The Roles of Community Interpreters in War Zones: Iraq as an example

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Abstract— Taking into consideration the problems, dangers and challenges they faced, the overall aim of this paper is to advance a clear picture of the interpreting situation and the roles played by community interpreters in war zones namely in Iraq. It draws upon the results of questionnaires sent to more than 30 interpreters who worked for the coalition forces during the 2003 war in Iraq. Now they are living in Iraq and some other foreign countries they immigrated to. It is also based on a number of letters of recommendations given to these interpreters during their work with the military. The paper tries also to prove that interpreters adopted other roles other than the linguistic ones. They were given a multiplicity of tasks to help facilitate the military missions.

Keywords— community interpreting, interpreters, narrative theory, war zones, Iraq.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Community Interpreting: Definition

The surge of immigration activities, refugees because of war and natural disasters, to countries such as USA, Australia, Canada and others created many problems for these immigrants. Among these problems is the linguistic barrier created from the language of the host countries that do not allow them to get access to public service institutions. Governments in these countries and in order these minorities are treated equally started using interpreters to ensure equal rights for all.

Scholars have different definitions for Community Interpreting. Pochhacker used a setting-based definition. He says it "refers to interpreting in institutional settings of a given society in which public service providers and individual clients do not speak the same language"(1999:126-7). Other scholars such as Gentile define it according to language directionality of the activity. Another definition is in relation to the people who get the service (Mikkelson 1996:126-7). Generally, it is the activity that "enables people who are not fluent speakers of the official language(s) of the country to communicate with the providers of public services so as to facilitate full and equal access to legal, health, education, government, and social services" (Carr et al, 1997). Sandra Hale (2007:25) states that, in Community Interpreting, the interpreter deals with the most intimate and significant issues which are related to people's daily life.

1.2 Interpreting Studies and the diversity of the interpreter's roles:

In all of the above types of interpreting activities, scholars have been trying to find the appropriate framework to describe the roles adopted by the interpreter. While the principal responsibility of an interpreter is to bridge the language barrier between individuals speaking different languages in order that they may communicate freely with each other, there is no consensus on the best way to achieve this. Thus, terms such as 'cooperation', 'conciliator', 'gatekeeper' or 'advocacy' reflect the assumption that interpreters are not mere machines but active and visible participants (Langue2009:3). In civil settings have been discussed in the field of Interpreting Studies in contexts such as the role of interpreters (e.g. Anderson 1978:209-231; "Perspectives on the Role of Interpreter" in Pöchhacker and Shlesinger 2002). The following discussion will focus on the nature of the roles the interpreters adopt in a number of settings. Roberts (1997) mentions some features that seem to characterize community interpreting from other kinds of interpreting services. Among these are: assistance, cultural brokering, advocacy, and conciliation. This is the framework in which community interpreting seems to be placed nowadays.
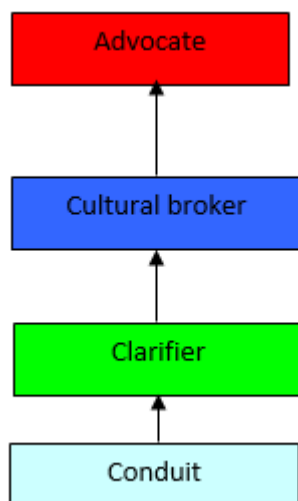
Fig.1: Interpreters roles (after Diversity Rx 1998)

1.2.1 The Helper Model

This model was dominant in the decades before 1960 where the interpreter is not differentiated from a helper (Roy 1996:349). The family members and friends do free interpreting for the deaf persons. Though this model appeals for many, it means that the deaf people cannot handle their own business without the intervention of the helper. Deaf people relied on "helpers" to communicate with the hearing world. These helpers were frequently hearing friends and family who had some knowledge of both the signed and spoken language in question (Roy, 1993, p. 139; Metzger, 1999, p. 22).

1.2.2 The Conduit Model

Although there was agreement that the basic function of the interpreter is to provide conversion of a message spoken in one language into another, there is a lack of a consensus on the type of role the interpreter has to adopt. Thus, one of the early conceptualizations that attempts to account for the role of the community interpreter is the "conduit model". According to this perspective, the sole function of the interpreter is "message passing". This approach limits the responsibility of the interpreter to the linguistic aspects of communication between the client and the service provider. The interpreter simply provides the conversion so that the other participants in the interpretive event are able to respond to the original message as if it were communicating in the original language.

1.2.3 The Communication-Facilitators (clarifier) Model

This conceptualization defines the primary function of the role as the facilitation of the communication process between two people who do not speak the same language

in order to make possible the goal of the encounter. The primary focus is on communication clarity. To achieve such clarity, it may be "necessary to provide linguistic clarification, cultural brokering, and limited advocacy while respecting the goals of the individual participants and the community. In doing so, the interpreter must also keep in mind the programmatic and institutional context in which she is interpreting as well as the cultural and political context of the patient's community."(Avery 2001:7).

1.2.4 The Cultural Broker Model

This is the third conceptualization as mentioned by Roberts in her framework to describe the role of the community interpreter. Cecilia Wadensjö (1992) introduced the concept of **broker** in interpreting studies when discussing the role of community interpreters. In her opinion in the course of community interpreting it is a mutual interest of primary communication partners to get into contact with one another, but they do not intend or have the abilities to initiate direct communication. In this case they look for or accept the assistance of a mediator.

Roda P. Roberts (1997) speaks about **cultural brokerage** when discussing the activity of community (also cultural) interpreters. The role of the community interpreter is active, assisting, safeguarding, at times also reconciliatory. While in other types of interpreting cultural mediation is only one aspect, in community interpreting this is the accentuated aspect. Garber (2000: 9-20), admits that the community interpreter must bear in his mind that part of his job consists of dealing with cultural differences that may render communication difficult.

1.2.5 The Advocate Model

Generally speaking, advocacy involves interventions to help ensure that individuals receive the services they need and to which they are entitled, as well as to help the service providers meet their statutory requirements. Advocacy is taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain services they need. It implies "defending, pleading for the or actively supporting the client"(Roberts1997:13).

1.3 Community interpreting in war zones:

In war zones, it is hard to maintain the definite roles of interpreters especially of the locally-hired interpreters. There is a continuum of roles ranging from that of a linguistic conduit to cultural brokering or advocacy. Interpreters can hardly work only as bilinguals whose main task is to facilitate the flow of information between two parties who cannot understand each other. Seleskovitch suggested three prerequisites for professional translation:

knowledge of the source and target languages, knowledge of the topic, and professional methodology. These prerequisites cannot be applied if they are put into practice. The discussion of two cases from Iraq and former Yugoslavia will show the impossibility of applying these three principles in these zones of conflict.

1.3.1 Iraq:

This section will discuss the emergence of military interpreting in south of Iraq. Using setting-based classification, this interpreting activity can be considered as a form of community interpreting because the service provider is the US military who assists in the provision of the public service. After the invasion and before forming the transitional government in Iraq, the US military was in charge of everything in the country. Thus, in addition to providing and maintaining security the US-led Coalition forces were entitled to coordinate and distribute humanitarian aid, building the infrastructures and many other tasks.

However, community interpreting started to emerge in Iraq since the beginning of 2003. In addition to the great numbers of foreign troops, Iraq witnessed the influx of NGOs and other international organizations. The demand for speakers of English has risen drastically for military and civil activities since the invasion. At times during the war in Iraq, the U.S. experienced shortages among translators to aid American troops. This vital need led the US Department of Defense to recruit a large number of interpreters to cover the scarcity of interpreters. A contract was given to a San Diego contracting company**1** to supply hundreds of interpreters to U.S. forces in Iraq. This company started hiring people who speak limited English and with no professional experience as interpreters and translators to cover the urgent need for the interpreters. From taxi drivers to English teachers, Titan Corp. starts hiring many interpreters. This clearly violates the principles of professional interpreting laid by Seleskovitch. The hundreds of Iraqis who have worked as translators contributed an invaluable knowledge of local customs and terrain as well as their knowledge of English to a difficult process of communication between two cultures.

Palmer (2007), drawing on interviews with a number of Western journalists, states that interpreters were given different tasks in Iraq. They provided information for the journalists, ensure security and fix appointments with the officials. There is a continuum of possibilities. At one extreme, the interpreter adopts the role of "conduit". His main task is to relay the messages from one language to another; this role can be replaced by a machine (ibid.).

On their part, Journalists used the interpreters as fixers;

translation was one task. They depended on their good network of contacts and their knowledge of the local culture. The translators' language qualification and competence were not important.

However, and despite all the important and humanitarian tasks the interpreters showed towards their society, the job was so risky that describing oneself as an interpreter could be a matter of life and death. Locally hired interpreters face highly dangerous situations: They are killed on the job, helping American troops in combat; and they are killed off duty by insurgents who see them as traitors and pro-American collaborators. According to the U.S. Department of Labor statistics, by 2006 a total of 199 interpreters hired by Titan had been killed in Iraq and another 491 had been injured (Inter Press Service 2006).

II. NARRATIVE THEORY

2.1 Defining Narrative

Narrative theorists state that (e.g. Sarbin 1986) we are born in a storied world, and we live our lives through the creation and exchange of narratives. Narrative can be defined as an organized interpretation of events. This involves attributing agency to the characters in the narrative and inferring causal between the events. Somers (1994:630) argues that the kinds of narratives people use to make sense of their situations will always be an empirical rather than presuppositional question, and that it is essential that we explicate, rather than assume or take for granted, the narratives of groups and persons. Jerome Bruner (1991: 4) proposes that "narratives…are a version of reality" and are different from logical, scientific realities that are verifiable empirically. Narrative realities, according to Bruner, can achieve a "likeness of reality, but do not exist in any verifiably objective way."

2.2 Translation and Narrative

In translation studies, the application of narrative theory is still at its beginnings. Baker was among the first theorists who explored its application to translation and interpreting. According to Baker (2006: 56), interpreters are not merely passive reviewers of assignments from others; many initiate their own translation…and volunteer for interpreting tasks that contribute to the elaboration of particular narratives. She added that they are not detached…whose involvement begins and ends with the delivery of a linguistic product.

2.3 A Typology of Narratives:

The revised version of narratives typology where sociological and narratological approaches are combined together to formulate a new model (Harding2009 :). It

divides the narratives into personal narratives and collective narratives. The latter will include the remaining three types of the original model with a fourth category is added. Also, in this revised version, the narrator becomes of a key importance (Baker 2008:38).

2.3.1 Personal Narratives:

They are stories that we tell ourselves about our place in the world and about our own personal history (Baker 2006). These stories may be constructed from events in a variety of time spans. Riessman (1993) offers a clear methodology of analysis of oral narratives in five levels. The first level of this model begins with "primary" or "prelinguistic" experience. Riessman calls this level as "attending". The second level is the telling of these personal narratives. At this level, there is a chance to create consensus with the individuals who interact with these narratives (cited in Harding 2009). The third level in the model is "transcribing" this experience into written text. "Analyzing" is the fourth level in Riessman's model of representing the experience. At any of these five levels, personal narratives can be found (Harding 2009).

2.3.2 Collective Narratives:

These are stories elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual, such as the family, .religious or educational institution, the media, and the nation (Baker2006). These include the following sub-narratives:

- **Local Narratives:** stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate for themselves and others about their object of inquiry. It is additional to the four narratives found in the original version by Baker (2006). These types of narratives relate particular events in particular places at particular times. They are the kinds that happen in everyday conversations.

- **Societal narratives:** narratives "in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history… Progress, Decadence, Industrialization, Enlightment, etc." (Somers 1994:605) explains that meta-narratives can also be "the epic dramas of our time: Capitalism vs. Communism, the Individual vs. Society, and Barbarism/Nature vs. Civility.

- **Theoretical narratives:** This is the third type of narrative in Baker's model. They are "the stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate for themselves and others about their

objects of inquiry (Baker 2006:39). Baker gives some examples such as Huntington's "Clash of Civilization"(1993).

- **Meta-narratives:** In this type of narratives, according to Somers and Gibson's(1994) and Somer's (1997) typology, master narratives in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history' (1997:86).These narratives acquire currency through the power of the story and not only by the authority of those who elaborate and promote them (Harding 2009:51). 'War on Terror' and 'Cold War' are examples of this type of narratives.

Baker argues that "narratives do not travel across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and certainly do not accrue and develop into global Meta narratives without the direct involvement of translators and interpreters" (Baker 2006:9). Therefore without telling their personal narratives, interpreters will continue be looked at as traitors. It is with repeated exposure to the narrative that leads to "the shaping of a culture, tradition, or history"(ibid.). Which discourses and narratives serve which moral or immoral agendas is ultimately a question of our own narrative location – what narratives we buy into, both individually and collectively(ibid.:12).

To describe themselves as "morally superior, peace-giving professionals are neither convincing nor productive"(ibid.), instead, the interpreters need to recognize and acknowledge our own embeddedness in a variety of narratives. Therefore, drawing on Harding (2009) narrative model, the assumption is that the interpreters are embedded in situations for the real service of their community. This embeddedness can be highlighted in a number of narratives. In promoting these narratives, the interpreters will draw the public attention to the great jobs accomplished during the years of working with the coalition forces. Though powerful institutions are needed to promote their narratives, it is with the repeated exposure that they will be forced on the public consciousness. While there is no absolute truth of any narrative, the verification and proof of the interpreters' narratives can be" sought through the use of triangulation methods whereby several independent reports of an event are required in order to establish that the event really happened (Polinghorne 1995, cited in Baker2006:18). Therefore, the following data come from three sources: our personal stories, the coalition forces' letters of recommendations and appreciations, and Iraqi institutions will support the three assumptions that the interpreters have three narratives to promote and challenge the dominant and hostile narratives of their adversary.

2.4. The Coordination Narrative

1- Education projects:

There are other roles the interpreters adopted during their working years such as coordinating meetings between the Civil Affairs section and Iraqi business groups as part of a programme by the US government to fund micro-projects. During this interpreting events and sessions, the interpreter instructed the local Iraqis about the best procedures and the suitable ways to explain their projects such as the costs and the expected profits and how the project will change their lives and their families' as well. As a result, their micro-projects will be approved and finally get funded.

"**The civil affairs officers asked me to meet some Iraqi businessmen and businesswomen as well and arrange some meeting with them. My job was translate only but I know that this mission will bring some benefit to some families, so I invited some of businesswomen and coordinated the meetings to meet the officers and listen to the stories of these women as I translate them into English**" expressed one of the interpreters in his personal narrative. This is also supported the survey when the sweeping majority of the respondents expressed their coordination role in the interpretative events.

2-Textbooks for Law College Students:

Working for the Civil Affairs section entails engaging in many projects to bring relief for the community. One of the valuable tasks was supplying the college of Law with textbooks. This was supported by an important a certificate of appreciation from the dean of the college given to the interpreter. This institution, by the help and coordination of the interpreter, received funding to purchase textbooks strongly needed for the students (see appendix):

"**Your excellent help in the coordination of printing and supplying 1000 textbooks for the first and the second year students…has been a credit…**"

This narrative was supported by 67% of the respondents who expressed their readiness to get embedded in for the service of the community.

3- Infrastructure projects:

In many missions, the military unit sends their interpreter in advance to coordinate for the mission such as building schools and roads and other civilian projects. The following excerpt supports this narrative (see appendices A and B):

"**Mr X was responsible for helping in the coordination of building 4 schools throughout Di Qar**

Territory"

The children were deprived of education because they have no schools or if there is any, it is far away from their homes that they drop out to go there. Therefore, the interpreters' role was vital in coordinating to rebuild these projects.

2.6. The Cultural facilitation Narratives

The specific examples analyzed here happened during the years of my working with Civil Affairs section in the US army.

Baker (2006: 105) argues that "translators and interpreters are not merely passive and active receivers of assignments from others". The role is very important during the intercultural communication between the American military officers on one side and tribal leaders on the other. The military officers have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They depend on the interpreter who is well aware of the Iraqi culture- here is in the tribal areas- where tradition, religion, taboos is very important to maintain a smooth interaction. The role of the interpreter is pivotal to the entire social process. Both sides rely heavily on the interpreter to communicate themselves. [See the appendix for the pictures]

2.5 The Advocacy Narrative:

There are many cases where the interpreter worked as an advocate for local nationals. For example, he offered his help for the local claimants to get their claims accepted. The main roles of the interpreters in these settings were to fill in forms, directions and also to add and omit some details in the narratives of the claimants to make them convincing and acceptable for the military lawyer. The following narrative is my personal narrative which clearly shows how the interpreter worked as an advocate for the claimant:

As part of Civil Affairs Unit, US army pays compensations for the claimants who are themselves or members of their families or their personal property got in cross fire or get hit by a military convoy. However, they have strict procedures and conditions for that need to be fulfilled and met. For example, the American lawyer informed all the claimants that according to the International law, there will be no compensation for anyone who got killed or injured or his properties damaged during the time of military operations from the beginning of the war until it ends.

However, many innocent civilians filed claims that state the damage of their properties or a member of their families got killed or injured during the days of

this unjust war.

The written texts in Arabic clearly state that. In such situations, the role of the interpreter is tremendous. I had a conflict of loyalties. One hand, the invasion resulted in the death of thousands of innocent people and lost properties; on the other hand, I have to be stick to the codes of ethics of my profession. I could not resist my sympathy with my people and being sided with them. However, as Baker (2007:p.7) tries to stress " We are dealing with human beings, not machines, and no code of conduct or talk about 'professionalism' can ever change this reality".

As a result, I reframed their written descriptions of the incidents and changed the "time" when these incidents took place and changed them from occurring during the days of the military operations (in this time they will not be compensated) to a date after the end of the war as declared by George Bush.

Moreover, some of the letters of appreciation from military commanders referred to the advocacy narrative and how important it was for the success of their missions to monitor some infrastructure projects in local areas; it is echoed in the following excerpt:

"Mr X interfaced with the local sheikhs as well as local nationals to ensure there was no hindrance to the mission"

In another situation, the interpreters have also worked as advocates for the local nationals and managed to bring projects to remote areas which were deprived of the public services for years during the old regime. The excerpt from a letter by the military clearly refers to that:

"I have had the privilege of working with Mr X on several projects to provide relief and humanitarian assistance to the citizens in…"

III.   DATA ANALYSIS

Taking the roles of the interpreter of (Diversity Rx) as a point of departure and drawing on Baker's narrative framework from chapter two, this chapter suggests a model to analyze and discuss the questionnaires. The interpreters in war zones perform a multiplicity of roles and tasks for the service of their own community. The results, in addition to some available documents and pictures, will be used to support the assumptions concerning the interpreters' narratives and how they can be accentuated to defend themselves against the hostile public narratives.

3.1 Distribution of the Questionnaire

At the beginning, forty requests were sent to three of

my friends who volunteer to help me distribute the questionnaires. The first one lives in Iraq and the other two live as refugees in Australia and the UK respectively. Those three volunteers can easily obtain the interpreters' emails because they used to work together in war zones. More interestingly, these interpreters formulate their own communities in the host countries where they live close to each other now and they are in daily contact and frequent family visits. That facilitates greatly the distribution of the survey. Thus, it was easy for the three volunteers to contact their friends and get the feedback and then forward it to me. Later on, some direct contacts were administrated with some of these interpreters when they finally gain trust on the objectives of the questionnaire.

3.2 Method and Data Analysis:

Using the discussion and classifications of the roles discussed earlier and the modified narrative model, this part will analyze and discuss the questionnaires.

3.2.1 Roles at early Stage

1- Why did you choose to work as an interpreter?

a- for financial reasons   b- to improve language skills c- both

The overwhelming majority (85%) of the respondents worked for both reasons. This will support later the main narratives for working as interpreters. Though there was no risk from any military group during that time, yet the interpreters worked only for these two reasons.
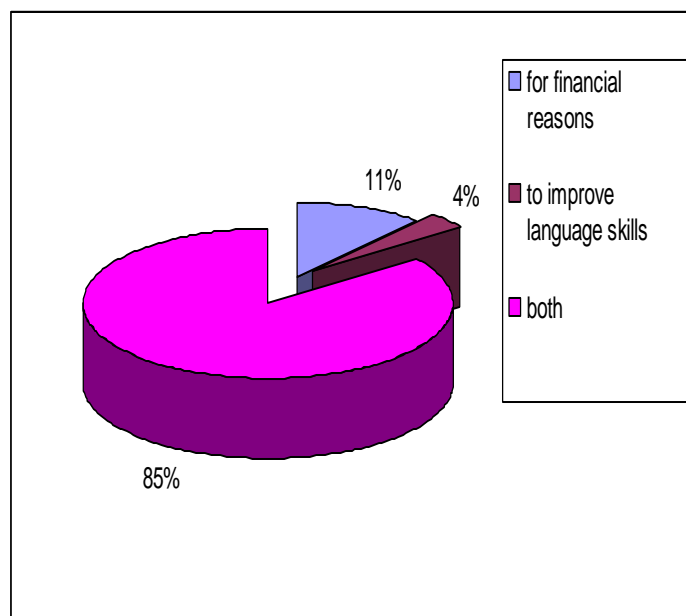
2- Do you think it is important for you to know whether it is *Halal* or *Haraam* to work as interpreter, and why?

a- Yes   b- No

This is very important question because it will explore the stance and justification of the religious institution. Basically, there is no harm in working as an interpreter in general but it acquired connotation here as it is connected with the occupation forces; it becomes, therefore, very important for the interpreter to make sure that his job with the invaders is religiously right. The question has some implications because almost all Iraqi Muslims check their acts in terms of Halal or Haraam (Kadhim 2006: 4). Firstly, religion forms the core of the opponents' narrative. Thus, referring to religion is important for the interpreters to strengthen their narrative. The question reveals the idea that the roles are already set for the interpreters which they are going to practice. In other words, the interpreters are assigned in advance with roles other than the "conduit" role

Therefore, it is not unusual for the crushing majority (81%) of the respondents to check the religious legality of their work as the following comments of two of the respondents show:

"**It is important for me to know whether it is Halal or Haram, because I fellow the religious leadership in such cases**".

Another gave this comment: "**According to my religion and belief, it's so important to know the type of the job which I'm applying for**".
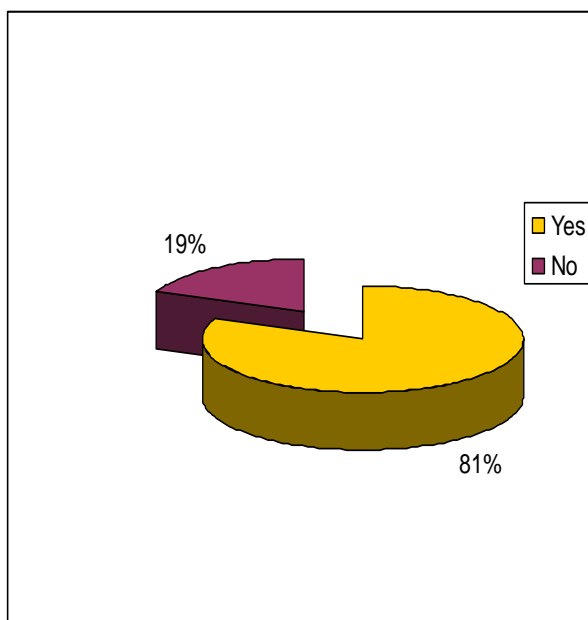
Secondly, when they were asked, all the religious clerics expressed their approval of the interpreters to work with the coalition forces provided that those interpreters act for the benefit of their community and "must" not support the invader against the people. Based on this approval, it becomes religiously right to work as an interpreter.

A third implication for this question is related to the social status of the interpreters and how the community looks at them. As one has the following comment:

"**Working as interpreter is very arguable issue in our society which is highly controlled by the religious-governed rules. On the one hand, different views have been introduced in terms of this job. On the other, such job entails the person to be very accurate and caution as it underpins some social, cultural, and religious taboos in certain contexts. Accordingly, it seems necessary for me to know whether it is Halal or Harram.**"

However, (19%) of the respondents chose not to check on that. Some of them are secular persons who show no interest in religious issues in most of their daily life acts. Others chose to say no because they themselves think that working as an interpreter does no harm and that there is no need to ask a cleric about that.

3.2.3 Mediation and the Interpreters' Roles at later Stage

3- How do you define your role as an interpreter, and why?

a- Just a linguist   b- coordinator   c- advocate
d- All of these roles

The two questions are firstly meant to probe how the respondents perceive their mediation in the interpreting activities in war zones when the realities on the ground had changed. The military groups started to be active and also people began to formulate opinions towards the coalition forces and the interpreters.

Four options were given drawing on the different tasks assigned to them during their work. The questions are designed to elicit the respondents' view of the applicability of each of these roles based on the realities of the interpreting situations in the war zone.

The linguistic or the "conduit" model got only 7% of the responses since it is impossible to identify with this role given the challenges on the ground. Thus, the "Just a linguist" role is dropped from the list of probabilities because of the impossibility of its application in such demanding setting.

As the chart shows, the majority (67%) of the respondents chose the forth option to indicate that their role can hardly be like a machine. One of them has the following comment:

I think that interpreter suppose to have a knowledge of these roles to be able to solve and do any requested activities that related to his work. For instant, civil affair interpreter covers all these roles because he

coordinates meetings between local civil departments with coalition forces-to perform projects beside his job as a linguist…
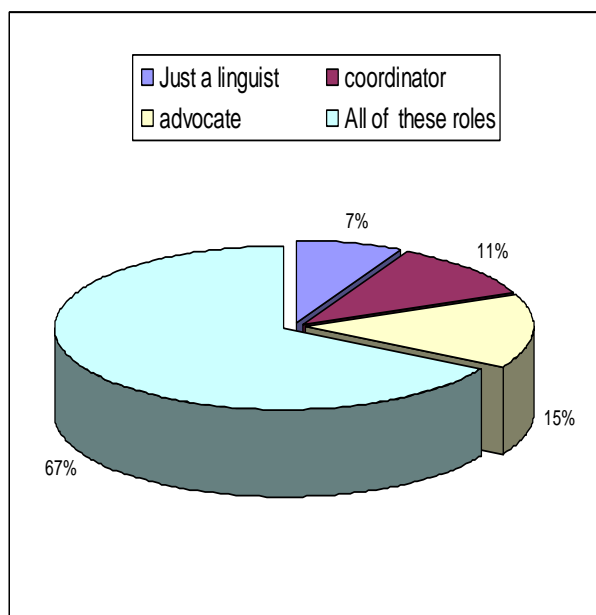

Another respondent comment:

"My job is not just translating and interpreting between two languages. I was also involved in coordinating the works and views of people who have different languages. In addition, I used my position with coalition forces to *advocate* some people or opinions that I feel they deserve that."

These respondents again highlighted the fact that they are more than a "conduit" in the war zone. This strongly supports the hypothesis on the impossibility of the "conduit" role.

4- Do you think your mediation to explain cultural differences is important?

a- Yes   b- Sometimes   c- No

This question is also concerned to reveal further the interpreters' perception of cultural differences and the applicability of the role of cultural mediator in war zones since it is crucial for the success of the communication among the participants.
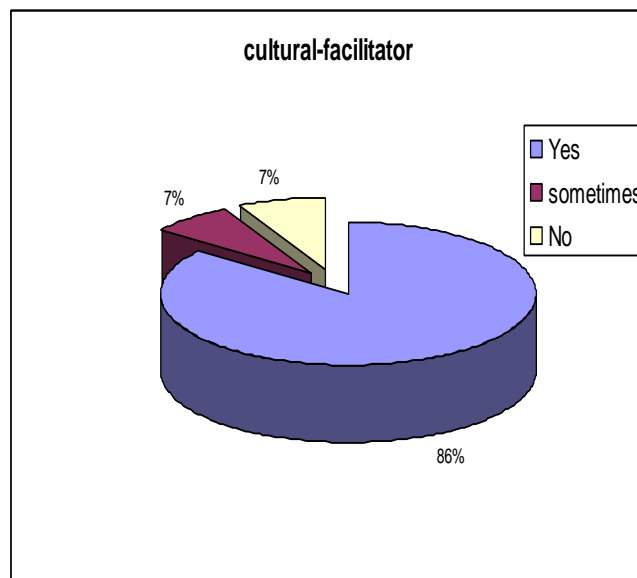
In war zone, there are many situations where the interpreter has to interfere to explain cultural differences between the military and the local community. Both sides depend greatly on the interpreters' cultural capital to facilitate the communication between them. The following excerpt by a military commander's memo strongly supports this role **"…he gave me and key leaders a simple lesson on the local customs and courtesy…"** (See appendix).

The chart shows that the sweeping majority (86%) agreed that mediation to explain the cultural differences is so important. It implies that they should mediate to explain the cultural barriers to ensure the spontaneity of the communication process. This is referred to by the military commander's letter of recommendation given to the interpreters:

"In recognition of your cultural advice and linguistic support to members of the overwatch Battle Group…"

Another excerpt states that the interpreter**" has been a very useful source of general and specific information for all local events and accidents"**. This clearly shows that the role of cultural mediation is a main task of the interpreter in war zones.

The military depended extensively on the interpreter's cultural capital for the accomplishment of their missions. The interpreter, according to a military document, is **"responsible for the facilitation of all the meetings held…"** This strongly supports the hypothesis on the important narrative of cultural mediation of the interpreter.

3.2.4 Advocacy and the Multiplicity of Tasks:

5- Do you think that bringing assistance, within the confines of your role, to a certain local area or group of people is important if you feel you can do it, and why?

a- Yes   b- No   c- Never

This question and the other two will explore whether the interpreters in war zones had adopted the role of advocacy or not. In earlier questions, most of the respondents replied to question 2 with overwhelming majority that their job is Halal since it brings with it assistance to their community. Here, the respondents agree with striking majority that adopting the role of advocacy is so important for the benefit of their community and themselves as well. The core of the coalition forces narrative is to help the Iraqi people and to help them rebuild their community. To do so, they need to show that successfully on the ground for the local nationals. The military initiated a program to rebuild many educational institutions, health centers in addition to many other civilian projects. That was a golden opportunity for the interpreters to show proof that their job with the invaders is religiously and socially acceptable and vital for the community. They directed people in how to approach the Civil Affairs in the coalition forces and submit a request for rebuilding a school, for example, or fixing roads. More than that, the interpreters themselves write the request and translate it and then coordinate a meeting between the military and the local nationals. The chart below indicates that the overwhelming majority agree to take the role of advocacy to help their community as the following comment by one respondent shows:

"Because at the end of the day my, community and country will benefit from this assistance". Q5
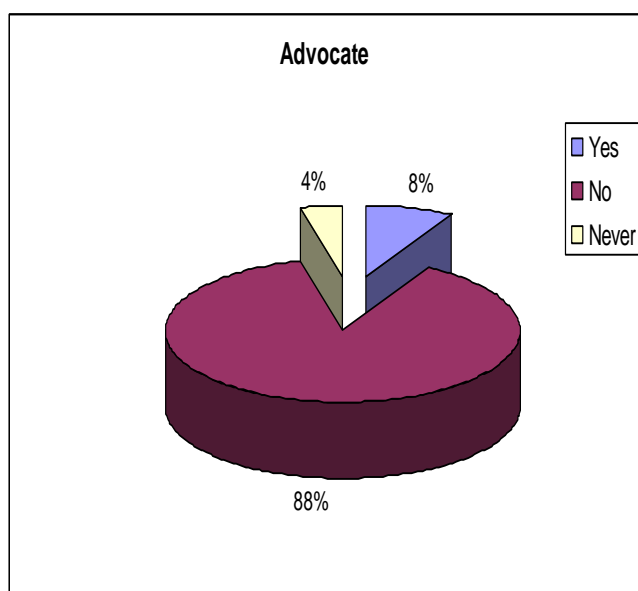

Some other interpreters chose to adopt this role for their security. One respondent has this comment:

"It is important to do this in order to: keep myself secured, start the first step in a certain group or area, make those people that my role is coordinator as a part of this community not just a linguist".

6-If a claimant who got injured by a military convoy asked you to help him get his compensation, would you help him and how?

a- Yes   b- No

Again, this question will further explore the narrative of advocacy. In war zones, so many accidents happened that involved local people being killed or injured or their property got damaged by the military convoys. The Coalition started a program to compensate the victims. Depending on the description submitted by the claimants, the lawyer with the military will decide whether to approve or to reject the submitted claims. To get a convincing description of the accident, the claimant thinks that the interpreter will help and will identify with him simply because he is a member of his community and the loyalty should not be to the invader. The chart shows a crushing majority of the respondents (93%) agree to help.
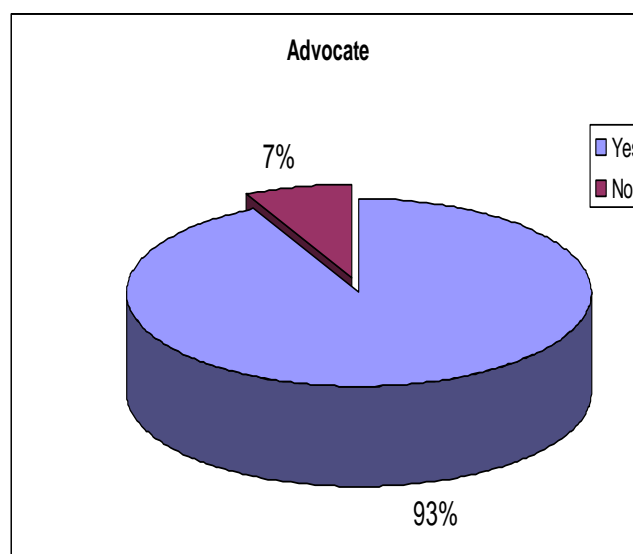
Furthermore, one respondent used the word **"direct"** which clearly shows his advocacy narrative:

"I can *direct* him to the right channels to ask for his compensation. Also I can help him in translating the documents to be affective during his claim for his right".

Other respondents adopt this role of advocacy clearly:

"I will go directly to ask the team that I am working with to facilitate his/her claim. I may *advocate* their case"

All the above argument strongly supports the hypothesis of "advocacy" narrative (2.4.4.3) of the interpreters in war

zones.

IV. CONCLUSION

The analysis and discussion in this chapter make it very clear that the roles of the interpreters are devoted to coordination, cultural facilitating and advocacy in addition to being linguists as well. The percentage proves that the interpreter plays pivotal roles in war zones to bring benefits to the community in addition to his family. Their consultation and advocacy roles managed to get schools rebuilt for the children, clinics, roads and other projects established in many remote villages which were deprived for decades during the old regime.

The questionnaire is analyzed and discussed using a model from the narrative paradigm and the roles of community interpreters in chapter two. It appears that the respondents strongly support the hypothesis that there is a multiplicity of roles adopted by the interpreters in war zones. Also, the results showed that the majority of the respondents opted for an advocacy and cultural mediation in the interpretative event.

Furthermore, the results obtained from the analysis and discussion of the questionnaire verified the three assumptions in chapter two that the interpreters' three narrative can formulate a whole personal narrative, if put in the media, it could challenge the hostile narratives.

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Appendix

Samples of the letters of appreciation:
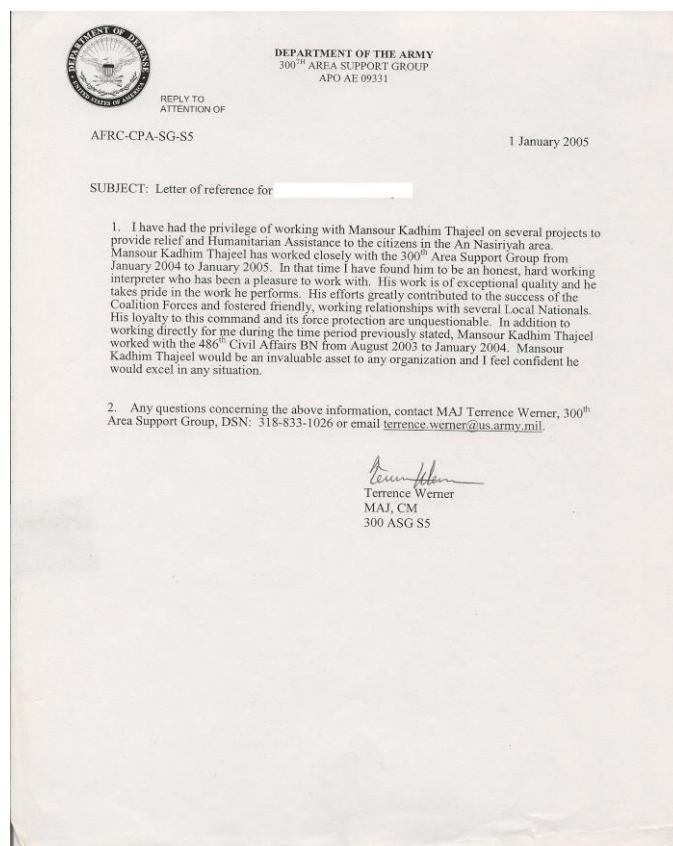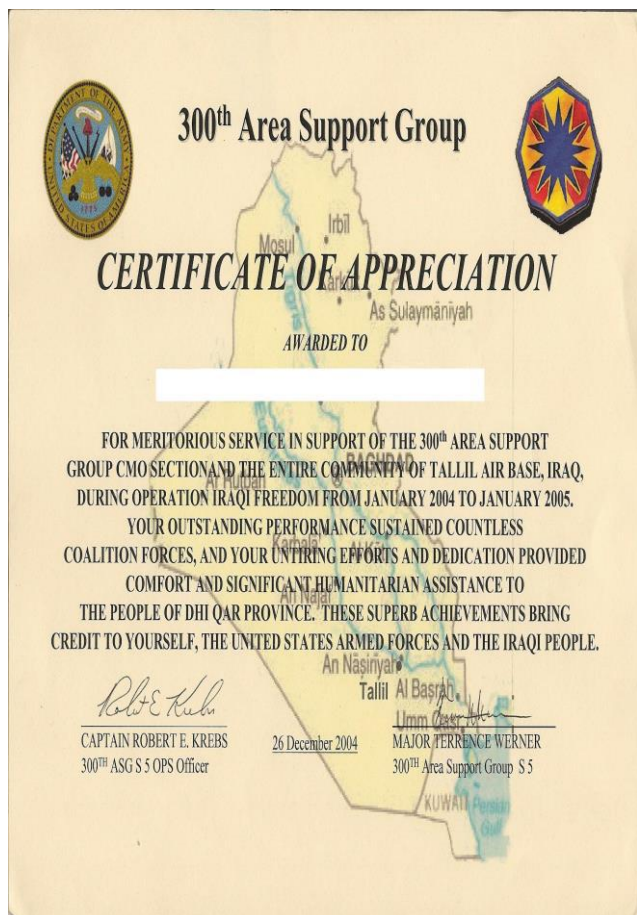
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
122ND SUPPORT GROUP (CORPS)
LSA ADDER APO AE 09331

WXBJAA   1 OCT 05

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

1. This memorandum is to certify that Mr.   was assigned as an interpreter with the U.S. Army Headquarters 122nd CSG Post Command during the year's 2004-2005. Mr.   was responsible for helping in the coordination of building 4 schools through out the Di Qar Territory.

2. We are very satisfied with his performance and recommend his services to any future U.S. Military Command or Coalition Forces. His dedication to a job well done is unquestionable. All work was performed professionally and in a timely manner.

3. POC of contact for this memorandum is the undersigned at DSN 833-1026, Tallil Iraq or Johnny.keel1@us.army.mil

Johnny F Keel
1LT, USA
S-5
Civil Affairs Officer

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
1015th MAINTENANCE COMPANY
COB ADDER, IRAQ
APO, AE 09331

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

AFZX-HC-CS-1015   18 May 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Letter of Recommendation for Mr.   .

1. Mr. Mansour Kadhim Thajeel has my strongest recommendation for any linguistic or related field of work that he pursues. His work ethic is nothing short of exemplary job performance.

2. I have worked together with Mr.   from August 28th to May 20th. During this period, he has shown a high level of professionalism in his job as an Interpreter for the Canal Pump Mission. Regardless of language barriers, one can trust in the abilities of Mr. Thajeel to relay and translate messages from English to Arabic and vice-versa without any doubts of misinterpretation.

3. He is well respected by the local nationals and Sheiks in the area, and a trustworthy co-worker. Often, when we encounter maintenance or fuel issues with the pump sites, Mr.   would be the first to notify us in advance about the specific problems. This allowed my mission team to prepare and have what is needed before conducting combat logistic patrols to the canal pump sites. Thus, saving valuable man-hours and helped us diagnose and address maintenance or fuel issues effectively, which contributed to the overall success of our mission.

4. Mr.   is a person of integrity, who is honest and has the best interests of Soldiers in mind. He gave me and key leaders a simple lesson on the local customs and courtesy, informed members of the canal mission team of any possible threats in the area, and was always willing to provide assistance. From 120 canal convoy missions that we conducted in the last 8 months, Mr.   participated in 115. Aside from a few days of absence due to family emergencies and situations out of his control—such as the fighting between the Iraqi Police and local militia and gangs, which held him from coming to work— Mr.   attended every mission.

5. POC is the undersigned at puletasi.wong-mageo@iraq.centcom.mil or DSN 318-833-2034/5050.

Puletasi H. Wong-Mageo
1LT, OD
OIC, Canal Pump Mission

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
1015ᵗʰ MAINTENANCE COMPANY
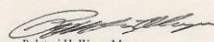COB ADDER, IRAQ
APO, AE 09331

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

AFZX-HC-CS-1015   18 May 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Letter of Recommendation for Mr. _____.

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3. He is well respected by the local nationals and Sheiks in the area, and a trustworthy co-worker. Often, when we encounter maintenance or fuel issues with the pump sites, Mr. ____ would be the first to notify us in advance about the specific problems. This allowed my mission team to prepare and have what is needed before conducting combat logistic patrols to the canal pump sites. Thus, saving valuable man-hours and helped us diagnose and address maintenance or fuel issues effectively, which contributed to the overall success of our mission.

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5. POC is the undersigned at puletasi.wong-mageo@iraq.centcom.mil or DSN 318-833-2034/5050.

Puletasi H. Wong-Mageo
1LT, OD
OIC, Canal Pump Mission

122d Support Group
Certificate of Appreciation

Presented to

_____
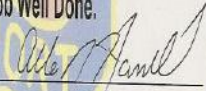
For

Your excellent job performance while assigned as an Interpreter for the S-5 Civil Affairs section of Headquarters 122ⁿᵈ CSG during Operation Iraqi Freedom III. Your professionalism and dedication to your country and Coalition Forces are beyond words . Your actions reflect great credit upon yourself, the citizens of Iraq and The Multi-National Coalition. Thanks for a Job Well Done.

Allen M. Harrell
COL, QM, AL ARNG
Commander

Alabama Army National Guard

159 (Colenso) Battery Royal Artillery
26ᵗʰ Regiment Royal Artillery Battlegroup
Op TELIC 3
BFPO 643

XXVI

12 April 2004

REFERENCE FOR ⬚

⬚ has been employed as an interpreter for the Iraqi Police Service and Coalition Forces in Abu Al Khasib since April 2003. He was one of the first local interpreters employed by the British Forces in the area. He has a BA in English from the University of Basra.

⬚ is an excellent interpreter and an outstanding translator (having previously been employed as a translator for a bureau in Basra). He has been employed to deal with many of the more difficult interpreting tasks, including meetings and conferences with local civic leaders, Imams and councillors. He has been depended upon to translate important documents and letters both from and to English. He has an excellent working knowledge of local and district governance and Iraqi culture and politics.

⬚ has been extremely hardworking and dedicated. He is a very bright man, who will be an asset to any future employer.

C R WARNER
Maj
BC 159

From Lieutenant D W E Johnston REME

38 (SERINGAPATAM) BATTERY, ROYAL ARTILLERY
40ᵀᴴ REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY
Alanbrooke Barracks
Topcliffe
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
YO7 3EY

SERINGAPATAM

Telephone Military: 9 (4712) 5233
Civil: 01748 875233

22 August 2003

To whom it may concern,

Mr ⬚ A has been employed as an interpreter for 38 (Seringapatam) Battery, 40th Regiment Royal Artillery, The Lowland Gunners, over the period July – August 2003. I have worked closely with him on all Abu Al Khasib Council Meetings throughout which his linguistic skills, attitude and professionalism were outstanding.

I highly recommend this man to any future employer.

J (Sidi Rezegh) Battery Royal Horse Artillery
3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery
c/o 7 Armoured Brigade
British Forces Post Office 647

III

22 June 2003

To whom it may concern,

....A has worked as an interpreter for J (Sidi Rezegh) Battery Royal Horse Artillery during the period May – June 2003 whilst the Bty had responsibility for the Al Faw Peninsula AO. With an excellent command of the English language, a background in medicine and a highly professional demeanour, his work as the G5 interpreter has been invaluable to the Bty. His conduct has been exemplary throughout.

I highly recommend him to any future employer.

R T OLDFIELD
Capt
J G5

J (SIDI REZEGH) BTY
3 RHA
A0202A

G5 CIMIC
HQ 3 Cdo Bde
Op TELIC
BFPO 654

4 May 03

To whom if may concern,

LETTER OF RECOMENDADTION

1. This letter of reference is for bearer, Mr .... who worked as an interpreter for 3 Cdo Bde between 14 – 30 Apr 2003. During this time Mr .... was a faithful and trusted interpreter who is highly qualified in his role.

2. He is highly suitable in any capacity, in particular where confidence is essential. Mr I.............. comes highly recommended and would be suitable to work for military units or IGOs/NGOs in the future. He has an exceptionally high level of English and is able to complete simultaneous translations. He was used in high-level meetings involving the regional council of Abu Al Khasib, where tact, understanding and accuracy were essential.

A J HENDERSON
Maj
3 Cdo Bde G5

Major GJ Boyd
Officer Commanding
FSp Company
2RRF
Basrah Palace
Operation TELIC
BFPO 657

...... has been employed as an interpreter for MNF since Op TELIC 1 in 2003. Most recently he has worked with Fire Support Company, Second Fusiliers, in Basrah Rural South for the last three months specifically as the interpreter for the Company Commander.

is an outstanding interpreter. His understanding of the English language, both written and spoken, is quite superb. It would, however, be wrong to say that l is just an interpreter. He has done far more than that over the last few years. I lives in Basrah and as such has a clear understanding of the security issues in Basrah as well as Hamdaan and Abu Al Khasib. He has on many occasions been able to offer advice on incidents that have happened, giving an accurate an unbiased account of the feelings and sentiments of the local community. He is also able to discuss the political situation in Basrah and, of most importance to me, the effect that it has on the community within the Company AO.

In addition to his role as an interpreter, I have used l as someone who can arrange meetings with the Abu Al Khasib Town Council as well as other agencies. He is fully aware of the security implications of such meetings and conducts himself accordingly. He has also been of immense benefit to the G9 SNCO it terms of his ability to arrange tenders for individual projects. A number of the projects that we have managed to achieve in the AO have been down to his hard work. He is also able to offer advice on the type of project that will have the most impact on the Community.

l has been of immense importance to me as both an interpreter and in a more advisory role. The risks that he, as an interpreter, takes are huge yet to his credit he has never refused to work or been deterred from the role that he plays for MNF. I would have no hesitation in recommending him for any future role with MNF.

GJ BOYD
Major
OC FSp Coy
2RRF

A (Norfolk) Company
1ˢᵗ Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment
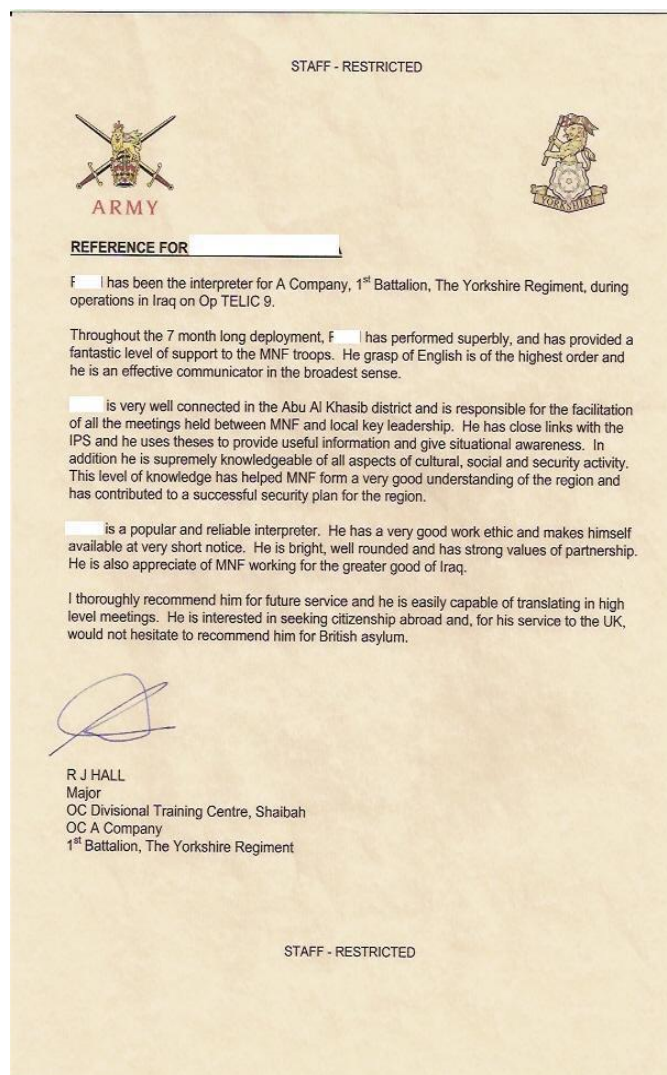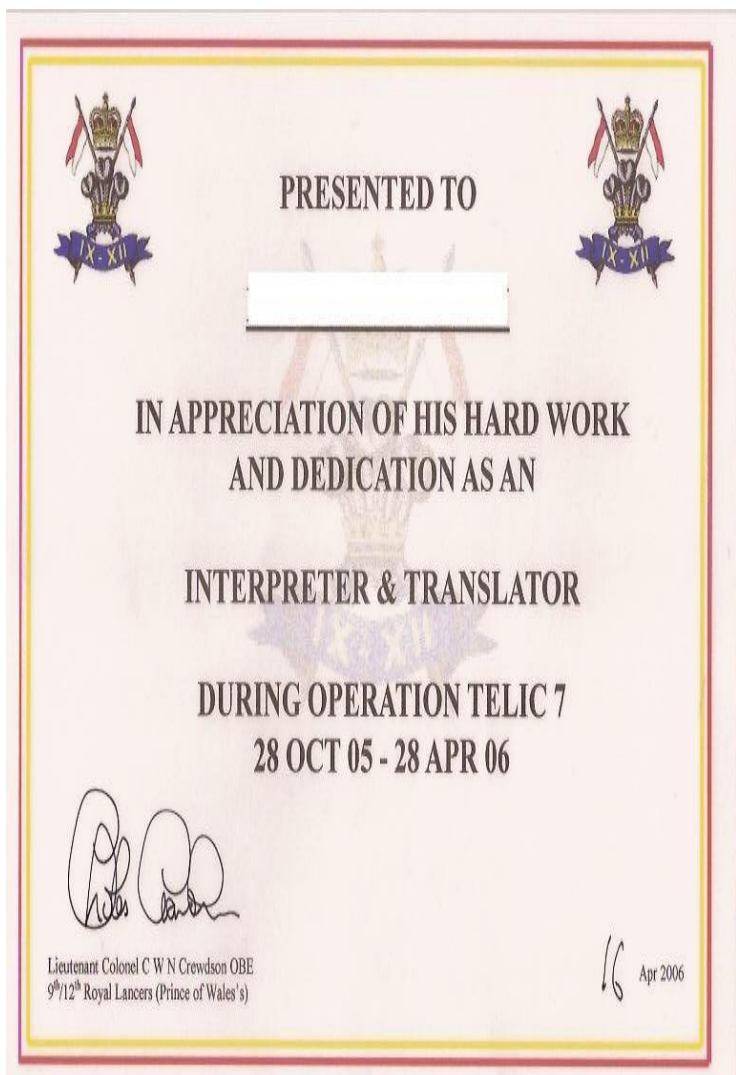
COMMENDATION

awarded to

_____

In recognition of his invaluable service as a translator

26ᵗʰ October 2005

With great appreciation

Maj J D Hughes
OC A (Norfolk) Coy

WO2 L Jay
CSM A (Norfolk) Coy

STAFF - RESTRICTED

REFERENCE FOR

F___ has been the interpreter for A Company, 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, during operations in Iraq on Op TELIC 9.

Throughout the 7 month long deployment, F___ has performed superbly, and has provided a fantastic level of support to the MNF troops. He grasp of English is of the highest order and he is an effective communicator in the broadest sense.

___ is very well connected in the Abu Al Khasib district and is responsible for the facilitation of all the meetings held between MNF and local key leadership. He has close links with the IPS and he uses theses to provide useful information and give situational awareness. In addition he is supremely knowledgeable of all aspects of cultural, social and security activity. This level of knowledge has helped MNF form a very good understanding of the region and has contributed to a successful security plan for the region.

___ is a popular and reliable interpreter. He has a very good work ethic and makes himself available at very short notice. He is bright, well rounded and has strong values of partnership. He is also appreciate of MNF working for the greater good of Iraq.

I thoroughly recommend him for future service and he is easily capable of translating in high level meetings. He is interested in seeking citizenship abroad and, for his service to the UK, would not hesitate to recommend him for British asylum.

R J HALL
Major
OC Divisional Training Centre, Shaibah
OC A Company
1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment

STAFF - RESTRICTED

A (Norfolk) Company
1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment
Basra Palace
OP Telic VI
BFPO 645

A (NORFOLK) COMPANY

IX

"THE FIGHTING NINTH"

Telephone: 964 3110

See Distribution

Reference: LSU NO. 11977

26 OCT 05

To whom it may concern,

The above individual has been employed by 'A' Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment for 6 months. In that time he has provided an invaluable service to the Company.

Mr Y⎯⎯ is a loyal, dedicated and trustworthy employee who has provided a consistently high level of service to this Company throughout its deployment. He has an excellent command of the English language and his written translation skills are good.

I would not hesitate to employ Mr ⎯⎯ again and strongly recommend him to any future employer as a translator.

WOII L Jay
CSM
'A' Coy, Basra Palace

1

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

★ ★ ★ ★

Presented to

In recognition of your cultural advice and linguistic support to the members of the Overwatch Battle Group (West) – Three. Your efforts were greatly appreciated and contributed to the success of the Battle Group's mission in southern Iraq throughout 2007.

from

The Commanding Officer, Officers and Soldiers of the Overwatch Battle Group (West) - Three

LTCOL J.F.B. ELLWOOD
COMMANDING OFFICER
OVERWATCH BATTLEGROUP (WEST) 3
1 DECEMBER 2007

CAPT G.J. MITCHELL
ARAB LIAISON OFFICER
OVERWATCH BATTLEGROUP (WEST) 3
1 DECEMBER 2007

SUPPORTING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ