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UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER

NEWS FROM THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

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Introduction

EVEN A VERY simple comparative analysis of the past and the present shows that the coexistence of people (and peoples) of different cultures and languages has been a recurrent feature in the history of humankind. So, too, the presence of bilingual and bicultural persons who have facilitated—and continue to facilitate—communication among different people or groups. When we observe our present-day societies and we see that hospitals, courts, employment offices and police stations—but also hotels and tourist resorts—have to face the challenge of interlinguistic and intercultural communication on a daily basis, it is perhaps useful to look back and note that this situation is by no means exceptional and that solutions to those communication barriers have been found in different historical and geographical settings.

Migrations and transfers of population are as old as the human species, although every society—perhaps even every generation—may tend to think that they are experiencing this phenomenon for the first time in history. One of the elements

involved in migration, particularly when migrants move across countries and languages, is the challenge of communication between the host society and the immigrants. Here, too, we see that certain people seem to be rediscovering the wheel every day, as if it were the first time that foreigners had arrived in a strange land where people spoke another language, and as if previous societies affected by the event had not developed the means to overcome that barrier in the past.

Our research team (*Grupo Alfaqueque*) has discovered a large number of instances, going back to the Middle Ages and to the time of the Spanish empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in which explorers, members of religious orders and eventually representatives of the state found solutions to these problems of communication by establishing corps of interpreters and translators who mediated between local people, ignorant of the common language of the Spanish kingdoms, and the administration, for example in the courts (Baigorri / Alonso 2007; Alonso / Baigorri / Payàs 2008; Alonso / Payàs 2008; Grupo Alfaqueque 2010). Historical records, even those equivalent to our present-day press, such as chronicles, offer plenty of examples of that interaction and of a well-oiled system that had to deal with cases affecting territories as distant as Mexico, Peru or the Philippines, with a range of languages to dwarf many contemporary multilingual institutions. Looking back at the sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish colonial empire, we see how its judicial system developed a set of sophisticated regulations in order to facilitate the hearings of people who did not understand Spanish. (And this applies to other colonial powers of that time, too. For instance, the first appointment of an official interpreter in New York City goes back to 1642—see the *New York Times (NYT)*, January 1st, 1899.)

With this in mind, we can perhaps take a fresh look at our apparently "sudden" and "unusual" problems of communication. If we approach the more contemporary situation of immigrants arriving in foreign countries from their own perspective instead of from that of the host authorities we will be in a better

position to assess their needs and their feelings and to design appropriate, empathetic solutions. (It may sound strange to read, in the *NYT* for September 9th, 1900, a story about a French woman, accompanied by her child, who got lost in Manhattan and wandered the streets for a whole week, unable to find her husband, because no one could understand her French and she was thought to be a beggar. This happened in "cosmopolitan" New York City in 1900.)

IN THIS PAPER we are going to deal with two different sets of documents, which reflect different variables of time, countries, immigrant groups, languages and tradition. We will use press cuttings from American newspapers from the turn of the twentieth century, and news about Spanish immigrants in Germany from the Sixties and Seventies—with brief mentions of other nationalities in present-day Germany—from Spanish local media or from other newspapers, some of which were specifically published to meet the needs of emigrants abroad. We intend to show how the press can be used as a source to analyze linguistic and cultural mediation with regard to immigrants at different times and places. There has been previous research on the perception of immigrants by the press—see, for instance King / Wood (2001), Prieto Ramos (2004) and Igartua / Muñiz (2007)—but references to their communication difficulties and to the solutions found to solve these are comparatively scarce. In our paper we shall be looking at some references to obstacles to communication and how interpreters helped to overcome them, while remembering that journalists tend to omit the necessary presence of interpreters in exchanges that, otherwise, would be impossible, as if we lived in a pre-Tower of Babel paradise.

The United States at the turn of the twentieth century was populating immense territories—which belonged to Native Americans in pre-industrial times—and transforming the country into an urban industrial society thanks to the influx of waves of immigrants from different parts of the world. Those who supervised their arrival were, more often than not, recent

immigrants themselves and were likely as a matter of course to view immigration with sympathetic eyes and with some awareness of the phenomenon. The normal process for a typical immigrant was to become American and to embrace the American way of life. That was then. Nowadays, issues such as the recent controversial legislation about immigrants in Arizona—with an obvious element of racial profiling—or the erection of new walls and fences to keep *them* away from *us* indicate that the matter is far from simple and far from being something of the past. Perhaps this shows that American society is *neither a melting pot nor a multicultural democracy* (Golash-Boza 2005, 750).

Postwar Germany is a different story. It was a country divided into two separate states under two different political regimes, both embarked upon the colossal endeavor of rebuilding their infrastructures, their factories and their respective social fabrics, which had been destroyed by the war that followed the years of Nazi domination and expansion. The western part, the Federal Republic of Germany, witnessed during the Sixties and Seventies what has been called the "German economic miracle", attributable to a series of factors, including the Marshall Plan and the presence of American troops in lieu of the German military, but also the hard labor of millions of workers from "the South", who were considered by the German government and people, at least at first, as "guest workers" *(Gastarbeiter* in German), that is, as people who would stay only temporarily and who would return to their countries of origin in an orderly manner, once the economic reconstruction effort was achieved (Limage 1985, 251).

This view completely ignored the realities of the social phenomena and the impossibility of establishing a "pure" culture—*all cultures are mixed ("hybrid", "cross-bred")* (Todorov 2008, 54)—despite the overwhelming evidence Germans had witnessed in their previous history. How many different cultures contributed to the societies that essentialists call "German", "French", or other mono-ethnic simplifications? (Hoerder 2005, 250). It seems, though, that the Germans were

caught by surprise when they found themselves in the company of several million foreigners, who, with the passing of time, had children who grew up as Germans—with a little component of their parents' culture—and who spoke German like everybody else, but were often denied German nationality. Instead of the *jus solis* that prevails in the United States, Germany has a legal tradition of *jus sanguis*. Maybe this explains why we speak of "first-generation Americans" while in Germany it is common to see expressions such as "third-generation Turks".

> In the last two decades, historians have questioned societies' master narratives written under the nation-state paradigm. Scholars in the two North American societies, who had been socialized in the context of discourses about immigration, pluralism, and multi-culturalism, pioneered these new approaches. Scholars in several European countries have also turned to the many-cultured pasts of their societies. Their empirical data quickly revealed that the mono-cultural nation state was nothing but a fiction (Hoerder, 235).

But the different approaches still persist:

> While the rhetoric about being a "nation of immigrants" is strong in the United States, Canada and Australia, it is singularly absent in Europe. The view that European nations were constituted before mass immigration began is still dominant (Penninx *et al.* 2004, 2)

The two examples are a mirror image, not only because of the different approaches to immigration (comparing the two broad historical periods), but also because in the case of the United States we use the press of the country of arrival, whereas in the case of Germany we use mainly the press of the country of departure of the emigrants, that is, Spain. There is a big

conceptual gap between the two: the American press is based on freedom of speech and is addressed mainly to a readership that is aware of the presence of their new fellow citizens, while the Spanish press under Franco was subject to the censorship of officially appointed civil servants and had a mainly propagandist aim. In both cases, however, it is good to read critically between the lines, because the media are never neutral and there is always a certain amount of manipulation involved.

The aims of this paper are: 1) to show in a few examples how the printed press—quite often the sole available record of the (oral) interpreted event—can be a source of information for the history of interpreting in its relation to migration, 2) to show that interpreters' profiles have been essentially multifaceted throughout history, concomitant to the diverse language needs and the variety of multilingual settings, 3) to illustrate some of the similarities between the past and the present as far as understanding the Other is concerned, 4) to show how those historical references can help us better understand our present-day societies, and 5) to encourage new research in this field.

1. Immigrants and the US Administration: Talking to Each Other (through an Interpreter)

THERE ARE HUNDREDS of references to language mediation through interpreters in the American press of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Those instances represent, however, an insignificant figure compared with the potential number of exchanges in which communication difficulties occurred. The topics of the news stories are extremely multifaceted and they tend to focus on individual cases rather than on the issue of interpreting in general. The reading of some of those articles gives us the idea that there is a need of mediators in order for the "Other" to communicate with the administration in an efficient manner. In this context, there is a coexistence of instances where a well-organized system of professional interpreters is in place and other cases where *ad*

hoc responses seem to be the best available solution.

Using the theoretical approach of *framing*—Igartua / Muñiz (2007) have carried out extensive empirical research on the topic of immigrants and their perception by the Spanish press—we immediately see that the press tends to use references and schemata to allow the readership to understand the story. In the field of foreign languages and speakers we may conclude that the myth or the metaphor of the Tower of Babel—not necessarily in a literal manner—is present in many instances. So is the idea of the interpreter as a critical link, and of the polyglot, particularly if it is a child, as a marvel. We can infer from the American press at the turn of the twentieth century what everybody knows but tends to overlook: that American society was—and, of course, still is—multilingual and multicultural, and that the presence of bilingual individuals, often mere passers-by, was required for the daily dealings of citizens or visitors who were not fluent in English (with limited English proficiency, or "LEP" in more contemporary terminology) with the different branches of the administration. The first filter, symbolically represented by Ellis Island, was the immigration authorities, accompanied by a corps of interpreters, who were an instrumental cog between the newly arrived immigrants and the authorities that supervised their entry into the country.

We are going to use in this part of the paper just a few articles from two American newspapers—the *New York Times* (*NYT*) and the *Boston Daily Globe* (*BDG*)—from the late years of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century. The reasons for this choice are that this was a nation-building period, when a great number of immigrants—the "Other"—arrived to populate the United States, and that those newspapers have a long span in history and an easy electronic access. Our aim is to show only an exemplary illustration of a phenomenon that, let us say between 1880 and 1920, was of huge magnitude, with hundreds of thousands of newly arrived people who did not speak English, the official language of their host country. Linguistic and cultural barriers must have been

an almost insurmountable obstacle to integration for the first generation of migrants, whose only luggage was quite often precisely their language(s) and customs. Also, it was a period of US history when the nation became an international power, with interactions beyond its political borders.

That the country was a mosaic of peoples and languages is shown by this announcement:

> The immigration service wants interpreters, and will receive applications for any of the following languages: Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian (Arabic), Bohemian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Dalmatian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Flemish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Herzegovinian, Hindoo, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Montenegrin, Magyar, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Roumanian, Russian, Ruthenian, Servian, Slovak, Slovenian (Wendish), Slovenish (Kranish), Spanish, Swedish, Syrian, Syrian (Arabic), Turkish, Yiddish. There could be no better illustration of the diversity of American population (*BDG,* April 12th, 1907, 12).

It is interesting to note: 1) the great variety of languages and dialects in demand, 2) the fact that different branches of the administration (in this case, the immigration service) were competing for interpreters, an apparently scarce resource, and 3) that the aspirations of the immigration service were somewhat unclear. By calling for applications for interpreters, did the authorities assume that qualified interpreters were available for such an immense array of languages or simply that understanding and speaking the languages involved (English plus at least one of the others) was sufficient accreditation for the job? In other words, did they consider that interpreting skills were innate to any bilingual, no matter what age, gender, social class or education level? These are relevant questions, because today, one hundred years later, public opinion (and many authorities!)

in numerous countries continues to make the same assumption: you speak two languages *ergo* you are, naturally, able to translate and interpret.

We know that the recruitment of children as potential interpreters was a commonly used tool to overcome language barriers at the time of the encounter between European explorers and conquerors and pre-Columbian peoples in the American continent, and surely before then too (see, for example, Díaz del Castillo 1632, vol. I, 92, 94, and Karttunen 1994, 94). The hypothesis that children's brains easily adapt to learning foreign languages is well-established. It has always been—and it is still today—a common practice to use children as *ad hoc* interpreters, irrespective of the huge amount of evidence that discourages it! If anything, the examples we are presenting show that practice quite clearly. But another ingredient is added here: that of considering these cases as child prodigies, in these instances on account of their linguistic skills.

> [...] A little Mexican girl who arrived here six years ago from Mazatlan, being then 7 years of age, can speak Italian, French, and English fluently, and a little German, all picked up while romping with her playmates. This is but one in hundreds among the children, while among the elderly people there are scores who cannot speak a word of English, although some of them have lived in San Francisco for the past 10 and 20 years. They converse only in the language of their native land, and if any person speaking English addresses them, the children are called in as interpreters [...] ("Cosmopolitan San Francisco", in the *NYT*, August 13th, 1878, 2).

This text is a telling example of the cosmopolitan nature of late nineteenth century San Francisco, where only children seemed to be able to interpret seamlessly the symphony of languages that lay beneath the apparent cacophony of a Babel-like mosaic

of neighborhoods. They were the big minds in tiny bodies who held a monopoly of communication.

In the following excerpt, a ten-year-old girl who arrives at the port of New York to join her father, in the company of other relatives in a process of family reunification, is, surprisingly for the journalist, able to speak five languages—and perhaps they overlooked that she probably also spoke Latvian, in view of her origin—in front of Ellis Island interpreters, who were supposedly familiarized with that type of linguistic marvel. This would be an example of language acquisition through a combination of private tutors—nothing peculiar for certain social classes in pre-Bolshevik Russia—and natural learning, although it may not be as easy to figure out how she could have learned the languages "naturally" than it is to predict that she will be able to learn English quite quickly. It seems easier to understand her acquisition of German—considering that Yiddish was the family language—and French than her learning of Italian, which was not so common in pre-Revolution Russia. The issue of *mastery* of those languages at such a young age would be more questionable, and should probably be understood as the ability to speak without an accent rather than as a full command of them. We can well imagine that she was able to speak in the languages briefly—busy Ellis Island interpreters would not have been able to spend hours testing the girl—and with a certain fluency. It is harder to believe that she would have been able to maintain conversations of a reasonable complexity for a ten-year-old child in all those tongues. That is, she would have been able to speak *in* five languages rather than five languages.

> [...] The girl's name is Minna Weisbeiner, and she came from Riga, Russia, with her mother, two little sisters and a brother. Her father is a prosperous tailor living at 83 Osborne st, Brooklyn. The family have come to join him.
>
> Minna attracted considerable attention and caused surprise at Ellis Island, where she conversed readily

with interpreters in Russian, German, French, Italian and Yiddish. She said she only went to school in Russia one year, but had private teachers part of the time and picked up the languages she had mastered herself. She has not acquired English as yet, but expects to do so in a little while, and says she hopes to go to school in America "for a number of years" ("In Five Languages: Little Russian Immigrant Girl Surprises Interpreters at Ellis Island. Is only 10 Years Old", in the *BDG*, December 15th, 1907, 7).

The last case we want to use in this section refers to a girl who acted as interpreter for her family. Speaking four languages was not *anything out of the ordinary*, according to this nine-year-old girl of Polish origin. What may seem odd to us is that the girl was called to act as interpreter in such a delicate situation as the threat of eviction of her family from their house in Lewinston (Maine).

> [...] The little girl usually acts as interpreter for the family, and it was in this capacity that she accompanied her mother to the office of the Lewiston police matron a few days ago, the family fearing eviction. The house in which they live was sold, and the new owner ordered them to move before Saturday in order that he might begin repairs.
>
> At the city building Frances explained the situation to the authorities—that the family would move as soon as they could find a tenement, but that they objected to being turned into the street, which they feared would be done.
>
> The city solicitor, William G. Tackaberry, explained the law in such cases. A day or two later, carpenters appeared at the house, saying they had come to make repairs. Mrs. Ozeckowicz, with Frances, hurried to the city building a second time, and were assured that

> nothing which would prevent their living in the house could be done until the new owner had obtained a certain paper from the court (*BDG*, August 20th, 1922, 58).

This goes well beyond casual mediation in the street and reaches a point where an adult, a professional interpreter, should have been necessary, not least because it is quite unlikely that a nine-year-old child could understand the legal consequences of an eviction action, and because, if she did understand them, the emotional effect of being evicted would no doubt trigger an unjustified and unjustifiable level of stress in the child, with all the empathetic and affective involvement required to carry out the task. No English-speaking child would normally have been considered as suitable to receive that type of information from the authorities, let alone to act as a messenger between the authorities and their family. And yet we know, from numerous instances in the present-day printed press, that this is still a quite common phenomenon in the United States and in other advanced countries too, with children acting as interpreters for family members in medical, judicial and other contexts. For example: "We still see kids acting as the cultural brokers for their families, but it's no way to run a hospital" (Dr. Betancourt, director of multicultural education at Massachusetts General Hospital quoted in Anne Underwood / Jerry Adler, "When Cultures Clash", *Newsweek*, 145, 17, April 2005, 70).

We could multiply the number of examples of newspaper articles in which interpreters are mentioned. Ellis Island interpreters are one of the types (see, for instance, the *NYT* for April 7th, 1903, and for January 22nd, 1914). It is interesting to note that the place that for many years served as the clearing house for immigrants arriving at the America's eastern shore—indeed, a symbol for many Americans of European descent—had an interpretation service, with interpreters in uniform as linguistic assistants to the Immigration authorities (there is a photograph of an Ellis Island interpreter in uniform

online at <http://www.gettyimages.es/detail/83931809/Hulton-Archive?language=es&location=ESP>).

A well-known person who acted as an interpreter at Ellis Island for three years (1907-10) was Fiorello Laguardia, the famous New York City mayor, who witnessed the frequent deportation of potential immigrants who supposedly suffered from different types of mental disorder. He contended that many of those cases were misdiagnosed due to communication problems or to the lack of medical skills to identify what the psychiatrist Joseba Achotegui from Barcelona described in 2002 as the "Ulysses syndrome", which presents one or several of the following symptoms: a feeling of being no-one, the pain of departure from one's own land and family, the melancholy of absence, an inferiority complex, the desire to return to an idealized childhood as a reaction to the hostility of a strange land, *etc.* One hundred years after Laguardia carried out his part-time job at Ellis Island we can still witness an influx of anonymous Ulysses, who continue to dream of no longer existing Ithacas and who find themselves entangled in the intricacies of being downgraded to the condition of strangers—of being "no one"—for their ignorance of the majority language. Many of them end up misdiagnosed with depression, although the real syndrome that they are suffering from is that of Ulysses, one of whose root causes is the language trauma (Achotegui 2009).

We shall finish this section by making brief reference to court interpreters, who appear quite often in the press articles we have used, particularly in cases where they were the main actors, either due to the demands of their job or because they broke the professional code of ethics. There is a great variety of types of interpreter in court settings, for instance, *general interpreter of the criminal courts*, *Supreme Court interpreter*, either of a county or a State, interpreters for the *Police Courts*, or for the *Court of Special Sessions* in New York City. And we find references to court interpreters in announcements of competitive exams (*NYT*, November 18th, 1897, "For a Court Interpreter"), of their appointments (*NYT*, May 8th, 1897,

"Brooklyn Interpreter Appointed"), their salaries (*NYT*, March 10th, 1875, "A Court Interpreter's Salary"), and even their obituaries (*NYT*, December 3rd, 1899, "Court Interpreter Dead"; *BDG*, May 21st, 1915, "Court Interpreter Dead"). But perhaps the most popular cases in the news are those which have to do with interpreters being used as scapegoats (*NYT*, April 12th, 1884, "The Interpreter Blamed") or breaching their code of ethics (*NYT*, July 2nd, 1888, "The Interpreter Explains"; *NYT*, October 12th, 1893, "Winked at His Chinese Interpreter"; *NYT*, December 14th, 1895, "An Interpreter Charges Bribery"; *NYT*, June 6th, 1896, "Court Interpreters At Odds"). What seems clear is that interpreting then—and now, as present-day news about interpreters in wars shows—was not an easy job.

> San Francisco, Cal., Dec. 1.—As indicative of the contempt manifested by the Chinese for the love of this country, Fou Sing, who has been acting interpreter between Port Surveyor Morton and bogus traders from China, sent word yesterday to the Collector that he was afraid any longer to perform his duties. His interpretations have been so faithful as to bring upon him the wrath of his countrymen who want the Chinese lauded as traders. They have hired "high binders" to shadow Fou Sing, who lives in momentary expectation of death (*NYT*, December 2nd, 1883, "Fears of a Chinese Interpreter").

This text raises the controversial issue of the professional code of ethics and impartiality of the interpreter. According to this article, the interpreter was faithful to language and to the San Francisco Port Surveyor but unfaithful to the expectations of his fellow Chinese citizens, to the extent that they were eager to kill him, a situation more reminiscent of interpreting in war zones than in presumably peaceful San Francisco. The interpreter, by performing his functions in a professional manner, runs the risk of ostracism in his own community—with the consequence of

a forced migration elsewhere—while the majority group, in this case the American authorities, do not take the necessary steps to protect him with preventive measures before or during the interpreting event. In this instance, the mafia-like group of fake traders may have had the upper hand, but this was not always the case. In the famous Sacco and Vanzetti trial, interpreting difficulties were identified by several parties in the process due to the fact that the defendants spoke two different dialects and to a *conscious manipulation by a pro-prosecution interpreter.* This combination of circumstances *contributed to the swift guilty verdict handed down by the jury* (Carnevale 2009, 86), which was followed by the execution of the two anarchists.

In a historical study which compares criminal courtroom interpreting in eighteenth-century London with twenty-first-century Toronto, MacFarlane (2007) has shown that the use of "bystanders, jurors, and other witnesses [...] family members [...], character witnesses [...], co-defendants, jurors, or most disturbingly, the principal witness against the person requiring their services" as court interpreters (282)—a typical feature of eighteenth century London courts—is a practice that can and does still happen in our present-day society (an article published by the *Toronto Star* on October 4th, 2010, talks of the lack of accredited Mandarin interpreters in Toronto: "Grocer trial stalled over interpreter").

2. Contemporary Spanish Emigration to Germany and the Press

In 1964 the one-millionth foreign worker to arrive in Germany, a Portuguese called Armando Rodrígues, was warmly welcomed by local German authorities. All the media—the print media, television, radio, photographers—wanted to be there at Cologne central station when the immigrant arrived, to register such a memorable event, which was crowned with the generous gift of a *Vespa* motorcycle and several bouquets of flowers to the astonished Portuguese.

The more recent history of immigration has been followed and documented by the media, which deserve credit for having registered the ups and downs of the phenomenon, focusing their critical eye on certain aspects, assessing the achievements and the failures, the challenges and the positive effects, and last but not least disseminating the apparent "euphoria" that prevailed during the years of the German economic miracle.

Should we conclude that the story of the one-millionth foreign worker coincides with the upbeat mood of the moment? Or should we consider the event as an isolated instance, an exceptional piece of news lost in the middle of a far less euphoric and positive atmosphere? Unfortunately, this "less positive" environment reflects the reality that we more often find in the media, when they report on the Other, the foreigner, the immigrant, the Turk, the guest worker or a dozen other expressions used to designate a foreign citizen who lives in Germany. Exceptional or extraordinary success stories fall quite easily into oblivion. The ones that remain and have an impact on public opinion are precisely those that generalize without qualification or a minimum of reflection—as O'Reilly (2001) puts it, "[n]egative makes better news, and [a]lthough migration can be a positive thing, it is rarely viewed as such by the mass media, and there are not popular channels to correct the unbalanced view" (181 f.)—those that, so to speak, in foggy weather can spot the lost sheep in a thick forest, establishing absurd associations which sometimes reach, perhaps unwillingly, the level of racist opinions (Van Dijk 2003, 54).

In the Sixties these conceptual associations were linked with the constant use by the media of expressions that describe immigration and the temporary nature that it should have. The term *Gastarbeiter* ("guest worker"), used by politicians and by all the other people responsible in this matter, is the clearest evidence of that approach. The use of the term was a continuous reminder that foreign workers would stay only until the country reached a position in which it could do without them. At the same time, the media—particularly the popular press (and most

notably the *Bildzeitung* daily newspaper, which in those days sold over 2.5 million copies—nowadays over 3 million—and had a readership way beyond that figure)—spread a distorted image of the foreign worker, with a considerable increase in the number of articles with stories about foreigners involved in violence and murder.

Even prestigious weeklies such as *Der Spiegel* spoke in 1964 of "a wave of foreign workers", of "an influx of immigrants heading for German salaries" ("Gastarbeiterschwemme", "Völkerwanderung zu deutschen Lohntüten", in *Der Spiegel*, October 7th, 1964, 44). In other sections, particularly in accident and crime reports, we find stories about sly foreigners who fool officials at the social welfare office in order to obtain benefits they are not entitled to, about cruel murderers coming from the South, criminal drug addicts and thieves, *etc.* This, in fact, is no news, since this kind of sensationalism—deplorable though it may be—is probably as old as the press itself. Yet readers of the press acquire, little by little, the idea that foreigners have higher levels of crime and delinquency than Germans, thus helping to consolidate totally unfounded prejudices and stereotypes.

In contemporary Spain we can also observe such phenomena in the media, particularly with the increasing number of immigrants arriving in the country—see Prieto Ramos (2004) and Igartua / Muñiz (2007). If a murder is reported in the accident and crime section of a newspaper, mention is made of the country of origin of the perpetrator: Colombian, Mexican, perhaps Russian. When reference is made to the mafia and organized crime, there is immediate mention of the origin of their members: Russians, Romanians, perhaps Albanians. But if a Spanish citizen from town *A* kills another Spanish citizen from town *B*, the information about the city of origin will be omitted, as irrelevant. Of course, the role of the media to inform us about everything and anything should not be questioned, but we should all be aware of the negative impact that a biased approach may have on the readership, creating prejudices and stereotypes that may eventually lead to social disturbances.

2.1 Spanish Emigration in the Spanish Local and National Press

Stories of economic boom, prosperity and job opportunities in Germany were echoed by the Spanish media. The echo was even more resounding, given that many young Spaniards were living in a precarious situation, characterized by a lack of well-remunerated jobs in a still mainly rural country, such as Spain was in the late Fifties. This may help explain the favorable reaction in Spain to the official initiative to recruit foreign workers to work in Germany and in other Central European countries.

From the end of the Fifties, different media, both at national and local level, launched a wide campaign of information on what was needed to be part of the legal emigration program to those countries. The campaign was encouraged—perhaps understandably, at a time when Franco's regime was trying to stabilize the country economically—by the *Instituto Nacional de Emigración* (National Institute of Emigration). In this context, it is curious to note the reiterated praise expressed with regard to the good work carried out by that institution, "whose aims are moved only by its encouragement to and protection of the Spanish worker" (*El Adelanto de Salamanca* (*AdS*), March 4th, 1961, 23), to quote, by way of one example from among many, one of the main daily newspapers from Salamanca that we analyzed for this research. In fact, with very few exceptions, the news relating to emigration found in that newspaper between 1959 and 1973, kept up a positive, even admiring, tone, particularly in the early years of that period. Thus we read that our workers "enjoy a good social, moral and cultural treatment" (*AdS*, October 18th, 1960, 7), their contracts include all kinds of guarantees, from the "payment of travel expenses, salary [...], social security" and even the "possibility of sending money to their relatives in Spain." Besides, according to that newspaper, some Spaniards feel so happy in Germany that "they express their appreciation to German companies [...] for their constant consideration towards them and for the opportunities they

found to adapt in the best way possible to the labor environment" (*AdS*, April 27th, 1961, 3).

Once the euphoria of the early years is over, and although the press continues throughout the roughly two-decade emigration period to highlight the work of the Spanish authorities in the interests of emigrants, from the year 1961 the local press begins to echo the problems that Spanish emigrants have to face. First and foremost, there are the difficulties in finding decent and appropriate housing, with criticism expressed of the abusive behavior of landlords, who charge very high rents, of overcrowding, and of the lack of privacy in collective dormitories. The press also points out the difficulties with the language, which is considered as "an insurmountable barrier for the majority" (*AdS*, August 22nd, 1961, 5). From 1967 on, we can see in the local press, perhaps due to an initial awareness of the labor crisis which ended in 1973 with a halt in contracts for foreign workers (known in Germany as the *Anwerbestopp*: a halt to the recruitment of foreign workers in 1973 as a result of the oil crisis), that migration is considered "a human tragedy," "a sacrifice" (*AdS*, August 2nd, 1968, 7), a situation that can materialize in an "inferiority complex" which can lead to a "decrease in their own natural aptitudes" (*AdS*, December 24th, 1966, 4).

This pessimistic and discouraging tone does not change until well into the decade of the Seventies, which coincides with record figures, so far, of foreign tourists in Spain. Since this period corresponds to an important movement of returns of emigrants to Spain, the preoccupation expressed by the press is to create tangible incentives for those returned emigrants, taking advantage of the benefits they obtained in their stay abroad. Therefore, the sentimental and compassionate mood observed in the early years towards the emigrant turns into a different approach that highlights the numerous advantages derived from the emigration experience, which contributed to a personal improvement for many Spaniards and—with a clearly progressive hint—to the Europeanization of cultures (*AdS*, July 10th, 1971, 6).

La Región (*Diario La Región*, available in the archives for the dates 1966 to 1968), another press medium that we have analyzed, was a national-level publication aimed directly at Spanish citizens living abroad. Its tone and the points highlighted by this publication coincide with what we have observed in the local Spanish press, although we may add that, since *LR* was a newspaper which was sold in many places in Germany, France, Switzerland and the Netherlands, its approach was aimed in a more detailed manner at the problems and difficulties affecting workers and their families. In this context, the problems mentioned are not only those connected with housing or work, but also those which have to do with the learning of the language, the schooling of the emigrants' children in the relevant education centers, integration in the host country and coexistence with the local population, and the preservation of the Spanish language, which was also an issue of great concern for the Spanish authorities.

Another point of reiterated interest for this newspaper was to preserve an impeccable image of Spaniards living abroad. Several authors take issue with the myth of the low productivity of Spanish workers, arguing that "the Spanish emigrant working in German companies has the same productivity as Germans and much higher than that of emigrants from other nationalities" (*LR*, February 25th, 1967, 5). Moreover, "Spanish workers have increased the production thresholds in many factories," performing "in their jobs as well or even better than native workers" (*LR*, July 26th, 1967, 6). This positive stereotype that the Spanish press for the diaspora tries to disseminate is in stark contrast to that purveyed by the German press, as mentioned above, where foreign workers were associated with far less positive features.

In *Carta de España* (*CE*), a periodical publication addressed to Spanish emigrants and funded by the Spanish Ministry of Labor, we can see that this preoccupation with the image of the Spanish citizen abroad is almost a *leitmotif* throughout the main years of emigration. To quote but one example, it is quite

often highlighted that Spaniards living in Germany "are exemplary even for many Germans" and that they enjoy "an excellent reputation in this country" (*CE*, March 1967, 92, 3). This image of the Spanish migrant as a hard-working, law-abiding, well-behaved person coincides with the values of the national-catholic ideology prevailing in Franco's Spain.

We could perhaps venture to suggest that the emphasis placed by this publication and others on the fact that Spaniards were as good as or even better than anybody else and that their behavior was close to ideal was perhaps an indirect revelation of the inferiority complex experienced by many emigrants, which turned at first into a feeling of melancholic absence and nostalgia for the homeland, and was later transformed into a routine that allowed for evasion to suppress their desire to return, reflected in a feeling of foreignness which was exacerbated by the ignorance of the language of the majority. This syndrome has been typified by Achotegui, a psychiatrist who works with immigrants at a Barcelona hospital, as "the Ulysses syndrome", as mentioned above (Achotegui 2009). In this vein, we may add that these emigrants spent a great deal of their free time talking to each other in their own language of their dreams of returning to places that no longer existed. They were not aware then—because of the apparently asynchronic ticking of the clocks in their two different places of reference—of the fact that their homes, their people and they themselves did not exist anymore as they previously had, which is another way of saying that they no longer lived in their idealized childhood, when they did not experience any problems of integration in the friendly environment of their natural social networks. Papastergiadis notes of this idea of asynchrony, that the Other lives in its own present but this is also the past of the host society (125). Hoerder *et al.* (2005) refer to the role of the younger generation in overcoming this time barrier:

> By virtue of their age, young people are mediators between the past that serves as reference period for

> adults and whole societies, and the future that today's adults will experience in old age, and that today's youth will live as adults. In this continuity-providing approach, cultural negotiation and transfer is an intergenerational creative process involving choice, challenges, and changes in internally heterogeneous groups ("Introduction: Transculturation and the Accumulation of Social Capital—Understanding Histories and Decoding the Present of Young People," 12).

The younger generation may eventually change its identity or add a second identity (resulting in a hybrid, hyphenated identity), providing that the host culture is willing to accept the immigrant into the community (Weiner 1996, 53), which, obviously, is not always the case.

2.2. The Linguistic Issue in the Press

In analyzing in more detail some of the aspects that significantly affected the lives of Spanish workers who emigrated after the late Fifties, we should emphasize, as mentioned briefly above, the difficulties that they faced derived from their lack of knowledge of the host-country language(s). Unfortunately, the press does not always reflect all the facets that would interest us, particularly where the group concerned happens to lack a status that could give them a certain *power* in the social hierarchy.

Since immigrants were considered by the host society as people who would stay in the country only temporarily, they were mainly interested in them as a labor force. As for the other factors, they were considered basically as second-class citizens, who lacked a real interest in integrating themselves in the host society. This view evolved when many of the immigrants decided to renew their contracts and stay more or less permanently in the country, bringing in (if they were married) their spouses and children. In fact, children would eventually become one of the critical elements in the matter of linguistic integration.

They became essential actors in second- and third-generation contexts and on numerous occasions they were instrumental in pushing their parents—even in an unintentional manner—into learning German. (The economic value of speaking the two languages cannot be dissociated from the ethnic factor, as Pendakur / Pendakur (2002) have found in their research in the three metropolitan areas of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, but bilingualism adds a human capital effect which should be taken into consideration.) This at least is what we can observe in newspaper stories of the late Sixties and early Seventies, in which the Spanish emigrants themselves admit that knowing the language is no longer an insurmountable barrier but rather a tool for social progress:

> All of them can do it; German texts are easy and the patience of the teacher does the rest. It doesn't matter about the language or how old you are; as to the former, the simplicity of the texts and the interest of the teachers do the trick, and the latter is not even taken into account (*CE*, May 1972, 144, 14, translation by the authors).

In the early years of the Spanish migration, communication between the Spanish emigrants and the Germans was really a problem. Before departure, the Spanish emigrants could follow an optional four-week training module, where they were taught very basic notions of the German language. We can, thus, understand the huge difficulties they encountered at the beginning, as attested by the Spanish press reports mentioned above. Advisory service offices were established to help Spanish emigrants in the early years of the migration process to help them overcome these linguistic barriers and to offer them advice and support in different areas. These services were later integrated in different German organizations: *German Caritas*, *Arbeiterwohlfahrt*, *Diakonie*. Social workers from the countries of origin of the emigrants were in charge (*Caritas* has actually

until quite recently maintained social assistance services for Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Croats and Poles in many German cities).

Although these social workers lacked specific training in translation or interpreting, they usually had a better knowledge of German than the newly arrived immigrants, so they often played the role of translators and interpreters. It is interesting to note that from the end of the Fifties the Spanish Institute of Emigration established many positions for pastoral advisers in Germany. These priests carried out religious (Catholic) advisory and follow-up functions with the support of the Franco regime, which wanted Spanish expatriates to keep up the religious traditions of their country while living abroad. One can see behind this policy the wish by the authorities to maintain the national-Catholic ideological orthodoxy then prevalent in Spain while at the same time guaranteeing the hard currency remittances which, together with the development of mass foreign tourism in Spain, were a key pillar of Spanish economic growth during the Sixties. The pastoral advisers, who were usually Spanish priests, often with some knowledge of German, acted as links with the network of German charitable organizations and worked hand in hand with the social workers from those organizations (A. Fernández Asperilla, in *CE*, special issue, March 2007, 38 f.).

The largest German companies did sometimes have translators, who were "sometimes other Spaniards who had arrived earlier and had learnt a little German" (Gualda Caballero 2001, 192). This was not always seen as logical by the local Spanish press. In one of the few articles devoted to the language issue we read that

> in order to be an interpreter it is necessary to have lived longer than two years in any given country as well as to have the relevant training, [...] because learning the language by ear does not qualify anyone to represent

> emigrants in their dealings with the companies (*AdS*, August 4th, 1968, 8, our translation).

The author of this article goes beyond the mere description of the situation, emphasizing how important it is that German authorities get involved in this matter and ensure the quality of this service, to prevent abuses committed by the many untrained interpreters.

Besides the professional aspect of the matter, the variety of roles played by interpreters is also mentioned. Many workers saw the interpreter as the person charged with the task of "solving all the problems they may encounter in the company, defend their wishes, [...] and protect the workers when they feel they are being treated in an unfair manner by the company" (*LR*, August 25th, 1967, 5). An interpreter interviewed by *La Región* says that "la música nunca toca al gusto de todos" ["you can't please everybody"] (*LR*, August 30th, 1967, 8), and another interpreter from a German factory, Gudrun, says that many Spaniards prefer "to be taken by their hand" (*LR*, August 25th, 1967, 9). This protectionist approach was also practiced by many social mediators, whose tasks, according to their own views, went well beyond the social sphere and encompassed areas from "trying to solve, through consultation, all the social and religious problems" to linguistic mediation through "talks with employers and workers in the factories to improve working conditions" (*AdS*, July 1st, 1961, 7).

In the German press, these aspects—at first—were almost irrelevant, since they focused mainly on the other problems mentioned above. However, more recently, well after the peak period of the Spanish migration, linguistic difficulties attracted the attention not only of the German media, but also of German policymakers and legislators. Research carried out in the Nineties revealed alarming figures for school dropout and unemployment rates among foreigners, particularly those of Turkish origin (*Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration*, 2010). Fluency in German seemed

to be logically linked to an optimal use of all the educational and professional opportunities, as well as to a much more effective integration in the labor market.

Although we cannot delve here into the political and historical factors that contributed to a change of direction in German policies (and politics), it is clear that in 2005 the debate about the integration of foreigners in Germany—these making up a total of 6.7 million in that year—led to the enactment of the new Foreigners Act, which among other things compels foreign citizens to prove a sufficient knowledge of German if they wish to legalize their situation, obtain a residence permit or acquire German nationality (the relevant paragraphs of the *Ausländergesetz* of January 1st, 2005, being "§ 9 Abs. 2 Satz 1 Nr. 7 i. V. m. § 9 Abs. 2 Satz 2 des § 10, Abs. 3 i. V. m. § 11 Satz 1 Nr. 1").

The statement, repeated *ad nauseam*, "Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland" ("Germany is not a country of immigration") (see *Die Zeit*, April 12th, 2006) led finally to the *Integrationspolitik*. This policy is aimed at integrating Germany's foreign citizens through the implementation of different measures, among which we should note regulations on subsidized integration courses—or, more precisely, German language and culture courses—, which, despite their voluntary nature, are in the long run prescriptive and a necessary prerequisite for applications for certain social benefits, employment, *etc.* These measures are being implemented with the support of the German Federal Government and the *Länder* (state) administrations, which are contributing considerable sums of money to the relevant organizations in charge of the program. The impact of the measures, however, remains to be seen, taking into account the brief period that they have been in place. But research carried out in the Netherlands, where similar legislation was enacted in 1998 (*Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers*), concluded that "neither knowledge of the Dutch language, nor obtaining a higher degree in the Netherlands, is enough for integration in the Dutch labour force" (Ghorashi / van Tilburg 2006,

62). So language acquisition seems to be only one part of the integration process (Weiner, 52 f.).

3. Discussion

WE HAVE SEEN examples of how the language barrier issue was perceived by public opinion, by immigrants and by the authorities in the United States and in Germany in two different periods of our modern history. Some of these points invite further discussion.

We believe that the press, in the past and in the present, has tended to overlook the communication difficulties experienced by people who do not understand each other, perpetuating a fictional image according to which conversations among people from different languages and cultures simply *happen*, and we read works and we watch films as if they had been written or shot in our own languages. We are aware of the great influence of the media in shaping public opinion—as the philosopher Epictetus (55 AD) once said, "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of them"—, and perhaps that is why it is worth emphasizing that, behind an apparently smooth universal intercommunication paradise, a totally different reality hides, in which millions of daily bilingual exchanges and translated words take place at all levels in our societies. The limits to the *curse of Babel* are set precisely by the countless interpreters, from the anonymous and spontaneous *ad hoc* passer-by to the well-known professional, and translators. That is why these linguistic mediators cannot possibly fit into one unique definition of interpreter or translator.

Sometimes the media seem to be suddenly aware of the multilingual reality that surrounds us and they make it a news story by calling attention to the feats of a polyglot child or the troubles experienced in looking for an appropriate mediator for certain settings. The opinions expressed by the press can be only one of the many pieces of the puzzle in which social phenomena are represented and, in that context, the articles which appear in

newspapers or magazines are, when read critically between the lines, an important source of information for grasping the social perception of mediated situations. But, as research in the field of migration in modern societies has shown, the topic of language mediation is only one side of a much more complex social issue, which requires a multidisciplinary approach.

Migration patterns have changed with the passing of time and the revolutions in transport and communications. They are no longer characterized by the old no-return journey overseas, but rather by relatively easy regular travel between the two places. For instance, European emigrants to the United States around 1900 left their country with little expectation of going back there anytime soon, so that they (and their children) needed to adapt to the host country as soon as possible. Latin American or Asian immigrants in the United States today are usually able to travel quite often to their countries of origin and to keep close ties with the family and society in their place of origin via satellite communication—you can watch your local TV station almost anywhere now——and the Internet.

This is also what happens with expatriates from Northern European countries in sunny coastal parts of Spain. Retirement migration has turned certain seaside resorts in Spain into a real geriatric coast, where, according to Betty / Cahill (2000), "The vast majority of British residents read only British newspapers, listen to English speaking community radio stations, and watch satellite television" (97). Or, as O'Reilly (2000) says: "I met people who had lived in the area 30 years and who spoke fewer than 20 words of Spanish. In fact it is possible to get by quite well without learning Spanish" (240).

The concept of *home* has now acquired many qualifications and nuances which pertain to the sense of place and sense of belonging, to the building of imaginary spaces both in the place of origin and in the place of destination (see Salih 2001). Indeed:

> Research with regard to Turks in Germany has revealed a notable finding; namely that the interviewees

> feel a sense of belonging primarily to their German place of residence, despite thoroughly rejecting any identification for themselves with "the Germans" (Sackmann 2003, 237).

If Spanish emigrants in the Sixties—often unable to return to their homes back in Spain for a number of years—suffered from the "Ulysses syndrome", it seems that the recent information and telecommunication technologies might be an antidote against that. This ubiquitous umbilical cord with one's language and culture entails, however, other risks, such as the clustering in almost self-sufficient neighborhoods, a lesser need for integration into the host society—where they feel they are staying only temporarily—and, therefore, a greater need for social, cultural and linguistic mediators when the migrants have to deal with the majority group. The pro minority human rights movement has also played a role in encouraging respect for the linguistic and cultural rights of immigrants, making our modern societies more multicultural but not necessarily more intercultural, and indeed moving them even farther from the "melting pot" situation. Perhaps this is why the demand for translation and interpreting services in the United States has continued to rise.

It would seem that the main cause of the lack of integration of immigrants in host societies is not so much the linguistic or cultural divide but the prevalence of negative images of migrants. These images, conveyed by the media, and policies which aim at highlighting differences rather than commonalities—such as the *us vs. them* stereotype that tends to show nationals as victims of the foreigners—may lead to apocalyptic predictions of disintegration of the nation. A recent example is Thilo Sarrazin's controversial book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* ("Germany does away with itself", 2010), in which, among other things, he blames Muslims in Germany for their unwillingness to integrate and for their abuse of the German social services, and predicts that Muslims will soon overwhelm the German population due to their high birth rates.

Historical research suggests that the endeavor of changing mentalities—and the concept of *culture* has a lot to do with worldviews and traditions—requires periods of time, sometimes longer than a generation, to succeed. Our societies are characterized by a mosaic of linguistic groups, with harmonious notes at community level but with an apparent cacophony at the metropolitan, regional or national level.

The effort made by German authorities in recent legislation to push prospective immigrants to learn the language of the country seems to point to a certain (perceived) correlation between command of the language and social integration, but it remains to be seen 1) whether or not this is a sufficient incentive for immigrants to learn the language, and 2) whether or not a good command of the host country's language will be enough to secure integration. The fact that third-generation descendants of Turkish immigrants in Germany who are fluent in German are still far from being perceived by many groups as fully fledged Germans seems to contradict the apparent logic of the legal provisions. Perhaps we should reflect on the fact that we are applying a nation-state paradigm here when what we are actually facing are postnational formations (Nuhoglu Soysal 1994, 167), in which there can be many paths to integration, depending on *the type and extent of the assimilation involved* (Sackmann, 238).

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NOTE: For convenience, the issues and dates for press sources such as *El Adelanto de Salamanca*, the *Boston Daily Globe*, *Carta de España*, *Der Spiegel*, *La Región*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, the *Toronto Star* and *Die Zeit* are given in the text.

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