

Trieste, 16th June 2010

A Study on Public Services Interpreting (PSI) in Catalonia: defining a new emerging professional profile

**Marta Arumí, Anna Gil-Bardají,
Mireia Vargas-Urpí**

Miras Research Group

Translation and Interpreting Faculty
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

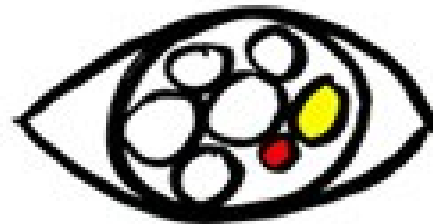


**With the support of the Inter-Asia Research group
(SGR 1103-2009) and the project FFI2008-05911/FISO**

Miras Research Group

MIRAS: *Mediació i Interpretació: recerca en l'àmbit social*

[Mediation and Interpreting: research in the social sphere]



MIRAS

Mediació i Interpretació:
Recerca en l'Àmbit Social

Research project – background

- **The Catalan context:**



41 “comarques”

**2 official languages
(Catalan, Spanish)**

**Unequal distribution
of migrated
population**

Research project – background

- **The Catalan context:**

No specific regulation for PSI organization:

*[...] it is necessary to organize a system to help the communication between professionals and users. This communication must rely on (face to face, by phone or written) translation systems to different languages. **Each region will have to adequate the system to its linguistic needs [...]** (p. 57)*

Citizenship and Immigration Plan (2005-08) issued by the Immigration Office of the Welfare and Family Department of Catalonia Autonomous Government (Generalitat)

Research project – background

- **The Catalan context: organization of PSI services**
 - **Legal and police interpreting:**
 - A translation and interpreting agency is selected through open tender
 - Freelance translators cannot directly apply for it
 - **Health care:**
 - Telephone interpreting
 - Some agreements with PSI providers
 - Intercultural mediators in some hospitals

Research project – background

The Catalan context: organization of PSI services

- **Education:**
 - 4 associations (located in Barcelona) selected by open tender
 - Telephone interpreting
- **Social services** (housing, immigration offices, employment):
 - PSI provided by local councils (comarques)
 - Associations

Research project – objectives



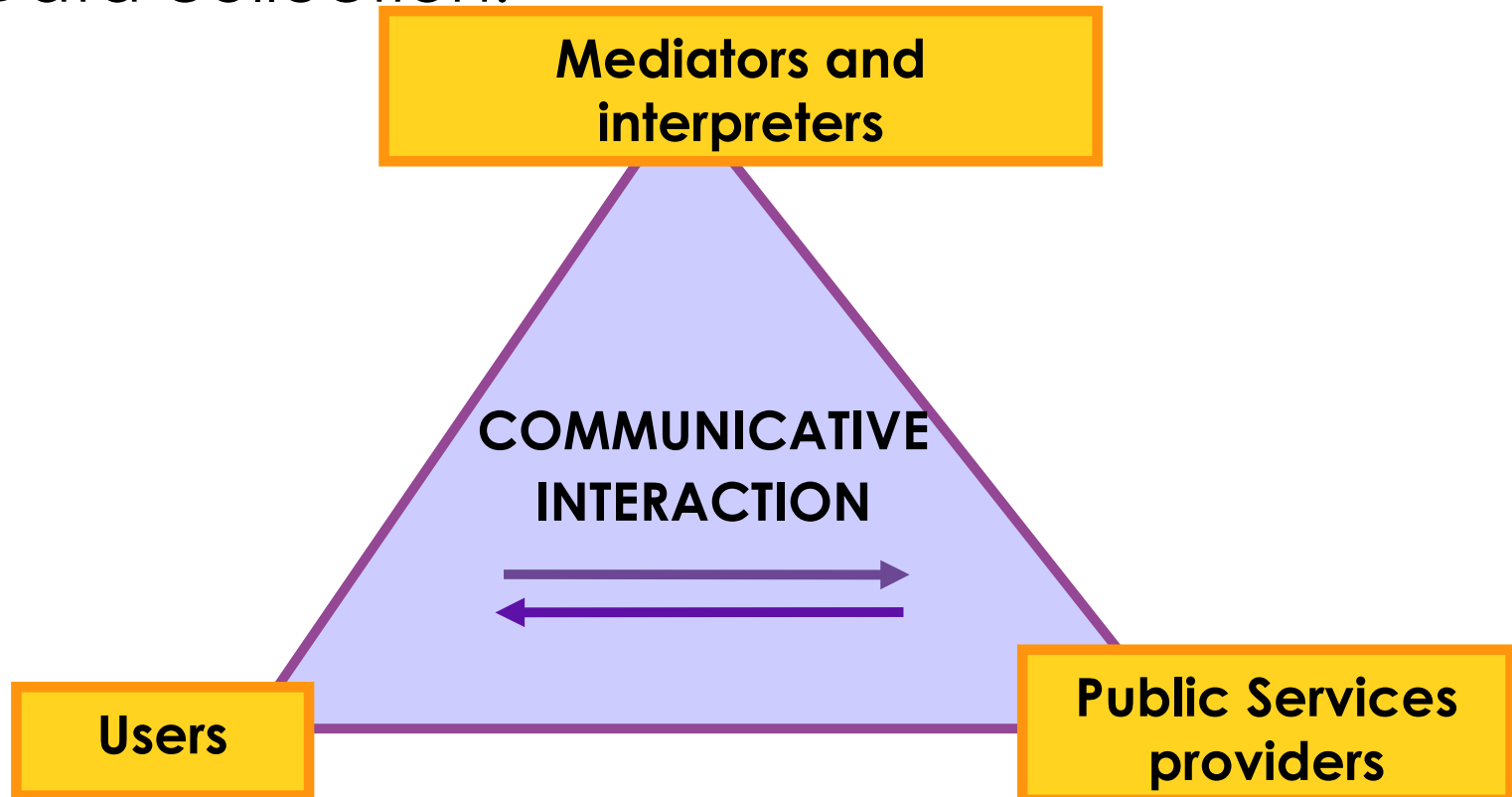
THREE STAGES:

1. Compilation of a significant data corpus from the triple perspective of interpreters, users and the Public Administration
2. Corpus data analysis (work in progress)
3. Based on the results, elaboration of guidelines and proposals for a university programme that may help create this new emerging professional profile

Research project – Methodology

FIRST STAGE:

1. Data collection:



Methodology – data collection

- **Design of the surveys:**

- Close-ended questions (multiple choice, categorical, scales, numerical...)
- Open ended questions

- **Translation into:**

- [Interpreters and mediators] Catalan and Spanish
- [Users] Catalan, Spanish, English, French, Chinese, Russian, Romanian
- [Public Service providers] Catalan

Methodology – data collection

Translation of the survey - Chinese

1. ¿Tiene problemas para comunicarse cuando acude a los servicios públicos?

1. 您到国家服务部门去办事时，有没有沟通问题？

Sí 有 No 没有 A veces 偶尔有

¿En cuáles?

哪些部门？

Hospitales y centros de salud 医院和医疗中心

Policía, juzgados 警察局和法院

Servicios sociales 社会福利部门

Escuelas 学校

Oficinas de atención al ciudadano 便民服务办公室

Otros¿cuáles? 其它，哪些？

Methodology – data collection

Translation of the survey - Arabic

1. هل لديك صعوبة في التعبير عندما تلجأ إلى الخدمات العامة؟

نعم لا أحياناً

في أية خدمات؟

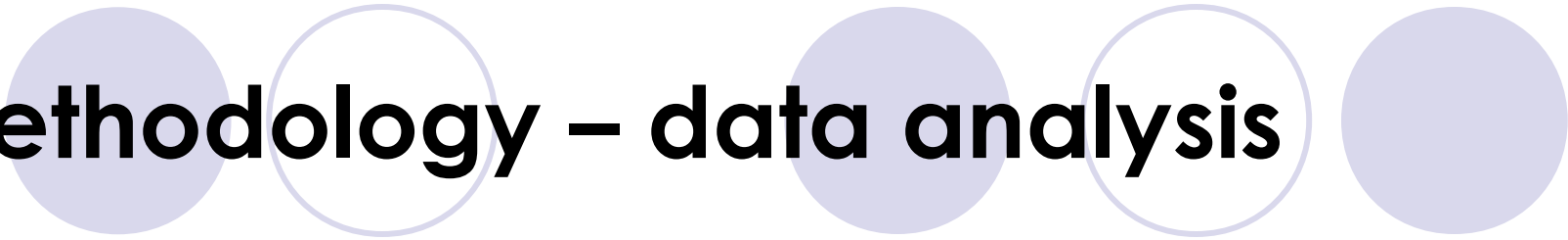
المستشفيات ومراكز الصحة (CAPs) الشرطة والمحاكم

الخدمات الاجتماعية المدارس

مكاتب توجيه المواطنين أخرى، ما هي؟

Methodology – data collection

- **Distribution of the survey:**
 - **Interpreters and mediators:** mainly through local councils
 - **Users:** at adult education centres, at their own shops and businesses, through some interpreters/mediators
 - **Public Service providers:**
 - Schools – through the Catalan Education Department
 - Hospitals



Methodology – data analysis

Mixed approach

Quantitative: desing of a data base and
statistical analysis through SPSS
→ **close ended questions**

Qualitative: discourse analysis
→ **open ended questions**

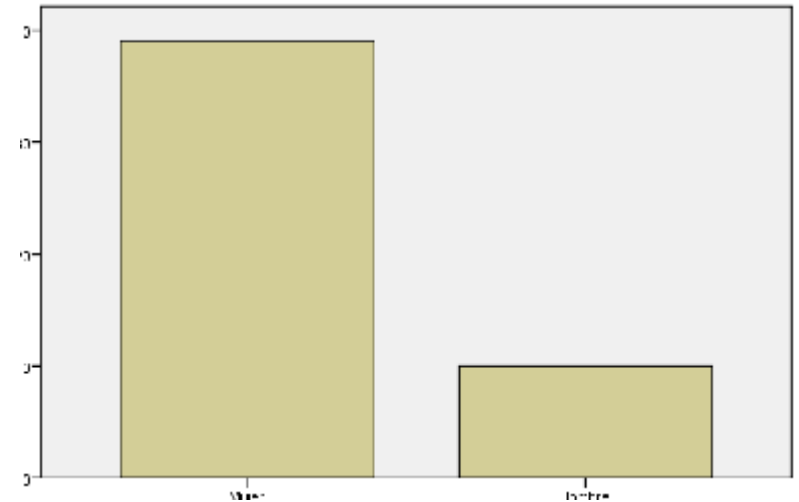
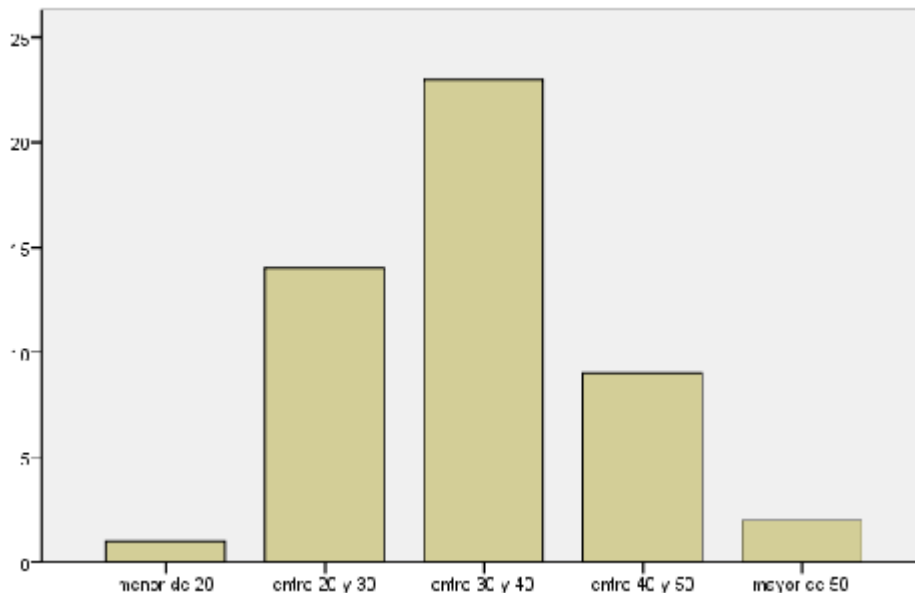


Results

- **Number of responses + analysis:**
 - **Interpreters and mediators:** 51 surveys – analysed
 - **Users:** 63 surveys – analysed
 - **Public Service providers:** work in progress

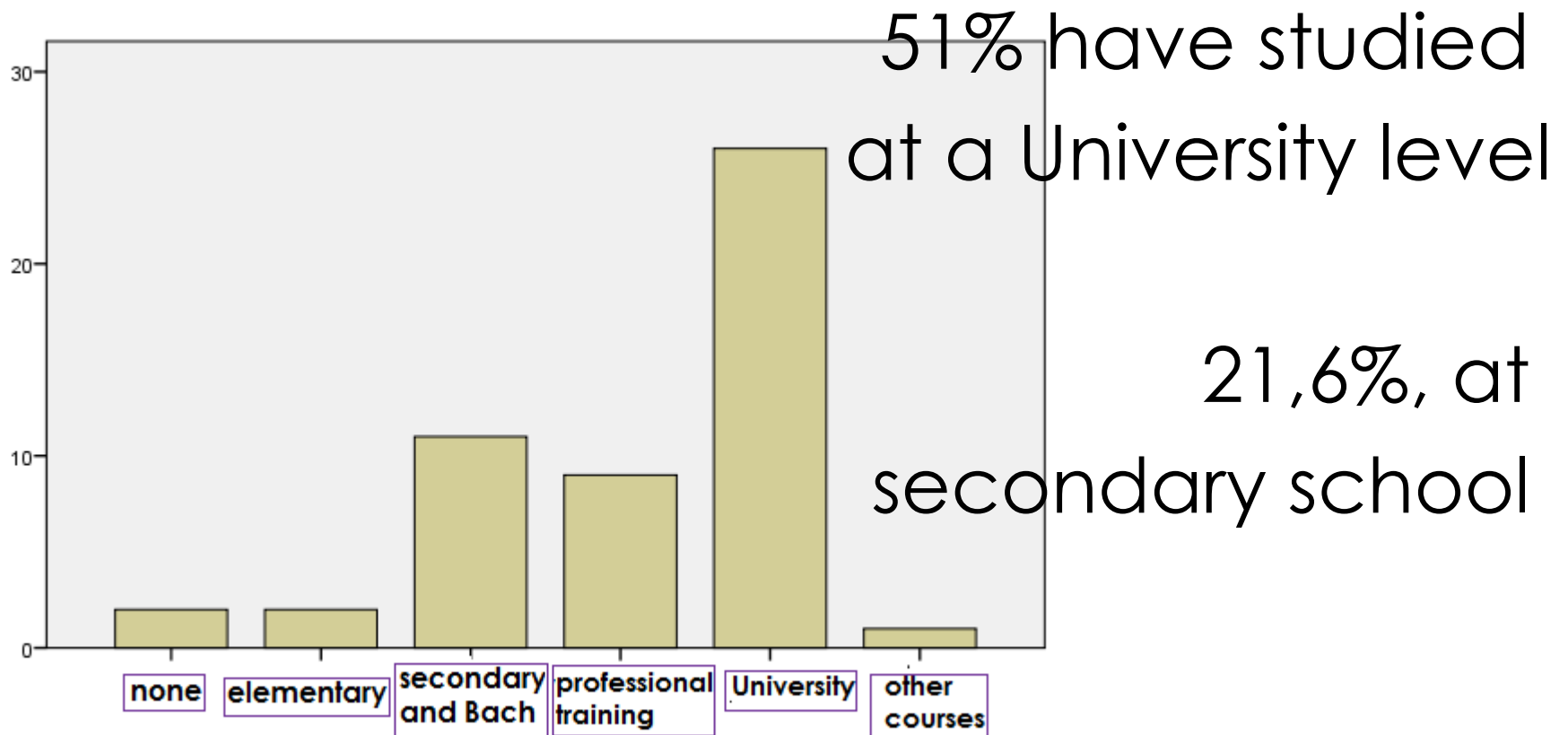
Results: Interpreters and mediators

- **Profile of the sample: age and sex**
 - 75,5% between 20 and 40 years old
 - 79,6% women



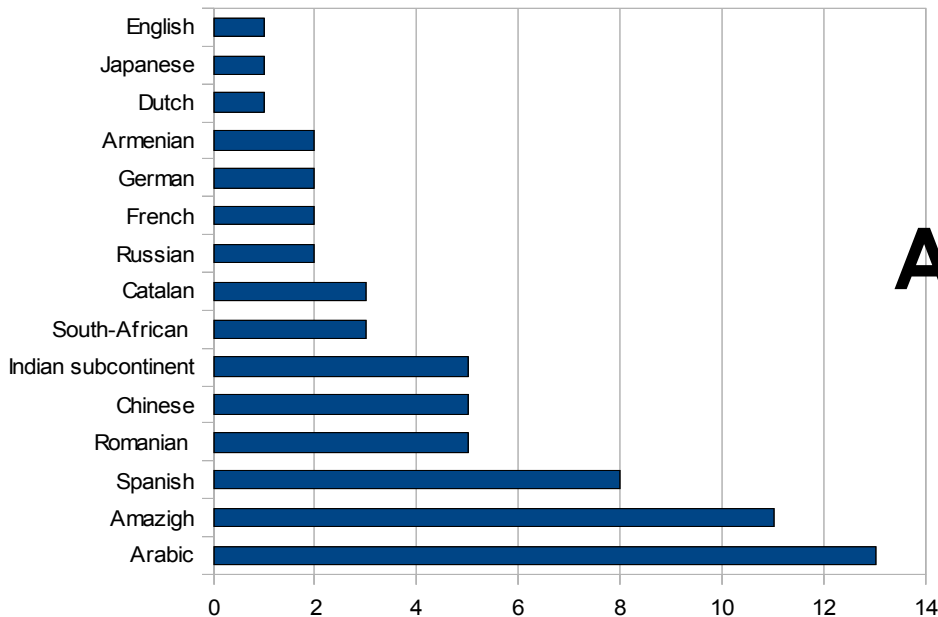
Results: Interpreters and mediators

- Profile of the sample:



Results: Interpreters and mediators

- **Mother tongue:**



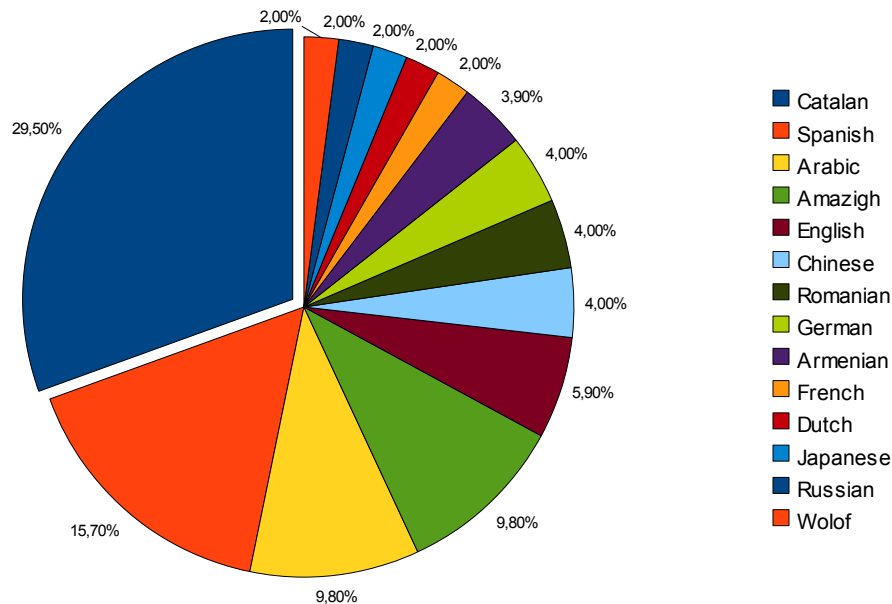
Arabic: 13 (25%)

Amazigh: 11 (21%)

Spanish: 8 (15%)

Results: Interpreters and mediators

- **First non-native language:**



Catalan: 29,5%

Spanish: 15,7%

Arabic: 9,8%

Amazigh: 9,8%

Results: Interpreters and mediators

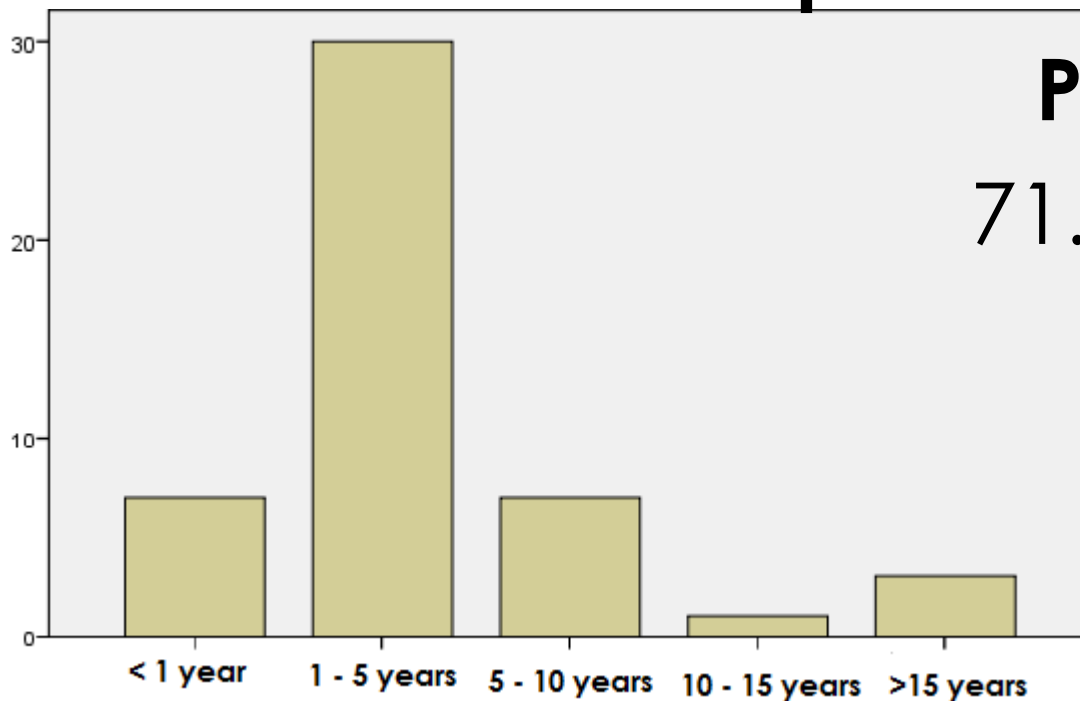
Profile of the sample:

- Few respondents (10%) have received specific training for PSI
 - Especially short courses (20 h.)
- Many have been trained for mediation
 - In courses organized by public institutions, NGOs, associations...

Results: Interpreters and mediators

Short professional experience:

How long have you been working as an interpreter or mediator for



Public Services?

71.4% → 0-5 years
in this field

Results: Interpreters and mediators

Kind of employment:

- 58.1% → occasionally
- 23.3% → full-time
- 18.6% → part-time
- 56.8% → have other jobs

Job instability:

- 39.5% → freelance
- 37.2% → employment contract
- 23.3% → internship

Results: Interpreters and mediators

Interpreting techniques:

- 81.3% → liaison interpreting (after short sentences)
- 33.3% → *chuchotage*
- 20% → after long interventions (taking notes)
- 20% → sight translation

FIRST vs. THIRD person:

- 87,8% → use third person
- 12.2% → use first person

Results: Interpreters and mediators

Service providers talk to...

- The interpreter (27.7%)
- Users (21.5%)
- It depends on the case (43.5%)

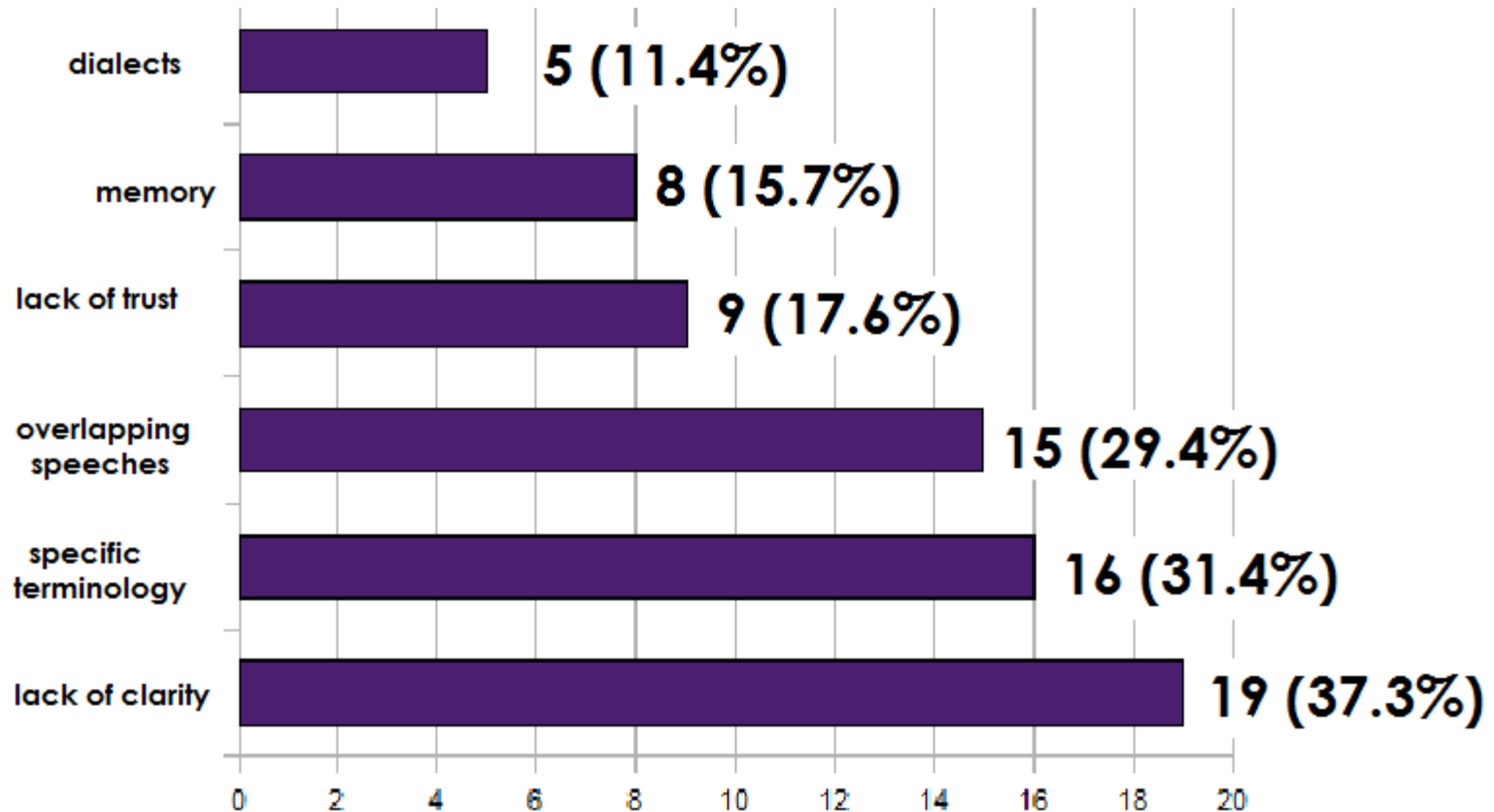
Users talk to...

- The interpreter (43.5%)
- Service providers (13%)
- It depends on the case (43.5%)

*More than a half of the sample do not receive information prior to the interpretation service

Results: Interpreters and mediators

Main difficulties interpreters and mediators encounter:



Results: Interpreters and mediators

Positive perceptions:

- 😊 96% of the sample like their job as interpreters or mediators
- 😊 58,8% feel PSI provision is good coordinated
- 😊 58,8% think PSI salary is appropriate

Even though...

47% of the sample feel the profession lacks clear definition

Results: Users

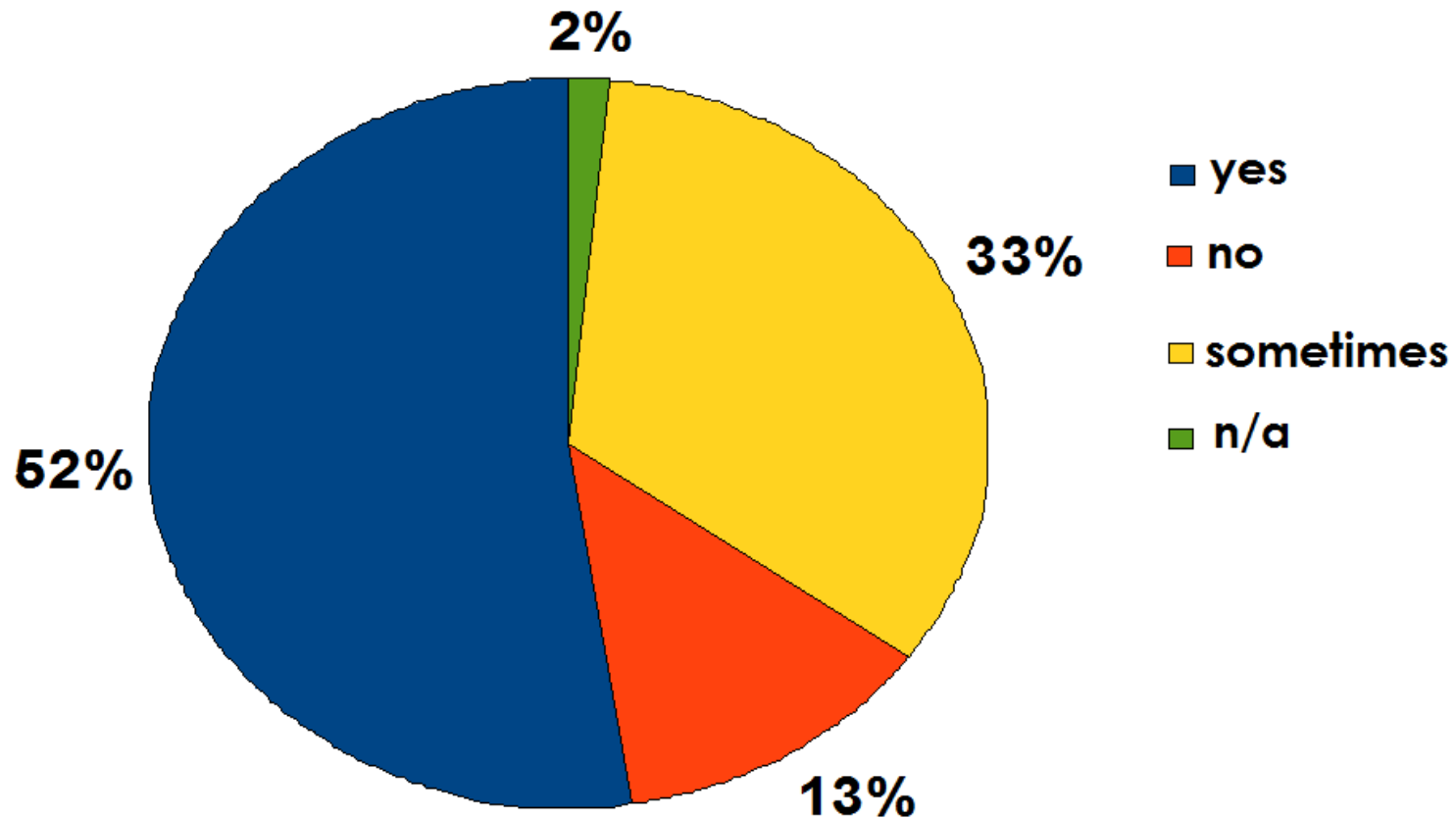


Profile of the sample:

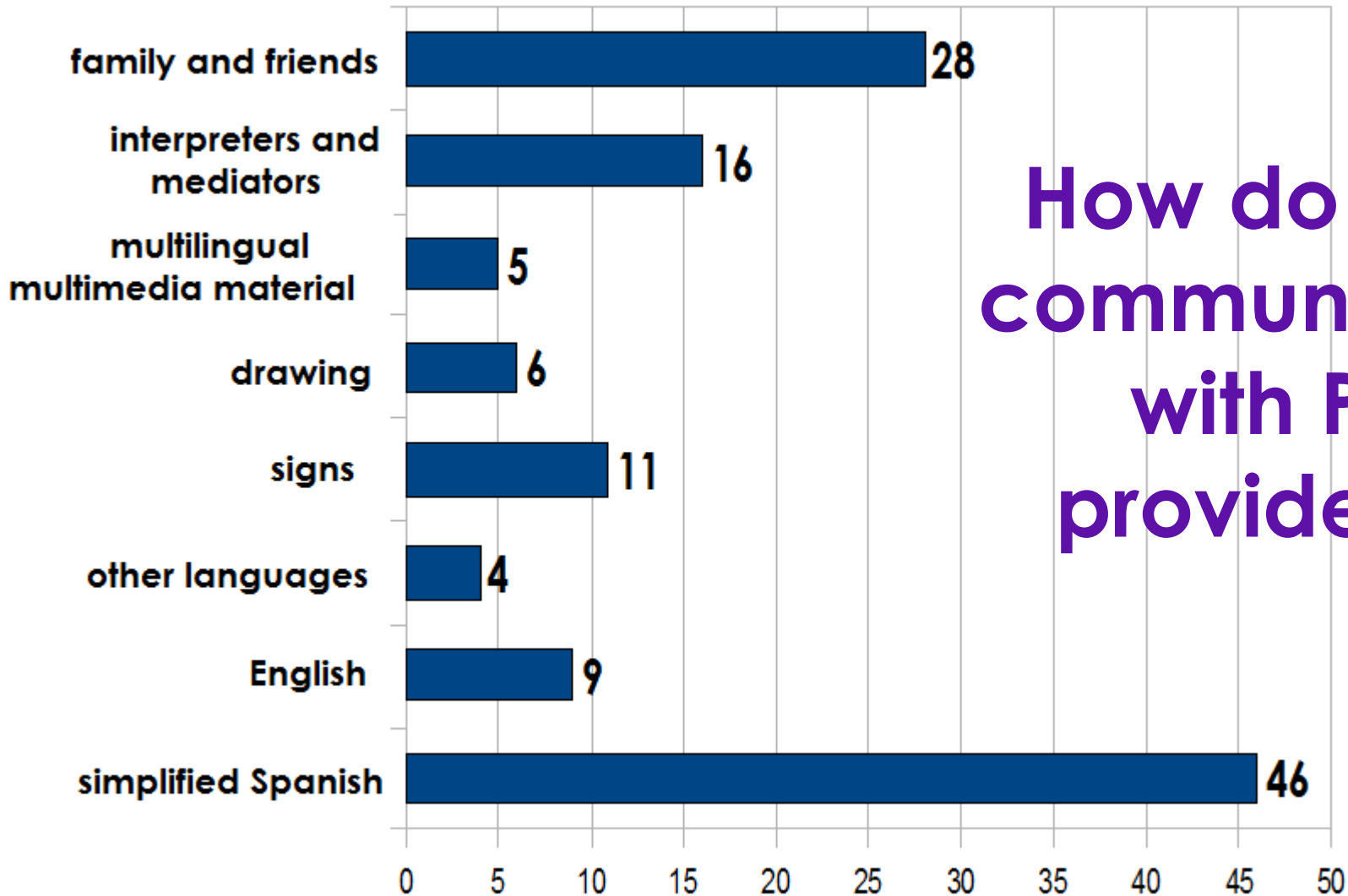
- Sex: 50.8% men; 49,2% women
- Age: 72.9% → 20-40 years old
- Countries of origin
 - China: 42.9%
 - Morocco 11.1%
 - Russia 11.1%
 - Other 63.1%
- Average time of residence in Catalonia: 2-3 years

Results: Users

- Do you have problems when communicating with PS providers?



Results: Users



How do you
communicate
with PS
providers?

Results: Users

"Helpers"	Proportion of sample	Satisfaction	Fidelity (towards users)	Fidelity (towards PS providers)
Relatives	47.6%	85%	66%	36.5%
Friends from same country	42.9%	81%	58%	33.3%
Friends from Catalonia who also speak the migrants language	25.4%			
Volunteers	7.9%	72,2%	33%	11.1%
Professional interpreters or mediators	7.9%	90.5%	58%	23.8%

Low proportion of use of professional interpreters, but high degree of satisfaction

Results: users

- **Most valued in an interpreter or mediator:**

2.7	Good command of languages
4.1	Seriousness
4.5	Confidentiality
4.9	Positive attitude towards their job
4.9	Patience
5.2	Good knowledge of both cultures
5.5	Solidarity
5.8	Friendliness
6.4	Neutrality

Neutrality, the last in the ranking...
Interpreter as an advocate?



Conclusions

- The data collected confirms our previous hypothesis:
 - Communication problems still exist at Public Services
 - Most of users surveyed do not usually receive the help of interpreters or mediators
- Low proportion of professionals have been trained specifically for PSI
- Young profession... and also, precarious, unstable and undefined



And now... what?

MIRAS' work need to walk towards...

- Design of specific training courses
- Coordination with Public Administration and private companies + assessment on their needs
- Grant and increase quality in PSI
- Development of a system of accreditation for interpreters



GRÀCIES - THANKS!

<http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/miras>



MIRAS

Mediació i Interpretació:
Recerca en l'Àmbit Social