



Cape Peninsula
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The use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town

By Katebesha MBANZA

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Supervisor: Dr Pineteh E. Angu

Co-supervisor: Dr Makwambeni Blessing

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ABSTRACT

This research analysed the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the refugee reception office in Cape Town. It examined the language challenges of Congolese asylum seekers, the role of the interpreters in addressing these challenges and the perceptions of refugees and home affairs officials about the quality of services provided by interpreters. It also discussed the implications for the outcome of Congolese applications for asylum.

This project was framed around Bell and Reiss's theories of translation and the general communication model. Community interpreting and interpreting studies complimented these theories because all of them focus on the intricacies of interpreting messages and the implications for meaning making, especially in the case of oral accounts. The research design was a case study and its unit of analysis was a company called Zeenab, Remy, Gerald, and Buba (ZRGB) Interpretation, Translation and Social Services, which has for years been the main provider of interpretation services to the department of home affairs in Cape Town.

Since this project was a case study, it adopted a qualitative approach and used qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document analysis to collect data from respondents. These methods were suitable for this project because they provided unrestricted space for Congolese refugees and home affairs officials to express their views about the interpretation services and the implications thereof. All interviews took place in Cape Town between June and July 2016. The duration of interviews ranged from 25-65 minutes and the total number of respondents was 18.

The researcher used a thematic analysis approach to organise, analyse and interpret the data collected from participants. This process involved coding, defining and naming and penetrating themes, searching for multiple meanings embedded in the data. After interpreting the data, this research revealed firstly that the main challenge of Congolese asylum seekers was to communicate their experiences consistently and accurately in English language. Secondly, asylum seekers blamed the rejection

of their applications for asylum on the poor quality of interpretation services provided by ZRGB. Thirdly, asylum seekers had different impressions of the role of interpreters in the refugee determination process. In terms of scholarly contributions, this study hopes to shed light on the communication challenges that francophone asylum seekers and refugees face during the application and interviewing process. In addition, it can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the politics of asylum and the acquisition of refugee identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother and father; I wish you were here to see me make you proud. Nevertheless, may your souls rest in peace and what came out from you remains a living testimony in my life.

Definitions/Explanations of terms, concepts and acronyms

Asylum seeker: Refers to a person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status (South Africa. Department of Home Affairs, 2016:5).

Refugee: a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (South Africa. Department of Home Affairs, 2016:6).

Interpretation: Bell (1991:11) as cited in As-Safi (2011:22) defines good interpretation as "that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work".

Translation: Nida and Taber (1969: 12) define translation as the process of reproducing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.

Difference between translators and interpreters: As-Safi (2011:14) argues that translators need five requirements to be considered as competent. For instance, "mastery or proficiency of SL and TL, thorough knowledge of source and target cultures, familiarity with the topic/register, vocabulary wealth, and finally awareness of the three-phase process. While interpreters are expected to have at least five more: short-term memory for storage and retrieval, acquaintance with prosodic features and different accents, quick wittedness and full attention, knowledge of short-hand writing for consecutive interpreting and finally self-composure".

ANC: African National Congress

CIC: Citizenship and Immigration Canada

CRED: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters

DHA: Department of Home Affairs

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo

EU: European Union

HRR: Human Right Report

OAU: Organisation of African Unity

RAB: Refugee Appeal Board

RRO: Refugee Reception Office

RROCT: Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town

RSDO: Refugee Status Determination Officer

SCRA: Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs

SA: South Africa

SAIP: Southern African Immigration Projects

SAMP: Southern African Migration Project

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

TL: Target Language

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees

ZRGB: Zeenab Remy Gerald and Buba

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (2010:1) states that there were 43.3 million involuntarily displaced people worldwide at the end of 2009, the peak number since the mid-1990s. Of these, 15.2 million were refugees. In 1994, South Africa signed up to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, which had occasioned the original establishment of the UNHCR globally (Crush & Williams 2003: 8). In the same year, the number of asylum seekers in South Africa increased significantly because of several armed conflicts around the African continent and promises of stable democracy after the collapse of apartheid (Pineteh, 2010). According to UNHCR (2015b: 6), South Africa accommodates 912,592 asylum seekers and refugees. However, the Green Paper on international migration reveals that the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) issued more than 1 million Section 22 permits to asylum seekers and 119,600 Section 24 permits to recognised refugees (DHA, 2016:30). Interestingly, of the 983,473 asylum seeker permits issued only 78,339 are still active, which means many recipients of the permits have failed to renew them as required by DHA. At the time of this study, 96,971 refugee permits were still active while 22,629 permits had expired. In South Africa, majority of asylum seekers and refugees live in the main urban centres of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth (UNHCR, 2008b: 190).

Statistically, the largest contingents of these asylum seekers are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia (Makhena, 2009:12). The recent data published by DHA 2016 shows the top 15 sending countries and the DRC is ranked third. (See table 1)

Table 1: Top 15 Countries of origin of asylum seekers

Country	Numbers
Zimbabwe	20, 405
Ethiopia	10, 176
DRC	8, 029
Nigeria	7, 431
Bangladesh	5, 110
Somalia	2, 595
Pakistan	2, 460
Malawi	2, 310
Ghana	2, 271
India	1, 781
Congo Republic	1, 485
Lesotho	1, 437
Mozambique	1, 220
Uganda	753
Burundi	678

Source: DHA (2016:30)

Although South Africa has provided refuge to forced migrants from several countries in Africa and Asia, the process of acquiring asylum is still a long and often traumatizing one for many applicants. This has been blamed on the lack of adequate qualified human resources to speedily process thousands of applications and widespread stereotypes about African migrants. For example, as a signatory of international conventions and human rights agreements, as well as the provisions of the South African constitution and the refugees' act (1998), South Africans continue to see the presence of Africans as a threat to their livelihoods (Pineteh & Mulu 2016). Newspaper headlines capture the negative attitudes and social violence towards immigrants from government officials and South African citizens (Reilly, 2001:6). McKnight (2008:21) argues that because of the massive increase in the number of refugees and the feared impact on the economy, South Africa has focused less on refugee protection and more on containment, expulsion and denial of rights. Pineteh (2015:76) supports the argument by saying that "the influx of migrants sets the stage for anti-foreigner sentiments stemming from the ideology of *makwerekwere*". According to Landau, cited in Pineteh (2015:76) "South African stereotypes about Africans have continued to affect the relationship between locals and African nationals, triggering nativist discourses and generalized and impassioned anti-foreigner sentiment".

Asylum seekers from other African countries are now faced with myriad of challenges in the process of acquiring documentations to legalise their stay in South Africa. This unending application process meant applicants had to live in limbo for many years with temporary asylum permits, which were often denounced and rejected by refugee determination officers (Pineteh 2010, 2011). Managerial problems are also well-known complications. For example, the department of home affairs has been criticised for the prolonged handling of claims, and insufficient decision-making on processing large numbers of asylum-seekers without looking at the specific demands of each applicant (NICDAM, 2011:79). Moreover, the process of seeking asylum means those asylum seekers must recall details of personal experiences (often traumatic) and give a narrative account which is coherent and consistent, in the context of administrative and legal procedures in the receiving country (Herlihy, 2012). South African refugee status determination officers therefore expect people who apply for asylum, to provide oral accounts that are accurate, coherent, consistent and reliable. However, the function of human autobiographical memory is not to remember exact/accurate memories of events. Rather autobiographical memory serves three broad functions (Bluck et al., 2005); social, directive and maintaining a sense of self.

The department of home affairs grants refugees status to people who flee their countries of origin because of persecution. The process itself requires an asylum seeker to give his/her story upon arrival, and s/he is provided with the assistance of an interpreter if there is a language barrier. Asylum seekers from countries of political turmoil that fail the interview are sent to the Refugee Appeal Board (RAB) for the Appeal interview. Those who are successful after the RSDO interviews and appeal process are then granted refugee status, and those who fail receive a final decision to leave the country.

Language barriers further compound the challenges of African asylum seekers. This is especially relevant in the case of francophone asylum seekers like those from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Officials dealing with asylum seekers and refugees who are not fluent in English neglect the fact that “access to the existing documentation and other support services in the country is rendered difficult for most potential asylum seekers, because of this language problem” (Landau, 2004). This language barrier results in a genuine communication breakdown between asylum

seekers, the local populations, authorities and the police, as well as officials in several non-governmental and governmental establishments involved in asylum adjudication, or who are expected to provide other kinds of support to asylum seekers (Landau, 2004).

For Francophone asylum-seekers in South Africa, the stereotypes, the prolonged waiting period and language barrier result in different forms of social exclusion. These have been expressed in the several xenophobic attacks of African migrants (Morris and Bouillon, 2001). Although the Refugee Act (1998) mandates the department of home affairs to appropriately issue permits to refugees and asylum seekers in order to protect their rights and legalise their stay in the country, this does not always happen in practice. Failure by the DHA to process applications effectively and efficiently prevents asylum seekers from enjoying adequate legal protection and accessing universal rights (excluding the right to vote) as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

The Department of Home Affairs is also expected to handle other responsibilities and obligations related to immigration challenges that are crucial to the lives of South Africans and immigrants. While processing asylum seeker applications, the department provides interpreters where necessary, to alleviate the language barrier (Refugees Act, 1998 article (5 (1))). However, several studies have criticised the interpretation services given to asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, Reitzes and Crawhall (1997) and Jacquet (2009) assert that this procedure is fraught with unexamined assumptions about language, national identity, and communicative competence. In the same light, Orsolya (2011) argues that whenever a foreigner does not speak nor have a good command of the language officially used, he/she can only rely on the message conveyed by the interpreter. Consequently, the applicant's claim can be distorted by the medium used. Moreover, Gumperz (1982) demonstrates how diverging use of certain contextualization cues (intonation, stress, and tempo) can lead to serious misunderstanding among speakers of different varieties of the same language. Enwere (2006) further contends that assisting refugees involves providing the basic needs of refugees, integration and economic self-sufficiency, while protecting them includes status determination, legal protection and issuing of proper documentation including voluntary repatriation where necessary. These factors are directly influenced by the ability/inability of asylum

seekers and refugees to communicate effectively with officials at the Department of Home Affairs.

According to guidelines of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) on asylum seeking procedure, credibility should be assessed by examining the applicant's testimony both for internal consistency and for external validity. Furthermore, interviewers are also instructed to "...consider the fluency of the testimony, as well as its clarity and detail" (UNHCR 1995: 42). To this, Malkki (1995) argues that the hearing process establishes an ordered, replicable, and consistent operation that depends on smooth interactional routines to achieve its goal of surveillance, discipline, and control. Such a strict procedure implies that poor interpretation services have severe implications for the outcome of applications by asylum seekers and refugees who are not fluent in English Language. In this light, this study aims to unearth the challenges of Francophone asylum seekers and refugees and to probe the role of interpretation services in the determination of refugee status. The study was conducted at the Cape Town refugee reception office and the participants included Congolese asylum seekers, interpreters provided by the DHA and refugee status determination officers (RSDO).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to the Department of Home Affairs' first memo of 1994, in order to create effective communication between departmental officials, other departments and members of the public; "it was decided to use English as the common denominator". Due to the communication challenges and language barrier, asylum seekers can only rely on interpreters to narrate their stories at Refugee Reception Offices. The use of English as the official language in the department of home affairs has therefore had severe negative implications for the applications of Francophone asylum seekers

It is worth noting that seeking asylum is a painful process and in the case of Francophone asylum seekers, the situation is exacerbated when they have to tell their stories through another person (interpreter). This is in itself a very stressful process, especially when asylum seekers are expected to talk about traumatic stories and not being sure if the message has been translated correctly. Moreover, the process of seeking asylum means that asylum seekers must remember what

happened to them and reconstruct their experiences with no ambiguity to the officials at home affairs (Herlihy, 2012). However, the Refugee Act compels the Department of Home Affairs to provide competent interpretation for applicants at all stages of the process (Refugee Act, 1998, article (5 (1))). In the case of asylum seekers in South Africa, there is an expectation from DHA employees to receive a story that is coherent, meanwhile Francophone asylum seekers can only rely on interpreters to tell their story in English. Therefore, the transmission of their stories through an intermediary can have a negative or positive impact on the outcome of the application.

Furthermore, despite the linguistic challenges of Francophone asylum seekers and other associated problems, it is not known if asylum seekers receive adequate language interpretation at the refugee reception office in Cape Town. There is no accessible empirical study in the South African context on the impact of the use of interpretation services on the outcome of asylum seeker applications at the department of home affairs. Therefore, this research will shed light on this often neglected, yet very important aspect of the refugee determination process in South Africa.

1.3 MAIN AIM

The study seeks to critically analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the refugee reception office in Cape Town.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- To analyse communication challenges of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees in Cape Town.
- To investigate the perceptions of Congolese refugees and asylum seekers towards the services rendered by ZRGB.
- To investigate the perceptions of home affairs officials towards language services provided by ZRGB employees.
- To examine the challenges faced by ZRGB employees in providing translation and interpretation services to Congolese refugees and asylum seeker.
- To examine challenges faced by the department of home affairs refugee reception officers in dealing with asylum seekers and refugees.
- To make recommendation for the improvement of interpreting service in asylum interviews.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research seeks to answer the following questions;

- What are the communication challenges that Congolese asylum seekers and refugees face at home affairs?
- How do Congolese asylum seekers and refugees perceive services provided by ZRGB Interpretation, Translation and Social Services?
- What are the perceptions of home affairs officials about ZRGB employees and the services they provide?
- What are the challenges faced by ZRGB employees in executing their duties?
- What are the challenges faced by the department of home affairs refugee reception officers in Cape Town?
- What can be done to improve the quality of the translation and interpretation services at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town?

Table: 1.1: Table of objectives, questions and methods

Objectives	Questions	Methods
To analyze the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees in Cape Town.	What are the communication challenges experienced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at home affairs?	In-depth interviews focus group discussion and observation.
To investigate the perceptions of Congolese refugees and asylum seekers about the services rendered by ZRGB Interpretation and translation services	How do Congolese asylum seekers and refugees perceive the services provided by ZRGB Interpretation and translation and Services?	Interviews, focus group discussions, observation
To investigate the perceptions of home affairs officials towards language services provided by ZRGB employees.	What are the perceptions of home affairs officials about ZRGB employees?	Interviews with home affairs officials
To examine the challenges faced by ZRGB employees while on duty.	What are the challenges faced by ZRGB employees?	Interviews, focus group discussions and observation
To examine the challenges faced by DHA refugee reception officers in Cape Town	What are the challenges faced by DHA refugee reception officers in Cape Town?	Interviews with home affairs officials and observation
To provide recommendations for the improvement of interpreting services in asylum interviews.	What can be done to improve the translation and interpretation services in asylum interviews?	Interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis

The table above illustrates the relationship between the objectives of the study, research questions and research methods. It provides questions that assisted the researcher to get an insight into each of the objectives of the study and to adequately respond to the main question of the study and shows clear links between research objectives and instruments used for data collection.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify and analyse the challenges of Francophone asylum seekers as well as to probe the role of interpretation services on the determination of refugee status. In so doing, the study hopes to contribute towards addressing the gap

in literature about asylum seeker processes in the context of South Africa and also sheds some light on the often neglected communication challenges of asylum seekers. According to Crush (2000) the history of migration has been acknowledged as being one of the most investigated and well accepted academic fields in the social sciences. However, it is surprising that there are very limited studies focusing on the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees at Refugee Reception Offices (RRO) in South Africa. To this end, the research hopes to make a contribution to enrich literature on the interpretation of asylum stories, the politics of seeking asylum and the acquisition of a refugee identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Based on the recommendations of this study, asylum seeker application processes could receive adequate interpretation services, or ZRGB could improve the quality of services it offers to the department of Home Affairs (DHA). The recommendations could also provide the DHA (Refugee Centre) with an opportunity to re-evaluate its contract with ZRGB and if necessary secure the services of another company. At a practical level, the recommendations provided by this study have the potential to improve the overall quality of translation and interpretation services provided by DHA to asylum seekers and refugees who are not competent in English. As a result, decisions to grant or reject asylum claims would be based on the merits of the case and not on the outcomes of symbols and meanings that are lost in the process of interpretation.

1.7 DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research focuses only on Congolese asylum seekers and refugees based in Cape Town and it excludes immigrants from other countries. The Cape Town refugee office is the second largest in the country and ZRGB is its main client. Also, Cape Town is home to many Congolese asylum seekers and refugees and DHA (2016:30) reveals that South Africa hosts 8029 bona-fide Congolese asylum seekers nationally. Moreover, the researcher is based and works as an interpreter at the home affairs refugee office in Cape Town, which made access to data for this study possible. Furthermore, all refugee offices in the country use the same Refugees Act; they operate under one umbrella, which is the department of Home Affairs (Human Right Watch, 1998:4, Refugee Acts, 1998). However, the findings of this study directly

affect the Cape Town refugee office only and are not applicable to other refugee centres in South Africa. Also, this study has made recommendations that could be useful to other refugee reception offices nationwide because it is the same company (ZRGB) that provides interpretation services to all the centres.

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is divided into five main chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the study and provides the background for the study, explains the research problem, main aim, objectives of the study, research questions, illustrates in a tabular form the relationship between the objectives, questions and methods, gives significance of the study and outlines the scope of the research.

Chapter 2 analyses existing literature on the patterns of migration to South Africa and the challenges experienced by African migrants in general and francophone migrants in particular in the process of negotiating political asylum in South Africa. It also discusses Bell and Reiss theories of translation, community interpreting, interpreting studies and how they serve as conceptual framework for this research.

Chapter 3 identifies the research design, justifies the choice of a qualitative methodology, describes in detail the strategies that were employed in the process of data collection and analysis, including sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data processing and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the major findings and the implications for Congolese claims for asylum, applications for renewal of temporary permits and the entire process of acquisition of asylum in South Africa. The chapter attempts to connect the findings to the challenges faced by Congolese refugees and asylum seekers in Cape Town.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions based on the findings and recaptures key issues that have emerged from this study. It also provides suggestions/ recommendations to improve the quality of language services at the Refugee Centre.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has contextualised the research project and identified the research problem. It has also outlined the aims and objectives, as well as the research questions. Finally, the chapter has explained the significance of the research, delineated the scope of the study and provided an outline of the five chapters that make up this study. The next chapter analyses relevant literature on the politics of seeking asylum in post-apartheid South Africa. It highlights the contentious issues that have been at the fore of discussions on forced migration in this context and the implications for this case study. It identifies the gaps in the literature and explains how this project has addressed the gaps. Finally, it discusses the theoretical framework and how it has been used as a lens to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study is to critically analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the refugee reception office in Cape Town. It investigates the communication challenges of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at home affairs refugee reception office (RRO) in Cape Town. It also discusses the perceptions of Congolese refugees and asylum seekers towards the services rendered by ZRGB and the challenges faced by ZRGB employees. To achieve these objectives, this chapter has revisited existing studies on the politics of migration in South Africa and it has provided a theoretical lens for this study.

The influx of African migrants during and after apartheid has produced several studies on the politics of migration in South Africa from researchers, scholars and postgraduate students. These projects have addressed issues ranging from mine labour migration from Southern Africa, immigrant entrepreneurship, the relationship between gender, health and migration, migrant rights and more recently to xenophobia (see Peberdy, 1999; Crush, 2000; Landau and Jacobson, 2004; Landau, 2007; Landau, 2011; Crush et al., 2008; Piper & Charman, 2016; Pineteh & Mulu, 2016 and Willie & Mfubu, 2016). In this literature review, I attempt to analyse the contentious issues from some of these studies and bring them to bear on this study. The chapter is therefore sub-divided into the following sections:

- the patterns of migration into South Africa;
- challenges of migrants in South Africa with a focus on Congolese migrants;
- Challenges of asylum seekers with a focus Congolese;
- The process of seeking asylum in South Africa;
- challenges experienced by the department Home Affairs when dealing with asylum seekers and refugees (the implications of interpretation processes and expectations of narrative-stories at Home Affairs);
- Theoretical framework.

2.2 PATTERNS OF MIGRATION INTO SOUTH AFRICA

After 1994, increased immigration to South Africa from other African countries has brought South Africans into direct contact with foreign Africans more than during the apartheid period when black immigration to South Africa was almost entirely banned, except for the temporary migration of mine labour (Peberdy, 2001; Crush and Dobson, 2007). The increased African immigration into South Africa is caused by political uncertainty and tenacious economic hardship in homelands, and they often anticipate an ultimate return to their familial lands in the event of possible political and socioeconomic changes (Adepoju 2003, 2006; Maharaj 2002; Pineteh 2011 and Posel 2010).

At the end of 2014, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015c: 4) reported that there were 59.5 million people globally who had been displaced by conflict, persecution, violations of human rights and generalised violence. While IOM (2016: 5-20) revealed that by the end of 2015, 65.3 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide due to persecution, conflict, generalised violence and human rights violations. This shows an escalation in absolute terms of 5.8 million people over 2014, and signifies the highest level of forced dislocation ever documented.

By mid-2015, the conflict in Somalia resulted in 1.1 million people fleeing the country as refugees, the third highest number of people seeking refuge in Africa. Somalia is closely followed by South Sudan (744,100), Sudan (640,900), the Democratic Republic of Congo (535,300) and the Central African Republic (470,600) (UNHCR, 2015b: 6). For instance, Somalis fleeing parts of Mogadishu with the Al-Shabaab militia rebels' control are regarded as legitimate refugees because the conflict is recognised as pervasive and on-going and large numbers of people are fleeing ongoing violence caused by the civil war. The same can be said for parts of South Sudan and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Willie and Mfubu, 2016:549).

In the west of the continent, conflicts have been on the increase and the escalating violence by armed insurgent groups such as Boko Haram have destabilised northern Nigeria. In the Centre-east of the continent, Mai Mai rebels in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo continue to force more people to flee from their country (Willie and Mfubu, 2016). Ethnic conflict in Rwanda has also led to the

massacre of innocent people, and it has disrupted political stability in the Great lakes regions. Appleyard (1998: 193), reveals that the genocide forced around 1.7 million people to find protection outside the country, with one million in ex-Zaire, 550 000 in Tanzania, 160 000 in Burundi and 5 000 in Uganda, and almost 1.2 million inward refugees. With the demise of apartheid in 1994, Africans who have been displaced from their country of origin for socio-economic and/or political reasons have migrated to South Africa, with a significant number from francophone Africa.

2.3 CATEGORIES OF IMMIGRANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.3.1 Temporary visa holders

Generally, visas are for international travelers who have permanent residence outside South Africa and who wish to come to the country for the purpose of visit, study, business, work, or staying permanently. Between 2010 and 2013, China accounted for the highest number of applications in this category, followed by Zimbabwe, India, Pakistan and Nigeria. These top five countries constituted over 65% of visa applications to the department of home affairs. (DHA, 2016:27).

2.3.2 Permanent residence Permits

Applications for permanent residency in South Africa are deliberated in terms of Section 26 (Direct Residency Permits) and Section 27 (Residency-on-Other-Grounds Permits) of the Immigration Act 2002 (Act No 13 of 2002), and in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Immigration Act. In terms of granting Permanent Residency Permits, emphasis is placed on immigrants who are in a position to make meaningful contributions to broadening the economic base of South Africa (DHA, 2016:29)

Figure 2.1: Applications for Permanent Residence Permits

Permanent Residence Category	Total applications	%
26(b)Spouse	9975	33%
26(a)Worker	5799	19%
26(c)Dependent(<21)	5271	18%
27(g)Relative	2298	8%
27(b)Extra Ordinary Skills	2175	7%
27(d)Refugee	1115	4%
27(e)Retired	953	3%
27(C)Business	875	3%
26(d)Dependent(>21)	621	2%
27(a)Worker	520	2%
27(f)Financially Independent	249	1%
26(c)Dependent(<18)	156	1%
26(d)Dependent(>18)	91	0%
Grand Total	30098	100%

Source: VFS System (16 June 2014 – 14 Jan 2016)

The table illustrates the categories and number of people who applied for permanent residency permits in South Africa over a two year period. For instance, between 2010 and 2013 there were over 6,400 applications for permanent residence under section 26(a) of the Immigration Act. These applications are in respect of foreign nationals who have been holders of general or corporate work permits for more than five years. Most applications for permanent residence were Zimbabwean nationals followed by foreign nationals from China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan. While applications on study permit were dominated by nationals from Zimbabwe (20%), followed by those from Nigeria (15%), DRC (9%) and Angola (6%) (DHA, 2016:28). Very often applications from Africans are rejected, showing the difficulties to obtain legal status in South Africa.

2.3.3 Refugees and asylum seekers

South Africa is in the top 5 nations that have received the greatest number of asylum seekers globally (DHA, 2016:63). By 1998 when the Refugee Acts was passed, the number of asylum seekers was at 11,000 and the number grew to 70,010 in 2013 because of various 'pull' and 'push' factors (DHA, 2016:29). Although South Africa receives a significant number of asylum seekers, over 90% of them are not qualified for refugee status. In May 2015 the National Immigration Information System (NIIS) revealed that the DHA issued 1 061 812 Section 22 permits to asylum seekers, of which 983,473 permits were not active, and only 78,339 were still active. Furthermore, NIIS states that 119,600 Section 24 permits had been issued to refugees, 96,971 were still active and 22,629 of those permits had expired (DHA, 2016:30). Although South Africa is an emerging economy with a myriad of socio-economic problems, it is host to a large number of asylum seekers and refugees on the African continent. Of the 616,220 South Sudanese refugees at the end of 2015, Ethiopia hosted 275,400 of them followed by Sudan, which hosted 190,700, and Uganda, which hosted 179,600 (UNHCR, 2015b: 6).

2.3.3 Long- term visa (family oriented)

This is a specific visa that is fast tracked and allows the applicant and the nuclear family to apply as one unit. Migrants with the desirable skills, investment and business interests are permitted access to long-term visas that will allow easy access to permanent residence. The family members are allowed to work and study using the long term visa without the need to apply for other visas such as work or study permits (DHA, 2016:44).

2.3.4 Strategic use of visa and permitting to retain international students after graduation

According to the National Development Plan (NDP), "all graduates from foreign countries should be granted 7-year work permits". The NDP used the visa and permitting regime strategically to retain international students in South Africa after graduation. For instance, in 2013, there were 20 962 international students at postgraduate level, and 35 813 at undergraduate level that were retained (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), cited by (DHA, 2016:44). However, NDP understood that other nations have long realised the profits of keeping ties with their diaspora populations and have produced committed

institutions to manage these bonds. Despite this trend, SA has not recognized an agreement on how to connect the diaspora to contribute to accomplishing development goals (DHA, 2016:48).

2.4 SEEKING POLITICAL ASYLUM IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa bears the brunt of the refugee crisis on the African continent because of its relative economic and political stability after 1994. Although it represents a beacon of hope for many Africans fleeing socio-economic and political hardships in their countries of origin, the process of seeking political asylum in South Africa is fraught with challenges. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) cited by Greyling (2016:2), South Africa is the largest recipient of individual applications for asylum in the world, with more than 207 000 applications out of a total of 839 000 globally. In 2015 alone, South Africa received 71,914 new asylum applications, 9,322 of which came from as far as Ethiopia and 6,554 were from Nigeria (Department of Home Affairs, 2016). It is therefore important to provide conceptual clarity on the distinction between refugees and asylum seekers in the South African context.

Greyling (2016:3) states that an “asylum seeker is a person who is seeking protection as a refugee and is still waiting to have his/her claim assessed”. Similarly, Kavuro (2015:236) argues that the term “refugee” is often assumed to represent a person who was forced to leave his or her country of origin or habitual residence because of war or armed conflict and, due to such war or armed conflict, is incapable to return. Furthermore, he argues that individuals who escape from environmental deprivation, natural disaster and poverty or hardship are defined as economic immigrants and are therefore governed by the immigration policy and not the refugee policy (Kavuro, 2015:246). Based on the above definitions, there is little distinction between an asylum seeker and a refugee. This lack of clarity at the conceptual level also extends to the practical level where thousands of asylum seekers in South Africa are left in limbo for several years, while waiting for the DHA to make a final decision either to grant or reject an individual’s application for asylum.

However, Kavuro (2015:240) asserts that in 2008, the Refugees Act was completely reviewed so as to fill in the gap in the refugee framework, by proposing the conditions

of asylum seekers' sojourn and by presenting the rights that flow from that status. Also, the protection of asylum seekers' rights is more challenging because the 2008 revision does not specifically state that they are "fully" protected. Furthermore, Kavuro (2015:236) claims "the protection of refugee rights is problematic everywhere in as much as states are committed to raising the living standards of their citizens and enjoy unrestricted choice to include or exclude non-citizens". This implies that the challenges related to the rights of asylum seekers are not only limited to the South African context. Globally governments are also grappling with limited resources in providing for their own citizens while guaranteeing the rights of asylum seekers.

However, prior to the review of the asylum seeker process in the 2008 Refugees Act, French-speaking refugees and asylum seekers experienced a myriad challenges with translation and interpretation in the process of negotiating political asylum, with significant implications for accessing legal documents. The following section examines the South African immigration law, with an emphasis on the Refugees Act in an attempt to understand the extent to which it facilitates the asylum process for applicants from francophone Africa.

2.4.1 South African Immigration Law

The problems with the South African immigration laws can be traced back to immigration policy during the apartheid era in South Africa. These problems affected the asylum process in post-apartheid South Africa. What is currently referred to as the South African Immigration Act emanates from the Aliens Controls Act during the apartheid regime. Interestingly, this Act promulgated in 1991 continued to influence the country's immigration policy after 1994. The Act was not cancelled until 2002 with the passage of a new Immigration Act that came into effect in July 2005. In the late 1990s, the immigration policy was being driven fundamentally by the Minister's own personal adviser and a small coterie of apartheid-era white officeholders (Crush & McDonald 2001).

In 2004, shortly after her appointment by the African National Congress (ANC) as the Minister of Home Affairs Mapisa-Nqakula commented about the Immigration Amendment Act, arguing that '[t]here will be a need in the long term for Government to look at a more holistic review of our immigration policy and for a possible rewrite of

the Act' (Mapisa-Nqakula 2004). The end of apartheid had ushered in a mine migrant labour calamity, unquestionably not for the first time in South African history. Interrupted production and labour crises had preoccupied the mining industry for most of its one hundred years (Crush et al. 1991). Likewise, Gordon (2010:3) argues that immigration policy had created an internal logic among state officials and law implementation personnel that foreigners, especially 'black' foreign nationals from Africa, were not privileged to the normal protections and human rights of a constitutional democracy.

However, the DHA (2016:39) argues that the policy objective of the South African Immigration Law is "to put in place a border management system that responds to the development and security needs of SA and its neighbours". Section 9 (1) of the Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002 states that, "no person shall enter or depart from the Republic at a place other than a port of entry" (DHA, 2016:38). For the DHA, "a sovereign state has the prerogative to determine who enters its territory and to enact laws accordingly. Also states have the right to protect themselves from risks, such as the entry and stay of fugitives from justice who are linked to organised crime" (DHA, 2016:40). For instance, in 2014-2015 a total of 54, 169 people were deported, out of which 44,536 (82%) of deportees were from three neighbouring countries: Mozambique 19, 562, Zimbabwe 13, 962 and Lesotho 11, 012 (DHA, 2016:39).

Moreover, Peberdy (1999, 2001) posits that the post-apartheid era was also preoccupied with an introspective nation-building process and immigration was not observed with any eagerness by the new government. Yet, the implementation of immigration policy as in the apartheid era, sustained a focus on recognizing and deporting illegal labour migrants rather than holding their employers responsible (Klaaren & Ramji 2001). A demonstrative Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) survey of South African arrogance towards immigrants, migrants and refugees revealed very little understanding for the idea of 'universal' rights (Crush 2000). For Crush & Dobson (2007:442), the shared component in these earlier policies was racial choice. By law, only whites could settle in apartheid South Africa, 'though the definition of whiteness and the desirability of immigrants from different countries varied over time.' (Crush & Dobson, 2007:442). Past policies and practices continue to influence sentiments about Africans migrants in democratic South Africa.

For instance, immigrants were repeatedly criticised by prominent politicians of the new order, most notably former President Nelson Mandela himself (Crush 2002). Such negative sentiments from prominent leaders mirrored the general anti-immigration perspective of the new state and the specific problems of achieving residence status through the Department of Home Affairs (Mattes et al. 2002; Rogerson & Rogerson 2002). The Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) survey of South African attitudes towards immigrants, migrants and refugees discovered very little sympathy for the idea of 'universal' rights, as far as asylum seekers and refugees are concerned (Crush 2000).

Another source of negative sentiments towards African migrants, asylum seekers and refugees emanates from the competition with locals over limited resources for the provision of basic services such as housing, water and sanitation. Greyling (2016:2) reveals that the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers into informal urban settlements, commonly referred to as townships leads to new socio-economic challenges and a necessity for the expansion of policy measures to address these challenges.

2.4.2 The Refugees Act of 1998

This section examines the Refugees Act of 1998 and its weaknesses in addressing the refugee crisis in South Africa. The Refugees Act was adopted in 1998 and came into effect in 2000 and its aims were stated as follows;

“...giving effect to international instruments, providing for the reception of asylum seekers, establishing conditions for the refugee application and determination processes, and defining rights and conditions of residence for refugees in SA; provides for the establishment of a Refugee Reception Office staffed by refugee reception officers and refugee status determination officers; provides for the establishment of both a Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs and a Refugee Appeal Board; and provides specific guidance on the composition, powers, duties, and conditions of office of members of both bodies” (DHA, 2016:25).

According to Belvedere (2007:59), “the Refugees Act has been hailed as one of the more inclusive pieces of refugee legislation in the Southern African region, as it enshrines freedom of movement, as well as other fundamental civil, political, social,

and economic rights, in line with the Bill of Rights of South Africa's Constitution". However, Willie and Mfubu (2016:542) argue that although South Africa has endorsed the Refugees Act, which is lauded as one of the most liberal national refugee protection legislation in Africa, it has degenerated in its refugee protection policy. Also, Crush (1999:1-2) labelled the Act as "a piece of legislation premised on principles of control, exclusion and expulsion", and concurred that the post-apartheid migration management system was "characterised by corruption, racial double standards, and special privileges for certain employers". According to Human Rights Watch, the Act is an out-dated remnant of the apartheid state that was in opposition to the South African constitution and internationally accepted human rights conventions. Also the Human Rights Watch (1999:6) describes the Refugees Act of 1998, as "...imperfect in material respects." Refugees in principle enjoy complete legal protection, which includes the rights set out in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, comprising the right to admission to social security, and, if they are incapable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance. Conversely, the Social Assistance Act (No 130 of 1998) does not cover protection of refugees. The conflict between the two Acts means refugee access to social assistance is still not yet conclusive (Nyenti et al., 2007:31). Such inconsistencies create challenges in the implementation of certain tenets of the Refugee Act.

According Levinson et al. (2009: 769), the implementation of policy is linked to a practice of power. The Refugees Act of 1998 states that in the absence of the proper paperwork issued by South Africa's Department of Home Affairs, refugees are not permitted to work or access any kind of education in South Africa (Palmary, 2009:3). In 2010 the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs talking at a conference on Legal and Social Security Protection Perspectives on Migration in South Africa, recognised that "some of the gaps between policy and implementation are sometimes not caused by the deficiencies in the policy itself, but by the inadequacies of the implementation mechanisms, particularly at administrative levels" (Tshiamala, 2010:25). The forced migration studies programme, cited by NICDAM (2011:79), contends that there is also anti-immigrant prejudice and unfriendly attitudes from the interviewing officers, revealing a general perception that people arriving at the reception offices are taking advantage of loopholes in the asylum-seeker system to remain in the country.

Finally, as stated in the previous chapter, the Refugees Act of 1998 and the amendment of 2008 make provision for the use of interpreters during interviews if the asylum seeker cannot communicate in English. This is a critical issue because asylum seekers from Francophone countries in Africa face major language challenges at refugee reception offices across the country. Therefore, this research aims to critically analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town.

2.4.3 Testifying during asylum determination process

Herlihy, Jobson and Turner (2006) state that claiming asylum implies providing basic details and explanations as to how the individual believes they fit the definition set out in the Geneva Convention. While Nelson and Fivush (2004) reveal that the asylum process relies heavily on the individual's ability to recall autobiographical memories. Autobiographical memories are defined as an explicit "memory of an event that occurred in a specific time and place in one's personal past" (Nelson & Fivush, 2004: 486). One of the most common tests for the credibility of an account of persecution is internal consistency (Granhag, Stromwall & Hartwig, 2005). If the individual cannot 'keep their story straight' then, it is assumed the story is fabricated. If an applicant gives different (discrepant) accounts of their experiences in the various written forms and oral interviews involved in the asylum process, it can be assumed that they have fabricated a story to assist their case (Herlihy et al., 2002; Herlihy & Turner, 2006). Although this maybe the case, the science of autobiographical memory, which should guide this process suggests that retrieving an accurate, consistent and reliable memory is not quite as simple as it may appear. Autobiographical remembering is not an exact replaying of an event. This type of memory is constructions of events based on several elements and subject to distortion, as well as failure (forgetting or false remembering) (see Bartlett, 1932, 1967; Rubin, 1995; Rubin, Berntsen, & Bohni, 2008)

Furthermore, in most asylum cases no biography evidence is accessible. The personal interview is the single opportunity to demonstrate that asylum seekers have well founded fears. Consequently, the process of seeking asylum implies that asylum seekers must recall details of personal experiences (often traumatic) and give a narrative account which is considered coherent and consistent in the context of

administrative and legal procedures in the receiving country (Herlihy 2012). There is an assumption that people who make legitimate claims for asylum can reliably, consistently and accurately recall autobiographical memories (Herlihy et al., 2010). However, the function of human autobiographical memory is not to remember exact/accurate memories of events but rather serves three broad functions, namely; social, directive and maintaining a sense of self (Bluck et al., 2005). It is therefore important to explain how these narrative trajectories impact on the process of filing for asylum in South Africa.

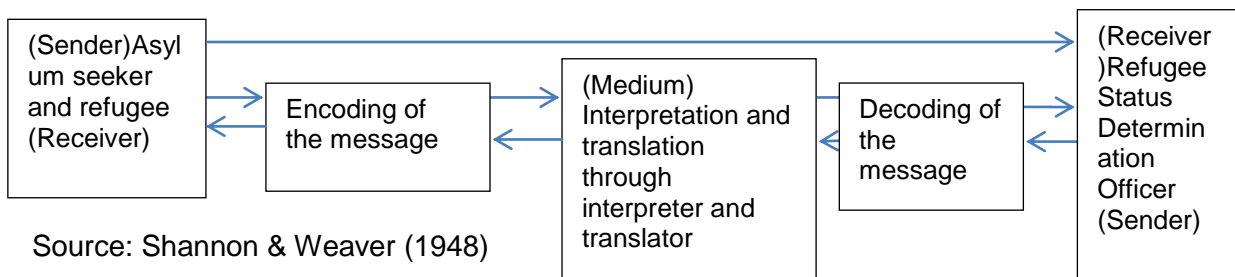
In South Africa, asylum seekers are expected to lodge an application at the border or port of entry. Offices that deal with newcomers currently are located in Marabastad-Pretoria, Greyville- Durban and Musina in the Limpopo (Belvedere 2007:58; Western Cape government, 2013). Before an individual is issued an asylum-seekers permit from a refugee reception office, he/she needs to undergo an interview conducted by a Refugee Reception Officer (RRO). During the interview, the officer would ask the applicant to complete the eligibility determination form (BI1590). It is the responsibility of the applicant to notify the official if he/she is not fluent in English. In that case, an interpreter would be appointed to assist the applicant in completing the form. An asylum seeker is also allowed to bring his/her own interpreter. The information that the asylum seeker provides at this interview is very important, as the Department of Home Affairs officials use the information to decide whether an asylum seeker qualifies for refugee status or not. A file will be generated for the applicant, and he/she will be given a file number. When issued an asylum-seeker permit, an individual may lawfully live, work and study in South Africa while waiting for the claim for asylum to be adjudicated. The asylum seeker permit is generally valid for three months and it is very challenging to replace a lost permit. Later on, the asylum seeker has to undergo a second interview where the refugee status determination officer (RSDO) ensures that information provided is correct. A final decision either grants refugee status or rejects the application. An asylum-seeker may legally remain in South Africa until there has been a final decision on his/her asylum claim and very often this process may take more than two years (Kavuro, 2016; Western Cape government, 2013; Belvedere 2007).

It is important to note that most first interviews take place later in the day that asylum seekers arrive at the port of entry because of the limited administrative capacity at

the Department of Home Affairs vis-à-vis the demand from asylum seekers. According to Belvedere (2007:59), the regulations states that asylum applications should be adjudicated or finalized by the department of home affairs “...within 180 days of filing a completed asylum application with a refugee reception officer.” However, this is not always the case. As discussed above, the asylum process relies heavily on the individual retrieval of autobiographical memories. Yet, the narratives provided by French-speaking asylum seekers do not only depend on their memory but are mediated by an interpreter. Ideally, the interpreter should take into account not only the facts but also the feelings and emotions of the applicant, so that the transcript can portray exactly what the asylum seeker intended to say. To this Orsolya (2011:3) states that whenever an immigrant does not express the language formally used by the administrative system, the quality of the interpretation has a massive impact on the result of the case. Therefore, in the narration of stories by asylum seekers, interpretation plays a crucial role. The next section examines some of the challenges in the interpretation of stories of asylum seekers.

2.4.4. Interpretation of stories of asylum seekers

Figure 2.3: Two-way communication while using interpretation as medium



The table above illustrates the flow of information at Home Affairs between an asylum seeker, an official at the DHA and an interpreter of ZRGB. Whoever starts the conversation is the sender; the one that receives the message is the receiver, and the interpreter is the channel. For instance, the official of DHA (sender) would ask a question to the asylum seeker (receiver) through the interpreter (channel), the interpreter would translate the question to the asylum seeker and vice versa.

Bell (1991:11) defines good interpretation as “that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language

belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work”. Also, As-Safi (2011:53) states that interpretation is the ability to interpret verbally with full attention what is obscure from source language (SL) to target language (TL) by keeping the same accents, speech structures, also by maintaining self-composure and calmness of mind (As-Safi 2011:61).

Pochhacker and Shlesinger (2002:122) reveal that the correctness of a translation should be judged according to the result and not the process by which the result is obtained. That is, as long as words in the translation refer to precisely the same thing as the word in the original, the translation is correct, irrespective of the reflective effort used. Pochhacker (2009:10) argues that translation is an activity that mainly consists of the production of utterances (texts) that are presumed to have a similar meaning and effect as previously existing utterances in another language and culture.

The definitions of translation and interpretation provided above suggest that interpreters acting as medium between officials at the DHA and asylum seekers require a unique set of qualifications and experience to fulfil the role successfully. But because many of the interpreters are not professionally trained, they often do not apply the basic principles of interpretation. Therefore, Ciordia (2016:74) argues that Community interpreting is necessary in order to deliver consistency in improving the quality of interpretation services and to contribute to the better understanding and more fruitful relationships between interpreters and public services providers. Yet, countries view and regulate the role of interpreters in differently. For instance, In Australia, the National Accreditation Authority provides accreditation for Translators and interpreters (NAATI); In Canada, the accreditation is given through the National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting of 2007 that was initiated in 1990 by the Healthcare Interpretation Network Policy Committee (HIN); and in the United Kingdom by the National Codes of Conduct. All of this requires an interpreter to play a passive role, to stick to impartiality, he/she has to remain voiceless, and opinion-less on anything concerned with an assignment, and has to keep the first person while interpreting (Cioria, 2016). Conversely, in East of Europe, and in South Africa, interpreters do not abide to any Professional National Code of Conduct. Tužinská (2011:7) attests that there is no technique specified by the law or used by the authorities to verify that the interpreter possesses the required academic

qualification, language skills and the experience that is necessary for interpreters working in this field. The UNHCR acknowledges that “determining refugee status is a skilfully demanding and difficult mission demanding significant understanding, skills, and good judgment” (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 1995: 45). That’s why, all interviews need to enter the legal record, and it is on the basis of this entextualization that asylum is granted or, in case of denial, that an appeal can be launched. In this light, the entextualization of the asylum seeker’s verbal performance becomes much more than the process of rendering a single instance of talk into text, detachable from its local context (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Briggs & Bauman 1992; Silverstein & Urban 1996). The process of interpretation and translation may serve to detach the meaning in a story provided by an asylum seeker from the cultural context in which it is produced and understood.

In asylum hearings, semantic ambiguities already present in any monolingual setting, become increasingly difficult to handle due to the trans-idiomatic nature of the statement. In many instances, the hearing is not conducted in the asylum seeker’s first language or the interviewer’s first language, necessitating the presence of an interpreter (Jacquemet 2009: 525-546). UNHCR’s individual refugee status determination procedures have been criticised for lack of procedural safeguards. Ironically, the UNHCR has advised that “the importance of [refugee status determination] procedures cannot be overemphasized.... a wrong decision might cost the person's life or liberty.” (1989, ch. 2) It is for this reason that the UNHCR has advocated in recent years for procedural safeguards such as an independent appeal, providing reasons for rejection, and access to interpreters and legal counsel among others (UNHCR 2001).

2.5 CHALLENGES ASYLUM SEEKERS FACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.5.1 Language, interpretation, translation, and communication

a) Language

Judging from the relationship between an asylum seeker, interpreter and the DHA official, it is common knowledge that language barrier is one of the main challenges faced by asylum seekers from francophone Africa. As argued in several instances, English is the main language used at the DHA and asylum seekers are expected to

send and receive messages in English. For Bell (2016) "...we don't learn to have a native language any more than we learn to have arms or legs; the ability to acquire a native language is part of our genetic endowment—just like the ability to learn to walk" (174). In addition, Clearer (2010:19) explains that language is a code that conveys meaning symbolically. The symbols are basically imitation, abstract and arbitrary. The words have no physical or natural similarity to the objects to which they refer. Therefore, language connects people through a set of signs that transfer concepts allowing individuals to think and respond to messages (Kendall 2001:73). Interestingly, language practices that are learnt and practised organically in the country of origin become barriers in different contexts when migrants seek asylum in those countries.

Challenges are bound to emerge when asylum seekers are not conversant in the language used by the authorities because the hearing process during status determination aims to establish an ordered, replicable, and consistent operation that depends on smooth interactional routines to achieve its goal of surveillance, discipline, and control (Malkki, 1995). Blommaert (2001) argues that the asylum process involves the problem of the availability and accessibility of linguistic-communicative resources, an often overlooked 'context' of talk. Also, Eades (2005) concurs that recent developments in the area of applied linguistics, include the release of guidelines by a group of linguists with a focus on the use of language analysis in such asylum seeker cases. An example is the work of John Gibbons on the wording of the police caution which demonstrates that suspects who are non-English-speaking would have struggled with the syntactic complexity of the police caution (Gibbons, 1990). In addition, Jacquet (2009) suggests that this procedure is nervous with unexamined expectations about language, national identity, and communicative competence, leading to the violations of the asylum seekers' human rights.

In this light, the entextualization of the asylum seeker's verbal performance becomes much more than the process of rendering a single instance of talk into text, detachable from its local context (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Briggs & Bauman 1992; Silverstein & Urban 1996). Therefore, the inability of asylum seekers and refugees to speak the required language of the host country forces him/her to rely only on the interpreter (Orsolya, 2011). This means that the quality of translation and

interpretation services offered by the English-speaking host country like South Africa impacts negatively or positively on the outcome of applications by francophone asylum seekers and refugees.

b) Interpretation, translation and communication

With reference to interpretation, Bell (1991:11) defines good interpretation as that in which the sender's message is equivalent in meaning to that of the receiver. While Jackendoff (1991:96) points out the challenges in the process of interpretation in terms of rules, but focuses on the meaning because once the meaning is clear, the message flows automatically. Likewise, Risager (2006:1) states that where the interpretation of language and culture merge is very important for academic purposes, as well as for progress in the different areas of practice where language plays an essential role. In the context of Eastern Europe legislation, Tužinská (2011:7) maintains that there is no technique specified by the law or used by the authorities to ascertain the interpreter's language skills or quality of his/her interpretation and the law does not list any further qualifications for interpreters. Consequently, only interpreters in countries like Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom who abide by a professional code of ethics that requires them to be impartial and accurate are considered as professionals (Hale, 2014:322).

With regards to translation, Catford (1965:20) reveals that it is the replacement of a script in one language (a source language) by the exact script in another language (target language). Nida & Taber (1969: 12) concur that translation/interpretation is the process of repeating in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of significance and secondly in terms of style. According to Newmark (1981: 39), the translator has to give readers the closest interpretation as the one found in the original source. Baker (2005:188) maintains that a translation method is a technique for solving a problem faced in translating a text or a section of it. Therefore, this research illuminates the reality of interpretation based on the challenges of communication faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees.

With regards to communication, Chen and Starosta (2005:4) argue that the progress of a comprehensive belief has become necessary for advancing human development and this belief can only result from intercommunication among dissimilar people. On the other hand, Samovar et al. (2006:16) reveal that communication has somewhat to

do with human conduct and the contentment of a need to interact with other human beings. According to Hale (2014:322), culture and language cannot be separated because words in communication only take on meaning conferring to context, and accurate interpreting can only be achieved by considering the culture. That's why, Neuliep (2009:397) argues that the more familiar you become with the people, the more you understand about them, the more you feel comfortable interacting with them, will facilitate your verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Also, Rajend et al. (2000:151) argue that people change their speech to decrease the social distance with one another, and especially when they consider people around them as strangers. Therefore, Munday (2012) argues that all actions of communication are subjected to interpretation. For instance, translation, reading, communication are acts of interpretation that people decode, interpret, transcode and convert.

2.5.2 Anti – foreigner sentiments, social and economic exclusion

According to Pineteh (2015:76) the influx of refugees into South Africa with the demise of apartheid in 1994 set the pace for anti-foreigner sentiments. Also, the few immigration officials appointed to process asylum applications were ill prepared, because of their own prejudices about Africans in Johannesburg (Landau 2011). Also, Landau (2007:67) demonstrates that “a cocktail of inadequate documentation, ignorance and outright discrimination prevents many non-nationals who are legal in South Africa from accessing critical social services”. Moreover, South Africans think that foreign nationals are here to take their jobs, wives and to increase the level of criminality in the country. Landau cited in Pineteh (2015:76) states that “South African stereotypes about Africans have continued to affect the relationship between locals and African nationals, triggering nativist discourses and impassioned anti-foreigner sentiment”.

African migrants seeking asylum in South Africa also experience diverse forms of social and economic exclusion. Social rejection is used here as the “lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas [which] affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole” (Levitas et al. 2007: 9; ECCV Policy Discussion Paper 2009; Saith 2001; Sen 2000). Landau (2007:67) discloses that “patterns of exclusion are also evident in private sector industries,

where poor foreigners are typically unable to access even the most rudimentary banking services". Similarly, Pineteh (2014: 72) argues that movement from other parts of Africa into South Africa is indicative of the failure of social, economic, and political establishments in post-colonial African states. These establishments have failed miserably to provide the quality of socioeconomic and political improvement promised by their leaders. Instead, the states function more as localities of armed rebels, complex ethnic conflicts, and economic insufficiency. Therefore, the South African government concerns itself not only with finding workable solutions for pathologies such as poverty, crime, and social violence but also with conveying concise acts to regularise and control the increase of African migrants (Landau 2005; Morris and Bouillon 2001).

2.5.3 Corruption and administrative constraints at DHA

Another challenge that asylum seekers are faced with at the Department of Home Affairs is the issue of corruption. Studies such as those by Landau (2007:66) argue that "home affairs was one of the most corrupt departments during the apartheid period, administrative incompetence and irregularities flourished...however, there has been little noticeable change in the levels of petty corruption that affect non-nationals" in the post-apartheid era. Non-nationals have to deal with security guards, immigration agents as well as officials that attempt to extort bribes in order to facilitate the process of acquiring documentation to legalise their stay in South Africa.

The DHA's desire to mandate civic services and its reluctance to assign the required financial and human means to its refugee affairs section has meant that a big number of newly arrived asylum seekers, who have attempted to follow the law and report to refugee affairs offices to lodge their applications, are being forced to remain in a limbo in the country without access to any form of documentation for several months (Belvedere 2007:60). This study further criticises the DHA's engagement in a prolonged status determination procedure that assists both the presence of abusers who often engage asylum seekers and refugees into corrupt practices to secure access to documentation in the face of continuous delays. It has become more politically convenient for the DHA to expose asylum seekers as cheats and abusers of the system that is responsible for the disaster of the asylum procedure. Faced with a myriad of challenges, some non-nationals, including those with legitimate claims for asylum are forced to abandon the process and continue to reside in the country

illegally. This literature review has attempted to tease out the multiple challenges in post-apartheid South Africa and how these challenges shape the trajectories of political asylum especially in the case of francophone applicants.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers, the draws on Bell and Reiss's theories of translation, community interpreting, interpreting studies and the general communication model. These theories speak clearly about the details of interpreting messages and the repercussions for meaning making, especially in the case of oral accounts.

Bell's interpretation theory is divided into three categories; translation as a process (information process), translation as a product (study of texts), and both process and product. The theory of translation as a process explains how to handle various themes when we are interpreting, such as the perception, the memory and the encoding and decoding of messages. While the theory of translation, as a product requires a study of texts not merely by means of the traditional levels of linguistic analysis (syntax and semantics) but also making use of stylistics and recent advances in text-linguistics and discourse analysis. Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2013:104) reveal that the importance of translation as a process lies in the fact that the diverse methods of expression (writing and talking) do not have to be used simultaneously; the conversation has no influence on the writing or translation process because it occurs afterwards. It is not possible for it to be precise because its process is complicated, culturally specific, and the process of translation depends on the theory of mind (Bell, 1991). In addition to the process of translating, linguists should in fact be mindful of all the basic language processes; listening, speaking, reading and writing-because they all operate in concert with the same innate language faculty. That is why Munday (2012) argues that all acts of communication are acts of interpretation: We are not "communicating", rather we are "decoding", "deciphering", recoding, "transcoding" and "translating".

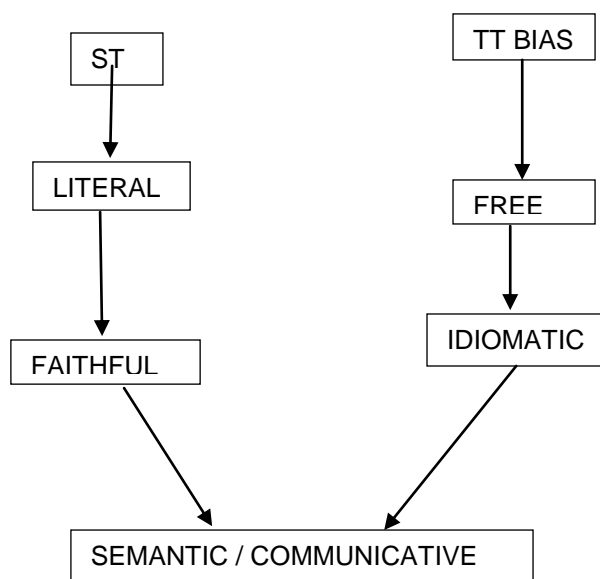
Reiss's theory of translation focuses on the multilingual intermediated process of communication, which generally proposes the production of a TL [target language]

text that is functionally equivalent to a SL text [source language]. This may be done in a three-stage-process (the informative, expressive and the operative type), which may be supported either by starting from the smallest textual unit and ending with the text as a whole, or by beginning with the text as a whole and ending with the analysis of the smallest textual unit.

According to Munday (2016:144), the informative text type is considered as plain communication of facts or plain prose (for instance, information, knowledge, opinions) while expressive text type is reflected as creative composition or 'identifying' method; and operative text type induces behavioural responses or 'adaptive' method and also its appellative function is to appeal to or persuade the reader or 'receiver' of the text to act in a certain way. Yet, the text analysis is made more difficult by the limitation of the possibilities of explicit verbalization of such elements, as well as by the spatio-temporal separation between addresser and addressee and the lack of feedback during the act of communication (Venuti, 2012:161). According to Reiss (1977: 113-14), text rather than the word or sentence is deemed to be the appropriate level at which communication is achieved and at which equivalence must be sought.

Likewise, Nida (1976: 75) suggests a three-stage model of the translation process in that particular model, Source Text (ST) surface elements (grammar, meaning, connotations) are analysed as linguistic kernel structures that can be transferred to form target language (TL) surface elements. This linguistic approach bears similarity with Chomsky's theory of syntax and transformational generative grammar. Pertinent to linguistic theories is Newmark's binary classification of translation into semantic and communicative processes, which somehow resembles Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence. "Communicative translation", according to Newmark (1981: 39) "...attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as possible the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language, and allows for the exact contextual meaning of the original. These two approaches can best be illustrated in figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Newmark's Two Approaches to Translation:



Source: Newmark (1981: 39)

From the diagram above, text-type theory is built on the concept of equivalence, which is the milestone in linguistic theories, whereby a word or sentence is deemed as the appropriate level at which the communication is achieved and at which equivalence must be sought (Reiss 1977: 113-14).

To understand the situation of interpretation at the Refugee Reception Office (RRO), the researcher decided to complement the theories of Bell and Reiss with interpreting studies and community interpreting. These theories provide key principles that can better our understanding of the process of interpreting on asylum accounts and they can strengthen the analysis of data.

Generally, interpretation is oral or spoken while translation is written or visible. Berk-Seligson (1990) considers an interpreter as a precise producer of messages in another language, and who is neutral and invisible in the process. Likewise, Giovannini (1992) contends that the interpreter vigorously manages communication, plays the role of a cultural mediator, rendering services of “advocacy” or “cultural brokering”. In addition, Moody (2011) states that an interpretation is considered faithful when it’s purpose to maintain the faithfulness and values of the community have been met. Likewise, Schneider (1992) contends that interpreters are conflicts solvers when people of different culture and race have dissimilarities. However, Bancroft (2015) claims that community interpreter should maintain confidentiality,

accuracy and impartiality. Jiang (2007) argues that there is far less agreement concerning interpreting ethics and standards for interpreter's role and choice of practice.

The most suitable role for a community interpreter is to ensure best practice, not the verbatim producer of messages in another language, who is neutral and invisible. In addition, the interpreter has to be active in managing the communication and mediating the culture (Ciordia, 2016:2). Hale (2014:322) supports the argument, it is almost impossible to apply community interpreting in practice without considering the cultures that merge; language and culture are intertwined and accurate interpreting cannot be achieved at a basic word level because words in communication only take on significance according to background, situation, participants and culture.

According to As-Safi (2011:15), interpreters must have self-composure, must not be timid or show stage fright; they have to pause behind the speaker to get a clear understanding, or at least the gist, of the message; and also they have to be fully familiar with the speaker's topic and/or register. Furthermore, they are expected to store the verbal and wait for the whole subject before they could retrieve and start rendering. However, translators are expected to perform triple tasks (that of a reader, a critic and an interpreter). In addition, they have to be aware of the author's style and relevant syntactic / linguistic features when dealing with literary / belletristic text; and thereafter, they have to slice the text into a number of units: words, phrases, clauses and sentences within each of which the distribution of denotative and connotative significances are perused (As-Safi, 2011:50).

Therefore, Ciordia (2016:19) argues that Community Interpreting can be achieved through education, legislation and public relations. Still, the following six conditions have to be fulfilled before declaring it successful; clarification of technology, clarification of the roles of the community interpreter, provision of training for community interpreters, provision of training for trainers of community interpreters, provision of training for professionals working with interpreters and accreditation of community interpreters.

With respect to consecutive interpreting, Pochhacker and Shlesinger (2002:223) argue that it entails a direct interaction, it is not facilitated by additional equipment, but rather is characterised by a greater strengthen of interface connecting the engagement of all senses. Pochhacker and Shlesinger (2002:223) contend that

consecutive interpreting shows more dissimilarity in terms of the use of supplementary equipment and physical distance between those involved. Also it is a direct, face-to-face communication act, though the use of supplementary equipment is not prohibited.

Similarly, Pochhacker (2009:18) disputes that consecutive interpreting is a field which arises from the interpretation of utterances as short as words, to the control of entire speeches, or more or less lengthy portions thereof, 'in one go'. Moreover, Pochhacker and Shlesinger (2002:122) maintain that interpreters are not walking dictionaries; rather they may have to identify something but could have trouble coming up with the exact corresponding term in the other language. Also, they have to quickly say something loud in the semantic field of the word they are looking for, and it will then surface spontaneously.

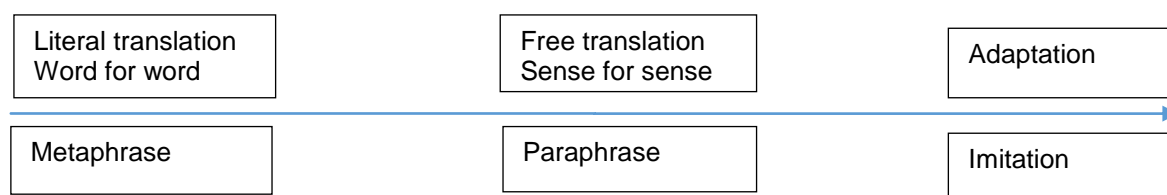
The reason for choosing Bell, Reiss's theories of translation and interpreting studies is their relevance to the daily realities of francophone asylum seekers at the Department of Home Affairs. When a client reports for the first time to the Refugee Reception Officer (RRO), s/he gets the BI 1590 form that has to be completed in his/her language of choice. The form will be given to an interpreter for translation. It is at this stage in the process where different types of interpretation are experienced. The first one is the "word for word or literal" type of interpretation and the second one is "sense for sense or free style", which is where the interpreter listens to both the client and the interviewer by playing the role of mediator and at same time by interpreting meaning rather than words. In the context of South Africa, this process can be summarized into categories according to Dryden (1680/1992: 25):

Metaphrase: 'word by word and line by line' translation, which corresponds to literal translation;

Paraphrase: translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; this involves changing whole phrases and more or less corresponds to faithful or sense-for-sense translation;

Imitation: 'forsaking' both words and sense; this corresponds to Cowley's very free translation and is more or less what today might be understood as adaptation.

Figure 2.5: Different approaches to translation:



(Munday, 2012: 42).

As-Safi (2011:59) articulates that the interpreter is regularly obliged to choose an approach to ease limitations, to achieve a smooth performance of fluid ideas and to increase the step of transfer. As-Safi (2011) further states that translation is not merely determined by text-type as seen in interpreting legal texts, but also by the technique, tactic, strategy or practice which puts constraints on the translator who is bound to accept it. These aspects often come into play when interpreters handle the cases of francophone asylum seekers and they certainly have implications for the outcome of their applications.

Furthermore, Snell-Hornby (2006: 21) argues that interpretation is “rewording” as “...an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language,” which has been variously identified with summary, paraphrase, explanation, definition, reporting, rephrasing etc. While As-Safi (2011) reveals that translation is the replacement of a text in one language by an equivalent text in a second language. Similarly, for Catford (1965: 20), translation is the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL).

However, the limitations enforced on the interpreters are more and greater than those on the translator. Hence, As-Safi (2011:14) stipulates that “the five requirements for competent translators are: mastery or proficiency of SL and TL, thorough knowledge of source and target cultures, familiarity with the topic/register, vocabulary wealth, and finally awareness of the three-phase process, i.e., SL decoding, transcoding or SL-TL transfer and TL encoding. Interpreting, on the other hand, requires at least five more: short-term memory for storage and retrieval, acquaintance with prosodic features and different accents, quick wittedness and full attention, knowledge of short-hand writing for consecutive interpreting and finally self-composure”. Therefore, Bell and Reiss theories of interpretation, community interpreting and interpreting studies are relevant in addressing the objectives of this study in that they provide a

set of principles for assessing the quality of interpretation services available to francophone asylum seekers at the Cape Town Refugee Reception Centre.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed literature on the use of interpretation services in addressing the communication challenges faced by asylum seekers in the South African context. Firstly, the chapter has discussed patterns of migration into South Africa; categories of immigrants in South Africa and the intricacies of seeking political asylum in post-apartheid South Africa. It has also analysed literature on the challenges of testifying during asylum determination process, interpretation of stories of asylum seekers and challenges asylum seekers face in South Africa. Secondly, it has explained the theoretical framework and how it provides a lens for understanding the complexities of interpretation at the Cape Town Refugee Reception Centre. The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology for this study. It explains the methods of data collection and the research journey. The chapter also describes the participants and the research site as well as ethical issues that emanated from a study of this nature.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study critically examines the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. The project draws on the Department of Home Affairs' first memo of 1994 (Reitzes & Crawhall, 1998:12), which states that in order to create effective communication between departmental officials, other departments and members of the public; English is to be used as the official language. For francophone asylum seekers, the use of English language poses serious communication challenges. Due to the communication challenges originating from language barrier, asylum seekers rely on interpreters to narrate their stories at the Refugee Reception Office. Relying on interpreters to translate their stories to Refugee Determination Officials poses further problems related to the authenticity, credibility and consistency of the stories that they tell. To address these challenges, Bell and Reiss's theories of translation, community interpreting, interpreting studies, and the general communication model were used as the theoretical framework (Bell, 1991: 146; Reiss, 1977:113-14). Also, because this is a case study that seeks to understand people's perceptions about the interpretation services provided by a specific service provider to the Department of Home Affairs, the study adopted a qualitative methodological approach (Stake (1995) and Yin (2003, 2006). This chapter explains the choice of research design and methodology used in the investigation.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Mouton (2014:107) a research design is "... a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem. A research design enables the researcher to anticipate what appropriate research decisions should be taken so as to maximise the validity of the eventual results". This research utilised a case study design and the unit of analysis was a company called Zeenab, Remy, Gerald, and Buba (ZRGB) Interpretation, Translation and Social Services, which offers interpretation services to the Department of Home Affairs in Cape Town.

ZRGB has operated in all the refugee reception offices in the country for the last four years. The head office of the company is based in Johannesburg, and monitors the centres through site supervisors. The centre in Cape Town had 18 interpreters and one site supervisor. Interpreters worked permanently, using a weekly time-table, and also, other interpreters worked on special request because the languages that they served were not often requested at the centre. Interpreters were recruited by the head office of the company or sometimes by the site supervisor through the monitoring of the head office management. Before, interpreters started work, they were tested by the supervisor to see if they could write and speak English proficiently, and one or two African languages including French. The test was marked and kept by the site supervisor for administrative purposes. If a new recruit fails the test, the site supervisor cannot employ him/her even if the head office of the company recommended the interpreter. No formal qualification was expected from an interpreter before joining the company, however, they had to demonstrate their competency in the relevant languages. The permanent languages that ZRGB provided translation and interpretation services for were French, Swahili, Lingala, Chichewa, Portuguese, Urdu, Hindi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Somali, Tigrena, Igbo, Wolof, Amaharic, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Oromo, while assistance with the translation of other languages were arranged as special cases (www.zrgb.co.za, interviews with interpreters).

In addition, interpreters played an important role that facilitated the services of interpretation at home affairs refugee reception office in Cape Town (HARROCT). Furthermore, interpreters were expected to assist asylum seekers in the completion of BI 1590; Interpreting for asylum seekers and refugee status determination officers (RSDOs) during interviews; explain the interview issued results to asylum seekers and refugees; help refugees and asylum seekers in completing family joining forms (children born here, those left behind, and dependents on the principal applicant); Support refugees in the completion of the refugee identification and passport form applications; assist refugees and asylum seekers at the Inspectorate in completing different forms and also interpreting for them in the Appeal Board sittings (interviews with interpreters).

According to Yin (1994), case study is an ideal approach when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed because it provides space for a thorough investigation of

topic (Stake 1995; Yin 2003 & 2006). It was important in delimiting the scope of the study, making it manageable for the researcher to conduct and complete with a limited time frame. In the context of South Africa, asylum seekers represent a marginalised group who do not have access to the rights that citizenship bestows. A case study design is therefore important in making their voices heard, and the case study site was the point of departure for the selection of the other interviewees, the francophone asylum seekers and the Refugee status determination officers.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Although a case study design can adopt either a qualitative, quantitative or mixed method approach, this study utilises a qualitative approach. In a qualitative investigation we are concerned “with how humans arrange themselves and their backgrounds and how they make sense of their milieu through symbols, rituals, social structures and social roles” (Berg 1998:7 as cited in Jaftha 2003:44). Here, “a design type is a reflection of the methodological requirements of the research questions and therefore of the type of data that will be elicited and of how the data will be processed” (Henning et al., 2004:36). Another important characteristic of qualitative research is the capability given to the investigator to choose the theory that is appropriate to his/her study (Gray, 2009:116). This topic aimed to understand translation and interpretation experiences of francophone refugees and asylum seekers at the Department of Home Affairs. Given that their experiences differ from one person to the next, qualitative methods are therefore appropriate because they permit the researcher to interrogate individual experiences and perception about the services in greater depth.

Therefore, the study subscribes to an interpretivist paradigm which emphasises that the core of qualitative paradigm is that “knowledge is the outcome of a dialogical process between the self-understanding person and that which is encountered whether a text, a work of art, or the meaningful expression of another person” (Smith 1990:177). Case studies in the interpretative paradigm adopt that reality is socially constructed and it develops from the way in which persons and groups interact and experience the world (Khan, 2007). Similarly, Yin (2013) contends that the qualitative approach to case study research is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, and organizational, social, political, and related phenomena. This approach was useful in this context because this research probed

the experiences of Francophone asylum seekers in order to generate findings about the language challenges that they experience at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town.

3.3.1 Research participants and sampling procedures

The participants for this study comprised of asylum seekers, refugees, interpreters and Refugee Status Determination Officers (RSDOs). Henning et al. (2013:71) argue that the criteria used to select participants come from the researcher's understanding of the issue under investigation. Similarly, Mouton (2014:132) reveals that sampling is to collect information from precise instances and generalise to new ones on the foundation of their belonging to a common population or instances. Participants in this study were purposively selected based on the positions that they hold either as RSDOS, interpreters or refugee and asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The researcher focused on asylum seekers and refugees who migrated from the DRC to Cape Town, South Africa and who are not fluent in English, the official language used at the Department of Home Affairs. In addition, it was practical for the researcher to access the communities mentioned above, as they both speak the same language and they live in Cape Town. However, this does not mean that the issues raised were unique to Congolese asylum seekers. It is likely that they are shared amongst other francophone asylum seeking groups in South Africa. Nevertheless, because of the necessity for a detailed in-depth research, it was essential to focus on a single group. To this end, a case study approach provided space for the researcher to comprehend in-depth processes within the single case study (Hlatshwayo 2003: 36).

Furthermore, both male, females, married and unmarried participants were selected among Congolese asylum seekers and refugees in order to get a broad perspective on their experiences at the Department of Home Affairs. Participants were also selected from different age groups and longevity in South Africa because the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in the late 90's and early 2000's may be different from those who entered South Africa after 2000. This is because South African immigration laws have changed significantly since the 90's

and recent arrivals have access to more information and support than those who arrived before 2000's. The researcher selected interpreters who are fluent in French and English because the language of communication with asylum seekers and refugees is mainly French, while Refugee Reception Officers communicated in English. Interpreters were key participant in this research because the clarity of asylum claims depended on the standards and quality of their interpretation. Lastly, Refugee Status Determination Officers were selected because they were the ones who decided the outcome of the claims for asylum.

Snowballing was effective in selecting participants for interviews and focus group discussions. Tshabalala (2009: 65) defines this sampling method as a process for engaging new cases through a procedure of forward transfer from recognised cases. Purposive and snowball sampling starts with one or more individuals who are recognised to meet the specified criteria. The respondents that were interviewed introduced the researcher to other Congolese asylum seekers who had used interpretation services at the Refugee Centre. Therefore, the snowballing method was preferred because it is an economical, efficient and effective technique for selecting suitable participants speedily. The researcher was connected to one respondent who gave him contact details of another respondent, and this approach carried on until enough participants were interviewed. In addition the sample size was influenced by Burgess (1984:80) who argues for "availability, access, and willingness of participants" to take part in the study. Williamson et al (1977) contends that this strategy falls in the group of nonprobability in which the choice of an element for the sample is not accidental. This suggests that "there is no general prescription for choosing a sample size in the qualitative analysis process since the sample size depends on what you want to identify, the purpose of the probe, what is at stake, what is useful, what is credible, what can be done with the available time and resources"(Patton, 1990:184).

3.3.2 Description of the research site

This research was conducted at the Cape Town Refugee Reception Office, which operates in the building of Public Works at the offshores harbour in the City of Cape Town. The Department of Home Affairs is also located in the same building. Although this office has been operating at this location for four years, new applicants are not currently assisted there. However, asylum seekers taking second interviews

and refugee status renewals receive assistance at the same office. Zeenab, Remy, Gerald, Buba Interpretation, Translation and Social Services (ZRGB) have 18 interpreters and 1 supervisor at this centre. The majority of these interpreters are French speaking because mainly francophone Africans apply for asylum at this Centre.

The Refugee Reception Centre in Cape Town is the second largest Home Affairs Refugee Reception Office in the country, as well as the second largest office of ZRGB Interpretation, Translation and Social Services in the country. Finally, this case study was selected because the researcher has been working with ZRGB for over four years. Therefore, he had access to the information and networks required to complete this project timeously. The researcher has built a good relationship with ZRGB management and Home Affairs management and this enabled him to collect data and complete the study on time.

3.3.3 Role of the researcher

The researcher fled the Democratic Republic of Congo because of war and ethnic conflict and came to South Africa in the year 2000. On arrival the researcher could only speak Swahili and French and applied for asylum, which was granted in 2001. Because the Refugees Act stipulates that asylum seekers are expected to integrate in the community and create means to sustain themselves, the researcher became a trader. Over a period of six years, he ran a small business in South Africa. During this period, he was able to learn how to communicate in English. In the year 2008, xenophobic violence broke out in South Africa and immigrants from different countries of Africa including those from South East Asia were brutally attacked and chased from their homes and shops. As a result of internal displacement caused by the violence, the researcher was employed as an interpreter in French and other African languages and he has worked in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town for different organisations. The researcher's experiences as an interpreter motivated him to enrol at the University to further his studies. The researcher was an asylum seeker who was assisted by an interpreter, and he was eventually granted refugee status. Currently he works as an interpreter for ZRGB at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. Given the researcher's experiences as a francophone asylum seeker from the DRC and later as a refugee and interpreter, it was important for the

researcher to remain conscious of his bias' throughout the processes of data collection, processing and analysis, so that they do not impact the validity and credibility of the data.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

In this project, the data was collected from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observation. Mouton (2014:09) argues that “the more you know about where you are heading and how to get there, the more planning you put into the journey”. Using different methods of data collection permitted for triangulation of data, thereby strengthening the results. The section on data collection techniques explain the operating principles of each method of data collection and why it was selected for this study. Each of the research methods were carefully selected to elicit evidence that responds to the research question. According to Leedy (1993:132) “the achievement of the research thus pivots on the precision and significance of data collected.” In addition, Merriam et al. (2002) contend that investigators are urged to use more than one technique for data collection as this increases the rationality of findings. By triangulating data collection methods, the results of the study were analysed more precisely. To this end, Cohen and Manion (1994) define triangulation as the practice of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspects of human behaviour.

Furthermore, Cohen and Manion (1994) argue for the need to construct bridges between different research methods in order to produce research of high quality. By using two or more procedures, the researcher was able to minimise or decrease bias and misrepresentation, which is often an outcome of relying on a single method. Also, triangulation delivers richer evidence on phenomena by studying them from numerous stand points. This provided the researcher with richer information about the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the researcher decided to use three data gathering methods as a single method offers a limited view of subjects. Case study research frequently uses qualitative techniques since they create rich and stimulating data (Bryman, 2008:53). Consequently, the tools used for the data collection from the respondents included semi structured interviews; focus group discussions, observation and the use of documentation.

3.4.1 The interview process

One of the most important sources of case study information is an interview. An interview is a guided conversation rather than structured process of inquiry. In other words, although the researcher did follow a consistent line of inquiry, the actual stream of questions in a qualitative interview is likely to be fluid rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Qualitative interviews were suitable in this case because: (1) the researcher had a relatively clear sense of his research interests and the kinds of questions he wished to address; (2) the settings or people were difficult to access using purely quantitative sampling methods. As stated above, this study is framed within a case study design and qualitative methodology. It subscribes to an interpretivist paradigm, which contends that the world is understood through the multiple social realities of the actors (Henning et al., 2004:20). Therefore it was useful to probe for internal significances/instructions or ways of seeing/not seeing and collective sense that are shared. The following section examines two types of interviews used in this study, namely; semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews.

3.4.2 Semi-structure interview

The researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews rather than structured or unstructured interviews. This was done by preparing few questions to guide the interview process. However, questions asked were not limited to the interview guide. The interviewer was often compelled to ask follow up questions in an effort to probe responses provided by interviewees. Walsham (2006:321) posits that in-depth access to individuals permits observation or participation in accomplishment, rather than purely recovering opinions. However, Sanchez-Ayala (2014:117) points out that the semi-structure interview technique allows the researcher to establish a general direction for the conversation but, still ensures flexibility for the interviewee to direct part of the conversation.

All interviews took place in Cape between June and July 2016 and were rigorous in terms of the way questions were asked and the strategy that was applied. Four interpreters at ZRGB comprising of two men and two women were interviewed in depth. Also, five clients of ZRGB were interviewed. They comprised of four asylum

seekers and one refugee. Two Refugee Status Determination Officers participated in the in depth interviews. In total eleven in-depth interviews were conducted, tape recorded and later transcribed. Interviews with interpreters and the Refugee Status Determination Officers were conducted in English language, while Congolese asylum seekers and refugees were interviewed in French. It is important to note that asylum seekers were given a chance to speak in a language of their choice during interviews. The researcher drew on his experience as an interpreter to transcribe and translate interviews that were conducted in French. The duration of interviews ranged between 20-60 minutes each.

This research focused only on Congolese asylum seekers based in Cape Town because they were the majority among the Francophone asylum seekers in this city. Also, the researcher had access to the Congolese community because he originates from the Democratic Republic of Congo and can speak French as well as other ethnic languages. Furthermore, working as an Interpreter made the process of interviewing interpreters and Home Affairs officials easier because of pre-existing professional relationships with interpreters at ZRGB and Officials at the Department of Home Affairs.

Table 3.1: Demography of participants in one-on-one interviews

Participants	Age Group	Position	Location	Duration
Male	20-30	Interpreter	RROCT	23 Minutes
Male	30-40	Interpreter	RROCT	32 Minutes
Female	30-40	Interpreter	RROCT	30 Minutes
Female	30-40	Interpreter	OBSERVATORY	39 Minutes
Male	20-30	Asylum seeker	CPUT	33 Minutes
Male	30-40	Asylum seeker	CPUT	33 Minutes
Male	20-30	Asylum seeker	CPUT	27 Minutes
Female	20-30	Asylum seeker	CPUT	24 Minutes
Female	30-40	Refugee	MAITLAND	25 Minutes
Female	30-40	Refugee	MAITLAND	21 Minutes
Male	50-60	Refugee	PAROW	25 Minutes
Male	20-30	Asylum seeker	CAPE TOWN	26 Minutes
Female	30-40	Asylum seeker	CAPE TOWN	30 Minutes
Male	30-40	Asylum seeker	WYNBERG	25 Minutes
Male	50-60	RSDO Manager	CENTURY CITY	39 Minutes
Female	30-40	RSDO	CAPE TOWN	30 Minutes

As depicted in the table above, respondents were in the following age groups: five were between the ages of 20-30; eight were between the ages of 30-40 while two were in the 50-60 age groups. Regarding the venue of interviews; four participants were interviewed at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) Cape Town Campus because they found the place safer than the Refugee Reception Centre. Three of the interpreters were interviewed at ZRGB offices because it was convenient; one was interviewed at her home in Observatory, a suburb in Cape Town because she was on maternity leave. Three others were interviewed in Cape Town city centre; one at her residence in Parow, another suburb in Cape Town and another was interviewed in Wynberg at his shop.

The researcher started off by interviewing interpreters. The first one was a male interpreter from the DRC who assists asylum seekers with interpretations from French and Swahili to English and vice versa. The interview took place at the office of interpreter after work and it took 23 minutes. The second participant was an interpreter of French and Lingala from the DRC. The researcher interviewed him the following day at the same venue and at the same time. However, this interview lasted a little longer than the previous one because the interviewee was able to answer questions very comprehensively. The third interpreter was sick but she still accepted to participate and the interview was conducted in her car at the parking lot during her lunch break. The interview lasted for 30 minutes. The fourth interpreter was a female

from the DRC and the interview took place in her house. This interview lasted for 29 minutes.

The interviews with asylum seekers and refugees were challenging to organise because of logistical constraints and issues of trust. Some asylum seekers suspected that the data could be handed to Home Affairs and eventually used against them during the asylum adjudication process. To address this constraint, the researcher had to explain to them clearly the purpose of the research and how the data would be used in the study. Snowball sampling technique was very useful in this instance because through referrals the researcher was able to recruit more participants.

3.4.3 Focus group discussion

Two focus group discussions were conducted and both were very insightful and rich in information because the participants were responding to questions as if they were offloading a burden that they had been carrying for a long time. They appreciated the fact that for the first time, someone had taken a keen interest in their life and social experiences. This motivated the researcher and enabled a positive environment whereby all participants could speak about their shared experiences. The first focus group discussion concentrated on interpretation services while the second one focused on the experiences Congolese asylum seekers. For Wilkinson (2004), focus group discussions can provoke a range of responses and ideas and are a quick means to gather information from members. Regarding the size of a focus group, Maree (2012:90) suggests that it can comprise of four to twelve individuals with a moderator directing the discussions. By using a focus group, the researcher managed to get a full understanding of respondents' perceptions about the language services rendered at the Cape Town Refugee Reception Centre. Also, focus group discussions provided a platform for participants to make sense of their shared experiences of the quality of translation and interpretation services rendered at the Refugee Reception Centre as clients and interpreters respectively.

The focus group discussions with interpreters were conducted in one of the rooms at the Cape Town campus of Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). Participants chose this venue because they found it to be convenient and accessible to public transport, safe, quiet and conducive for the interview. It took almost a month

to organise the group discussion because of the different work schedules and family commitments of participants. On the day of the interview the researcher was at the venue two hours in advance to prepare for the session, and to brief the moderator. The researcher played the role of the observer while audio recording the discussion. The discussions were recorded with the consent of the participants. The discussions were lively and participants felt comfortable to make their voices heard because they were in the company of their peers with similar experiences. The focus group discussion lasted for 65 minutes.

The second focus group discussion was composed of five francophone asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo. This session took place in Maitland, a suburb in Cape Town because at the time of the research most of participants lived in this suburb. The researcher played the role of facilitator and the language of communication was French. Participants were able to talk freely because the group discussion was conducted in a language in which they are fluent. The discussion lasted for one hour and two minutes and the mood was engaging and jovial. Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1990) contend that in the focus group interview, respondents are interviewed for a short period of time, such as an hour. In such cases, the interview may still remain open-ended and assume a conversational manner, but one is more likely to be following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol. Also Merton (1956) and Morgan (1988: 12) demonstrate that focus groups are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by 'the explicit use of the group interaction as research data.

Table 3.2: Demography of participants in focus group discussion

Group participants	Age Group	Gender	Number of participants	Location	Duration
Interpreters	30-40	All males	4	CPUT	65 Minutes
Asylum seekers	20-40	Male and Female	5	MAITLAND	62 Minutes

As illustrated in the table above, the focus group discussion with interpreters were conducted with four males, without any female because when the interview was scheduled, the female interpreters were busy with other commitments. However, the discussions went well because males and females have worked together for ZRGB for a long time and are likely to have similar experiences of interpretation. Four

asylum seekers and one refugee participated in the other focus group discussion and it comprised of two males and three females from the DRC.

3.4.5 Observation

The researcher participated as an observer of three interviews conducted by Refugee Status Determination Officers (RSDOs) in which ZRGB interpreters assisted asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Silverman (2013) opines that participant observation should be distinguished from both pure observation and pure participation. Pure observation, as used by some sociologists and psychologists (see Adler & Adler 1994; Tonkin 1984), seeks, to the maximum extent possible to remove the researcher from the actions and behaviours so that they are unable to influence them. While pure participation has been described as “going native” and “becoming the phenomena” (see Jorgensen 1989). In this case, the researcher was not a participant observer.

The interviews between asylum seekers and refugee determination officers observed by the researcher took place at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town (RROCT), and each one of them lasted for more than 30 minutes. The participants of these interviews were the Refugee Status Determination Officer (RSDO), the client or asylum seeker, the interpreter from ZRGB, and the researcher who played the role of the observer. The interviewer (RSDO) asked questions in English through the medium of the interpreter of ZRGB who interpreted to the client in French. The respondent answered the questions in French using assistance of the same interpreter. Hence, the role of the interpreter was very crucial in these interviews because both the RSDO and asylum seeker depended on the interpretation provided in order to communicate.

The questions asked by the RSDO focused on why the asylum seeker left his/her country of origin and came to apply for asylum in South Africa. Also, the RSDO was interested in the consistency of narrated claim and why the asylum seeker came to South Africa instead of other countries on the continent. Henning et al. (2013:83) states that an observation seeks to capture the “insider’ view” and not to enforce exterior knowledge classifications on what was observed. For them, observation as a research method aims to see human life-in-action as it occurs by means of direct interaction, and not how it is reported or accounted for in interviews or in articles and

documents alone. In this case, observations provided an opportunity for the researcher to witness first-hand what transpires during interviews at the Refugee Reception Centre, instead of relying solely on interviews conducted with asylum seekers, interpreters and Refugee Status Determination Officers.

3.4.6 Document analysis

To complement the interviews, focus group discussion and observations, the researcher decided to analyse Home Affairs policy documents. This process was meant to ascertain whether Refugee Status Determination Officers implemented policies accordingly and whether there was a correlation between what they said in interviews and the actual policies. In this sense, the researcher analysed the handbook and guidelines on procedures and criteria for determining refugee status; Refugee Acts; and Human Right Reports, as well as Southern African Immigration Projects reports. The data obtained from analysing these documents, was used to guide the researcher during the interview and observation sessions. These documents did not only provide context, they were also used as a point for discussion with the refugees and asylum seekers.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

3.5.1 Interpreting and coding data

Thematic analysis was used in processing and making sense of the data that was collected. Firstly, recorded interviews were carefully transcribed into texts. Where interviews were conducted in French, transcripts were then translated into English and verified for authenticity. The researcher drew on his years of experience as an interpreter to translate selected interviews from French to English. Secondly, the researcher used open coding to identify themes that emerged from interviews. Codes were not randomly selected but were formulated based on the objectives of the study. Thirdly when the researcher became familiar with the transcripts, he regrouped codes that were related to particular objectives of the research into themes. These themes were sub-divided into sub-headings that are presented as findings in the next chapter. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2013: 402):

Open coding, collecting codes under potential subcategories/subthemes or categories/themes, and comparing the emerged coding's clusters together and in relation to the entire data set comprise the next stage of data analysis, which is named the organizing phase in content analysis. The same set of analytical interventions used in content analysis is applied in thematic analysis under the classifications of generating initial codes, defining and naming themes, reviewing themes, and searching for themes.

In order to meet the rigorous criteria for thematic analysis stated above, the researcher read through transcripts several times to familiarise himself with the texts. He considered both hidden and noticeable contents in the data, and selected obvious and hidden contents before proceeding to the next stage of data analysis. The researcher relied on logical settings often used in thematic analysis for arranging and producing of original codes and for defining, naming and revising themes.

3.5.2 Reliability and validity

To ensure that the data was credible, it was important for the researcher to evaluate the level of truth or accuracy in the interviews and focus group discussions. Creswell & Miller (2000: 124-131) define validity as how methodological instruments effectively answer/measure the main research question. To verify the validity of data, the researcher had to compare information collected from diverse interviews, focus group discussions and written documents. This triangulation of data collection methods enabled the researcher to corroborate information that he collected from the different participants and from his observations.

Whilst to show validity and reliability of data is very essential in quantitative research, qualitative researchers are expected to show that data is trustworthy. By triangulating the data collection methods explained above, the researcher's primary concern was to ensure that the information was trustworthy or credible and reliable. Here, triangulation involved conducting personal interviews with asylum seekers, interpreters and Refugee determination officers, organising focused group discussions with asylum seekers and observing actual interviews during the refugee determination process. By triangulating the data collection methods, the researcher

was able to identify and address gaps, inconsistencies and other key issues that emerged during individual interviews.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Addressing ethical issues is highly essential especially when investigating exilic experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. Not only is the process physically and psychologically painful, it also involves divulging very sensitive and private information to a researcher. Here, the issue of trust is very important because it impacts on the willingness to participate in the research and providing the researcher with the quality of information that they so desire. In addition, talking about painful experiences can result in emotional breakdown and should this happen; the researcher was able to provide links to the necessary psycho-social support services. In this study, the main ethical concerns were trust and ensuring that the research process or the outcomes of the research were not harmful in any way to the participants.

To deal with these ethical concerns, ethics clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology before the researcher commenced with fieldwork. Throughout the research process, the researcher ensured that no harm was done to any of the participants as a result of their involvement in the study. This is particularly important because asylum seekers and refugees represent a marginalized group in South Africa. The professional relationship between the researcher and his colleagues, as well as his ability to communicate in French and Swahili made it possible for him to gain the trust of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover, asylum seekers and refugees were motivated to participate in the study in the hope that findings would lead to recommendations that could improve the quality of interpretation services rendered by interpreters. For the purpose of this study, some of the ethical guidelines that were observed included informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and professional ethics.

3.6.1 Informed consent

All participants signed a written consent form, which confirmed that they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and which gave the researcher permission to audio-record all the interviews. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher explained the main aim of the study and contents of the consent form before the participants

were allowed to sign the document. In addition to the ethics clearance from the university, the researcher also obtained written permission to interview interpreters from their employer ZRGB. No participant was given money or any type of compensation for participating in the research. Regarding the safety of the participants, the researcher ensured that the interviews took place at a venue of their choice or at a place whereby the researcher felt it was relatively safe and convenient. The researcher maintained confidentiality by not using the participants' real names during the interviews and in the final thesis. He ensured that direct quotations in the thesis were assigned special codes or pseudonyms and in this case, he used 'participant and corresponding number'. All data collected during the research, was kept in a safe place. The consent form also stipulated clearly that participation was voluntary and participants would not be coerced into answering questions and that they could withdraw from the study at any point if the interview made them uncomfortable. It also accorded them the right to accept or to decline the use of the recording device.

3.6.2 Voluntary Participation

As mentioned above, in the process of data collection, the researcher made sure that participation was voluntary. Firstly, each participant had to choose a place and time that was convenient for the interview and then inform the researcher. Secondly, the researcher did make it clear to each participant that he/she could terminate the interview at any point. Thirdly, anybody who was approached to participate in the study had the right to decline without any justification. Lastly, the participants were treated with respect and those who participated did so of their own accord and were not reprimanded or sanctioned.

3.6.3 Privacy and confidentiality

The privacy of participants was highly respected during the data collection process of this research. Since some of the participants were also colleagues of the researcher, it was important to avoid any unauthorised invasion of privacy. For instance, a research assistant was recruited to facilitate the focus group discussion with interpreters so that they could speak freely and also not to allow work assumptions and perceptions to influence the discussions.

For Gravettor and Forno (2009:108-109) confidentiality means those things which are personal remain so and information collected from participants cannot be used for any purpose other than the one stipulated in the consent form. Throughout the collection of data, the researcher and his assistant protected participants by handling all the information very confidentially. The researcher addressed the issue of anonymity in this study by giving each participant or group of participants a unique pseudonym. For example, quotes from individual interviews with asylum seekers and refugees are cited in thesis as *participant 1, 2, 3* etc. Excerpts from focus group discussion with asylum seekers and refugees are referred to as FGD 1. Quotes from interviews with ZRGB interpreters are cited as *ZRGB interpreter 1, 2, 3* and so forth. For the focus group discussion with interpreters, excerpts from the discussions are referred to as *FGD 2*. Lastly quotes from the status determination officers are cited as RSDO and DHA Official.

3.7 RESEARCH CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

This research focused only on Congolese asylum seekers and refugees based in Cape Town and it excludes other immigrants from other countries. It is based on views of asylum seekers, refugees, interpreters and refugee status determination officers in Cape Town only. The researcher has therefore not used the findings to make generalisations about the interpretation challenges that asylum seekers and refugees face in South Africa. Like any research work, numerous snags were encountered throughout the process of data collection. Sanchez-Ayala (2012: 117) states that when a research study involves human subjects, such a study is a real trial. In this case, dealing with a refugee group was quite challenging. For example, asylum seekers and refugees depend on employment in the informal sector or short-term contracts to survive. To secure interviews with some of the participants was difficult because the researcher had to schedule interviews strictly during their free time. Very often, they needed their free time for personal errands, so time was a major constraint and it made the planning of meetings with participants more difficult. The researcher had to maximise time available by conducting back to back one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions.

Furthermore some asylum seekers were initially interested in participating in the study but later changed their minds because they felt that the researcher was

collecting incriminating evidence for the Department of Home Affairs. Issues of trust were therefore a constraint for this project. To address this constraint, the researcher had to clearly explain the purpose of the study and ethical considerations to all participants. Finally, because the researcher is married with children, he struggled to juggle family responsibilities and his research work. In some instances, the researcher could not meet up with interview schedules because of family commitments. Having to juggle family commitments and research activities has, in fact delayed the completion of this study.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has explained the choice of research design and methodology. It has described the sampling procedure and the methods used for data collection. These methods included interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and observation. The chapter has also provided demographic information about all the participants and described the research site. Furthermore, it has explained the ethical issues that emerged from this study and how they were addressed. Although the researcher's position as an interpreter and a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo facilitated access to participants and documents, it also created ethical dilemmas when it came to dealing with issues of privacy, confidentiality, voluntary participation and informed consent. Nevertheless, these issues were handled professionally, ultimately ensuring that the study was not harmful to any of the participants. Also, the researcher had to ensure that data collected from the different sources was trustworthy. To achieve this, he triangulated data collection techniques. Finally, by purposively selecting asylum seekers, refugees, interpreters and DHA officials, the researcher was able to collect rich data from all stakeholders involved in the process of translation and interpretation at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. These different information sources were quite complementary and they enhanced the credibility of the data. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study. The chapter is divided into key themes generated from the research objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the Refugee Act of 1998 and the amendment of 2008 cited previously, applicants for asylum who are not proficient in English can use an interpreter during communication with Refugee determination officers. This Act also stipulates that the interpreter must be provided by the state. To comply with this legislation, the Cape Town Refugee Reception Office has for years used the services of Zeenab Remy Gerald Buba Interpretation, Translation and Social Services (ZRGB). This study therefore set out to critically analyse the use of interpretation services provided by ZRGB, to address the communication challenges faced by Cape Town based Congolese asylum seekers and refugees. The study was framed around the contention that the use of English as the main medium of communication at DHA offices including refugee reception centres affects applications for asylum of francophone asylum seekers and refugees who cannot communicate in English (Reitzes & Crawhall, 1998:12). To investigate the quality of services rendered by ZRGB to Congolese asylum seekers and refugees, this study used Bell and Reiss's theories of translation, community interpreting, interpreting studies and the general communication model as its theoretical lenses. The researcher decided to draw on these theoretical conceptions because they explain the intricacies of interpreting messages and the consequences for meaning making especially in the case of oral accounts (Bell, 1991: 146, Reiss, 1977:113-14, Hale, 2014:321, Ciordia, 2016:74, Munday, 2016:144 & Venuti, 2012:148).

As explained in the previous chapter, to collect data for this project, the research adopted a qualitative research approach. This entailed using qualitative data collection instruments such as interviews, focus group discussions and observations to gather subjective views about the interpretation services. Participants in this project included asylum seekers and refugees, interpreters and refugee determination officers. This chapter therefore uses excerpts from data to discuss key findings of this investigation. Here, the researcher attempts to connect the discussion of findings to main theories and literature. This chapter is organised according to themes developed from the aim and objectives of study. These themes are: the communication challenges that Congolese asylum seekers and refugees faced at

Home Affairs; Congolese asylum seekers and refugees perception of the interpretation provided by ZRGB; the perceptions of home affairs officials about ZRGB interpreters; the challenges faced by ZRGB interpreters in executing their duties; and recommendations for improvement of the quality of interpretation services at the RRO in Cape Town. The researcher has decided to maintain the quotations from participants in their original state, as a way of showing the level of English proficiency of asylum seekers, interpreters and RSDOs. In so doing, the researcher seeks to show the relationship between English proficiency and the communication challenges of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at Cape Town's RRO.

4.2 THE COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN CAPE TOWN

Political uncertainty in countries like the DRC has resulted in large groups of francophone refugees and asylum seekers migrating to South Africa (Morris & Bouillon 2001). Since English is the main administrative language in South Africa, these French-speaking refugees and asylum seekers experience numerous challenges upon arrival in the country, and especially when they communicate with the indigenes and administrative authorities because of language barrier. At the Department of Home Affairs where they apply for legal documents to reside in the country, they are assisted by interpreters throughout the process. Despite the assistance that they receive from interpreters, asylum seekers still encountered different types of communication challenges. This section analyses research evidence about the communication challenges of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees faced at the refugee reception office in Cape Town. It addresses challenges related specifically to language barriers.

Herlihy, Jobson and Turner (2006) state that claiming asylum is to give basic details and explanation as to how the individual believes they fit the definition set out in the Geneva Convention. This statement suggests that the asylum process relies heavily on the individual retrieval of autobiographical memories, which is defined as an explicit "memory of an event that occurred in a specific time and place in one's personal past" (Nelson & Fivush 2004:486). In this case, communication is the process of creating meaning between two or more people through the expression and interpretation of messages. However, Orsolya (2011:3) contends that when a

foreigner faces a challenge of communication, he/she can only rely on the Interpreter. This means that the quality of translation and interpretation services accessible in the host country can negatively or positively influence the results of applications by francophone asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa.

With regard to the communication challenges that francophone asylum seekers face in South Africa, the data revealed that the use of English as the official language at the DHA has had severe negative effects on the claims of Francophone asylum seekers. According to the DHA's first memo of 1994, in order to create effective communication between departmental officials, other departments and members of the public; "...it was decided to use English as the common denominator" (Reitzes & Crawhall 1998:12). Here, English as a lingua franca especially in the case of linguistically diverse South Africa is in fact used as a means for individuals to think and interconnect with each other. But this ability to connect with other people is not always possible because of communication barriers. In the case of asylum applications, an asylum seeker who arrives in a foreign country for the first time must give his/her account of a traumatic situation that s/he went through in a language that is not his/hers. That is why Ciordia (2016:2) argues that the interpreter has to be active in managing the communication and mediating the culture. Hale (2014:322) supports the argument; it is difficult to apply the practice of community interpreting without considering the cultures and languages because words in communication only take on meaning according to background and situation. The above explains exactly what happens at the Refugee Reception Office, whereby the Congolese community comes in contact with South African community, mediated by interpreters. It means the use of community interpreting in this context is very important. In response to questions about whether or not Congolese asylum seekers spoke English when they lodged their initial application for asylum in South Africa, participants responded:

No, initially I had no knowledge; I could not speak a single word of English language, so I had no knowledge at all. Basically, I was answering questions that were asked to me through the interpreter, and as I was answering the questions then the interpreter transferred them to the officer of Home Affairs Department (Participant 5).

I had an interpreter, I remember having one, I was speaking in French and he was translating it for me into English. For me, I think it was helpful because the guy was flowing and he could understand me clearly, and I had my little

English knowledge I was able to follow him while he was interpreting (Participant 7).

For these participants, when they took the interview they were assisted by an interpreter because they could not speak English fluently. Although, Participant 7 had some basic English communication skills and was able to understand some aspects of the conversation, she/he was still unable to determine if the interpretation was accurate. For these participants, the clarity of their claims was largely dependent on the quality of translation offered by the interpreter and also the level of clarity was proportionate to the level of interpretation. Since these asylum seekers were not fluent in English, it was difficult to ascertain whether their stories were communicated accurately to the Refugee Determination Officer. This means that whenever a foreigner does not speak nor have a good command of the language officially used, he/she can only rely on the message conveyed by the interpreter.

Furthermore, the findings show that because of asylum applicants' language barriers, they tended to rely not only on interpreters at ZRGB but also from strangers or family members who could speak English and who happened to be at the refugee reception office. This usually happened when there was no available interpreter at the time of the interview. Although these strangers were not professional interpreters, they had no option but to resort to this type of clandestine interpretation. This case illustrates how "access to the existing documentation and other support services in the country is rendered difficult for most potential asylum seekers, because of this language problem." (Landau, 2004 cited in Shabanza 2011:14). The following quotes capture the experiences of two asylum seekers.

There were no interpreters; there were some Congolese who accompanied their cousins, brothers, sisters, who helped me and others to complete the forms (Participant 6).

"I had an interpreter, I remember having one but this one was not working for the DHA, still I was speaking in French and he was interpreting it for me into English" (Participant 9).

The above quotes demonstrate that while some asylum seekers had access to interpreters, others did not and had to rely on people who are not trained to assist

them. By relying on clandestine interpretations, asylum seekers who could not speak English were putting their lives in the hands of some strangers. They took this risk regardless of the fact that in the context of South Africa the first interview in the process of seeking asylum is very important because subsequent interviews depend on the story an asylum seeker narrated during the first interview. So if the information in the first interview was inconsistent and inaccurate, it impacted negatively on subsequent interviews. Jacquemet (2009:42) therefore argues that diverse ways of speaking and incapable access to entextualization led to a record of the hearing that openly did not signify the applicant's intention, leading to possible harm of the asylum seeker's human rights. The provision of interpreters during the asylum process is intended, to alleviate language barrier as stipulated in Refugees Act, 1998 article (5 (1)). But when asylum seekers turn to unprofessional sources for assistance, it jeopardises the effective and efficient adjudication of applications. It also infringes on the applicants' right to language support in the event they cannot communicate in the official language of the Refugee Centre. Moody (2011) states that an interpretation is considered realistic when its purpose is to sustain the correctness and standards of the community. Hale (2014:322) argues that professional interpreters are those who abide by the code of ethics that requires them to be accurate and impartial, and they are expected to offer clarifications in fear of generalizing, labeling or violating their role boundary.

Furthermore, Cleary (2010: xii) contends that communication is the process of creating meaning between two or more people through the expression and interpretation of messages. All participants (asylum seekers and refugees) that the researcher interviewed regarding the issue of language claimed interpreters assisted them. This meant that the results of these interviews depended directly on the level and quality of interpretation. The dangers are that narration in stories can increase shared meaning amongst those present who interpret the narration in line with their own experiences, allowing personalised cognition about problems, solutions and explanations (Denning 2005 as cited in Gill 2011:25).

Firstly, asylum seekers had to tell a story that was consistent and coherent to the RSDOs. Here, asylum seekers must recall details of personal experiences (often traumatic) and give a narrative account, sufficiently coherently and consistently, in the context of administrative and legal procedures in the receiving country (Herlihy,

2012:661). In the case of South Africa, to achieve this level of coherence and consistency is questionable because interpreters do not often have the requisite experience and/or qualifications. For example, Bell's theory of interpretation states that good interpretation is the transmission of language into another "to be as definitely captured, and as powerfully felt by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who communicate the language of the original work" (As-Safi, 2011:22). Likewise, Ciordia (2016:19) argues that Community Interpreting is achieved through learning, regulation and public relations. Similarly, Pochhacker and Shlesinger (2002:223) claim that consecutive interpreting requires a direct interaction, which is expected to better strengthen the interface, involving the commitment of all senses. That is why As-Safi (2011:15) argues that interpreters must have self-composure, must not be timid or have stage fright. To interpret in the manner stipulated by these theories requires utmost professionalism that can only come from years of experience and sound education in the field of translation and interpretation. The following quote captures a participant's negative perception of the quality of interpretation received during an interview process.

When I was told to interpret my story, I could feel that the interpreter didn't write correctly. Even though my English is bad, I could pick up some words that I did not mention but he decided to tell my story in his own way. When I looked at the document later, I found errors on dates the place and the story was written in summary. He didn't dramatize; he didn't give the correct sense of the story (Focus group discussion 1).

Although it is highly unlikely for non-English speaking asylum seekers to identify interpretation flaws, the quote points to the way language barriers shape the asylum process. Nevertheless, applicants have no option but to rely on this poor quality of interpretation to retell their forced migration experiences. Sometimes, asylum seekers figure out the quality of the interpretation services they initially received upon arrival in South Africa when they go for further interviews after several years in the country. One participant testified:

I couldn't tell because I was speaking French, I didn't know if he was saying the right thing. When the copy of the story or the result came out saying what I went through before coming to South Africa. I think he said what I supposed to be saying just the languages differed at that time, and I got my paper after that (Focus group discussion 1).

In this quote, we see yet again the interplay of language barriers and the quality of interpretation and how the two entities intersect to influence the process of asylum. The quote indicates that although the participant could not tell at the time of the interview whether or not the interpreter was accurate, she later concluded that the interpretation was accurate when her application was successful. From the above quotations, communication barrier was a key impediment to asylum process in South Africa. They disclose that Congolese asylum seekers could not speak English fluently; they were bound to face communication challenges when they were interviewed at the refugee reception office in Cape Town (RROCT). Even though they received assistance from interpreters, the quality of the services further complicated the construction of their stories. For example, when the meaning of the stories was lost in interpretation, their language barriers prevented remedying the situation before it impacted negatively on their application.

4.3 THE CHALLENGES FACED BY ZRGB EMPLOYEES AT THE REFUGEE RECEPTION OFFICE IN CAPE TOWN

This section examines challenges faced by ZRGB interpreters while rendering interpretation services to asylum seekers and refugees at DHA. These challenges include language, methodology of interpretation, issues of trust and lack of appreciation from clients. This section uses empirical evidence from individual interviews and focus group discussion with interpreters, to explain the challenges faced by ZRGB employees.

4.3.1 Language challenges

For Congolese applying for asylum in South Africa, language proficiency plays a major role to both parties including the interpreters. Although the asylum seekers and interpreter spoke French, sometimes the level of language became a barrier to active communication. Therefore, Bell's theory, Reiss's theory, community interpreting and interpreting studies speak clearly about the details of interpreting messages and the repercussions for meaning making, especially in the case of oral accounts. Bell identifies three types of translation namely; translation as a process (information process), translation as a product (study of texts), and both process and product. The process of translation depends on the theory of mind. While Reiss (1977: 113-14) argues that text rather than the word or sentence is deemed to be the appropriate

level at which communication is achieved and at which equivalence must be sought. Ciordia (2016:2) contends that the management of communication, mediation, culture, and activeness play a huge role in interpretation. Also, Hale (2014:322) points out that it is difficult to apply the practice of community interpreting without considering the cultures and languages. This means that when interpretation is happening, language and culture have to be considered because they operate together. This research revealed that the level of language between interpreter and client creates communication challenges during the asylum process. In certain circumstances, interpreters speak standard or educated French, and asylum seekers found it difficult to understand or vice versa. The most appropriate role for the community interpreter is to ensure best practice, not the verbatim creator of messages in another language, who is neutral and invisible (Ciordia, 2016). In the following quotations, interpreters describe their experiences with translating or interpreting from French to English:

I have a small problem with asylum seekers concerning the language, when I interpret for them. Sometimes, I can meet someone who doesn't have the same knowledge of French as mine...it depends on the background of the person. Okay, some people have difficulty to speaking French correctly but I try my best to do because to me it is not a complicated language. Okay, when I am interpreting in French, it depends on how good the person is, some people have difficulties understanding the language and these people struggle to understand the questions (ZRGB interpreter 1)

"I meet different kind of people from different countries of Africa who speak French. They have different kind, ways of expressing themselves, which can only be understood or comprehend by someone who can speak the same language and this, is a bit tough for interpreters even though we are using the same language. We understand each other because we got almost the same background" (ZRGB interpreter 2).

The interpreters cited above indicated that some of the asylum seekers and refugees from the DRC do not have the same competency in French. While some of them are very proficient in the language, others are not, which poses challenges for interpretation from French to English language. Temple and Young (2004:165) argue for the importance of language in social life by stating that the spoken does not make for efficiency at the work place. This is because Congolese asylum seekers come from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds with different levels of formal

education. Consequently it was not uncommon for clients to switch languages in the middle of an interview. For instance, the interpreter may speak standard French while the asylum seeker does not or vice versa. Kendall (2001:73) states that language is used as a means for people to communicate whereby a set of symbols transfer ideas allowing people to think and communicate with each other. But in this case, language became a barrier to active communication. So, the interview process was usually effective when the interpreter and the client were equally competent in the language. However, this is not always the case with Congolese applicants at the Refugee Reception Centre in Cape Town. One interpreter commented:

My own understanding when I am interpreting French is that some of Congolese clients find it difficult to understand what I am saying. They can choose that they want to speak French but sometimes I have to repeat and sometimes I can switch from French to Swahili. For instance, people who speak Lingala they can claim that they speak French but you will find out you will never finish the interview without switching to Lingala. (ZRGB interpreter 4)

Code switching is a common technique used by interpreters while working with asylum seekers from the DRC. Asylum seekers would claim that they can speak French fluently and, in the middle of the interview, the client would code switch to an ethnic language like Lingala or Swahili. According to the interpreters, this would normally happen when an asylum seeker was originally from the West part of DRC and the interpreter is from the East. According to Ciordia (2016), the switch of role by an interpreter depends on the circumstances and the expectations of the clients, and this includes the advocacy role. In this situation, when interpreter feels that the interpretation is not flowing and the asylum seeker is not understanding him/her properly, the change of language just happens spontaneously. The quotation below reveals the ways in which interpreters deal with code switching during interviews.

“... the moment I notice that the conversation is not going easily I can switch from French to a language that the client is able to understand. In such a case I have to start the interview all over because I can't trust what the client said before in French” (ZRGB interpreter 4)

From this quotation, the interpreter uses code switching as a strategy to address the language challenge. However, code switching had implication for the completion of an interview because interpreters had to start the interview all over in the interviewee's preferred language. This occurs in situations where the asylum seeker

and interpreter come from the same region in the DRC, although, this is not always the case. The evidence provided above demonstrates that when Congolese asylum seekers claim to be competent in French they do not always speak it fluently and end up switching from French to Lingala or to another Congolese language. Hale (2014:325) reveals that a competent interpreter is the one who accurately renders every utterance in order to place the parties in a position similar to a monolingual communication. This situation leads to linguistic accommodation as both speakers change their speech depending on the person they are talking to, and they tend to converge when they request to decrease the social distance between one another (Rajend et al. 2000:151).

Therefore, before requesting for an interpreter it is always important for the official at the DHA to ask the client his/her language of preference. But relying on language preference becomes a problem because of scarcity of interpreters in ethnic languages. As a result, asylum seekers desperate to legalise their stay in South Africa would claim that they can speak French and a French interpreter would be allocated to them. During one of the interviews that the researcher observed, it was obvious that the client was not competent in French and immediately decided to switch from French into Lingala. This might lead to a complete breakdown in communication especially if the interpreter cannot speak Lingala. Hale (2014:324) argues that perceptions can lead to communication breakdown or misunderstanding. However, in a situation where the interpreter could speak Lingala, the interview would continue unabated. Generally, the quality of this interpretation would be poorer than if the client had been allocated a Lingala interpreter from the outset. Although, code switching was used to address language challenges, it often disadvantaged the asylum seeker especially in terms of capturing the essence of the story during the process of interpretation.

The findings also revealed that asylum seekers sometimes claimed that they could speak English but in the middle of an interview, they would realize that it was difficult for them to continue and they would at that stage request for an interpreter. Again, the official is expected to start afresh and this resulted to time wastage for the asylum seeker, the official and other asylum seekers at the office. The quote below illuminates this situation.

...The official (RSDO) can just say fine, she will be here but she will not talk, she will just be watching us, then the interview will carry on without the interpreter because the client refused to use him/her, and s/he has the right to do so. They will start the interview, one question up to seven questions, and the client will start asking the interpreter what refugee status determination officer said, although the client just said he/she can speak English well (ZRGB interpreter 4).

This quote shows how the interview process is delayed by the asylum seeker's attempt to avoid the services of interpreters. From the findings, it was also evident that interpreters struggled to interpret certain French expressions because of lack of an English equivalent in the allocated time and context. Here, the need for intercultural communication skills becomes apparent. For some interpreters, certain expressions sounded easy in the ears but they were very difficult to interpret to others if the person was not competent in the second language. For example, in the quote below, the asylum seeker mentioned that s/he was a member of a particular organisation in the DRC, and it was difficult for the interpreter to interpret the exact message into English to the RSDO. The quotes below explain.

There are certain clients who want to convince the RSDO, claiming that they belong to certain complicated political parties. This becomes hard for me because I am not familiar with those political parties, and also, I don't know how to interpret them into English (ZRGB interpreter 3).

Asylum seekers can speak many things regarding the life they went through or what they experienced in their countries. However, is not easy for me to put them into English even if I understand them very well in French, maybe it is because of the French words that they have selected (ZRGB interpreter 5).

The quotations above suggest that interpreters occasionally struggle to transmit messages from their clients to RSDO. Pochhacker (2009:10) argues that interpreting is much about meaning-based rather than word-based concepts, and also, is performed here and now for the benefit of people who want to engage in communication across barriers of language and culture. This may stem from the fact that interpreters are not as competent in English language as they are in French, or they are attempting to interpret words, instead of making meaning within a specific context. Alternatively, because interpreters usually come from similar backgrounds as their clients and understand the context, they may find the stories narrated by clients as unconvincing, especially when clients make claims to having complex political affiliations. Hale (2014:324) contends that interpreters who work in community locations with applicants from different cultural backgrounds may confront problems

based on transmission of the source message into the target message precisely due to cross-cultural differences. In such cases, the application for asylum is not granted not because of the claims of the asylum seekers but rather because the interpreter was unable to correctly interpret the accounts of applicants due their own language challenges.

4.3.2 Challenges related to methodology of interpretation

Generally, there is no method that interpreters are expected to use during interpretation services at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. However, they use consecutive interpretation because they have to listen to asylum seekers and thereafter, they interpret and send the message to officials of DHA. For Hale (2014:322), it is difficult to apply the practice of community interpreting without considering the cultures that join; language and culture are intertwined and precise interpreting cannot be accomplished at the simple word level because words in communication only take on connotation according to background, situation, applicants and culture. This entails that, when interpreters perform their work they have to consider the culture of asylum seekers and refugees so that they can know how to deal with the expressions used by them. Furthermore, Bell (1991: 146) argues that the practice of translation depends on the concept of mind. The quote captures the challenges interpreters experience when choosing a method of translation.

...And another thing is that even when you are interpreting you don't know which methodology you have to follow. Sometimes you don't know if you have to go word for word or not. For instance, the client speaks and you speak or sometimes you don't know if you have to go sense for sense, whereby the client speaks everything and you have to make sense of it and translate it into English... (ZRGB, interpreter 1)

The quote above reveals that interpreters use free style while rendering their duties because they are not obliged to use a specific approach. The choice of method is dependent on the Interpreter. This study revealed that although the interpreter can choose the method of translation, the application of the method might sometimes be impossible especially if a client was able to speak uninterrupted for a long time while an interpreter tried to do word for word translation. Jacquet (2009) argues that this procedure is often fraught with unexamined expectations about language, national

identity, and communicative competence, leading to egregious violations of the asylum seekers' human rights. For example when the researcher asked interpreters if they consider the services rendered as adequate, a participant in the focus group discussion responded:

I can recall what my colleague highlighted regarding the methodology. Sometimes we don't know exactly what to do or how to start, if we have to start after the RSDO or we have to start first. As I am working there I am gaining experience, with or without any briefing. I can only see the way the client is talking and I can also ask question to the one who is conducting the interview if I can go word for word or I can just wait for the client to finish a part of story so that I can summarise it and I make sure that I do it properly. I communicate with the client while interpreting; I look at the clients eyes and talk loudly so that s/he understands. I can also see the body language of the client. If he/she is satisfied, you can see it; you can see the expression on his face. Then, on my side I make sure that the client is satisfied with the service that I am providing (Focus group discussion 2).

Discussions in the focus group with interpreters indicated that most of the skills and approaches that they use in the process of translation are gained from the experience while working at the refugee reception office. Ciordia (2016:70) argues that in countries without permanent protocol to which interpreters must adhere in order to gain accreditation, they use their own intuition, judgment and empathy to guide the interpreters' work, and they are more willing to act as full participants in the interaction. This implies that interpreters, who have worked there for longer, are more competent than new recruits are. In addition, it suggests that in selecting the appropriate method interpreters often ask for permission from RSDO and not from asylum seekers who are their clients. Finally, interpreters pay attention to the body language of the asylum seeker to determine their level of satisfaction with the interpretation services offered. Here, nonverbal communication plays a critical in determining the client's level of satisfaction with the interpretation and translation services.

4.3.3 Lack of appreciation of ZRGB Interpreters

During the focus group discussion with interpreters, they claimed that officials of DHA, asylum seekers and refugees, do not appreciate them; although they feel that

the services they render have a significant impact on the lives of asylum seekers in South Africa. The lack of appreciation may originate from people's attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, behaviours and expectations (Verderber & Verderber 2008). In the following quote an interpreter at ZRGB share their views of the question on appreciation.

I may say the interpreters sometimes are neglected by the society, especially at Home Affairs, they are not really considered like people who are giving a valuable service to this company which is Home Affairs (ZRGB interpreter 2).

The above quote indicates that interpreters feel that the work they do is not appreciated, although it has a major impact in the lives of asylum seekers. One way in which this lack of appreciation is demonstrated is when interpreters get disrupted by officials when they are asking questions to asylum seekers and also by clients when they try to put pressure on interpreters to provide answers on their behalf. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) acknowledges that "determining refugee status is a professionally demanding and onerous task requiring considerable knowledge, skills, and good judgment" (UNHCR, 1995: 45). However, lack of respect and appreciation from RSDO and asylum seekers make the work of the interpreter even more difficult. For instance:

When the officer is conducting the interview, asylum seekers try to push you so that you can show some feelings and they push to show that you are partial you need to assist them or something like that. Officials can create what we call communication barriers between the clients and the interpreters. While the client is busy narrating his story some official's colleague can come and disrupt by talking in the middle of the interview. Sometimes, the official in the middle of the interview takes a phone call; and these interruptions are disruptive to the client and the Interpreter. Although we are expected to be focused, sometimes it is difficult because of the way in which officials behave (ZRGB interpreter 5).

The outcome of the applications of asylum seekers depends on the intersection between the asylum seeker's original accounts, the interpretation and the evaluation of the RSDO. The interpreter, as the intermediary, is an important role-player because he/she serves as the medium between the applicants and DHA. This means that their services are very valuable and he/she deserves recognition. However, the evidence presented exposes the environment in which interviews are conducted at the Refugee Reception Centre in Cape Town. It shows that human behaviour

hampers the smooth communication between, interpreters, RSDOs and asylum seekers. For instance, interruptions from other DHA officials, unprofessionalism on the part of the officials conducting the interview are disruptive and they have implications for the outcome of the application. These issues do not only make interpreters feel disrespected and unappreciated but can hinder actual and effectual translation and interpretation.

4.3.4 Issues of trust between interpreters and Refugee Status Determination Officers

Trust is at the epicentre of the relationship between the interpreters and RSDO in those officials need to be convinced that the interpreters' version of asylum seekers' claims are accurate. When an official suspects that information provided by an interpreter is not correct or it has been fabricated in an attempt to assist the asylum seeker, the attitude of that official becomes negative toward the asylum seeker rather than the interpreter. Moody (2011) states that an interpretation is considered faithful when its purpose is to maintain the faithfulness, and values of the community have to be met. Hale (2014:328) reveals that in order for interpreters to be trusted to offer such skilful opinions, they are expected to be extremely competent. This means, "a clear understanding of trust and its causes can facilitate cohesion and collaboration between people by building trust through means other than interpersonal similarity" (Mayer et. al, 1995:710). To gain trust entails conveying and interpreting messages clearly so that people can work together. Generally, in the asylum determination process trust is very crucial, because the interview or claim is based on it. Once, there is no trust between the official of Home Affairs and the interpreter, obviously the victim is the asylum seeker because one party has suspected another to have a motive of building a false claim. Therefore, Clearer (2010:121) maintains that in the translation process, the interpreter's message must be clear, leaving the DHA official or client without any doubt about the accuracy of the translation.

Findings from personal interviews showed that asylum seekers did not fully trust services provided by the interpreters. This was particularly evident when their applications are rejected. Often they conclude that their application was unsuccessful

because the Interpreter did not translate their message accurately. This argument is supported by the following quote.

The challenges that we are facing is that, sometimes the asylum seekers do not trust that we are feeding the official (RSDO) with what they are telling us, and sometimes the asylum seekers want us to help them but when they are rejected then they think that we didn't convey the message properly (ZRGB interpreter 2).

This quote shows how the issue of trust influences the relationship between interpreter, asylum seekers and RSDO. For interpreters both asylum seekers and officials did not trust the interpretation they offered and often this lack of trust has implications for the process of seeking asylum, especially in the case of Congolese applicants. It is therefore assumed that in this case, communication has something to do with human behaviour and the satisfaction of a need to interact with other human beings (Samovar et al. 2006:16). However, in the process of translation and interpretation, this need is not always met. For instance, the official may think that the interpreter provided answers to the asylum seeker while the asylum seeker may believe that the interpreter was not efficient, or the asylum seeker may expect the interpreter to help strengthen his/her claim for asylum as revealed in the quote below:

Other challenges maybe when you try to explain properly if the person didn't get the question from the officer and when you try to explain it properly the officer might think that maybe you are feeding the client with the story (ZRGB interpreter 5).

Attempts by the interpreter to clarify questions asked by the Refugee Status Determination Officer to the asylum seeker are often misconstrued by the officer as an attempt to provide the asylum seeker with private information. Although people frequently believe that they can regulate a speaker's place of origin from their use of specific words or pronunciation, their judgement is not always corroborated by linguistic investigation (Eades et al. 2003). Here, the issue of trust impedes effective communication because all parties tend to relate with a strong sense of suspicion.

The discussions above indicate that there are a myriad of communication challenges between interpreters, asylum seekers and RSDO. The level of French language between interpreters and their clients are often unequal, although both parties

originate from the DRC. Also, when clients speak during interviews, they do not always ensure that there is sufficient time for the interpreter to translate. The study showed that interpreters are often not appreciated and this lack of appreciation usually affects their performance negatively. Furthermore, the lack of trust from both asylum seekers and officials makes the process more challenging and less rewarding. From the findings, rejection of asylum applications was repeatedly attributed to bad interpretation. Furthermore, the language challenges were compounded by the fact that on the one hand, Congolese asylum seekers claimed to speak French when they could not speak the language fluently and they ended up switching from French to Lingala or to another Congolese language. On the other hand, Congolese asylum seekers occasionally claimed to be proficient in English only to request the assistance of an interpreter mid-way through the process of the interview. It was found that, officials constantly disrupted interpreters and clients while they were executing their duties and finally, there was no standardised method of interpretation used by interpreters and while this allowed for flexibility, it was also characterised by challenges.

4.4 CONGOLESE ASYLUM SEEKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTERPRETATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY ZRGB

According to Clearer (2010:12) perception is the process of selecting and organising information gained through the senses in such a way that the information makes sense. Angelelli (2004) cited in Ciordia (2016:70) argues that the perceptions that interpreters have about their role differs along a distinguishability/hiddenness continuum, according to the background in which they work. It is a way of interpreting information or giving meaning to the world around you. In this section, the researcher discusses the asylum seekers and refugees' perceptions of the interpretation services provided by ZRGB employees at DHA. To this, the findings of this study revealed that asylum seekers have different perceptions of the interpretation services offered by ZRGB. These perceptions were generally different, depending on the level of English Language proficiency of asylum seekers, which enabled them to appreciate the quality of the services. The perceptions were also based on the outcome of the applications for asylum. For example, they were generally positive if an asylum seeker's application was successful. However, some asylum seekers

argued that the decision to grant or reject asylum claims depended on the claim and not the interpretation.

Interestingly, responses from new asylum seekers with extremely low levels of English struggled to appreciate the quality of the services. In this instance, the perceptions were neither negative nor positive especially during individual interviews. However, there was a significant shift when they met their peers and listened to their experiences during focus group discussion. The results also showed that once they received the outcome of interviews they started to develop either positive or negative perceptions of the services. The findings dovetailed with Cleary's (2013:13) contention that cultural background, past experience, selection, needs and education are perceptual breakdowns in the communication.

During the interviews, some asylum seekers claimed that they enjoyed the interaction they had with interpreters and this category of respondents were generally positive about the services provided by interpreters. In response to a question about her perceptions of the ZRGB interpreter that assisted her during her interview, one asylum seeker stated:

For me, I think it was helpful because the guy was flowing and he could understand me clearly, and I had my little English knowledge I was able to follow him while he was interpreting (Participant 7).

For this participant, their perception of the services was influenced by the interpreter's ability to communicate fluently in English. For them, this was an indicator of efficient interpretation and as a result, she felt that the interpreter understood and transmitted her accounts accurately to the status determination officer at the DHA. This quotation suggests that translation/interpretation is the process of reproducing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style (Nida & Taber 1969: 12). Based on her basic understanding of English language, the participant concluded that the translation provided by the interpreter in English language was the closest natural equivalent of what she was narrating in French.

Furthermore, the data revealed that Congolese asylum seekers and refugees were generally more appreciative of interpreters if the outcome of their application was

positive. For them, good interpretation must lead to a positive outcome in the claim. Here, participants were not aware that the interpretation process is a far more challenging effort than syntactic restrictions. (Jackendoff 1991:96). An asylum seeker who had used the services of interpreters and who was eventually granted refugee status stated "...for me that interpreter was fine because I end up getting my status without difficulty (Participant 8). This implies that some Congolese asylum seekers' perceptions of interpreters are based solely on whether their application for asylum is granted or rejected. Where it is granted, they would perceive the interpretation as real and where the applications are rejected, the interpretation was perceived to be useless.

The foregoing discussions show clearly that, some Congolese asylum seekers had negative perceptions of interpreters. Interestingly, the negative perceptions were formed not from their personal experiences but from the stories told by other asylum seekers who had used the services. In the following quote, the participant's perception of interpreters was based on another person's experience and not directly his own experience.

It depends because there was a time I witnessed, one day I was accompanied a friend, a new comer and there was a Congolese interpreter who was writing my friend's story but this interpreter was not writing exactly what my friend was saying. Since then, I decided to take my interviews alone, because interpreters don't write exactly what they were being told. I speak about my personal experience in regard to the friend that I accompanied. I think interpreters do their work but it was what I have seen, due to the experience of my friend. That's why I was ignoring them and took my interviews alone. It depends, if you can do it alone is better to do it, and when you can't do it alone, it is better to use the interpreter (Participant 6).[sic]

The negative perception that is expressed above was from an eyewitness account and not personal experience. The quotation revealed that the construction of perceptions about interpretation services was not strictly based on first-hand experiences. As mentioned previously, at the refugee reception office (RRO) there are many people who offered interpretation services as a favour to a friend or clandestinely and not necessarily contracted by ZRGB. Therefore, it is difficult to tell if the interpreter mentioned by the participant was not in fact contracted by ZRGB. While this was the opinion of one of the participants of this study, it is worth noting

that, participants with personal experience tended to provide realistic perceptions of ZRGB interpreters.

Finally, some asylum seekers had neither positive nor negative perceptions of interpreters. On the one hand, there were those who could not speak any English at the time of the interview and therefore could not judge the quality of interpretation services that they received. This perception is captured in the following quote by a Congolese asylum seeker:

My judgement of the interpretation was not good because I had very limited knowledge of English language that time. So I could only see someone asking me questions, I could only answer the questions he asked me, he (interpreter) was transferring the message to the officer of the department of home affairs. So, that time I didn't have proper understanding of the language that I can't be able to tell you exactly what was going on (Participant 5) [sic]

This excerpt reinforces the role of language in the process of interpretation in this context. Here, language barriers affect not only the transmission of asylum stories to RSDO but also asylum seekers' impressions about the interpretation services. In this case, the participant was unable to tell if the quality of interpretation he received was good or bad. Consequently, he claimed not to have any perceptions of interpreters although he used the interpretation services provided by ZRGB. The use of interpretation services in this case, is strictly a DHA requirement and not a decision based on the quality of the service.

In some cases, asylum seekers contend that although the quality of interpretation could have had an impact on the claim, for them, the outcome depended mainly on the merits of the claim and not the quality of interpretation. One participant testified:

It might be true, yes, because interpretation of things is complicated, people receive things differently and they interpret another way, and I do think, definitely that has an impact on the result of the application (Participant 9).

This participant's perception is contrary and misleading because since applicants cannot communicate directly with RSDO, the assessment of merits of claims depends largely on the translated versions of asylum seekers accounts. Hale (2014:324) speaks about the negative impact of perception in communication and

interpretation. Such dissimilarities are related to social bonds, underlying cultural perceptions, ideologies or beliefs. In the context of South Africa, the process of interpretation remains a complex one, which can have a negative impact on the results because interpreters listen to things and portray them differently. The variations that occur in the meaning making process across languages may alter the essence of the story. In situations like this the claim for asylum might fail to be granted, not on merit but rather based on inaccurate interpretation. In this case, the merits or demerits of asylum testimonies rest on the people who transfer the message to the recipient, and in this case, interpreters to RSDO at DHA. The discrepant views about the quality of interpretation services, simply confirm Cleary's (2010:12) contention that perception is the progression of choosing and establishing information extended through the senses in such a way that the information makes sense. It is a way of interpreting information or gaining meaning to the world around us. Therefore perceptions of interpreters are important in determining the extent to which French-speaking asylum seekers and refugees use of the interpretation services provided by ZRGB especially during the process of seeking asylum.

4.5 HOME AFFAIRS OFFICIALS' PERCEPTIONS OF ZRGB INTERPRETATION SERVICES

The intersection between applicant, interpreter and RSDO has serious implications not only for the applicant but also for the RSDO adjudicating the applications. Ciordia (2016:69) highlights the junction in the comportment of trained and natural interpreters, as well as the relationship that seems to exist between service providers' perception about the suitable role for each situation and interpreters' performance in daily practice irrespective of their training background or lack of it. It means the services rendered by interpreters do not create a precise perception; rather it might build a daily criticism because they have an existing relationship with the service provider. To produce a balanced and holistic appraisal of the quality of services, it was therefore important to solicit the views of the officials. Also, it was important to understand the perceptions of two RSDOs because ZRGB is contracted by the department of Home Affairs to provide translation and interpretation services to individuals seeking asylum in South Africa, in compliance with the Refugees Act of 1998.

Just like asylum seekers and refugees, the officials' perceptions were both positive and negative. These perceptions were influenced by officials' personal experiences with the interpreters, quality of translation, work ethics and general complaints from asylum seekers and refugees. The evidence provided in this section was collected from interviews that were conducted with officials.

Okay, let me first start by saying that you know the DHA at first did not use the services of interpreters; it was long time before ZRGB came to being. They had seen there was a need to outsource the interpretation services to a company that would assist asylum seekers and refugees. But then there was no available interpretation service provider with the expertise that we needed. This posed a big challenge because when these refugees and asylum seekers approach the office, lot of them couldn't understand English while South Africans could only understand English and no other African languages spoken by asylum seekers from DRC, Zimbabwe, Angola, Rwanda and all Africa. There was a challenge and we needed an interpretation company that could assist us with interpretation because some applications were unfairly rejected since some of the officials could not understand their language and some of us have serious negative attitude toward refugees or asylum seekers, which sometimes influence the granting of asylum in South Africa (RSDO 1).

This participant perceived that the outsourcing of interpretation and translation services by the DHA to ZRGB was a positive initiative because for years, asylum seekers from across the African continent had been unfairly treated because of language barrier and negative stereotypes of asylum seekers. For example, Landau cited in Pineteh (2015:76) argues that "South African stereotypes about Africans have continued to affect the relationship between locals and African nationals, triggering nativist discourses and...generalized and impassioned anti-foreigner sentiment". These sentiments are also demonstrated by some RSDOs during the adjudication of claimants' applications. Again, this response reiterates the role of language, which according to Kendall (2001:73) is used as a means for individuals to think and connect with each other. For this participant, the employment of interpreters was imperative not only because it was a legal requirement but most importantly, it helped to mitigate the linguistic challenges faced at the DHA.

After four years of working with Interpreters from ZRGB, the RSDO's perception about the relationship between the two organisations is stated below.

Between the company and the department the relationship is very much cordial. However, there are more things that need to be taken into consideration because some of the interpreters are not well educated. They don't understand some of the languages spoken in particular areas and some of the interpreters, the salary/money they receive from the company doesn't make them eager to do their work the way they should (RSDO 1) [sic].

This quotation captures some of the interpretation challenges that are affecting the quality of services provided by RRO in Cape Town. Although the DHA official stated that the relationship between the DHA and ZRGB was generally cordial, their overall perception of the services was negative. This negative perception stemmed from interpreters' lack of the required language skills required in fulfilling their duties competently. This could be blamed on the fact ZRGB did not always employ interpreters with the right qualifications and expertise. Also, while interpreters from the DRC may be competent in French and other languages such as Lingala and Swahili, as stated previously, many of them were not very proficient in English Language. Furthermore, the RSDO claimed that interpreters are not highly motivated in performing their duties because they were not well remunerated by the employer-ZRGB. From the above quotation, one could deduce that ZRGB employed unqualified interpreters because it was not interested in paying market-related salaries. Also, the low morale of interpreters could be attributed to the lack of appreciation from DHA officials and asylum seekers, as mentioned by interpreters during the focus group discussion. The following quotation suggests that with the right training and appropriate remuneration, interpreters have the potential to deliver excellent services at the DHA.

The use of interpreters in the Refugee Sub-Directorate, with training and evaluation support from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), stands out as one of the best examples of language access for non-South Africans (RSDO 1) [sic].

This DHA official cited examples of interpreters who have been trained and continuously receive support from the UNHCR as effective and efficient in executing their duties. For this interviewee, interpreters from ZRGB do not meet the standards in terms training and evaluation as set out by UNHCR. Therefore, in terms of professionalism, it was imperative for ZRGB interpreters to improve their language

skills through training, as well as their commitment at work through on-going evaluation and support.

To this end, the findings revealed that given these challenges, it is not surprising that the RSDO concurred with asylum seekers perceptions that their claims for asylum were rejected because of the poor quality of interpretation and translation that they received from ZRGB interpreters.

Yeah, that is sometimes correct or because of these challenges of interpretation that's why there should be on ongoing training. If the interpreters were permanently employed by the department they would receive ongoing training. Maybe interpreters employed by ZRGB, some of them are qualified enough and others are not. To some extent when they translated into English sometimes there are some words lacking, you feel that there is a need for training (RSDO 1) [sic].

This indicates clearly that while some ZRGB interpreters were competent in English language, others were not. The participant argues that some interpreters had difficulties in speaking English because when interpreting they lacked the vocabulary to translate. In situations where interpreters lacked the vocabulary in English to translate, this directly had a negative impact on the way they translated the story of asylum seekers. Because coherence and consistency are very important in the narration of stories, the inability to interpret everything that is said would normally disadvantage asylum seeker. For this RSDO, if the interpreters were employees of the department of Home Affairs, they would be subjected to training programmes that will improve their translation and interpretation skills. However, the interpreters are contracted by ZRGB, which means that it is the responsibility of ZRGB to train its employees. Furthermore, the quotation reveals that during the interview process a RSDO can tell when interpreters struggle to find the right English words when translating from French or from other languages to English. Again, Cleary (2010:121) maintains that communication must be clear, leaving the audience in no doubt as to the intended meaning. By concentrating on clarity, interpreters show respect for their clients. The benefit for interpreters is that their work is likely to be regarded as credible. However, judging from the RSDO's responses, officials do not always see value in the services rendered by ZRGB as stated below:

The department doesn't get value for their money in terms of this interpretation because at some points the Interpreters are not paid enough money, and at some points you feel that the job they are doing, they are less interested because of the first reason (RSDO 2) [sic].

This reveals the negative perceptions of officials of DHA toward the services of interpretation rendered by ZRGB interpreters. For them, services rendered were not on par with the money that the department of Home Affairs pays the company ZRGB. There is also a perception that the Company ZRGB does not provide fair wages to its' employees, which affects their morale. However, it was unclear from these responses whether the use of interpretation has contributed to address the challenges that necessitated the need for such services.

The negative perceptions of the company ZRGB continue in the following quotation by another RSDO:

When ZRGB is using interpretation, they are using the same interpreters to all the asylum seekers or refugees that are French or other languages. Then, in terms of English it becomes difficult, yes they understand French, but it needs to be interpreted into English. There are certain vocabularies lacking since we are dealing with particular vocabularies in terms of asylum seekers. We see there is a certain amount of gap in terms of understanding English. Some of them are educated enough and others are not well educated to do interpretation (RSDO 2).

The issue of English competency continued to recur during the interviews with RSDOs at the Cape Town Refugee Centre. Here, the issue of using the same interpreters for different countries as long they spoke French was considered problematic. This perception is relevant because even though asylum seekers from DRC and Burundi speak French; there are often variations in their spoken French, influenced by unique slangs, accents, educational level or ethnic languages. During interpretation, these variations can lead to communication barriers between asylum seekers and interpreters. Sometimes, it is the type of French spoken by the asylum seeker and not necessarily the English competency of the interpreter that affects the quality interpretation services at RRO in Cape Town. These issues reveal that cultural background, past experiences; selection needs and education are perceptual breakdowns in effective communication (Cleary 2010). They also reveal the urgent

need to employ interpreters with the requisite skills and qualifications, or to provide continuous training to those without the skills.

Although, interpreters from French speaking countries may occasionally struggle with translating from French to English, using a first language speaker of English is not an option either:

For instance, saying that someone who knows English to become an interpreter will never take us anywhere, you will find that the department has been taken to court because of an interpreter who could not speak French during the Interview. There are lots of challenges whereby asylum seekers that have been rejected accused interpreters saying that they interpreted for them wrongly (RSDO 2).

The quote above shows that competency in languages is not sufficient for a person to work effectively as an interpreter. There are methodologies of interpretation that are needed as well. For instance, someone can speak two or three languages clearly but to transfer the meaning from the sender to the receiver can be challenging if the person is not trained well or does not have interpretation experience. Interpretation is therefore a specialised skill acquired through educational training and years of experience. Moreover, Risager (2006:1) states “that the combined interpretation of language and culture is also necessary both for the theoretical understanding as well as for the development of the various areas of practice where language plays a crucial role”.

4.6 CHALLENGES FACED BY HOME AFFAIRS OFFICIALS AT THE REFUGEE RECEPTION OFFICE

This section of the thesis focuses on challenges faced at the Refugee Reception Office (RRO) beyond the issue of interpretation. It is important to note that in the asylum seeker management system, the RRO plays a role as the port of entry for all asylum seekers and refugees. At this centre, besides francophone applicants from the DRC, there are other asylum seekers coming from different corners of the world seeking for refuge and they speak different languages from those spoken in South Africa. Consequently, there are always not enough interpreters to meet language demands at the RRO. There are also staffing challenges stemming from lack of qualified human resources to deal with refugee-related issues. According to Boddy

(2005:522), communication transpires when folks share information to influence a common understanding. Even with the presence of ZRGB, rendering efficient services is still a major challenge because asylum seekers and officials at the RRO do not understand each other. Although ZRGB is able to mitigate the language challenges between francophone asylum seekers and RSDOs, they do not have the capacity to deal with asylum seekers from other parts of the world. This challenge affects applications in this category of asylum seekers.

The following quote contends that asylum seekers were rejected based on the challenges of communicating in English.

Yes, due to the language barrier they disadvantaged them to be granted refugee status and some of the officials were having attitude on the asylum seekers until such time the department identified that problem. And to address this interpretation problem the department had to outsource the interpretation company which is currently ZRGB but we still have problems because ZRGB does not have interpreters for all the language they speak (DHA Official).

This quote shows the limits of ZRGB to address one of the major challenges at the RRO, which is language. Although, the department decided to outsource the interpretation services, they failed to ensure that the company has the capacity to address the complex language needs of the RRO. Instead, the DHA opted for a company that was already riddled with problems and without the requisite skills. Hale (2014:322) argues that DHA's ability to use the services of an interpreter or their misinterpretation of the interpreter's role can produce poor communication within cross-cultural differences. It means that it is important to use the right interpreter for a specific case and not only focusing on the ability of spoken or written languages. For instance, if the asylum seeker is from the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is better to use an interpreter who is from that part of the country because he/she understands the reality of that place. In the case of Cape Town RRO, the use of interpreters to all asylum seekers has not adequately addressed one of its major challenges.

Apart from the language challenge, the finding of this study also revealed that the RSDO's job was no longer independent because of interference from the management especially at the level of decision-making. According to the Refugees

Act of 1998 the role of RSDO is to conduct interviews with asylum seekers and decide based on the merit of the claim whether refugee status should be granted or rejected. However, interference from management during the process of interviews affected the way RSDOs managed the interviews and the way they applied their minds to each case.

There is something I need to touch on. Sometimes it becomes a difficult issue to do the job of RSDO in our days because for an example, there are lots of interferences from the management to say that RSDO you must conduct this interview in this fashion or we don't need any approvals or we don't need these 1-2-3-4. The RSDO job now becomes not independent, to do their hearings and interviews to give a precise informed decision because of this interference from the management (RSDO 1) [sic].

This quote reveals the level of authority and power at the RRO in Cape Town. Because the office is very hierarchical, key decisions about applications are influenced by the managers without knowledge of the process and procedures (Crush & Williams 2003; Crush & Dobson 2007). Although RSDO are normally expected to make decisions based on the merits of each case, within the framework of legislations, management expects them to do things as instructed rather than being guided by the Refugees Act of 1998. Therefore, the decisions that they give to asylum seekers are not often based on facts presented in each application but rather on the pressures to satisfy the management. In trying to please management, RSDO fail to execute duties as stipulated by the UNHCR (1995: 45), which states that “determining refugee status is a professionally demanding and onerous task requiring considerable knowledge, skills, and good judgment”. The interference of management confirms perceptions from asylum seekers and refugees that DHA is always searching for reasons to reject rather accept applications for asylum.

Another challenge faced at the RRO in Cape Town is dealing with the negative attitudes of some DHA employees towards asylum seekers from other African countries. Generally, when people perceive things in their environment without investigating them, they cultivate certain attitudes before even experiencing them. Many South Africans including RSDO still perceive migrants including asylum seekers and refugees as threats to their livelihood (Pineteh 2011 & 2015, Crush &

Williams 2003). These negative views influence the way some RSDOs relate with asylum seekers and refugees.

I don't want to use the word xenophobic because is a strong word, however, they have negative attitude, they don't have patience because they don't know asylum seekers' language challenges. Therefore, they don't give a chance for asylum seekers to explain themselves; they become restless not wanting to listen and not enough patience in listening to asylum seekers and refugees (RSDO 2) [sic].

The above quote captures RSDOs negative attitude towards asylum seekers and refugees and how they affect their interactions with applicants. These attitudes have been responsible for the growing xenophobic tensions in South Africa (Pineteh & Mulu 2016). The quote shows how RSDOs' perceptions about foreigners affect the quality of service provide at RRO in Cape Town.

During the interviews with RSDOs, lack of training was also cited as one of the challenges facing the RRO in Cape Town. It was indicated that there was a need for officials to be trained on a regular basis so that they could understand the background of asylum seekers, refugees and their attitudes. The quote below provides some insight to the above-mention challenge.

There is no particular training for officials; however, there should be ongoing training so that the officials could be informed to make informed decisions. Sometimes, I don't know the reason; maybe the department is not serious concerning the issues regarding refugees (RSDO 2).

Given that asylum seekers and refugees come from different political and sociocultural contexts, it is important for RSDOs to understand the unique characteristics of forced migration. According this participant, training was necessary for RSDOs to help address some of the challenges they encounter when adjudicating the claims of asylum seekers. And also, the quote speaks about the negligence of the department in providing specialised training that can assist them to make informed decisions.

The lack of consistency in all RROs was identified as a challenge that impedes RSDOs from rendering proper services to asylum seekers. However, according to the

Refugees Act of 1998, all Offices are advised to operate in uniformity. For instance, Musina, Pretoria and Durban accept new comers while Port Elizabeth and Cape Town do not.

You know, most of these Refugees Offices in the country don't work in a uniform way. That's why currently it was been identified by the management in high level that there should be a uniformity in everything done in Cape Town and in other Offices in the country (RSDO 1).

Operational constraints such as lack of consistency in addressing refugee issues have always been a major challenge for both asylum seekers and RSDO (Crush & Dobson 2007; Pineteh 2011). In South Africa, each RRO office seems to have its own interpretation of the Refugees Act of 1998 and therefore applies the clauses differently. This explains why the RRO management are constantly interfering in the duties of RSDOs. It is therefore not uncommon that an application can be rejected at one RRO and the decision is overturned by another office. This inconsistency is often blamed on lack of adequate resources to streamline operations. However, there is evidence that the government is addressing this challenge. Despite these challenges at the RROs and the implications for delivering quality services to asylum seekers and refugees, many Congolese asylum seekers have been granted refugees status and this has had a positive impact on their lives in South Africa.

4.7 SUGGESTIONS PROVIDED FOR IMPROVING INTERPRETATION SERVICES

The foregoing sections have discussed the intricacies of seeking asylum in South Africa. The findings of this study highlighted in these sections show clearly, there is a need to improve the quality of interpretation provided by ZRGB. This section of the thesis analyses suggestions from the different participants.

4.7.1 Suggestions from Congolese asylum seekers and refugees

In this section, most of the suggestions are based on the communication challenges encountered by francophone asylum seekers and refugees. As discussed above “a communication barrier is defined as any factor which hampers or prevents the smooth flow of the message from the sender to the audience” (Cleary 2010:11). Moreover Bell (1991: 146) clearly articulate the details of interpreting messages and

the consequences for meaning making, especially in the case of oral accounts. For Bell (1991: 146) the process of translation depends on the theory of mind. His conception about the relationship between interpretation and the oral account provides an appropriate framework for our understanding of interpretation services at the Cape Town RRO. The emphasis on the autobiographical memories of asylum seekers means that interpreters have to orally interpret the story of asylum seekers by following certain approaches to interpretation. The first one is the “word for word or literal” type of interpretation and the second one is “sense for sense or free style”, which is where the interpreter listens to both the client and the interviewer by playing the role of mediator and at same time by interpreting meaning rather than words. To this, Reiss (1977: 113-14) argues that text rather than the word or sentence is deemed to be the appropriate level at which communication is achieved and at which equivalence must be sought, rather than the focus on written interpretation, as is the case with first interviews at the RRO in Cape Town. Here, the interpreter would ask questions to the applicant verbally and use their responses to complete a DHA form BI1590 in English. Pochhacker (2009:10) contends that interpreting is much about meaning-based rather than word-based concepts, and also, is performed here and now for the benefit of people who want to engage in communication across barriers of language and culture. This means that interpretation is a solution where language and culture merge.

Asylum seekers opined that the quality of interpretation is better when asylum seekers are matched with interpreters who come from similar backgrounds because language drives culture. Accordingly to Ajygin (2010:5) cited in Maniragena (2014:16) “to begin to understand the current situation of a group of people, it is necessary to understand their background”. In line with this issue, Congolese asylum seekers suggested:

I would advise the interpretation office to have people from similar background to interpret, doing interpretation for the people of same background rather than just saying interpreting a language (FGD 1) [sic]

Basically, to make sure they utilise people from the same background. Because languages transcend, or try to adapt to cultures and environment, and very important factor that the department needs to put in consideration or the interpretation company. For the interpretation company they need to consider the background of interpreters versus to the people that are being interviewed. The background matters a lot in terms of language code (FGD 1) [sic].

These asylum seekers emphasised the importance of cultural background in allocating ZRGB interpreters to asylum seekers. This is because people effectually adapt their verbal and non-verbal messages to the appropriate cultural context (Neuliep 2009:394), For example, an interpreter from the Eastern region of the DRC would be more active in interpreting for an asylum seeker from the same region because the interpreter has a deeper understanding not only of the languages, but also of the context and the culture.

Another important point that was raised by asylum seekers is that ZRGB should recruit individuals with a good understanding of two or more languages; and good communication skills. Asylum seekers in the focus group discussion commented:

They have to call all interpreters and each one of them must go through an interview in French and English because an interview is where you will know if this person is qualified or not (FGD 1) [sic].

To have good interpreters and who can write exactly what the asylum seekers are saying. I meant qualified interpreters, known and who have a lot of experience. They have to recruit interpreters who can speak English and French correctly to assist Congolese. Generally, who can speak English, French and other languages, for example, Swahili, Tshiluba and Kikongo (FGD Participant 2) [sic].

For these participants, interpreters should be subjected to rigorous interview processes or an aptitude evaluation to test their interpretation skills in relevant languages before being employed to work as an interpreter for ZRGB. For them, interpreters should be proficient in written and spoken French and English with some knowledge of Congolese languages. They should also be experienced interpreters with formal academic qualifications. These quotations point to the fact that language is a code that conveys meaning symbolically. The symbols are essentially artificial, mental and random. The words have no physical or natural resemblance to the objects to which they refer (Cleary (2010:19). To have the requisite skills is therefore imperative because to recode is to transmit a message in the target language which complies with the source language, as well as literary agreements of the literary texts so as to be as semantically precise and visually effective as the possible (As-Safi 2011:52). Interpreters require relevant academic qualifications and skills to perform these complex tasks efficiently.

Still along the same lines, asylum seekers suggested that the company, ZRGB should assess the competency of interpreters in terms of communication and vocabulary; and that these tests should be conducted by an external reputable company. As Grunig (2011:2) points out, organisations are realising that workers are their most central competitive benefit, and effective communication supports unleashing the abilities and energies of their employees.

The company, first of all they should test the people enough; they should test their ability in communication and vocabulary, second, the ability to communicate with people. Then, I wouldn't suggest finding someone who is learning to speak French and English. Rather they should try to find someone who is teaching French, and/or someone teaching English, a professor perhaps. The person could be the one who is supposed to give a test to interpreters so that they find out if they are competent or not (Participant 5) [sic].

I can advise that the department to have a panel that is not made up only of DHA officials. I understand that is not the responsibility of interpreters but they need to consider the interpreters views and opinion of what the outcome should be. Because they are the ones who get the information from the source, they are the ones who can make sense whether there is legitimacy or whatever word that was used in the interview is genuine and they can share that with the department. So, the DHA needs to consider what the interpreters are saying, and they need to consider working with the interpretation company in terms of decision making (FGD) [sic].

Although this is an interesting suggestion, it is also controversial because most interpreters are foreign nationals, the majority of whom have been granted refugee status in the country. Therefore, it is likely that they would be sympathetic to fellow asylum seekers and may not be as objective during decisions making. Also there is a lack of trust that already exists between RSDO and interpreters at the Cape Town RRO. Involving interpreters in the decision making process would not only exacerbate the level of distrust, it would also jeopardise the legitimacy of the outcomes.

4.7.2 Suggestions from Refugee status determination officers

The RSDOs suggested that ZRGB should recruit people who have stayed in the country for a long time, who have mastered the terminologies used at the RROs. They also suggested that the company should organise on-going trainings for interpreters in order to hone their skills and ensure their continued commitment to their responsibilities as interpreters. Ciordia (2016:68) argues that traditional simulations of interpreting fail in face-to-face communication, therefore, it is important to develop trust among all the speakers, and that is so critical in interpreter-mediated meetings. While Hale (2014:324) contends that in order for interpreters to be trusted to offer such skilled thoughts, they are expected to be extremely qualified. This shows that trust is built through a particular process of observation, the more you are perceived as capable of doing something, the more likely it is for you to gain trust. The following statement by a RSDO points to the need to improve the quality of interpreters employed by ZRGB.

I think they should employ people who are in South Africa for quite some time, they should make sure people that they are employing understand English and the vocabularies that are used in asylum seeker management. This thing of interpretation is an on-going process; I think they should organize training once per year so that interpretation can be effective and as smooth as possible (RSDO 1).

This official assumes that some of the interpreters are not very proficient in English language because they have not lived in South Africa for a long time. This is problematic because longevity of stay alone cannot guarantee English language proficiency. The official also highlights the importance of on-going training for interpreters. This suggestion originates from the fact that managers in South African organisations that offer services are now paying more attention to the importance of training because they contribute to and influence high turnover rates (Qureshi, Iftikhar, Abbas, Hassan, Kan & Zaman 2013: 764). Also, it might be possible that lack of proficiency in English amongst some interpreters emanate from the fact that there is a high turnover of staff at ZRGB and the company needs to constantly hire new staff members who are not as competent as those that have worked there for years.

4.7.3 Suggestions from interpreters

Interpreters offered several suggestions that could improve the quality of interpretation services at the refugee reception centre in Cape Town. These suggestions range from the need for training, evaluation and professionalism amongst interpreters, as well as the need for the management of ZRGB to visit the branches more often in order to familiarise themselves with the challenges that interpreters face and provide solutions.

Many interpreters suggested the need for training that would improve the interpretation skills of interpreters working at the RRO in Cape Town. They argue that the company should train interpreters so that they can improve their proficiency in written and spoken communication in the relevant languages, and their level of professionalism. Many interpreters who assist Congolese asylum seekers are proficient in French and/or other African languages but may not be as competent in English Language. Also, many interpreters do not possess formal qualifications in the field of translation and interpretation:

What I can say as suggestions, maybe if they can find a way that there can be some trainings regarding interpretation in our department because as I was going through some papers, it is necessary to have maybe five years of experience so that you can be a professional interpreter for a big company as Home Affairs as we are. So if our company wants to be strong, we have to be able to work in different companies. Maybe they have to create or to support trainings in the company. They should send employees to some training so that they can improve the level of interpretation (FGD 2) [sic].

They should also think about training interpreters so that they can know their job and how they are supposed to do their job and what is expected from them as interpreters. So, I think, they must consider that sending interpreters to such a big company like Home Affairs people need to be trained first. People can speak the language but there are certain terms which need to be interpreted professionally by using the right terms, right words but you can keep the content of the message Words used wrongly might change the context of the entire story which the client was giving, the claim of the client. So, it is better to find a way to train people so that they can learn little or more about interpretation because it might sound easy but is not really easy (FGD 2).

Several participants in the focus group discussion emphasised the need for training to be provided to them, to improve their competency in languages and their

translation and interpretation skills. Translation and interpretation are complex processes that require specific set of skills. For Dubois (1974) translation is the expression in another language (or the target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences. Moreover, Newmark (1981:39) states that “communicative translation” attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the original. As explained previously, Bell (1991: 146) identifies three types of translation namely; translation as a process, translation as a product, and both process and product. These definitions point to the complexities of translation and interpretation, and interpreters are expected to choose the correct type for the correct context. Pochhacker (2009:18) contends that consecutive interpreting is a field that includes the interpretation of sounds as short as a word, to the control of entire speeches, or more or less long portions thereof, ‘in one go’. However, at Cape Town RRO, interpreters use the differently types interchangeably. It means that the asylum seeker narrates his/her story in French language, then, the interpreter interprets it in English. Asylum seeker, RSDO, and interpreters are expected to pause before speaking in order to allow time for the others to talk. Such a demanding task requires individuals who are suitably qualified and not just individuals who can speak several languages.

In the following quotes, interpreters suggest the need for professionalization of the services provided by ZRGB.

For the new interpreters what I can tell them is that they are in the world where things are not easy. So, first of all, you have to keep the business professional and everything will follow. Once you get your job as an interpreter, be professional and updating yourself with regards to interpretation so that you can improve (FGD 2) [sic].

For interpreters, they must read a lot, and do some research so that it can enable them to perform and to have many words. Secondly, they should be aware of challenges because those challenges can assist them build on their performance. And they mustn't take criticisms negatively because they help them to know how to deal with difficult situations, because to memorize when someone around is busy on the phone is not easy (FGD 2) [sic].

The suggestions cited above emphasise the need for life-long learning and professional development. The quotes show that interpreters are keen to transform

their jobs and careers by acquiring necessary skills and developing the level of professionalism required by professional translators and interpreters. However, one participant had a different perspective on the need for training.

You know because I am working there I can say that we have already improved those things that we are doing. They are just routines now. There is no new thing whereby the company must train people. For instance, if there is a new machine the company must train people how to use it or should hire trainers to train his employees to use the new machine. As interpreters what we are doing there is on standard and is always there (ZRGB interpreter 4).

For this interpreter, there is no need for further training because he has gained all the training he needs through experience. The interpreter considers the work he does to be routine, which is problematic because the asylum seekers that he assists come from different socio-economic, educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Assuming a one-size fits all approach to interpretation is bound to result in communication barriers with dire consequences. However, Neuliep (2009:397) concurs that the more interaction an individual can have with people, the more likely they are to acquire knowledge about them and to network with them.

Other important suggestions from interpreters to ZRGB were that the company should honour its promises of salary increments to employees. They also emphasised the need for operative communication within the company.

They have to respect their own word, because making empty promises is not respecting the word at all. For instance, they promised to increase the salary of the employees but it has not happened. Visiting the company in Cape Town is important but they don't, they are in Johannesburg and we are here in Cape Town (FGD 2) [sic].

Communication is very important in any organization; I can suggest that ZRGB should start to visit the Centre regularly so that they deal with issues. They can put back what they said in the procedure because work-chain our company has omitted it. When employers are happy, employees are happy, you can see satisfaction on the job and also on the performance and this can make the company happy. On our side all those channels are omitted only the management that is happy while if we put those three things together it can be very good for all of us. Lastly, we need vacations because as interpreters we can also go and do some research about our work, we need to be paid for that particular time so that you may come back with good performance. We cannot just be busy all the times (FGD 2) [sic].

The quotations above explain why interpreters are not often motivated to execute their duties. It points to internal dynamics in which the management makes promises to its employees that go unfulfilled. Interpreters suggest that ZRGB managers should visit the Cape Town centre often so that they can get feedback regarding the issues those interpreters faced on a daily basis. To this, Bovee and Thill (2008:64) contend that to communicate excellently people need a basic comprehension of the cultural dissimilarities they may encounter and the approach it should be handled with. Moreover, to boost interpreters' morale, they should be paid market-related remunerations. For them, this incentive would improve the quality of services rendered by interpreters at the RRO in Cape Town.

Finally, a suggestion to the management of the RRO in Cape Town is captured in the following statement:

I can again suggest our company to speak to Home Affairs officials, especially at the top management so that they can also improve their job. For example, when they are conducting interviews it is very important to know that the claim can be rejected or approved but not good to take it for granted, like RSDOs talking to a friend over the phone or with other colleagues. The client can also take it for granted, that's why the clients sometimes ask us if we can respond to the questions on their behalf because they saw the RSDOs taking the interview process for granted (ZRGB interpreter 2).

This quotation suggests that the quality of interpretation services was also affected by the level of professionalism exhibited by the RSDOs at the Cape Town RRO. Interpreters therefore suggested that the ZRGB management should advise the DHA management to train its' employees on how to handle interviews with asylum seekers in a professional manner. For them, interruptions are not only disruptive to the interpreter but could affect the coherence and consistency in the asylum seekers' oral accounts.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the myriad of communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the RRO in Cape Town. Drawing on empirical evidence, the chapter pointed that while some of these challenges are caused by the poor quality of interpretation services offered by some ZRGB interpreters, others are caused by asylum seekers who claim that they can speak either English or French when they cannot. It has also highlighted the fact that, asylum seekers had different perception of the services offered by ZRGB employees. Some asylum seekers considered rejections of their claims to asylum as evidence of poor interpretation, while others attributed the positive outcome of their claim as proof of active interpretation. However, the data revealed that others were unable to discern if the quality of interpretation services that they received was good or bad because they lacked English language aptitude to evaluate the quality of services, even though they relied entirely on interpreters to communicate with RSDOs. On the one hand, asylum seekers and refugees who had been in the country for a long time were more likely to question the success interpreters. On the other hand those who were relatively new in the country thought that interpreters were there to defend them because they spoke the same language or came from the same country. These perceptions tend to cause trust issues between RSDOs and interpreters because, the official felt interpreters were providing asylum seekers with information that could make their claims more compelling. To improve the quality of interpretation and possibly address the communication challenges, asylum seekers suggested continuous trainings for teams in order to hone their general language and translation skills, as well as their commitment to work.

The chapter has therefore discussed the communication challenges and the perceptions of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees about interpretation services provided by ZRGB. It has highlighted the perceptions of RSDOs about services provided by ZRGB and the challenges faced by ZRGB employees and RSDOs at the RRO in Cape Town. The next chapter provides general conclusions drawn from the findings presented in chapter 4 and also recommends strategies to address the communication challenges by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the Cape RRO. The chapter concludes with areas for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the study was to critically analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the refugee reception office in Cape Town. To achieve this main interest, the study started off by examining the communication challenges of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the RRO in Cape Town. It then investigated the perceptions of RSDOs and Congolese refugees and asylum seekers about the interpretation services provided by ZRGB. Furthermore, it highlighted challenges faced by ZRGB employees and finally, it offered recommendations for the improvement of interpretation services by ZRGB.

The study was a qualitative case study and it used three methods of data collection namely semi-structured individual interviews, focus group discussions and observations. To complement the three methods of data collection, the researcher analysed relevant policy documents. Participants for the study included asylum seekers and refugees, interpreters and Refugee Status Determination Officers at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town, South Africa. In terms of conceptual framework, the study used Bell and Reiss's theories of translation, community interpreting, interpreting studies and the general communication model.

The study was motivated by the fact that although francophone asylum seekers and refugees faced several communications challenges in the process of seeking asylum in South Africa, the Refugees Act and Immigration laws do not have a clear framework for the provision of interpretation services to non-English speaking asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover, there is a paucity of studies in South Africa, which have focused on the interpretation of oral accounts of forced migrants, even though the DHA has been providing such services to applicants for asylum in need. This chapter presents the summary of the key findings of the study, makes recommendations based on the findings and identifies areas for further research.

5.2. SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The first objective of the study was to analyse communication challenges of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees in Cape Town. The data sources used to address this objective were interviews with asylum seekers, refugees and interpreters. It was found that most Congolese asylum seekers faced communication challenges stemming from language barriers and negative perceptions about African migrants in South Africa. Although, the applicants relied heavily on the assistance of interpreters when they took their first interviews, the interaction between the interpreters and asylum seekers were also impeded by language problems. To this, Tužinská (2011:7) attests that there is no technique specified by the law or used by the authorities to ascertain the interpreter's language skills or quality of his/her interpretation and the law does not list any further qualifications for interpreters. This discussed article is about the condition and the legislation in Eastern Europe, but referred to in order to illuminate the condition in South Africa. However, in the practice of interpreting, linguists should in fact be careful of all the basic language processes—listening, talking, reading and writing—because they all function in concert with the same innate language faculty (Bell, 2016:156).

The second objective was to investigate the perceptions of Congolese refugees and asylum seekers about the services offered by ZRGB. The sources of data were one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with asylum seekers and refugees. From the data, it was clear that Congolese asylum seekers' perceptions of interpreters were diverse. They were positive, negative or neutral. Generally, their perceptions were influenced by their level of English proficiency, the outcome of the application, eyewitness accounts, and personal rapport with the interpreters. To this Chen and Starosta (2005:4) argue that the progress of a comprehensive belief has become necessary for advancing human development and this belief can only result from intercommunication among dissimilar people. From this standpoint, perception is the process of selecting and organizing information gained through the senses in such a way that the information makes sense.

The third objective focused on the perceptions of RSDOs about interpretation services provided by ZRGB employees. The data was collected through one-on-one interviews with officials and through the researcher's observations. The RSDOs' perceptions were generally positive especially at the level of interpersonal relationship. However, in terms of professionalism and the overall quality of services, there was a call for interpreters to improve their language skills and to increase their commitment while at work. Good interpersonal relationships do not determine the efficiency in the work and 'people using different languages may construct different ways of seeing social life (Temple & Young 2004:165).

The fourth objective highlighted challenges faced by ZRGB employees while providing translation and interpretation services to Congolese asylum seekers and refugees. The data was gleaned from one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with interpreters. The findings revealed communication challenges between interpreters and asylum seekers because the level of language proficiency was unequal, although interpreters and the asylum seekers were from the same country or spoke the same language. Also, when clients narrated their stories, they did not always pause to give interpreters time to translate during a session. Furthermore, interpreters were not appreciated and it affected their performance. The study also uncovered that there were issues of trust between asylum seekers and interpreters because the rejection of an asylum application was usually blamed on poor quality interpretation.

Finally, the study revealed that the quality of interpretation was also hampered by some Congolese asylum seekers' claim that they could speak French, even though the quality of their spoken French could not sustain a conversation with interpreters. This forced interpreters to constantly switch from French to Lingala or to another Congolese language. Also, some claimed they could speak English and therefore did not require the assistance of an interpreter. However, midway through an interview with a RSDO, they would request for the assistance.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF INTERPRETATION SERVICES

One of the main findings of the study was that asylum seekers experienced communication problems during their first interview, either because of poor quality interpretation or a decision not to use of the services of ZRGB interpreters. To overcome this problem, it is recommended that the service provider, ZRGB should match interpreters with asylum seekers who are from similar geographical, cultural and linguistic background because language drives culture. It is also recommended that only individuals, who can speak, write and read both source and target languages proficiently and possess good communication and interpretation skills should be recruited. Some knowledge of Congolese languages such as Lingala should be a requirement for the job. Finally, the company ZRGB should hire an external service provider to subject potential employees through rigorous tests in order to ascertain their competency in the relevant languages.

This study also recommends that ZRGB should recruit interpreters who are not only proficient in French or competent in English language but also have a mastery of the vocabulary used at the Home Affairs Refugee Reception Offices. This will help to mitigate some of the language barriers encountered by asylum seekers, interpreters and RSDOs. The need for on-going training and better remuneration for interpreters was highly recommended. This will help to hone the communication and interpretation skills of interpreters. Market-related salary package will lead to better motivation to render the services and it will enhance the level of professionalism. It will also reduce fast turnover of ZRGB employees. In addition, the training of interpreters is vital in order to improve their proficiency in writing, speaking and translating in different languages.

To ensure staff loyalty and commitment, ZRGB management should establish an environment of trust. Management should ensure that it always fulfils its promises to employees and there should be regular communication with staff to find out their challenges. Also, the DHA management should train its employees on how to handle issues relating to asylum seekers professionally, particularly during interviews. This should help RSDOs to understand the burdens of seeking asylum and should help to reduce the negative attitudes about asylum seekers and refugees.

To enhance communication at the RRO; the DHA should consider hiring a service provider that is able to provide interpreters who can speak, listen, write and read

English, French and other languages represented by different nationalities other than Africans. The company should train its employees regularly, pay them well and visit them often to evaluate performance and address challenges. The researcher considers the issue of trust as important in the asylum process because the lack thereof always leads to serious communication challenges.

5.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has the potential to influence language assistance provided to non-English speaking asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa. But, because of the requirement of this degree and time constraints, it was limited to the RRO in Cape Town. One area for further research could be to extend the study nationally, at doctoral level. The investigation can choose respondents from different refugee reception offices in the country. By expanding the scope of study, the researcher should be able to compare the perceptions of asylum seekers, refugees, interpreters and officials of the DHA. Also, the study could gather extra empirical data by using mixed method approach, which could solicit the opinions of a larger population and use numerical data to make inferences and draw conclusion that can be generalized.

Furthermore, a future study can focus on other institutions that face similar language challenges when offering services to asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, such a study can investigate the success of interpretation services in places such as police stations, court of laws, hospitals, clinics, prisons and schools.

5.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This study has examined the interpretation services provided by ZRGB as a strategy for addressing the communication challenges that Francophone asylum seekers and refugees face in South Africa. In so doing, the study hopes to make an important contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the politics of asylum and the acquisition of a refugee identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

The practice of using English as the official language in the department of Home Affairs has had severe negative consequences for the applications of francophone

asylum seekers. It is important to note that francophone asylum seekers come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to those of RSDOs working at Cape Town RRO. These cultural differences pose challenges for the actual communication. To address the objectives of this study, the researcher has drawn on Bell and Reiss's concepts of translation, community interpreting, interpreting studies and the general communication model because they explain the specifics of interpreting messages and the consequences for meaning-making, principally in the case of oral accounts.

The study started with a brief contextualisation of the research, which teased out some of the discussions about forced migration to South Africa after 1994. It presented the motivations for undertaking the project and stated the research problem, objectives, its significance and delineation. The research utilised a case study research design and a qualitative methodology.

In chapter two, the study gave an overview of the patterns of migration to South Africa, with a focus on the different experiences of asylum seekers especially when applying for documents to regularise their stay in South Africa.

Chapter three provided a rationale for a case study design and qualitative methodology. It described the data collection process, explained the procedures for selecting participants and described the demography of the participants, the duration and locations of the interviews.

Chapter four presented and discussed the findings of the study and Chapter five summarised the key findings, and provided recommendations for the improvement of interpretation services at the RRO in Cape Town. Finally, this chapter proposed areas for further research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Consent form

Research on Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town

Participant consent form

Dear participant,

I am currently conducting research on the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. The research seeks to critically analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. The findings of this project will be used to provide recommendations on how to address the challenges that will emerge of this project.

In line with the Ethics Policy of CPUT, the researcher(s) will ensure that:

1. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time during the research if you wish to do so;
2. The interviews will be conducted at your convenience and in a conducive environment;
3. You will not be coerced to answer any question that you are uncomfortable with;
4. Anonymity will be guaranteed during and after the interviews- your real names will not be revealed in the data and subsequent reports unless you permit the researcher(s) to do so;
5. The transcripts of your interviews will be used for the purpose indicated above;
6. Your interview will be recorded only if you permit the researcher(s) to do so.

Please sign this consent form in the space provided below if you are satisfied with the ethical considerations.

Research Team

Researcher: Katebesha Mbanza

Supervisor: Dr Pineteh Ernest Angu

I _____ accept to participate in the above mentioned research as an interviewee/ a respondent and I permit/ do not permit the researchers to use a voice recorder during the interview.

Signature of participant



Office of the Research Ethics Committee (REC)

Faculty of Informatics and Design

Ethics Approval certificate

Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2015

Applicant Name: Katebesha MBANZA

Student Number: 211282545

Qualification?: Master's Degree

14. Declaration of Investigators			
I/we apply for approval to conduct research. If approval is granted, the research will be undertaken in accordance with the information provided in this application, the protocols described in this application, and any other relevant guidelines, regulations and laws.			
Investigator / Researcher	Department	Email	extension
1 Katebesha MBANZA	Department of Public Relations Management	Katebesha@yahoo.com	2015-2016
2			

15. Declaration of Supervisor/s (if applicant is a student)			
I/we have read over this application in its entirety and will endeavour to ensure my/our student undertakes his/her research according to all CPUT ethics protocols.			
	Name	Signature	Date
Supervisor:			
Co-Supervisor:			

FID Research Ethics Committee comments:	
	Ethics Stamp

APPENDIX C: Sample of interview questions

SECTION A: Asylum seekers and refugees

- 1) How long have you been living in South Africa?
- 2) May you please tell me about your life back home?
- 3) What was the reason to leave your country of origin?
- 4) May you please describe the experience of your first interview at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town?
- 5) Other refugees are saying that interpretation has an impact on the outcome of the asylum seekers' application, what is your take on that?
- 6) What suggestions that do you have for ZRGB to improve the quality of interpretation?
- 7) Is there anything else that you think we should have added on this interview we did not?

SECTION B: ZRGB Interpreters

- 1) Which country do you come from?
- 2) How long have been working with Home Affairs?
- 3) Which language is preferable for your interpretation, and describes your experience working as a French interpreter?
- 4) Would explain the type of supports that you receive from ZRGB, and how they enable you to your job as an interpreter?
- 5) What suggestions that do you have for ZRGB to improve the quality of interpretation?
- 6) Is there anything else that you think we should have talked we did not?

SECTION C: Refugee Status Determination Officer

- 1) How long have you been working with Home Affairs
- 2) Would you describe your professional relationship with ZRGB employees?
- 3) Refugees are saying that interpreters fail them to be granted status, what is your take on this statement?
- 4) What suggestions do you have for ZRGB to improve the quality of interpretation?
- 5) Is there anything else that we should have talked about we did not?

APPENDIX D: Samples of transcript.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE INVESTIGATOR AND THE RESPONDENT (RSDO Manager)

Interviewee 10 (Male, RSDO) South African

This interview took place in Cape Town on Sunday, July, 03, 2016, started from 13:00' to 13:29'. The interviewer was the researcher himself, while the respondent was the Refugee Status Determination Officer's manager (RSDO).

Investigator: Thanks for agreeing to participate in this research and thank you for accepting to be part of it because last time we did one and it was not well saved; now we had to re-organize another one and the time was not on our side, but actually today we managed to be part of it. Thank you again.

Respondent: Thank you.

Investigator: As we spoke, and as you read on the informed consent form that you have right to answer any question you want, even if you don't feel okay with the recording we can stop it. This interview has only academic purpose and nothing than that and I record it to enable me to take the transcript easily. This interview is about the analysis of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Francophone asylum seekers at Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town. Let me start with the questions, how long have you been working with Home Affairs?

Respondent: I have been working with Home Affairs for 29 years and for asylum seeker management for around 15 years.

Investigator: And 15 years, you have been working at the one Centre (Office)

Respondent: Yes, all 15 years, I was been working at Cape Town Refugee Centre.

Investigator: Which was located where in Cape Town?

Respondent: It was located in Cape Town, Custom House and it moved to Nyanga because of the challenges of accommodation. Because of the bylaws of the Municipality of Nyanga it was closed there and reopened again in Maitland. The same challenges reasoning bylaws of the Municipality it was moved again to Custom House in Cape Town.

Investigator: And where is based currently?

Respondent: Yes, is where is based currently.

Investigator: There at Custom House which types of asylum seekers do you accept or take or assist at the Centre?

Respondent: We were dealing with new asylum seekers but lately the department is attempting to close the office we are no dealing with new comers rather we are dealing with the determination of refugee status.

Investigator: All are from different countries of Africa?

Respondent: Different countries of Africa, yes of course.

Investigator: Okay, would you describe your professional relationship with the company that provides interpretation at Home Affairs?

Respondent: Come again?

Investigator: I would like to ask you, actually I would like to know, and even I didn't ask that question, those asylum seekers who come to the country and cannot speak English how they get assisted?

Respondent: Okay, let me first start by saying that you know the department at first never uses the services of interpreters; it was long time before ZRGB came to being. They have seen there was a need to outsource the interpretation company that would assist for interpretation to asylum seekers and refugees. But then there was no interpretation company that provided interpretation, that poses a big challenge because when these refugees and asylum seekers approaching the office lot of them couldn't understand English while South Africans could only understanding English and no other African countries languages. For instance, like Zimbabwe, Angola, Rwanda and all Africa. There was a challenge we needed to have Interpretation Company that could assist us with interpretation because then some of the refugees were unfairly rejected since some of the officials could not understand their language and others were having attitude toward refugees or asylum seekers. Based on that sometimes they could disadvantage granting the asylum seeker asylum in South Africa.

Investigator: its mean those asylum seekers who came at that time when the language was a problem many of them the decision was not on their favour due to language barrier?

Respondent: Yes, due to the language barrier they disadvantaged them to be granted refugee status and some of the officials were having attitude on the asylum seekers until such time the department identified that problem. And to address this interpretation problem the department had to outsource the interpretation company which is currently ZRGB.

Investigator: Okay, why the department chose to outsource the company of interpretation rather than taking the interpreters directly?

Respondent: You know sometimes it becomes a challenge because of the financial problem involves in terms of employing permanent interpreters. Then, to me it should be something very important for the department to employ its own interpreters which are going to serve the department like at the department of Justice. If I can make an example, at the department of Justice they employ their interpreters, they take them for training, and you know that this is assisting the department in terms of work. When sometimes when they use these companies there are lots of challenges because when it comes to a company some of the people that are employed, interpreters by the company sometimes we are establishing problems whereby the services are not serving the department. The department doesn't get value for their money in terms of this interpretation because at some points they are not paid enough money, and at some points you feel that the job they are doing, they are less interested because of the second reason.

Investigator: And this company that is outsourced by the department would please describe to me the professional relationship the employees of that company have with the department?

Respondent: Although they are those challenges that I have mentioned, between the company and the department the relationship is very much cordial. However, they are more things that need to be taken into consideration because some of interpreters are not well educated. They don't understand some of the languages spoken in particular areas and some of interpreters the salary money they receive from the company doesn't make them eager to do their work the way they should.

Investigator: Some refugees are saying that interpreters fail them in order to be granted status, what is your opinion on that?

Respondent: Yeah, that is sometimes correct or because of these challenges of interpretation that's why they should be an ongoing training if they were permanently employed by the department. Maybe interpreters employed by ZRGB some of them are qualified enough and others are not. To some extent when they interpret French or whatever

language in terms of getting it translated into English sometimes they are some words lacking, you feel that there need to be a training or lack of training for interpreters.

Investigator: As yourself you are an RSDO the time you were conducting your interviews have noticed that there is a problem on some interpreters the time they were doing their job?

Respondent: Yes

Investigator: And what exactly are those problems which can affect the asylum seekers to be granted status.

Respondent: You may find sometimes, I will put it like this. Some of interpreters outsourced by the department, ZRGB, are from Congo or Rwanda and s/he speaks French. When ZRGB is using interpretation, they are using the same interpreters to all the asylum seekers or refugees that are French or other languages. Then, in terms of English it becomes difficult, yes they understand French, and needs to be interpreted into English there are certain vocabularies lacking since we are dealing with particular vocabularies in terms of asylum seekers. We see there is a certain amount of gap in terms of understanding English. Some of them are educated enough and others are not well educated to do interpretation.

Investigator: According to you what could you suggest the company of interpretation to work on so that they can improve the quality of interpretation?

Respondent: I think they should employ people who are in South Africa for quite some times, they should make sure people that they are employing understand English and the vocabularies that are used in asylum seeker management. This thing of interpretation is an ongoing process, I think they should organize training once per year so that interpretation can be effective and smooth as possible.

Investigator: Regarding these challenges what are the plans the government is having because the government go through or get assisted by these outsourced companies of interpretation and they can see these challenges, what are them thinking about it?

Respondent: I don't think there is a plan that is going forward now. They are lot of things that have been said about telephonic interpretation whereby the officials are going to conduct these interviews through telephones.

Investigator: Is it new plan?

Respondent: Is a new plan. To me is a lack of seriousness because you cannot have interpretation on a phone and have limited time to do the interview.

Investigator: And the plan is for when, when are they thinking to start with this telephonic interpretation?

Respondent: 2017 and 2018 their plan to say they are going to use this telephonic interpretation which I don't think whether is credible or not? We don't know that's why I said is lack of seriousness. You know as I mentioned earlier when the department of Justice is employing interpreters, they employ them on the permanent basis and they do they training at the Legal College so that their interpreters can be trained and know the legal terms that are used in Court of Law. I think the department of Home Affairs should take the example of the department of Justice so that this thing can become a reality. For instance, saying that someone who knows English to become interpreter will never take us anywhere, you will find that the department has been taken to court because an interpreter was not French during that time. There are lots of challenges whereby asylum seekers that have been rejected accused interpreters saying that they interpreted for them wrongly.

Investigator: Now, if we take one example specifically whereby an asylum seeker has accused an interpreter because of misinterpretation or the interpreter didn't interpret properly, have ever go through a case whereby the interpreter has been accused and you

find that interpreter was wrong or s/he was wrongly accused? Or there is something tangible whereby the interpreter was accused of not interpreting correctly and going to court, after the review of the case they find that the interpreter was wrong, there is something like that?

Respondent: There is no concrete evidence that can be put to say that the interpreter didn't understand the language properly because when the interpretation is conducted between the official and the interpreter you find that everything is well until the application of the asylum seeker has been rejected. Then, the asylum seeker claims that I was not afforded a good interpreter because he didn't interpret properly since he comes from different areas as mine. As I am saying we don't have a concrete evidence to suggest that because sometimes is an accusation from asylum seeker or refugees.

Investigator: According to some interpreters' asylum seekers have the perception that when they are going through interview if they fail it, the interpreter failed them and if they get granted status, then the interpreter was good interpreter. How do you see it, the problem is the interpretation or the problem is the claim itself?

Respondent: To me is not about the interpretation as officials are conducting interviews, everything is fine, no complaints, until such time the outcome of the application has been rejected then, they will say that the interpreter didn't interpret something of my original language. But when is on their favour, granted status, you don't see this thing of the interpreter didn't interpret what was said.

Investigator: According to you as an RSDO there is a type of story or claim that deserve to be granted or it depends how the asylum seeker present the claim?

Respondent: This thing of interpreters goes a long way, is a big challenge in asylum seeker management because you get a situation where asylum seeker arrive in the country they are not afforded the opportunity to be given an interpreter they complete the form in their own way and sometimes being assisted by another asylum seeker who happened to be there in the office. When this thing goes on and on till to the RSDO and when they ask them questions according to what is written in the form, it becomes a challenge, no that interpreter didn't write according to my knowledge. Then, that create a big confusion, you will feel that this is not my own story and my story is this while he was assisted by an interpreter among themselves.

Investigator: Who is not employed by Home Affairs or the Company of Interpretation?

Respondent: Who is not employed by the government or ZRGB, then at end there will be an accusation toward interpreters and so forth.

Investigator: And ZRGB has how many years operating with Home Affairs?

Respondent: I think, is five years now.

Investigator: Working with the department of Home Affairs.

Respondent: Yeah

Investigator: What are the biggest challenges you faced with the employees of ZRGB or with the company itself since the time they are there?

Respondent: To me, I never experienced any challenge toward interpreters of ZRGB because some of them understand English and French. These accusations is what they call sometimes crop up, do you understand? I should think the relationship between the department and ZRGB is very much cordial and nothing else.

Investigator: The way this Centre (Office) of Cape Town operates is the same like other offices in the country or they use different programs dealing with asylum seekers?

Respondent: You know, most of these Refugees Offices in the country don't work in the uniform way. That's why currently it was been identified by the management in high level that there should be a uniformity in everything done in Cape Town and in other Offices in the country.

Investigator: Regarding our discussion, there is something or any else we should have talked about we did not?

Respondent: You know, some of the challenges that I see from the officials' point of view when dealing with these refugees some of officials become. I don't want to use the word xenophobic because is a strong word, however, they have negative attitude, they don't have patience because they don't know asylum seekers' languages. Therefore, they don't give chance for asylum seekers to explain themselves, they become wreck less not wanting to listen and not enough patience in listening to asylum seekers and refugees. There is a need for officials to be trained on regular basis so that they can understand the background of refugees and their attitudes.

Investigator: I just got a question from that, which is very important. RSDOs are not trained to know the situation of asylum seekers that are coming in the country and their background? There is no training?

Respondent: Sometimes, the training is done on the job.

Investigator: There is particular training?

Respondent: There is no particular training for officials, however, there should be ongoing training so that the officials could be informed to do informed decision. Sometimes, I don't know the reason, maybe the department is not serious pertaining the issues regarding refugees.

Investigator: It means there is an issue on RSDOs; they are not also trained so that they can understand the life pertaining asylum seekers. There are also some challenges on the side of interpreters of ZRGB as you have picked up that they deserve some training as well.

Respondent: Correct.

Investigator: Nothing else you see that we should speak about but we did not?

Respondent: You know at some point, there is something I need to touch on. Sometimes it becomes a difficult issue to do the job of RSDO in our days because for an example, there are lots of interferences from the management to say that RSDO you must conduct this interview in this fashion or we don't need any approvals or we don't need these 1-2-3-4. The RSDO job now it becomes not independent, to do their hearings and interviews to give a precise informed decision because of this interference from the management. To me is like they are not serious enough or they are tired with refugees, I will put it like that.

Investigator: Is what you see you should add on this interview?

Respondent: Yes, is what I should add?

Investigator: Nothing else?

Respondent: No, nothing else.

Investigator: Thank you again for accepting and participating in this interview. Thank you very much.

Respondent: Thank you.

INTERPRETER OF ZRGB AT DHA

Interviewee 4, Female (interpreter) DRC

This interview took place at Observatory in Cape Town on Thursday, June, 16, 2016, started from 13:00' to 13:40'. The interviewer was the researcher himself, while the respondent was the interpreter of ZRGB that renders interpretation services at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town.

Investigator: Good afternoon

Respondent: Good afternoon

Investigator: Thank for agreeing to participate in this interview, this question and answer together. And as you have read you have the right to withdraw anytime, you have right to say that the recorder can be stopped because I am doing it so that it can facilitate me to take the transcript. However, I should ask questions without recording it just to enable to make a transcript in an easy way.

Respondent: Okay

Investigator: And you are from which country?

Respondent: I am from DRC Congo

Investigator: Where are you working?

Respondent: I am working at Home Refugee Reception Centre

Investigator: Are you employed by Home Affairs?

Respondent: No, currently, I am not employed by Home Affairs, I am employed by ZRGB that is under Home Affairs.

Investigator: You are working as who?

Respondent: I am working as an interpreter

Investigator: For how long have been working as an interpreter for ZRGB?

Respondent: Almost three years now

Investigator: And you interpret for which particular people?

Respondent: For Congolese

Investigator: Both Congo Brazzaville and Congo Kinshasa?

Respondent: Yes, sometimes also I interpret for people from Malawi because I can speak also Chewa.

Investigator: With your assistance which language that you used most when you are assisting them in interpretation?

Respondent: I am using English

Investigator: I meant on the side of the asylum seekers themselves, which language that you are using?

Respondent: Sometimes French and Swahili, and most of the time is French and Swahili

Investigator: Okay, but which language that you find preferable to interpret for the clients (asylum seekers)

Respondent: French and Swahili

Investigator: Would explain to me your experience of interpreting French to the clients, to the Congolese?

Respondent: My own understanding when I am interpreting French, some of Congolese clients they find it difficult. They can choose that they want to speak French but sometimes you have to repeat and sometimes you can switch from French to Swahili. For instance, people who speak Lingala they can claim that they speak French but you will find out you will never finish the interview without switching to Lingala. People from Brazzaville you can speak French because they understand it.

Investigator: When you French to people from Brazzaville which types of challenges that you encounter when you speak to them?

Respondent: I don't encounter any problem when I interpret French to people from Brazzaville, I don't some difficulties too much like from other Congo. But you can still find people from DRC who understand French, however, most of them prefer Lingala and Swahili.

Investigator: When they speak like this do you see that their claim can reach the destination properly while there is language problem?

Respondent: It does, but the moment you noticed that the conversation is not going easily you can switch to a language that the client is able understand. In such a case you have to start again the interview because you don't trust what he said before.

Investigator: Some Congolese clients are saying that they fail their interviews or they fail to be granted status because of interpreters, what do you say about that?

Respondent: That's not true, we know what is happening there, we know the rules, and we know what can make a person to get status. There are some regulations, some categories, some characteristics of claim according to South African law can grant some status. It has nothing to do with interpreter, if the claim is fit to those South African rules and regulations, I don't see how the interpreter can stop someone to get status.

Investigator: Which are those categories?

Respondent: To be a refugee, they are some categories, for instance political or social it depends on claim. South African Home Affairs do have some claims when they fit to those categories if they speak what is needed, nothing to do with interpreters.

Investigator: Nothing to do with interpreters. It means when they are saying that the stories or claims are not conveyed or portrayed by interpreters properly that's why is affecting the result of their claims.

Respondent: I am Congolese, I can speak about my sisters and my brothers. They have that perception, they judged you before, and they feel you make them look small if they say that they need an interpreter. They don't know that to be given an interpreter is for their own good. They feel that you make them like they can't speak English.

Investigator: They are new in the country, which language...

Respondent: You see whether they are new in country if you tell them, from my own experience I met these problems many times. If you tell I am an interpreter I will be facilitating; Interpreting is facilitating of the oral or signs of any language. So, if you tell a person that I will be your interpreter you can see someone objecting it or rejecting it by

saying "I don't need an interpreter". The official (RSDO) can just say fine, she will be here but she will never talk, she will be just watching us, then the interview will carry on without the interpreter because the client rejected, and he has right to reject. They will start the interview, one question up to seven questions, and he can start you asking what he said but you just told me that you can speak English.

Investigator: In that particular context the interpreter can assist again?

Respondent: Yes, because you are there to facilitate, those are stumbling blocks, it a challenge to you as an interpreter. You can find someone some interviews that you can with no problem. Those are small challenges that found. I raised this issue because of your question saying that some don't get status because of interpreters.

Investigator: Yeah, they are saying that.

Respondent: I am just trying to analyze to give my own experience

Investigator: And others are saying that even those interpreters who claim that they speak French clients don't understand their French it means that the reason a problem of the French use by interpreters.

Respondent: I don't understand?

Investigator: Some clients, some Congolese asylum seekers who speak French found that the French use by interpreters doesn't portray their message clearly; they are not communicating very well no matter interpreters claim that they speak French.

Respondent: I don't know, I can't say no or yes but I speak French and I know French, I am sure about other interpreters and I can't speak on their behalf. The same questions that officials are asking are repeated to many clients even up to thousands of them. So, even, the interpreter doesn't know French because of the same questions it easy for an interpreter to know about those questions. Even, though he doesn't know the language in that context or domain of asking questions. For instance, they ask you what is your name (quel est ton nom?) it will come an interpreter even thousands time. These clients, our brothers and sisters they have that problem; they feel small when they asked if they need an interpreter. They don't know if is for their own good, they think that you are better than them when you sit nearest to a South African official, and you want to tell them you know better than them. Okay, its fine, if they say about French by saying that interpreters can't speak it, what about English, when they say that I can speak English and in the middle of interview I cannot speak and start asking questions. What about the English then, when they claim that they can speak, you stay away, you find the same person who claimed that he can speak English, start asking the same interpreter that he rejected. For example, qu'est ce qu'il ont dis (what they said), how can you explain that.

Investigator: Would you explain the types of support that you receive from ZRGB and how they enable you to do your job as an interpreter?

Respondent: The types of support

Investigator: Which supports you get from your company and how they can assist you to do your job properly?

Respondent: The question sounds tricky, first all, the support can be moral support, monetary support whereby you get paid and which plays the role of the job motivation. The support given by the supervisor because when we find challenges while working there, sometimes you find that the support is moral. Particular me, when I go to interpret if I face something that I am not with I always come back to the office start talking or reporting. For example, I came across this challenge although is bad you can see that the supervisor will minimize it and advise so that you can have courage.

Investigator: What the company is doing in terms of training or, it takes you through certain sessions whereby they train you or refresh you so that when you go to interpret you are well prepared. When you encounter those challenges what the company is doing to train you so that you can be well equipped to face those challenges?

Respondent: Honestly speaking since I started working there I never get any training from the company.

Investigator: And the experience that you have for interpretation is the knowledge that you learned when you were working with this particular company or even before you were an interpreter somewhere?

Respondent: I never been an interpreter somewhere, the only thing I will say I benefit from the company they allow you to gain experience while you are working. They give you an exposure, is not that you go training, thereafter you start working, no. You come with no experience, you never work anywhere as an interpreter; you just come straight because you know how to speak French and other languages. They allow you to work straight, the first mistake, they are paying while training you. You apply your knowledge while you are working.

Investigator: This thing of people getting training while receiving payment, can't you see it can affect the asylum seekers? Because if you see yourself from the day one that you worked and currently the way you provide interpretation compare to the day one, what about those asylum seekers who came when you were fresh in the training?

Respondent: The training that we get as I said previously it cannot affect at all the decision of the RSDO because interpreting...is a language. For instance, when you say in English blue in French is bleu, what I said it just the exposure to the work, you find yourself with an official who speak fluent English because he was born and bred in it, it what I am saying. Is about a training how to repeat those words of French, is language you know it already. For instance, if they say blue is blue, for someone who started working ten years back, blue remain blue and red remains red, is not that because they are training me I will say another word. The only challenge that you can encounter maybe you can be slow, panicking on the way of answering some questions. For me I can say that the person who have experience is even dangerous than the person who just started.

Investigator: Why is he dangerous?

Respondent: This is my point of view

Investigator: I want to get your point of view

Respondent: Because for someone started new he can even, I am not talking about myself, it just generally.

Investigator: Yeah generally

Respondent: This is part of analysis, for me someone who started long time and someone who starts now. The person who started long time is more dangerous why because he is getting use to that, he can even change the position, he sits to another position. I know the first question that they will ask, is what is your name?, what country do you come from?, I know already those questions from different officials but for someone that is new he will be very focused because he doesn't know how the second question will look like. He doesn't know the tactics of each official because working there you will know certain officials how they ask questions, and you will know the procedure of each and every official. You have experience of the talk of this one and the talk of that one. I can even analyze how they do their interview one by one but for someone who is new is scared because he doesn't know what will happen, he doesn't know the first question and the following questions. Therefore, the person will be focused and will reproduce what the person (client) is saying.

Investigator: Now you are saying that experience doesn't matter in interpretation or experience is a negative thing in interpretation is what you are saying?

Respondent: I don't say that, I did not mention that I tried to analyze this to support my answer saying that if someone is new he cannot affect the decision of the RSDO. That's why I gave that answer, however, experience remains experience.

Investigator: Let say the interpreter knows the reactions of the RSDOs what about the reactions of the clients, the asylum seekers themselves?

Respondent: You can know no matter the clients are changing all the times.

Investigator: Are them speaking the same way, they face the same challenges at the same way, they talk things at the same way, then what is the difference?

Respondent: They don't

Investigator: What is the difference?

Respondent: Because we don't receive the same clients, sometimes you receive ladies, and sometimes you receive men, the following day you receive the senior citizen or old person. And it depends on stories and emotions because when you interview for a client who was been raped and another one who brings the same story. You will see the difference, on the emotions, is just different. When you talking or interpreting for a man is different to the time you interpret for woman, is not the same.

Investigator: And when the emotion is so high from the client, what do you do as an interpreter? Let say someone is talking and in the middle of interview he starts crying, what do you do?

Respondent: You will keep calm, you keep the same position. Like in the beginning I used to feel bad, sometimes I can start looking for handkerchief or tissue to try to make him calm in the beginning.

Investigator: Now...

Respondent: Something happened, I noticed people are not straight, you found that people are not serious.

Investigator: What you mean by people are not straight?

Respondent: They pretend

Investigator: How?

Respondent: I am talking according to my experience. For instance, when I started working I received a lady from Congo, a small lady maybe she was in between 19 and 20, while on interview she was crying, she was telling the story that was so pathetic. I felt bad, cried, the official asked me if I was crying, answered that I was having toothache, and then he advised me to go home. It happened that the official didn't finish the interview because he had to do some research about the girl. What happened they asked the girl the whereabouts of the brother, she replied that when I running I didn't know where was my brother. I never saw him, I am looking for him and I am here alone. However, the official took the name of the brother and also felt bad so that he can help her to find your brother. It was on Wednesday and the next Wednesday they called me to interpret for the same girl. So, when the girl went home, the official remained doing some research about the brother, he found that the brother was having the same address with the girl and they stay in the same house. The brother also has an asylum, they came at Home Affairs the same time and they stay in the same house in Cape Town but claimed that she didn't know the whereabouts of the brother. She said that she was running away from Congo they lost each other, and then the official told me that you

see you were crying last time. You were crying and you pretended that you had toothache then look at the person you were crying for, see look at the address he turned the computer screen on my side. The official said that you mustn't feel sorry rather you must judge before taking decision. I even told the girl straight why did you lie, the official didn't see it because I was speaking in Lingala. Then, she was saying that I was trying to see if I can lie.

Investigator: Then, the trauma she was exposing was a fake trauma?

Respondent: It was a fake trauma, she really helped me

Investigator: Then from thereon, you lost your feelings?

Respondent: If someone cries, I will keep myself calm; I am an interpreter, I am there to interpret for them.

Investigator: You let them cry, when they finish you carry on?

Respondent: Even I cry with them, I can't change the decision of the RSDO; I can't change the rules and regulations of South Africa for someone to be granted status.

Investigator: Okay, that very interesting

Respondent: So, to say that it was very nice for the story of the girl happened to me because it allowed me to know that people who cry..., something happened to me again and I was so surprised to see that official granting status to another lady because is a difficult official he doesn't give people status.

Investigator: So, what happened?

Respondent: What happened was that he was interviewing a girl; she was narrating a story of Bunia, while talking she was crying hiding, she didn't want the official to see if she was crying and that make the official to grant her status. The official told me that you know why she was hiding she didn't want me to see her if she was crying because she was talking the truth. If someone is not talking the truth he will make sure to show you if is crying, said the official.

Investigator: Which story she was giving that makes her to cry.

Respondent: She was raped there in Goma, and the person who raped her killed the father and the mother.

Investigator: And how do you deal with the cases of trauma, whereby the person is traumatized and speaks shocking story, is the person just cries and when he finishes you just carry on?

Respondent: Remember I am an interpreter, and I cannot speak on behalf both (RSDO and client) of them. Such a case whereby the client is crying the official allows the client to cry, he allows that part and he cannot continue while the client is crying. The official gives 1 or 2 minutes for the client to come down before proceeding.

Investigator: That's good in that regards. What suggestions do you give to your company of interpretation so that they can improve the quality of interpretation?

Respondent: You ask me that if there is no quality.

Investigator: Because in anything there is a room for improvement, so, what do you suggest them so that they can improve the quality of interpretation?

Respondent: You know because I am working there I can say that we are already improved those things that we are doing there because they are just routines. There is no new thing whereby the company must train people. For instance, if there is a new machine the

company must train people how to use it or should hire trainers to train his employees to use the new machine. As interpreters what we are doing there is on standard and is always there.

Investigator: There are no new cases?

Respondent: There are no new cases, always same stories. Sometimes, you find the same story to twenty or more people. The way questions are asked, the way officials ask questions is always the same. So, in that point the company should spare their money rather than spending on employee's training.

Investigator: According to you the quality of interpretation is good and there is no need for improvement?

Respondent: According to me is good and no need because of what we are doing, that's why I gave the example of machinery that is different for interpreting. Maybe if there is a new language that interpreters don't know we can go to learn it. Maybe if there are new people from Russia we can send people to go learn Russian.

Investigator: It means no need for that. There is anything else we should have talked about we did not?

Respondent: I don't think so. I think I have answered all the questions.

Investigator: Personally, what do you see we supposed to add on this conversation and we didn't touch?

Respondent: No, nothing.

Investigator: Thank you again for accepting to participate in my conversation and for your time.

Respondent: You are welcome.

INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE INVESTIGATOR AND THE RESPONDENT (Congolese asylum seeker at CPUT)

Interviewee 5 (Congolese asylum seeker), Male, DRC

This interview took place at Cput campus in Cape Town on Tuesday, June, 09, 2016, started from 19:30' to 19:53'. The interviewer was the researcher himself, while the respondent was Congolese student asylum seeker.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for coming

Respondent: Thank you

Interviewer: The title of research is, "The use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers and refugees at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town".

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study which started on April 2015 and it will finish on October 2016. This form details the purpose of this study, description of the involvement required and your rights as participant.

The purpose seeks to critically analyse the use of interpretation services to address the communication challenges faced by Congolese asylum seekers at the Refugee Reception Office in Cape Town.

You are stimulated to ask questions or advance concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please contact me at any time at the e-mail address or telephone number listed above.

Our conversation will be audio taped to help me precisely capture your understandings in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. You have the right to withdraw at any phase of the discussion if you don't feel comfortable of the content, the identity will be kept in confidentiality, and your names will be replaced by code.

Thank you again, at least you have heard about the procedure, and if you agree with it content then you will sign the paper.

Respondent: Yes, it is fine

Interviewer: Thank very much, and Sir, let go for questions as I prepared them. First all Sir, can you tell me the country where you come from?

Respondent: I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Interviewer: Okay, can you give a reason why you decided to leave your country of origin and come to South Africa?

Respondent: The reasons for my leaving my country of origin and come to South Africa, was about insecurity in general. I was in a family of seven, where I lost some siblings, and loved ones. When I am saying that, I mean one brother, two sisters and husband. That's why, I left my country and came to South Africa.

Interviewer: Okay, and when you came to South Africa you passed through which border?

Respondent: When I came to South Africa, I came directly from Lubumbashi to Johannesburg, I did not used borders.

Interviewer: Okay, and how long have you been in South Africa?

Respondent: I have been in South Africa for the last 16 years.

Interviewer: May you please tell, have ever visited any office of Home Affairs for Refugee in South Africa since you came?

Respondent: Yes, on my first year, I came here exactly 25th December 2000. Soon I came my brother took me to the Refugee Offices in Braamfontein at the time to apply for an asylum seeker, yes I was at the Refugee Office.

Interviewer: Okay then, did you go through a particular interview on the first time?

Respondent: What took place there, we were asked to line up, me and other refugees from across the continent, others as well from the rest of the world. In that line we had to be registered first, and after we can be able to get inside at the waiting room, where all the men that were registered can be recalled for a particular interview. I remember going there twice; I went there on Monday it didn't take place because the waiting was too long, we didn't manage to be called but we managed to get our names into the list, we went inside as per the system at that time bit later. When we were inside it was the end the day for the Refugee Offices, we had to return back home and the next day go back again enter straight inside because we were part of the queue outside. And as soon as we entered we were the first load, first pack of the people that were called for interview. I was called in the room where there was a presiding officer refugee officer that was asking questions, I was answering through an interpreter.

Interviewer: How was your level of English that time? You could speak English that time?

Respondent: No, initially I had no knowledge, the English language I could not speak a single word, so I had no knowledge at all. Basically, I was answering questions that were asked to me through the interpreter, and as I was answering the questions then the interpreter transferred them to the officer of Home Affairs Department.

Interviewer: Okay, is your case was, or you have received the outcome or the result of that particular interview?

Respondent: First of all, the interview itself took place but the methodology or method the DHA was using was different to what was written in the paper that received that day. I, that very, I was interviewed I was given a paper by the Department with an extension of a month saying that "we have received you this date, we found that you came from the Democratic Republic of Congo and we will be looking to your case in the next six months, and upon our conclusion in six month time will be able to tell you what the result will be like". By then, month after month I had to go back and get the extension of a month or a month and half from the Department. And never went for another interview, stayed for two years, and during those two years I had regularly doing so that they can extend my permit by the Department.

Interviewer: It means you went through, only one interview?

Respondent: I never go through another second interview; I was just given extension from the first permit. They never took me for the second stage for the two years that stayed in Johannesburg before moving to Cape Town.

Interviewer: How did see the interpreter, he was helpful?

Respondent: My judgement of the interpretation would not be good at the moment, being the facts that I had very limited knowledge of English language that time. So I could only see someone asking me the questions, I could only answer the questions he asked me, he (interpreter) was transferring the message to the officer of the Department of Home Affairs. So, that time I didn't have proper understanding of the language that I can't be able to tell you exactly what was going on.

Interviewer: Uh huh, thank you for that. Other refugees are saying that interpretation has an impact on the outcome on the asylum seeker's application, what is your take on that?

Respondent: Ah, it surely does. Remember, what interpretation is it, is transferring a message from sender to receiver. So, for you to be able to send a message through channel, you need to do it accurately. And my take is the pronunciation of words, the terms that we used, the slangs or the form that people use to transfer message can be misinterpreted, it doesn't mean you are good or not because they are not official terms, and is not reading

from the script it done spontaneously, the might be some differences in understanding. So basically, the message has been sent first by an individual in a certain way and interpreter gives meaning of the message based on their understanding of the particular message that they received, based on their environment, understanding or translation of the message. Yes the message never accurate, it depends on the interpreter himself, some interpreters might be very good to pass on the message accurately.

Interviewer: Uh, others maybe they supposed to have a status, to be granted status now they on appeal, some they even received a "SCRA" or manifestly unfounded, they accusing interpreters of not assisting them as it should be, and he is the one who was carrying their message and now, maybe their message was distorted by the interpreter. Then, in that context I would like to understand if there is probability or there is a way interpreters can affect the outcome of the result?

Respondent: To be honest with you, interpretation is a very difficult job for anyone to do. Yes of course, in the definition of things, scholars don't define things the very same way, they define them in different ways but the meaning will be, one meaning they will describe it in different ways. For instance, when you put two people to translate a message from one place to another, it might be difficult for an interpreter to do it accurately because is where the problem is. You might do it but you don't know the way transferring the message might portray exactly what another tried to think. So, there is possibility we can give it 60 or 40, 50/50, a chance is that the message might not reach the receiver as it should be, and that all depends how accurate the interpreter is and familiar he is to the person who sending the message in terms of their background, language skills, and what they meant.

Interviewer: Uh, and the time they interpreted for you at the Refugee Office, you were speaking French by then?

Respondent: Yes,

Interviewer: And the interpreter was translating French for you?

Respondent: When I came here, they were translating French to English for the Department Officers.

Interviewer: And French that they were translating for you was passing clearly?

Respondent: Yes, the briefing that I had of what was going to take place was not really what I saw. There was no briefing, I entered in the room, they interviewed me, and someone was interpreting.

Interviewer: There was no an introduction?

Respondent: No, no...

Interviewer: Like the interpreter introduces himself, the interviewer as well.

Respondent: I cannot recall everything it was 16 years ago; I cannot recall exactly what took place the way he was saying. I am sure but they must be some sort of introduction, and the interpreter himself, I am sure he was average. I cannot recall going home with an impression of wow; I spoke to someone that was so fluent in French. That was not my impression in the time of interview itself. I am sure he was an average.

Interviewer: Sir, if you may suggest the Department of Home Affairs regarding the companies which provide interpretations at DHA, what should you advise the company that provide interpretation at Home Affairs to improve on?

Respondent: Basically, to make sure they utilise people from the same background, like we all know.

Interviewer: Why from the same background?

Respondent: Like today we all know, English was English but today is American. The very same English spoken in South Africa it sounds a bit different, is between Dutch and American English. That's the way South African speak because of influence of the environment that you in, people that interact with and things like that. So, when you take interpreter from France to do an interpretation for someone from DRC for instance. I am just giving an example, in the Drc when they say 70 "septente" but when you are in France you say 70, you say "soixante dix" so you see, that alone, it French. Drc people are using the Belgium French, whereby they twisted some of the words and so forth. And then, maybe the other Congo, Congo Brazzaville using different French that is similarly to the one used in France. Even when you go to France itself you find that people don't speak the same way, people of the south of France totally different from the ones of the North, there is also Parisian French. Even, when you go to Canada, there is total difference of French there. So, that's why I would advise the interpretation Office to have people from similar background to interpret, doing interpretation of people of their background rather than just saying a language. Because languages transcend, or try to adapt to cultures and environment, and very very important factor that the department needs to put in consideration or the interpretation company. And another advice, I can advise the department to have a panel that is not made on them. I understand that is not their responsibility but they need to consider the interpreters views and opinion of what the outcome should be. Because they are the ones got the information from the source, they are the ones get some sort whether the legitimacy or whatever word that was used in the interview if it genuine and they can share that with the department. So, in the department side they need to consider what the interpreters are saying, and they need to consider working with the interpretation company in terms of decision making. For the interpretation company they need to consider the background of interpreters versus to the people that are being interviewed. The background matters a lot in terms of language code and etc.

Interviewer: Uh, is that all, you see that you can give as suggestions to the company of interpretation

Respondent: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay, there anything else you think we should added on this interview we did not?

Respondent: In the interview itself, I think, in particular case, that was my experience in two years in Johannesburg. I came to Cape Town, I replied, no no, I didn't reply but I just wanted my file to be transferred to Cape Town Office, where they carried on with the same system of renewing my document, two months later three months it was still the same way which up to now has not been finalised properly. And in terms of this interview if there is any think that I need, that I think you should added, you should have tried, if there can be more than one interpreter and the third party can be able to tell what is going on or if the department can provide cameras or recording facilities. I don't know if it takes place now, it was not taking place the time I was doing it. Recording facilities to actually go back to the records, in case someone is claiming that they did not give the accurate translation so that they can go back to those files, and actually go back to it look for the third party view point of what the message was all about so that to give an interpreter a sort of fair treatment in terms of their job for not being judged based on things that are not accurate, that was the thing that I could add.

Interviewer: Thank very much for responding to my call and for participating in this interview, and have lovely day.

Respondent: Thank you.

