**"Practice, role and training of interpreters in conflict zones: a case study of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia "**.

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**The researcher**

The researcher carrying out interviews is Eleonora Bernardi. She is an adjunct professor and PhD candidate at the University of Bologna, Department of Interpretation and Translation. She is also a professional interpreter, member of the Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters, working from and into Italian, Croatian, French and English.

**The research**

Research has recently been trying to fill the blanks in the history of interpreting, an ancient-old profession that, due to its oral nature, remained substantially unrecorded. Despite being war a central experience in human history, interpreting in conflict zones, as a field of research, started attracting academic interest only during the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, when issues were raised about interpreting quality and the risks interpreters faced. In order to contribute to this debate, we decided to focus, as a case study, on the war that led to the dissolution of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s: a recent and an international conflict, with widespread use of interpreters, that could offer potential insights into the experience of interpreters and interpreting service users. This research project therefore aims at shedding light on interpreting in order to gather information that could improve the quality of the service and the working conditions of interpreters in future conflicts.

**Research methods**

This study adopts a historical approach in the analysis of information from documentary research, which will include NATO, UN and EU Archives, national war archives – when declassified-, press and news bulletins, written accounts by interpreters and service users, ICTY proceedings, television footage and photographs.Findings will be complemented with semi-structured interviews with interpreters, military personnel, and language military trainers.

**Inclusion criteria for interviews**

Interpreters who wish to take part in this project need to have worked as interpreters/translators/language assistants for any period of time, from 1991 to 2006, either with the then European Community, the United Nations, NATO or national armies.

**The Interviews: What do I need to do?**

If you meet the above-mentioned criteria, you will be asked to participate in an interview during which you will be asked to briefly introduce yourself, and later focus on issues related to interpreting during the conflict such as interpreters’ tasks, recruiting, training, ethnicity, interpreting techniques, neutrality, confidentiality, perception, status and lessons learned.

The interview will last approximately **30 minutes**. Pauses and breaks are allowed at any time. You find below a list of questions to be asked in the interview. Given the nature of the topic discussed interviewees have the right not to answer a specific question/questions and move to the following one/s. Interviews will be conducted through **Zoom**, a conference/VOIP platform. You do not need to register to Zoom, a link and instructions will be sent to you to access the meeting. If you prefer, another platform you are more comfortable with, like Skype, this could also be arranged with the researcher. Interviews will be only sound recorded. After the interview, the audio file will be sent to you so that you can check if everything is correct and if there is anything on the recoding that you would like to be corrected or not used at all for this project. Video will not be recorded.

Please note that interviews are completely anonymous, the interviewee's name will not appear in the final data used and it will be replaced by a number or a pseudonym. Data will be published aggregately so that even if partial quotes are used these cannot, in any way, be linked to the interviewee.

Together with the access link and instructions the researcher will send you a privacy statement and informed consent form to be signed and sent back to the researcher before the interview begins. Should you have other questions do not hesitate to contact researchers at [eleonora.bernardi5@unibo.it](mailto:eleonora.bernardi5@unibo.it)

**Interview questions**

**PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

1. How and why did you start working for international/armed forces?
2. Had you ever worked as a translator/interpreter?

**PARTE 2: THE JOB**

1. How did the interpreting service work?
2. Did you receive any training or instructions?
3. What kind of relationship did local interpreters have with the military?
4. What was the relationship with your local community after you took the job?
5. Did your job entail risks?
6. Was the choice of the interpreter for a specific meeting determined by the interpreter’s and the participants’ ethnicity?
7. Were the interpreters paid? If yes by whom and how?
8. Could you briefly describe a typical day as an interpreter?
9. How long did you work as an interpreter for international/armed forces?

**PART 3: INTERPRETING PRACTICE**

1. What kind of translation did they expect from you, as an interpreter?
2. Besides interpreting, did the interpreter perform other tasks?
3. Did you have any information on the interpreting assignment?

**PART 4: ETHICAL ISSUES**

1. In non-war-related settings, professional interpreters are expected to be neutral. Do you think that the principle of neutrality can be applied to interpreting in conflict zones?
2. Did someone check the quality of your translation?
3. Did you have to keep what you learned during your job secret?
4. Did you ever censor or downplay the meaning of what you translated? If yes, why?

**PART 5: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

1. For you, what is a good interpreter in this kind of setting?
2. In your opinion, what can be learnt from this experience on how to use interpreters in conflict zones?
3. Is there anything else you’d like to add that we didn’t mention?