

# The role of emotions in interpreting in conflict zones

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Interpreting in armed conflicts have recently received considerable attention in academic literature. However, little attention has been paid to the role of the affective and how it shapes the interpreter's behaviour. I will present the results of a qualitative study carried out with Spanish military personnel and national and local interpreters who worked in Afghanistan. Although participants mentioned several different issues, I soon noticed one theme that consistently stood out both explicitly and implicitly—the impact of emotions on the interpreter's behaviour. The findings show that there is a difference between the national and the local interpreters in terms of their emotional implication in the conflict. The interpreters' emotions may have been affected by previous beliefs and events, the unique framing of a particular event, the ideology behind the conflict and pre-existing emotional sentiments about the different parties, and all of these factors influence the emotional response to each event. The emotions felt by local interpreters both guides their decisions when deciding to work as an interpreter and when interpreting and leads them to adapt the content of what they have to transmit. I conclude by establishing that the affective shapes the interpreter's positionality, particularly in conflicts in which he or she, as an individual belonging to the local community, is both judge and jury. In this discussion, I hope to be contributing to three on-going debates: the study will offer an empirically grounded account of the role of emotions and their impact on the behaviour of the interpreters who work for the military; a topic that has been overlooked despite the recognition of the extreme conditions under which these interpreters work. Secondly, the study aims at providing additional understanding of the factors that shape the interpreter's positionality. Finally, it will contribute to current debates about neutrality in certain contexts.

**Key words:** interpreting; armed conflicts; Afghanistan; emotions; positionality.

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