

Language rights and social reintegration through effective communication in prisons. A Case Study

Carmen Valero-Garcés

Bianca Vitalaru

Raquel Lázaro-Gutierrez

University of Alcalá

The legislation on foreign prisoners in different parts of the world demonstrates that the protection of language rights is only addressed in a few exceptional cases. There are legal instruments to protect these rights such as the Directive 2012/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2012 on the right to information in criminal proceedings, or the Directive 2010/64/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings). However, the transposition of these recommendations into binding provisions in parliament laws or international prison regulations is left to the discretion of each particular state or administration of the EU member states. Multiple reasons may influence these decisions (Baixauli-Olmos 2017). In Spain, in the absence of the provision of a professional service of Tr&In, fellow inmates who speak both the foreign language in question and Spanish are called upon to carry out linguistic intermediation between the foreign inmates and the prison staff. However, a growing concern about the need of a successful interaction in prison as part of the process of education and social integration mentioned in the Spanish Constitution underlines the importance of communication in achieving these objectives (Valero-Garces 2017). This process requires a joint effort from both prison staff and inmates. A pioneering example of such programmes that focuses on promoting social reintegration is the pilot training programme developed for bilingual prisoners as part of a co-ordinated research-action project developed between the University of Alcalá and the Spanish Directorate General for Penitentiaries This proposal aims at presenting some of the challenges of its design and implementation, first results and main conclusions of its implementation in a Spanish prison. These conclusions will eventually contribute to achieving one of the main goals of the project itself, that is, to implement the training program in different prison centers, evaluate its results and ultimately propose standards to contribute to the linguistic communication and integration of foreign inmates.

Key words: language rights; translation and interpretation services; interpreting training; prisons; social reintegration.

References

Baixauli-Olmos, L. 2013. A description of interpreting in prisons – Mapping the setting through an ethical lens. In C. Schäffner, K. Kredens and Y. Fowler (eds), *Interpreting in a Changing Landscape. Selected papers from Critical Link 6*, pp. 45-60 Amsterdam: John Benjamins. (in-text reference: Baixauli-Olmos 2013).

Valero-Garcés, C. (2017). "Ethical codes impacting in prison communication". Valero-Garcés, Carmen y Tipton, Rebecca (eds.), *Ideology, Ethics and Policy Development in Public Service Interpreting and Translation*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 105-130.