the victim; in other instances, the interpreter, rather than acting directly, should alert the participants about the possibility that a cultural reference may cause a misunderstanding and allow the parties to decide if they need further clarification (Bancroft 2016: 255, 272).

Experts participating in the SOS-VICS surveys underlined that the concepts of gender, gender roles and GV may differ greatly between cultures, and as a result cultural patterns tend to be present in the way victims understand and express their experience of GV. Also, it is well established that communication norms and style and the concept of quantity and relevance of information are culture-bound (Hall 1976/1989; Katan 1999/2004 and 2009; Pistillo 2003). In this regard, in the case of GV victims, interpreters need to be prepared to respect narration style, pace and tempo. Silence, for example, may be a sign of distress, as mentioned before, or it may be a sign of respect related to a culture-bound style of communication (Bancroft et al. 2016; Pistillo 2003: 8).

c) Subject-area competence

Interpreting in any public service setting requires a sound knowledge of the service and subject areas involved. However, since GV victims can be assisted by several different

public services, interpreting in this context involves a particularly high degree of multidisciplinary. An additional aspect of this area of competence is that subject-matter knowledge should be contextual and therefore interpreters should be prepared to adapt to the different types of interview and the aims and specificities of the most prototypical ones, and also to become familiar with the specific protocols and documents (tests, questionnaires, forms, reports, etc.) used for different professional interventions (Toledano-Buendía and Del-Pozo-Triviño 2015: 66-9). Finally, during the SOS-VICS fieldwork, both interpreters and some service providers (social workers in particular) identified the need for interpreters to acquire expertise in the subject of GV, in other words, they should be trained in basic concepts of both gender and GV (amongst others, sex vs. gender, gender inequality, power relationships, the myths of romantic love, the scope and difference between gender, domestic and family violence according to legislation, the cycle of violence, trauma and speech, etc.). This training will allow any professional working with GV victims (including the interpreters) to incorporate the gender perspective into their tasks, understanding and not blaming women nor justifying violence. This includes understanding the concept of gender as a socio-cultural construction of the roles and identities of men and women that perpetuates social inequalities and the myths that underpin GV (*Ibid.*: 19, 70; Toledano-Buendía, 2019).

d) Professional and instrumental competence

This area of competence refers to the ability to use documentary sources and tools to support the communicative and subject-area competences, as well as to manage professional activities (contracts, billing, associations, etc.). In the case of PSI, this competence refers mainly to ethics and to issues related to the role of the interpreter and the limits of her/his intervention.

As expected, during the project's fieldwork the issue of role definition proved to be a complex one. Because there are conflicting views in this regard, interpreters working in GV contexts need to be aware that different providers will have different expectations. Indeed, service providers did not agree on the tasks that interpreters should perform, with more restrictive views on the part of agents from the legal field. During group discussions, there were conflicting opinions on whether the interpreter's remit includes a facilitator role –that is, contributing to eliciting information from victims. Agents who favoured this role mentioned that interpreters need to have a very high degree of empathy (as high as the providers themselves), in order to create rapport and encourage the victim to speak freely. However, most agents also identified the risk of over-involvement by interpreters, and the need to clearly distinguish between objective empathy and overprotection (as one professional who works at a shelter put it), and between 'becoming involved and becoming an emotional hostage' of the victim (in the words of a police officer). In this regard, all participants in the project's fieldwork mentioned the need to train interpreters in managing emotions during and after their interpretation assignments (and the training tools developed by SOS-VICS devoted special attention to this; see section 4 below).

Command of this competence, therefore, should equip interpreters with frames of reference for well-informed, flexible decision-making processes in case of dilemmas or conflicting expectations of role. Protocols that promote non-intrusive interventions while at the same time considering role as dynamic and context-dependent are particularly useful (Bancroft 2016: 230; Toledano-Buendía and Del-Pozo-Triviño 2015: 90-4).

e) Attitudinal or psycho-physiological competence

This competence refers to the interpreter's self-confidence and to her/his 'self-concept', in particular to the attitude of interpreters as professionals who are constantly aware of

their responsibility towards their own work and who exercise constant self-monitoring. In the group discussions some agents stated that interpreters should be aware of the attitudes, beliefs and clichés that often arise in GV contexts. They noted that interpreters should be especially alert to those attitudes that arise in the interpreters themselves, and review whether they may be biased as a result of their own concepts of gender, GV, etc. In this regard, interpreters should regularly devote some time outside the interpreting session to a process of introspection and self-reflection which involves reviewing the most common sources of bias (such as issues of gender or culture) and analysing personal reactions to those issues (Bancroft 2016: 254).

As for psycho-physiological skills, interpreters in GV contexts need to have a particularly high level of concentration power, and also of analytical skills, since the nature of GV encounters and the state of mind of the victims mean they may have to interpret long, unstructured testimonies without losing sight of what the victim intends to convey and of the relevant information. Also, interpreters should have good memory and note-taking skills so that they will not need to interrupt the victim.

f) Interpersonal competence

This competence is the ability of the interpreter to interact with clients and users, and to manage three-way, face-to-face interactions, including moderating turns of talk.

One of the most frequent comments made by providers during the SOS-VICS fieldwork was the importance of interpreters being able to identify and adapt to different communication and interrogation styles (closed or open questions, semi-structured interviews, etc.), as determined by the goal of each type of interview. The interpreter should be able to replicate the questioning style of the provider and also to choose an interpreting technique that does not interfere with the victims' talking pace and that

allows all information to be registered without interrupting. In this sense, briefing sessions with the service providers would be particularly useful for interpreters to establish the nature and dynamics of the encounter, and to prepare accordingly. During a briefing interpreters and providers can go over a checklist covering issues such as the purpose of the encounter, what interpreting technique would be most appropriate, whether specific procedures or forms will be used and will need to be translated on-sight, or any particular difficulties or complications that may be anticipated. The interpreter may also take the opportunity to establish whether the provider has worked with interpreters before and, if necessary, provide explanations about her/his role (Tebble 2012: 28-35).

g) Strategic competence

This area of competence brings together all the others and involves the ability of the interpreter to identify and effectively respond to cognitive and situational constraints. It can be defined as a ‘meta-communicative competence’ that provides a situated and operative understanding of ‘what to do and why’ (Niska 2002: 134).

All in all, strategic competence in GV contexts means that interpreters should be able to: analyse situations and attitudes as much as information; understand and maintain their professional role in the midst of all kinds of situational constraints and possibly conflicting expectations; keep their cognitive skills sharp at all times; and manage to hold their own emotional reactions in check. Not surprisingly, training in stress and emotional management ranked high in the list of elements that interpreters interviewed by SOS-VICS considered *very important*.

3.1.3 Trainee profiles

The profile of the potential beneficiaries of the SOS-VICS training materials for interpreters was determined by the current status of PSI in Spain, taking into account that the degree of professionalization of PSI varies widely depending on the setting and the geographical area, as mentioned in the Introduction.

Another problem is that, although Spain has a fair number of formal undergraduate training programmes for translators and interpreters (28 in 2019), very few of them include training in the languages of immigrants (RITAP-APTIJ 2011: 123-27), as has also traditionally been the case in many other countries (Abril-Martí 2006). By way of illustration it should be noted that Arabic, by far one of the languages most needed in the public services, is only offered as B language (including initial training in interpreting) by one university, and as C language (with training limited to written translation) by eight additional universities.¹¹

All things considered, the lack of professionalization of PSI and the shortage of professional interpreters in some of these languages, plus the urgency with which the need for interpreters sometimes arises, result in the use of non-professional interpreters with insufficient training, let alone specialized training in GV.

For this reason, the SOS-VICS project included among its objectives that of providing training materials to people who are already interpreting in public services with or without specific training. Also, the target users of these specific materials were likely to be interpreters of one of the several *languages of limited diffusion* in Spain, with different

¹¹ Despite the large number of undergraduate degrees, there are significant differences in curricular design when it comes to interpreter training. For the most part, curricula include only 2-3 semester courses (6 ECTS each) in general interpreting (liaison, consecutive and in some instances an introduction to simultaneous). However some universities do offer additional specialization pathways that range between 12 and up to 60 ECTS. On top of that, there are about 6 MA programmes fully devoted to conference interpreting, plus additional programmes that include some training in public service interpreting (Ortega-Herráez 2018: 243-251).

levels of proficiency in Spanish (at group discussions the lack of language competence in both language-directions was identified by some of the service providers as a problem).

Another important factor when considering the profile of potential beneficiaries of training is their degree of motivation. The SOS-VICS project predicted that interpreters already involved in GV would probably not have so much work in this field (for instance, in some language pairs or in specific locations) as to be motivated to engage in long, formal courses, but would be willing to take advantage of freely accessible specialized material.

At this stage of the SOS-VICS project, bearing in mind the three factors considered relevant for the *planning objectives* phase of our CD process (needs analysis, competence model and trainee profiles), we went on to create training materials (see sections 3.3 & 4 below) with the following global objectives:

- a) To provide a set of tools that would enable interpreters with some experience in interpreting to acquire an acceptable degree of specialisation in a very specific, wide-ranging and multidisciplinary context, consisting of services to assist victims of GV who do not speak Spanish (or one of Spain's other co-official languages).
- b) To provide free access to training tools and materials that help to develop a set of competencies specifically related to contexts of GV. Training for some areas of competence –such as basic interpreting skills and techniques– is not provided. However, ample information and access to online training resources in interpreting have been included.
- c) To provide language-independent training materials (with the bulk of contents in Spanish) as well as role-plays, documents and glossaries in different languages.

- d) To provide training materials and suggestions that cater to the needs of interpreters with enough motivation to improve their competence through an active effort to access the materials provided, and to study and practice individually.

3.2 Selecting curriculum content

In the case of the training materials created by SOS-VICS, the context that shapes the content selection process is not conditioned by an institution, by level of education and specialisation or by the duration of training, as is the case with Kelly's model (2005: 62) and others designed for institutional training. Our context was shaped rather by the same factors that determined the first stage (planning objectives), that is, specific needs as expressed by stakeholders and analysed by the SOS-VICS team; a specific competence model supported by input from the same stakeholders about what they perceive interpreters should know and be able to do; and the profile of the potential beneficiaries of the training, determined by the SOS-VICS surveys of interpreters and by the current situation of PSI provision in Spain. The contents selected at this stage of CD will be presented in section 4 below, which includes a description of the training website.

3.3 Implementation of curriculum contents

The third stage of CD entails identifying the training resources available to provide training (or designing materials, in our case) and selecting teaching methods and activities aimed at achieving the objectives set in the first stage.

As for resources, the different participants in SOS-VICS (agents, victims, interpreters and academics from the 9 universities involved in the project) provided input and materials from a wide variety of sources that reflect the institutional settings where interpreting for foreign-born victims of GV will actually take place. This pool of

resources reinforces the situated teaching/learning approach selected at the beginning of the CD process.

As for teaching methods and activities, an analysis of needs, resources, profiles and prospects led SOS-VICS to choose two training tools to respond to the objectives set in stage 1 of the CD process (providing interpreters with no specific training in GV with free access to specialized, language-independent and multilingual learning materials): a website and a handbook both in printed and online format (Toledano-Buendía and Del-Pozo-Triviño 2015), which can be used independently or as complementary materials.¹² Section 4 below contains a thorough description of the website and presents the defining features of the handbook.

3.4 Assessment and evaluation

The last stage of CD comprises the assessment and evaluation of both trainees' performance and the training tools themselves. In our project, trainee performance does not apply, given the nature of the SOS-VICS project and its deliverables. As for the evaluation of the training materials, so far it has been conducted through the analysis of two parameters.

Firstly, the use given to these materials within graduate, undergraduate and CPD programmes in translation and interpreting offered by Spanish universities, in some instances by partners of the SOS-VICS project. The feedback received by those members of SOS-VICS who have used these materials in their training activities (in 9 universities) is quite positive both in terms of material usefulness and student motivation when using the different resources developed. As reported by Del-Pozo-Triviño (personal

¹² <http://sosvics.eintegra.es>

communication), SOS-VICS resources are also being used by organisations such as Monash University (Australia) and Cross-Cultural Communications (USA), which have a long tradition in the training of public service interpreters for a variety of languages.

Secondly, the frequency of visits to the training website, as measured through the number of hits, renders positive results. Data obtained through Google Analytics over the past years (July 1st, 2016 through January 31st, 2019) show that the website has received 23,025 visits by around 13,000 visitors (71.4% of them being new visitors). Naturally, the country reporting most sessions is Spain (49% of the overall number of visits). Moreover, the usefulness of the website and its materials may be better measured by looking at the number of downloads. By way of illustration, during the year 2018 the printed handbooks (see 4.3 below) was downloaded 1,332 times, while the number of role-plays downloaded varies depending on the language, with English (1,277 downloads), Chinese (525) and Arabic (Darija, 399) being the three most popular languages. Although it is true that there is no direct correlation between number of hits and downloads and the usefulness of the resources themselves, the fact that the use of the website has increased steadily since it was first launched could be considered a good indicator.

The following section is devoted entirely to describing and analysing the training website.

4. A training tool that meets the goals of curriculum design: the SOS-VICS

Training Website

The SOS-VICS Training Website aimed to fulfil the four-fold objective laid out in section 3.1.3., against the backdrop of the situation of PSI in Spain, in terms of service provision, professionalization and training opportunities (or lack thereof).

A website seemed the best option as it provided a platform that could easily accommodate the desire to gather a wide range of highly specialized materials into a single tool that could be accessed freely and easily by anyone with basic IT skills. It must be highlighted that given the scope and timeframe of the SOS-VICS project, the possibility of setting up a dedicated e-learning platform was soon discarded. Such platforms are probably more useful in combination with taught training courses, whether delivered mainly through distance learning/online (Skaaden 2016a:162-184), face-to-face or through blended approaches (Skaaden 2016b: 46-68). In the post COVID-19 era, learning resources such as the SOS-VICS website will probably be increasingly relevant for the new remote and hybrid learning environments that are likely to prevail in the future.

4.1 The access page and the two main menus

As shown in Figure 1 the access page to the SOS-VICS Website, apart from its welcoming message, contains two main menus, a vertical one on the left-hand side and a horizontal one at the top of the page, that allow users to easily navigate the web and access whatever specific contents they may need. While the vertical menu provides access to instrumental and cross-cutting concepts and topics related to the use of the website, to interpreting (both as a profession and as an academic discipline) and to GV, the horizontal menu is aimed at facilitating access to setting-specific materials. The contents were selected to respond to the findings of the SOS-VICS fieldwork (needs analysis, see 3.1.1 above) and to develop the competencies described in 3.1.2.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Figure 1: Access page



Aspects covered in the vertical menu include basic theoretical concepts related to GV, basic aspects of interpreting in GV contexts -key terms in interpreting, interpreting fields and their characteristics, ethics, a list of resources for self-guided learning in interpreting, remote interpreting in GV contexts, and prevention strategies and self-help for interpreters. By clicking on any of these sections, users will be shown new windows containing detailed information on each topic which, again, is organized in a very graphic and user-friendly way. Figure 2 shows the case of Remote Interpreting by way of example. The section is divided into various headings intended to provide a straightforward account of the specificities of that type of language mediation (mainly telephone interpreting), given its wide use in certain Spanish GV contexts, such as healthcare or social services, as documented by our survey. In short, a precise definition of Remote Interpreting is presented, along with its defining features, frequent communicative events when dealing with GV victims, and specific skills required. Given the unprecedented rise in remote interpreting in the COVID-19 era, this section becomes

particularly relevant. A glossary with key terms and a selection of bibliographical references are also provided.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]
Figure 2: Remote interpreting section



The instrumental and cross-cutting concepts appearing in the vertical menu, as they are presented in the website, can be directly linked to three, or even four, of the competencies discussed in the previous section: subject-matter, professional and instrumental, attitudinal and psycho-physiological, and interpersonal competencies. Some of them, such as communicative and textual, intercultural, and strategic competencies, are addressed more specifically in the setting-specific menus at the top of the page. In any case, since most competencies are not associated to closed areas of learning, they may be developed and enhanced cross-sectionally by working with the materials contained in several sections of the website.

4.2 Common format for setting-specific materials

One of the main features of the SOS-VICS project is its wide scope. Contrary to other projects that focus on specific fields of professional practice, such as legal or healthcare, for instance, the SOS-VICS project aimed at addressing communication difficulties with foreign victims of GV in a comprehensive way, in consonance with the response that public authorities in Spain are trying to implement. Such endeavour proved to be

challenging, given the specificities and inherent complexities of the fields involved. Therefore, for the sake of clarity and user-friendliness, which would ultimately facilitate user access to those fields, a common format was selected to conceptualize each field and classify the resources at the disposal of users.

As already mentioned, setting-specific materials are accessed through a horizontal menu containing four square buttons, one for each of the macro-settings identified: police, court, healthcare, and psychological/social services. All the information, documents and activities pertaining to each one of them are presented and classified identically, i.e., by means of five different tabs that can be accessed independently and in any order: Itinerary, Role-plays, Glossary, Resources, General Resources (see Figure 3).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Figure 3: Horizontal menu

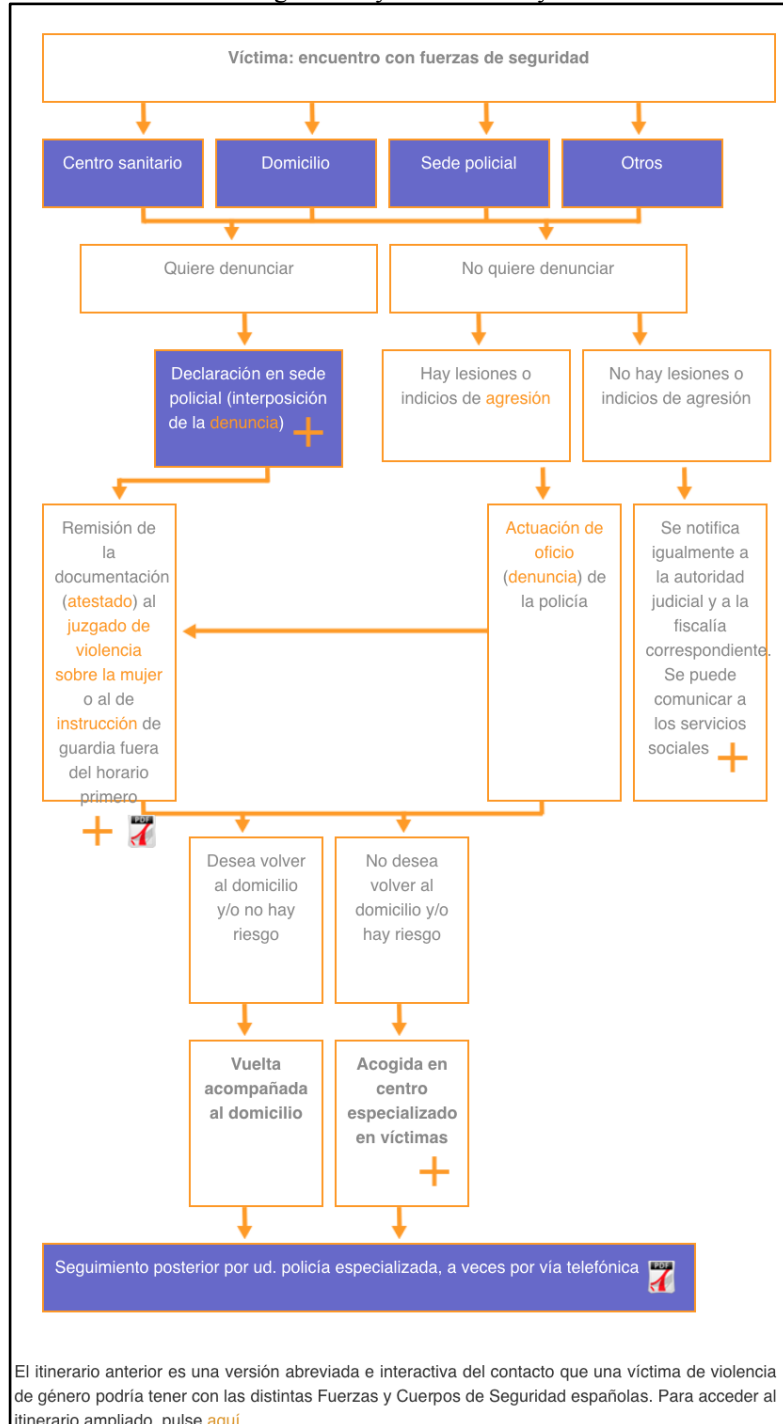


The first tab that appears when a specific setting button is clicked is the so-called *dynamic itinerary*. This tab is a crucial one, in that it plays a dual role: apart from its focus on developing the subject-area competence, it also acts as a gateway for each setting and more importantly it facilitates access to the rest of the setting-specific materials associated with each particular field. This access is provided by means of links to new tools or materials, pop-up windows with term definitions, and links to documents. In fact, this permeability between different sections and resources represents one of the most salient features of the SOS-VICS Website as a whole –its high degree of internal cross-referencing. As a result, despite its primarily static and non-interactive nature, this training website lends itself to very dynamic use. Its design allows users to create their

own study or discovery pathway, depending on their own needs and interests, which of course facilitates self-learning. Figure 4 depicts the itinerary designed for police settings.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Figure 4: Dynamic itinerary



As mentioned previously, each itinerary is intended to equip interpreters with subject-area competence by providing an overview of setting-specific proceedings, the dynamics

of specialized communicative events and an understanding of the position of victims in the system, as if they were being walked through the different settings.

Another exceptional tool for interpreters are the prototypical interpreter-mediated communicative events that can be accessed by clicking on the Plus signs ('+') embedded in the itineraries. These signs lead to a template containing a thorough description of a particular setting-specific interaction structured around the 4Ws (*Where, When, Who* and *Why/What for*), to a certain extent in line with Tebble's (2014) proposal for the medical consultation. Tebble focuses on the idea that 'understanding the social context and the structure of the genre can provide a contextual configuration and a schema for the students to be able to comprehend the interpreting event' (Tebble 2014: 430).

Thus, the SOS-VICS template for prototypical communicative events can give users a clear understanding of the professional contexts and different genres where they may be asked to intervene. And, as professional interpreters, they would certainly need that type of information to prepare for specific assignments. Therefore, through these prototypical interactions, several competencies are developed and enhanced, alongside the already mentioned subject-area competence, namely the professional and instrumental as well as the interpersonal competencies.

Figure 5 depicts an extract of the police itinerary with its corresponding pop-up windows with term definitions, links to specific documents (pdf symbol) and the template with one of the prototypical communicative events.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Figure 4: Resources available within the itinerary



The second tab takes users directly to the core elements of the SOS-VICS materials, i.e. multiformat, multilingual, setting-specific role-plays. Role-plays are widely used in training Public Service Interpreters because of their potential to develop all the competencies described and to coordinate them all into the strategic competence (see other PSI material banks such as *Linkterpreting* or *Building Mutual Trust*).^{13, 14}

Space constraints make a thorough analysis of the SOS-VICS role-play approach unfeasible, but its main features will be highlighted. The role-plays proposed are linked to the prototypical communicative events described, and their design has been carefully monitored by subject-area experts in an attempt to create materials that are as authentic as possible and to promote –within the constraints inherent to the online format of a training website– a situated-learning environment, in line with practices such as those described by Creeze (2015). In the Spanish context, accessing authentic materials, mainly recordings of interpreter-mediated interactions which could be edited for educational purposes, has proven time-consuming and troublesome (Hunt-Gómez and Gómez 2015:

¹³ Linkterpreting: recursos para la interpretación de enlace. <http://linkterpreting.uvigo.es>

¹⁴ Building Mutual Trust Materials Bank: <http://www.buildingmutualtrust.com/materials-bank.html>

192-3). Despite the efforts deployed in recent years with initiatives such as the TIPp project (2015-2017), teaching materials based on authentic data are still not publicly available.¹⁵ Therefore, despite the inherent benefits of using authentic materials (Hunt-Gómez and Gómez 2015: 200-1), valid alternatives need to be developed. And tandem collaboration with subject-matter experts, in line with the SOS-VICS approach, seems a suitable solution.

The selection of both scenarios and languages for the role-plays has been informed by the results and recommendations of the project's fieldwork (Del-Pozo-Triviño et al. 2014a & 2014b). Languages used in role-plays include: English, Arabic (Darija), Romanian, Russian, French, Italian, French, German, Chinese and Portuguese. As for the specific presentation format, video and audio recordings, alongside their written scripts, have been included. As a result, the SOS-VICS role-plays can be used in numerous different ways, both for self-practice and for classroom practice, as part of any type of training course.

The third tab contains a Spanish-only glossary to support and develop communicative and subject-area competence in each of the fields covered. The different glossaries (and their merged version accessible from the left menu of the website) have been compiled by experts in each field, working in collaboration with linguists. In the case of the legal/police glossary, previously developed materials have been used.¹⁶

The same approach was applied in the case of the fourth and fifth tabs, which contain a wide range of documentary resources, both setting-specific and for GV in general, that required a thorough process of classification and cataloguing by an expert in document search and retrieval.

¹⁵ <https://pagines.uab.cat/tipp/en>

¹⁶ The legal glossary has been compiled by researchers from the GENTT research group based at the Universitat Jaume I, coordinated by Dr. Anabel Borja. <http://www.gentt.uji.es>

4.3 A complementary and more traditional tool: a printed handbook

Despite the advantages and wide-reaching potential of Internet-based training materials, SOS-VICS decided that a traditional paper handbook could also play its part and complement the website. Such a tool might be useful for those public service interpreters with limited IT skills or for those with a preference for printed materials. In any case, a handbook written entirely in Spanish and mainly aimed at interpreters was published, both in printed form and in electronic format (Toledano-Buendía and Del-Pozo-Triviño 2015). The electronic version is available directly from the access page of the website. The main feature of this handbook is that it mirrors the website so that for each of the sections described above there is a corresponding chapter. The book provides a detailed narrative account of the specificities of interpreting in GV contexts, supported by academic literature and the results of the SOS-VICS fieldwork (Del-Pozo-Triviño et al. 2014a & 2014b). It is worth noting that some chapters of the book have been translated into English and adapted to a wider international audience,¹⁷ following the suggestion from some colleagues interested in using it for their training initiatives outside Spain.

5. Conclusions

To close, we believe that the SOS-VICS project has effectively served its purpose of creating specialized tools and materials for the training of interpreters involved in GV contexts, a particularly far-reaching and complicated field that requires interpreting competence that is both highly specific and at the same time broad and complex.

The keys to the success of this proposal for specialisation are found in the very foundations of the SOS-VICS project. Indeed, the conceptualization and design of

¹⁷ http://sosvics.eintegra.es/Documentacion/Interpreting_in_gender_violence_contexts_translation.pdf

training tools and materials were based on a prior analysis of the needs of the agents involved in providing assistance to victims of GV, on the conceptualization of a competence model adapted to the specificities of interpreting in this field and on reflection about the profile of the project's potential beneficiaries. All of this has culminated in a CD specific to the Spanish context and shaped by the current situation of PSI in this country.

Additionally, the selection of a situated learning philosophy made it possible to create tools that reflect professional practice and at the same time are adaptable to a teaching environment. This dual professional-pedagogical feature has been enhanced by the multidisciplinary of the SOS-VICS project, which has benefitted from the participation of experts from all the fields related to GV and to interpreting, active both in university settings and in the official network of victim assistance services. The participation of experts in areas deemed instrumental by SOS-VICS –such as sociology, statistics and documentation– ensured that the needs analysis was founded on solid fieldwork and that the data that have informed the CD decisions and the compilation of materials are based on specific expert knowledge.

The usefulness of the training materials, and in particular the Training Website, has already been confirmed, through the records of frequency of use in Spain and even internationally. As mentioned above, the availability of online resources facilitating remote or blended learning as well as self-learning has become particularly relevant in the COVID-10 context.

In the future it would be worthwhile to broaden the coverage and scope of the current website, by including new materials and increasing the diversity of the languages. Although the project's basic objective was to contextualize the training, situating it in the field of interpretation in Spain –which is why the contents related to subject-area

competence are contextualized in this country— it is true that it would be necessary to increase the resources available in *languages of limited diffusion*, for which there is a certain demand but little or no training. As for other national contexts, the training proposal put forward by SOS-VICS could be adapted, maintaining the overall philosophy and structure while making small adaptations to local particularities.

In any case, the current COVID-19 crisis has created new learning scenarios where freely available online resources are likely to be favoured, inasmuch as they foster autonomous learning and facilitate cooperation among institutions from different countries. In this sense, we hope the SOS-VICS website will be a valuable contribution to the training of interpreters for institutional contexts.

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