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TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER AS CULTURAL MEDIATOR IN LAW ENFORCEMENT SETTING. CASE OF MUSLIM MIGRANTS – POLICE AND BORDER GUARD OFFICERS' ENCOUNTER IN POLAND¹

Summary

Translators' and interpreters' social and cultural competences allow them to discuss encounters between law enforcement officers and Muslims and point out the weaknesses in these relations. The aim of the article is to explore the role of interpreters and translators as (inter)cultural mediators in Police/Border Guards' encounters with Muslims. The study used qualitative methodology and semi-structured individual interviewing with six translators/interpreters to derive answers to the following research questions: What roles do interpreters and translators play as (inter)cultural mediators? What additional tasks do they perform? What is the experience of the interpreters and the translators with assisting the Police and the Border Guard officers during interactions with

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the Muslim population? What is the impact of the anti-Muslim sentiment and officers' attitudes towards Islam on these contacts from the perspective of the responders?

Keywords: Police, Border Guard, Muslims, translation, cultural mediation.

JEL Codes: K14, Z12, Z19

Research article

TŁUMACZ JAKO MEDIATOR KULTUROWY. STUDIUM RELACJI FUNKCJONARIUSZY POLSKIEJ POLICJI I STRAŻY GRANICZNEJ Z OSOBAMI WYZNANIA MUZUŁMAŃSKIEGO

Streszczenie

Tłumacze, dzięki posiadanym kompetencjom społecznym i kulturowym, potrafią scharakteryzować relację funkcjonariuszy służb mundurowych z osobami wyznania muzułmańskiego i wskazać słabości tej relacji. Celem autorów artykułu jest zatem omówienie roli tłumaczy jako mediatorów kulturowych w relacjach funkcjonariuszy Policji i Straży Granicznej z muzułmanami. Badanie zrealizowano z wykorzystaniem metody jakościowej – indywidualnego wywiadu częściowo ustrukturyzowanego z sześcioma tłumaczami. W artykule zawarto odpowiedzi na następujące pytania badawcze: Jakie role odgrywają tłumacze jako (między)kulturowi mediatorzy? Jakie dodatkowe zadania wykonują? Jakie są doświadczenia tłumaczy w asystowaniu funkcjonariuszom Policji i Straży Granicznej w kontaktach z muzułmanami? Jaki jest wpływ nastrojów antymuzułmańskich i postaw funkcjonariuszy wobec islamu na te kontakty z perspektywy respondentów?

Słowa kluczowe: Policja, Straż Graniczna, muzułmanie, tłumaczenie, mediacje kulturowe.

Kody JEL: K14, Z12, Z19

Artykuł badawczy

Introduction

This article examines the role of the foreign-language translator/interpreter as an (inter)cultural mediator in relations between Polish Police, Polish Border Guard officers and Muslims. Muslim migrants come to Poland from different countries for various reasons and speak different languages. They include people traveling to Poland for educational, business, economic and tourist purposes, as well as forced migrants (Pędziwiatr 2011). Crossing the Polish border, regardless of the method and reasons results in meeting the law enforcement officers. Some of these encounters (especially pertaining to the investigative interviewing) may be assisted by interpreters/translators. While the litigation literature perceives the interpreter/translator primarily as an ‘assistant to the procedural authorities’ (Jachmowicz 2019), the multidimensionality of the functions they perform positions them as a ‘(inter)cultural mediators’ (Katan, Taibi 2021). The procedure of translation/interpreting poses predicaments due to the diversity of cultural components in the countries of the translated languages. Translated documents or interpreted statements devoid of socio-cultural context could be structurally correct, however, inadequate in terms of situational considerations. The interpreter or translator as a participant and mediator is a part of the culture. In the process of communication, they act as an interpreter of symbols, signs and cultural codes.

The investigative interviewing of victims, witnesses and suspects is one of the most frequent and important tasks undertaken by those conducting law enforcement investigations. Over the past 20 years or so in Western European countries, there has been a substantial rise in the number of studies examining the practice, especially in the context of ethnic and religious minority groups (see e.g.: Albrecht 1997; Ben-Porat, Yuval 2012; Bradford 2014; Spalek 2011). The subject of interest of the researchers was also the mutual relations between law enforcement officers and Muslims communities (see e.g. Asfari, Shuraydi 2020; Khan, Smit 2022, Williamson, Murphy, Madon 2023). Nonetheless, little research has been conducted into Polish legal context. It stems from unique difficulties with surveying Police and Border Guard officers. These include, but are not limited to, the target population being close-knit and especially distrustful of outsiders, and the necessity of obtaining a formal approval from the supervisors (in case of Poland: Commander-in-chief of Police and Commander-in-chief of the Border Guard). The authors of the article also faced these difficulties – the original research intention was to examine the attitudes of the Polish uniformed services (Police and Border Guard) officers towards Islam

and Muslims. However, it was not possible to obtain the appropriate consents to conduct the research among the officers. Therefore, the authors decided to look at the officers' attitudes towards Islam and Muslims "through the eyes" of the foreign language translators/interpreters cooperating with these services, who assist the officers in their work with Muslims. They are therefore the observers, and as it will turn out later, also (inter)cultural mediators.

The aim of the article is to explore the role of interpreters and translators as (inter)cultural mediators in Police/Border Guards' encounters with Muslims. The study used qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviewing to derive answers to the following research questions:

1. What roles do interpreters and translators play as (inter)cultural mediators? What additional tasks do they perform?
2. What is the experience of the interpreters and the translators with assisting the Police and the Border Guard officers during interactions with the Muslim population?
3. What is the impact of the anti-Muslim sentiment and officers' attitudes towards Islam on these contacts from the perspective of the responders?

In what follows, a description of the conceptual framework, methodological procedures, and findings from an analysis of six individual semi-structured interviews will be provided.

Translator/Interpreter as Cultural Mediator

It has become commonly accepted that translation and interpreting involve and require more than linguistic transfer (Dolata-Zaród 2009; Florczak 2013; Katan, Taibi 2021; Korpala 2016; Mayoral Asensio 2016). Interpreters are indispensable as (inter)cultural mediators (Gustafsson, Norström, Fioretos 2013; Wang 2017). According to Katan and Taibi (2021), the term 'cultural mediator' was first introduced in Bochner's (1981) book *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*. Recently, the cultural mediator has been particularly associated with the phenomenon of globalization of human society, migration, the settlement of groups of people in new social and cultural environments and ensuing interpersonal and public service needs. In the migration context, EU's DG-Migration and Home Affairs (www1) defines cultural mediator's role as follow: 'a professional who facilitates the communication (including

interpretation) between people speaking different languages and coming from different cultural backgrounds’.

Seweryn (2005) following Emaries (1999) distinguishes three meanings of the term ‘mediation’ in the context of the use of cultural mediation in the integration of immigrants. The first understanding refers to the activities of the mediator-intermediary in non-conflict situations, when the only problem is communication. The mediation that takes place consists of facilitating the process of communication and understanding between people of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Mediation aims to avoid misunderstandings resulting from differences between communication codes and values (mediator as a translator, culture decodifier, cultural intermediary). The second meaning of mediation is related to resolving conflicts between immigrants and the host community, but also conflicts within immigrant communities. The last meaning of mediation refers to the process of creation in the sense of social transformation and the creation of new norms based on the cooperation of the parties and solutions developed during the mediation process.

‘(Inter)cultural mediation’ is a much wider term than the term ‘translation’. Cultural mediators provide information on different sets of values, orientations in life, beliefs, assumptions and socio-cultural conventions. They clarify culture-specific expressions and concepts that might give rise to misunderstanding. Bukowski and Heydel (2009) refer to the concept of Lefevere and Bassnett, in which ‘the translator and his work are perceived primarily as mediators involved in – or even responsible for – creating the image of the *Other* in the process of intercultural communication. This mediation takes place within the framework of the existing power structures, national interests, religious systems and economics, which the translator himself is subject to on various levels’ (Bukowski, Heydel 2009, p. 25). Lefevere and Bassnett believed that translation, through the so-called ‘construction of culture’, makes a great contribution to the creation of an internationalized world (Bassnett 1998).

Translation as cultural mediation requires specific knowledge, competences and abilities. Portalla and Chen (2010; see: Winiarska 2015) introduced the term ‘Intercultural Communication Competence’ (ICC), which is defined as ‘an individual’s ability to achieve their communication goal while effectively and appropriately utilizing communication behaviors to negotiate between the different identities present within a culturally diverse environment’ (Portalla, Chen 2010, p. 21). They distinguished three important dimensions of this competence:

1. Intercultural awareness (cognitive aspect) – it includes both knowledge of cultural differences and a critical awareness of one's own culture (including awareness of one's own cultural biases), as well as the ability to interpret, evaluate and negotiate different perspectives and practices.
2. Intercultural sensitivity (affective aspect) – it includes the ability to notice and distinguish the feelings, points of view and behavior of culturally different people (as well as one's own) and respect for differences.
3. Intercultural effectiveness (behavioral aspect) – it consists of the ability to achieve communication goals in intercultural interactions, including verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

Translation/Interpreting is a complex task that requires multiple competences from the translator. Translators/Interpreters appearing in this article as cultural mediators have a good understanding of cultural differences and how the cultures operate. The role of the interpreter as a (inter)cultural mediator will be analyzed further on the example of relations between Police and Border Guard officers and the Muslim minority.

Translator/Interpreter in Law Enforcement setting

There are various occasions when Police officers need to speak to people in the community to obtain information that cannot be gathered from other sources. These include talking to victims or witnesses of crimes, persons of interest in an investigation, or at information sessions for community members (Gruza 2020; Jagiełło 2017; Mazur 2012; Wilk, Woźnialis 2018). One of the most common and most important law enforcement activities is a police interview. Police and Border Guards play an important role in the criminal justice system by providing the courts with all important evidence or facts in the form of written statements and electronic recordings of interviews. The matters under investigation may range from relatively minor offenses, such as driving infringements, all the way up to serious crimes, such as illegal border crossing.

Cooperation with interpreters (including sworn interpreters) has been one of the integral components of the operations of law enforcement officers. According to the Polish legal system, the right to an interpreter is guaranteed in the criminal process, including interactions with the Police or Border Guard officers who are the organs undertaking procedural actions preceding

before the ordinary or administrative courts (Jachmowicz 2019). The right to provision of interpretation and translation services derives directly from European Union legislation, which obliges member states to ensure that victims who do not understand or speak the language of criminal proceedings are able to receive (upon request) interpretation at no charge (Olesiuk 2015). Availability of interpretation services free of charge must be provided at least during interviews with law enforcement or interrogations in the course of criminal proceedings before investigative or judicial bodies (including interrogation by the Police). It is also worth mentioning the importance of translation during admission to the prison, e.g. in the context of the legal basis for medical examinations during admission to a prison/guarded detention center (Gronowska, Sadowski 2020).

Interpretation services play a fundamental role throughout the asylum procedure to ensure that the exchange of information between the applicant and the asylum authority is clear and understood by both parties. Interpretation should also be provided in return procedure and detention proceedings (especially during admission to a detention center) (Chlebny 2020). A foreigner should be informed by the authorities in writing, in a language he understands, about the principles and procedure, as well as about his rights and obligations. While the law sets out the legislative provisions for interpretation, in practice the quality and efficiency of the interpretation services impact the foreigner's ability to fully understand all the steps of the asylum or return procedure.

Within the broader field of legal interpreting, police interpreting is emerging as a highly specialized, distinct application of interpreting. Police interpreting mainly takes place in Police–suspect interviews and in obtaining statements from witnesses and victims. Interpreting is increasingly required in multilingual communities as members of ethnic communities come in contact with law enforcement agencies. But not only – in homogeneous societies such as Polish society, interviews requiring the assistance of an interpreter involve foreigners (travelers, refugees, etc.), but also residents of the country who do not know the language well enough. As a rule, it should be either a sworn interpreter or, in certain cases, an *ad hoc* interpreter. The possibility of appointing an *ad hoc* interpreter result from the Polish criminal law (Sadowska 2018). It can be any untrained person known to have a language proficiency. These are often rare languages or specialized language translators/interpreters (Sadowska 2018).

Mapping the context: Islam and Muslims in Poland

(Inter)cultural mediation takes place within the framework of the existing power structures, national interests, religious systems, and economics. These factors create a unique context not only for the work of translators/interpreters, but also for interpersonal and intergroup relations and furthermore, for work of the Police and Border Guard officers as members of the Polish society. Thus, the framework in this study is shaped by the phenomenon of Islamophobia in Poland.

As it was mentioned, Police and Border Guard need to interact with the Muslim population. The ability to achieve the communication goals would seem to be shaped by both organizational and individual understanding and perception of both Muslims and Islam (Keeling, Hughes 2011). The lack of research on the attitudes of Polish officials towards Islam and Muslims requires a brief discussion on the attitudes of Polish society towards Islam in general.

The presence of Muslims in Poland changed and diversified after 1989 with the fall of communism and reached a breakthrough with Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. Górak-Sosnowska (2022) indicates that Poles have a specific interpretation of cultural diversity, which refers to local national and ethnic minorities and communities from the neighboring countries. This is reflected in the spread of Islamophobia among the Polish society. The distinctive type of Islamophobia among Polish society is the platonic Islamophobia, which exists in the absence of a direct experience of Poles with Muslims (Górak-Sosnowska 2022). Islamophobic narratives in Poland are strongly connected the populist and nationalist groups, which promote protecting Christian Europe against Islam by emphasizing the importance of the concept of Fortress Europe. Platonic Islamophobia in Poland is manifested by the activity of nationalist groups under the pretense of patriotism, which are supported by some political parties. In fact, these groups recruit a part of Poland's youth who are impressionable to anti-Muslim sentiments and as willing participants of the annual, so called, the Independence March during which they promote Islamophobic slogans (Górak-Sosnowska, Sozańska 2023).

Islamophobia, a widespread phenomenon in European societies since the 1990s, has become increasingly entrenched in Polish society. In considering the categorisation of the phenomenon of Polish platonic Islamophobia without a significant number of Muslims, the geopolitical location of Poland should be emphasized (Bobako 2017). Górak-Sosnowska indicates the transplanted discourses related to Islamophobia in Poland. The discourse on Islam in the

Visegrad Group countries (to which Poland belongs), as well as, more broadly, in Central and Eastern Europe, in most cases, the discourse of Islamophobia is transplanted from the experience of Western Europe, which has no relation to the realities of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, a factor that is common to manifestations of hostility toward Muslims in Central and Eastern Europe is a relatively homogeneous society with the absence of a colonial past. This is reflected in the discourse imported from Western European countries (characterized by a higher percentage of Muslim population), revealing the fear of an imaginary enemy, namely the Muslims and, consequently, fear of the Islamization of Europe. In consequence, well-integrated Muslims, like local owners of the Arabic or Turkish restaurants offering kebab, a dish popular in Polish cities, are becoming victims of the transplanted discourse associated with Islamophobia (Górak-Sosnowska 2011).

Methodology

The study is based on interviews conducted with interpreters and translators who are positioned as '(inter)cultural mediators' in law enforcement setting. Research borrows from the work of Verrept (2008) and partially from research works on specified Polish attitudes toward Muslims and Islam. Verrept noticed that the (inter)cultural mediator's duties include not only 'interpreting' itself, but many other roles, such as acting as advocates for ethnic minority when they are being confronted with racism or discrimination or when their well-being or dignity is at risk; acting as a culture broker (explaining the world of one party to the other), providing practical help and emotional support, engaging in conflict mediation when necessary, pointing out problems experienced by ethnic minority. These were useful analytical categories for this study.

The data was collected through the individual semi-structured interviews, as this approach allows to obtain vast amount of individual information through an in-depth understanding of a person's opinion and experiences. Authors developed a semi-structured interview guide based on research questions and previous research findings on Islam and Muslims in Poland. Six translators/interpreters (including 4 sworn translators) participated in the study. Respondents were recruited in two ways: through the authors' own networks of contacts and using the database of sworn translators/interpreters maintained by the Ministry of Justice. People who worked (or continue to

work) with the law enforcement and who assist the Police interactions with Muslims were eligible to participate in the study. To avoid the possibility of personal identification of the respondents, the authors decided not to present demographic data. Some information identifying specific places (cities, organizational units of the Police and Border Guards, etc.) is omitted or intentionally changed to random. Respondents were provided with a brief description of the research and given the opportunity to end their participation at any time during the interview.

Some of our respondents, for personal and professional reasons, agreed to record neither video nor sound. Two interviews were also conducted by telephone. Some of the interviews were transcribed, some were noted down. Thus, all data was coded manually. Thematic coding was used as a form of qualitative analysis that involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a common theme or idea allowing to index the text into categories and therefore to establish a 'framework of thematic ideas about it' (Gibbs 2007, p. 38).

Findings

Serving as a cultural mediator, which is understood in terms of mediating between Muslims and the law enforcement staff in order to improve understanding and communication, was not an official role for any of the respondents, but they were continuously assigned or voluntarily took this task. The interpreters participating in the study assisted the law enforcement officers during various encounters with Muslims. These were routine activities (e.g. border control at the airport), but some also concerned criminal cases (a Muslim as a person suspected of committing a crime, e.g. crossing the border irregularly, treated as illegal). Respondents also assisted the procedure of submitting an application for international protection. The range of situations in which translators/interpreters have gathered their experience is therefore very large. In regard to the quality of the cooperation with officers, participants' narratives varied. Interpreters' descriptions of their experiences with officers were evenly split between positive, negative, and neutral encounters, and there were no typical or general findings about the nature of these experiences. Neutral interactions were reported as unremarkable, without any positive or negative valence.

The analysis of the collected research material enabled to distinguish several roles and tasks that interpreters undertake as (inter)cultural mediators in relations between officers and Muslims (adopted from Verrept 2008). These roles are: a trainer, a cultural broker, a conflict mediator and an advocate.

Interpreter as trainer and cultural broker

Term ‘cultural broker’ is used in a wider context and refers to person who has cross-cultural competences to explain, elucidate and bridge cultural differences in multicultural contexts. In other words, the interpreter as a cultural broker explains the world of the Muslim citizen to the law enforcement officer and the word of the law enforcement officer to the Muslim citizen. Most Poles have never met a Muslim person (Stefaniak 2015), so their knowledge of Islam and its followers is based primarily on secondary sources (mass media, publications). Law enforcement officers are provided with the Islamic awareness training (Tołczyk, Sozańska 2023). However, these trainings are irregular and carried out in a ‘dry run’ – without the presence of the Muslims (Górak-Sosnowska 2022). Respondents indicated lack of proper training:

‘[About the Border Guard] There is definitely no institutional training. This training relies rather on the individuals, their willingness. And this, in my opinion, is based on their own knowledge. There is definitely no systemic training here. Same with the Police.’ [Respondent 4]

‘Some officers have quite extensive knowledge about Islam, about its customs. Seniors always try to delegate a female officer to work with a Middle Eastern woman. But that’s not the rule.’ [Respondent 3]

Study participants stated that most Police and Border Guard officers have a limited understanding of Islam and that this can create problems when they attempt to engage with the Muslim population. It also appears that for some of the officers the assumed knowledge was based on stereotypes rather than a factual understanding of Muslims and Islam. The participants agreed that this limited understanding of Islam related not just to scriptural matters but also to broader cultural issues relevant to diverse Muslim population. This was seen to be problematic, and participants were unanimous that it was necessary for the officers to have at least some basic understanding of religion, tradition and culture of Islam. Participants saw improving officers’ understanding of the faith and its link to cultural relations to be vital for successful interactions and policing Muslim communities.

Interpreter as a conflict mediator and an advocate

Advocacy is a role an interpreter takes that moves from interpreting the communication between speakers to acting on behalf of one of the speakers based on the interpreter's understanding of what the speaker's intended outcome is. Thus, we are not seeing here the translator/interpreter as a 'lawyer' in the legal sense, but as a 'defender' of the rights of the Muslim citizens when they are being confronted with racism, prejudice or discrimination. Respondents mentioned several situations in which they had to force officers to respect the religious rights of Muslims. Most often, these situations concerned women (removing the veil in the presence of men, medical examination performed by a male doctor), but also men (provision of *halal* meals). One respondent discussed a situation where a Muslim required several medical visits:

‘Come on, don't come here at all, because he's some filth (pl. *brudas*) who robbed our bank and we'll take care of him now.» So that kind of a comment... I told them that under the law he is still innocent.' [Respondent 5]

It emerged from the analysis of the interviews that interpreters were witnesses of verbal and physical abuse of Police and Border Guard officers towards Muslims. Although they unanimously claimed that these were isolated cases, almost every person participating in the study shared at least one such a story. Such hostile behavior stemmed from the fact that a prejudiced officer dealt with a Muslim person. One respondent told the story of a pregnant Muslim woman who did not want to undergo a medical examination in the presence of men, including a male doctor. The respondent witnessed a verbal aggression and an argument while defending the woman's right and explaining to the officers why the woman has the right to demand the medical examination be carried out by a woman. In other cases, it was difficult to determine whether religion had any influence on the officer's behavior.

'I have never witnessed physical violence, but psychological violence seems to me happening quite often. If shouting «Speak or you will never see your children again» can be seen as psychological violence then yes, it happens...' [Respondent 4]

Interpreters experienced negative feelings associated with these acts of aggression against Muslims. They displayed feelings of hopelessness and uncertainty when exposed to situations of a Police officer's aggression. Sometimes they took action to defend an abused person or reported such cases to the officer's

superiors or through an official complaint. As it was mentioned, respondents combined the function of a conflict mediator and an advocate with the function of a trainer and explained some aspects of the religion of Islam to the officers:

‘[The woman] was selected out of the group not by chance. She was asked to take off the veil, she did not want to take it off in the presence of other people. Only after explaining the problem to them, female officers came to search her, and she was taken to a private place where she could take off the veil. On the other hand, there were comments among men that they would remove the rag (pl. *szmata*) from her head in front of everyone, or they would tear off this terrible rag from her head.’ [Respondent 1]

The interpreters drew attention to the use of certain stereotypes and prejudice about Islam and Muslims by the officers rooted in Polish society. Stereotypes and prejudice are ‘stumbling blocks’ in intercultural communication (Barna 2007). Examples described by respondents were references to unfavorable attitudes toward minorities who immigrated from patriarchal societies, again a woman covered with a veil, and the perceived hygiene issues of some foreign individuals. Also, they noticed a practice called by Balogun (2020) ‘Polish-centrism’ which relates to everyday biological practices that reproduce and strengthen the differences between Poles and Others:

‘Once I remember there was a comment that the detention room stinks terribly because «negroes and Muslims were sitting there. Because the white man washes himself and does not allow such a situation to happen».’ [Respondent 5]

Respondents noted that attitude toward Muslims is primarily the outcome of the way local group membership (local Police station, Border Guard unit etc.) operate rather than contact-specific interactions with the Muslims. A direct contact with a stereotyped group, which, according to various models weakening of stereotypes, would translate into positive changes, is perceived by the respondents as not very effective (see: Nelson 2003). Respondents mentioned, however, that such behavior could be the result of the fact that the individuals dealing with the migrants have already some life experiences and formed certain behavior patterns that influence what attitude they adopt towards Muslim upon interacting with them - be it positive, negative or neutral. Frequent contact with Muslims does not increase the knowledge of Islam and proper behavior towards Muslims.

Discussion

For institutional reasons, the research investigating Police and Border Guard officers' attitudes toward Muslims, is underdeveloped. Criminologists have not devoted much time to unpack this topical area, even though this phenomenon could have important ramifications. The article presents the role of the interpreter as a 'cultural mediator' in contacts between the law enforcement officers and the Muslim community. Translators' and interpreters' social and cultural competences, such as the intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Portalla, Chen 2010) allow them to discuss encounters between law enforcement officers and Muslims and point out the weaknesses in these relations. Several categories of roles that an interpreter plays as a cultural mediator have been distinguished. The perspective of the interpreters also made it possible to initially recognize the officers' attitudes towards Islam and Muslims and to identify the issues. This study provides a preliminary foundation for further research by demonstrating a number of important findings.

Firstly, the roles of a trainer and cultural broker are an example of relatively common cooperation between the Police and Border Guard and interpreters and translators. Respondents defined these roles as a pattern of their everyday policing work (which they voluntarily adopt) rather than an incidental case. It has been argued that majority of the Police and Border Guard officers did not have a specific knowledge on Islam that puts Muslims in a less favorable position when approached. Officers' knowledge is simplified, and regional, religious and cultural aspects are generalized and attributed to the entire region of Southeast Asia, Africa or West Asia. However, officers are likely to base their perceptions and attitudes toward the Islam and Muslims on information gained from self-study (see: Kordaczuk-Wąs, Sosnowski 2011). Yet, from a participant's perspective, the official training system covers only the basic knowledge, that in the perception of the study participants, is not enough. So, interpreters and translators do not just passively observe a Police-Muslim encounter from a distance; however, they try to stay as invisible as possible. Note that in the vast majority of cases the Muslim-Police encounter is self-controlled and does not give any reason for interpreter's intervention.

Secondly, stereotypes and prejudices towards Islam and Muslims as distinguished by gender (women specific), religious commitments, perceived hygiene issues were observed in the study. Even though these were marginal cases, these stereotypes persist. It is worth noting, that respondents, because of their close relations to the Muslim minority and their acquired intercultural

competences, were highly aware of the prevailing stereotypes and some of them had a strong interest in overcoming them.

Thirdly, the key feature of the roles of conflict mediators and advocates is that interpreters and translators play a more active role and have a visible presence. Respondents claimed that they tried to defend Muslims' rights by communicating them and negotiating with the officers. In several cases, the use of unjustified violence against a Muslim was raised. In this context, it should be remembered that previous studies commissioned by the Polish authorities show that almost half of the policemen during their service witnessed an unjustified aggression of their colleagues against ordinary Polish citizens (MSWiA 2015). That study also showed that about 45% of the officers had been participants in the events during which the Police officers had committed acts that could be considered as a manifestation of an unjustified aggression. Many Police officers admitted that they sometimes behaved more aggressively than it was necessary/appropriate. The correlation between violence and minorities is therefore a topic for further research.

In conclusion, the translators and interpreters' feedback regarding officers and Muslims encounters varied. They suggested that the future training programs should be focused even more on the Islam-related content and cultural awareness. The study has therefore implications for the law enforcement agencies, specifically for Police officer and Border Guard training academies. From this study one can conclude that the Police officers or Border Guard officers' behavior in various situations might be based on stereotypes and/or incorrect information that they have about Muslims and Islam. While this study does not suggest that the Police officers or Border Guard officers act on negative stereotypes or behave differently around Muslims, it is clear that some officers, like many members of the Polish society, are primed with negative thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes toward Muslims. Systematic training can provide officers with raised awareness and correct information about Islam and Muslims.

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