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Crisis and Citizen Translation: Jordanian Gypsies amid the Coronavirus/Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study concerns the health of the Gypsy minority of Jordan amid the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic, and language services available and their effect on the public health. The study finds that this minority group was excluded from consideration by the authorities in their attempts to counter the pandemic. This study is a qualitative investigation, adopting an ethnographic model to elicit data from the target sample. The findings reveal that the Jordanian Gypsies were overlooked, mainly because their language (Domari) is not one of the languages supported by the country's translation services. Moreover, due to the minority's paucity of schooling and high illiteracy rates, together with their belief in supernatural powers and superstitions, their concept of the disease is erroneous, and Covid-19 therefore has the potential to take a significant toll on both the Gypsies and the wider community in which they live. This study recommends that the authorities and related bodies, such as academic institutions, should launch a training program to qualify Gypsy volunteers to provide translation services in the form of citizen translators.

Keywords: Citizen Translation; Covid-19; Crisis Management; Crisis Translation; Gypsy; Jordan.

1. Introduction

A crisis is defined as an event that is non-routine, that poses a threat, and requires a response in order to mitigate the harm it causes; such a response requires external assistance that renders coordination and communication more difficult than previously (Hunt et al. 2019, 25). Communication in crisis management is crucial, especially when the crisis is national, and/or global in nature, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, communication is the main means of stimulating a response to a crisis, or a disaster, particularly in a diverse culture within which different languages are spoken (Alexander and Pescaroli 2019, 150). Moreover, communication contributes to building trust between the public and decision makers, which in turn facilitates the execution of any plan (Arokiasamy et al. 2019, 141). For this reason, communication is a vital pillar of crisis management that influences the outcomes of a crisis (Coombs

2010), especially in multilingual communities. Communication can take different forms, one of which is translation (including oral interpretation),[1] to reduce the risk of a population's vulnerability to the crisis situation. This transference of information is no different from other basic needs amid crises, particularly when it is made available in a timely fashion to linguistically diverse groups. In the absence of professional translators, minority linguistic communities can be more affected by a crisis than those who speak the majority language(s). This highlights the need for qualified and trained translators and interpreters who are well-versed in the culture and the language of such minority groups.

Within Translation Studies (TS), this matter is called 'crisis translation', which is defined as "the act of transferring meaning and cultural encodings from one language/cultural system to another, in written, oral or signed modes, before, during or after a crisis" (Hunt et al. 2019, 25). It is also defined as any form of cultural and linguistic transmission of meaning or messages that facilitates the accessibility of information during a crisis or an emergency, regardless of the medium (Federici et al. 2019, 247). Crisis translation, or translation for emergencies, is a relatively new concept within TS, and has only recently received attention (Federici 2016, 1; Cadwell and O'Brien 2016, 2). It is associated with, and required within, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in which vulnerable sub-communities struggle to access information (Federici 2016, 2). This article seeks to illuminate this topic, with regard to vulnerable speech communities who are neglected in the midst of crises, because of linguistic challenges.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus, and its declaration as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, the world was for quite some time engaged in a race to control its spread, and to mitigate its impact. A linguistic approach, particularly focusing on translation, was among the various economic, health, and social countermeasures employed to tackle the crisis. Translation is vital in the context of a public health crisis, as increased health vulnerability is associated with a lack of language proficiency between health service providers and linguistically diverse populations (Kreisberg et al. 2016, 6). Indeed, authorities were increasingly aware that translation is crucial in a crisis situation. For example, the Ministry of Health of New Zealand provided updated information about Covid-19 in multiple languages, including Te reo Māori, simplified Chinese, and English, in order to target specific communities, and ensure that all citizens of the country had access to vital information (New Zealand Ministry of Health 2020). Similarly, in the United States, President Trump's administration released a Spanish-language version of the White House guidelines for addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. This is triggered by the previous monolingual English version that received criticism, as it was considered to be "not only cruel but irresponsible for this Administration to not make critical public health information accessible to everyone — in a language they can understand and trust," the US Representative, Tony Cárdenas said (Goba 2020). Volunteer health interpreters therefore contribute to the response to public emergencies, with many involved in translating documents, medical data, and research to ensure the flow of accurate information for citizens and healthcare providers, to help public health workers provide assistance and support to communities of different

linguistic backgrounds like working with Epidemiological Survey Teams, and to facilitate the exchange of vital information worldwide.

Consequently, translation helps to establish good communication, which is important for crisis management because it builds a positive perception between the public and decision makers (Arokiasamy et al. 2019, 142). Therefore, communication is both inevitable and paramount throughout a crisis, because instructions are sent to stakeholders, and feedback is received by decision makers to initiate an appropriate response. This highlights the utmost importance of crisis translation, and its role in filling the communication gap, especially in a region that is linguistically diverse. In this situation, decision makers ideally employ translators to translate health pamphlets, brochures, booklets, authority's instructions, or videos, because this is "a key action for sharing information with partners, coordination groups and other relevant actors" (Sphere Association 2018). However, the reality of a situation may contravene this logic.

In Jordan, the first Covid-19 case was recorded on 2nd March, 2020, and a strict lockdown followed on 21st March, 2020 that had been partially eased in some sectors at the time of writing of 6th June, 2020. During this time, a minority element of the population of Jordan, namely Gypsies, who are known locally as *Nawar*[2], were not considered by the country's decision makers in their crisis communication, and were overlooked due to a linguistic barrier. This study seeks to address this situation, which not only affects the members of this minority, but also the entire community in which they live. Put another way, combating coronavirus/Covid-19 is a collective effort with which everyone should comply, otherwise the measures implemented may be futile, due to individual non-compliance.

In the then on-going pandemic, an initial confirmed coronavirus case could spark a series of contaminations, due to the interactions between different individuals engendering an escalation of confirmed cases to the point at which the escalation has a far more profound impact on the health system than the original trigger event. To prevent this happening, communication at an early stage is vital. However, the reality, which is discussed in detail later in this paper, demonstrates that many individuals do not abide by the authority's measures, simply because they have not received the appropriate information, because of linguistic constraints. In any attempt at crisis management, "90 percent of a crisis response is communication" (Arokiasamy et al. 2019, 144). Translators help to bridge this gap between individuals and decision makers by establishing a medium of communication

2. The study

2.1 Background

In Jordan, there are a number of migrant minorities, including Armenians, Chechens, and Circassians, each of which has its own language, but speaks and uses Arabic, the official language of the state, in daily life communication and education. They share in common the mastery of their native language, primarily speaking and listening comprehension, and of all the skills of Arabic. By contrast, while the Gypsy minority has mastery of their native language, Domari, their Arabic tends to be very poor, and limited to instrumental use, namely that required to make a living.

The origin of Gypsies, who are also known as Romanies or Domaries, is controversial. Although it is mistakenly held that they came from Egypt, and thusly are called 'Egyptians' (Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005, 190; Nord 2006, 7; Lecouteux 2018, 5), other scholars believe that they originated in the north of India, from where they moved to Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa (Heald 2012, 1; Weckman 1998, 4). Supporting this belief are certain studies conducted by philologists, which claim that the vocabulary of the Gypsy language shares similarities with the language of Hindustani in India (Nord 2006, 7). Gypsies are also known as Roms (noun, plural), or Doms (noun, plural), with the adjective being Romani and Domari, respectively, the former referring to Gypsies living in Europe, and their language, whereas Domari denotes the Gypsies residing in the Middle East and North Africa, and their language (Peterson 2012, 50). Every group of Gypsies has developed their own dialect, which is not understood by other groups (Weckman 1998, 4).

Because of their nomadic nature, specific population figures for Gypsies around the world are not available, and the extant literature includes striking discrepancies in terms of the estimated numbers of Gypsies across the world (Haug et al. 2000, 176). For instance, Corradi (2018, xxiv) claimed that the estimated number of Gypsies worldwide is 20 million, while Tobin estimated the number to be more than 40 million (2008, 2).

In terms of Jordanian Gypsies, they are no different from their peers elsewhere in the world. There is no precise date for the advent of Gypsies in Jordan; however, it is believed that they were present in the region before the country was founded in 1921 (Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005, 191). Since there is no official census of Gypsies in the country, it is difficult to determine the exact size of the population, especially those who are nomadic and constitute the majority (Al-Absi and Al-Absiová 2014, 86). However, it is estimated that there are approximately 25,000 Gypsies living in the country (Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005, 191).

It should be noted that the Gypsy community in Jordan consists of two sub-communities, who share the same origin, but live different ways of life. The first community live a nomadic way of life, characterized by moving from one place to another within the country. These Gypsies usually live in tents, preferring to camp on the fringes of large urban centers, and the members of this sub-community are mostly illiterate and unemployed. The majority of those who have jobs work as itinerant blacksmiths, peddlers, entertainers, or fortune tellers, while others prefer to earn their living by begging. The second sub-group consists of those who have integrated into the majority community. The Gypsies in this sub-group live a sedentary life, and socialize with other Jordanians (Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005, 191). Sadly, the Jordanian Gypsies have a bad reputation, and are called *Nawar* in the local dialect, a name employed to denote many negative characteristics, including, but not limited to, people who are ill-behaved, disgusting, or lack etiquette. This negative reputation is not limited to Jordan, and is also reflected in the names given to the Gypsy community in other countries, such as Norway where "they were called *Skøyer*, meaning *thieves*" (Lecouteux 2018, 4). Gypsies are known for their love of dance and singing, which they often adopt as a profession (Peterson 2012, 45). However, this is not appreciated by the Jordanian

community, since according to traditions and customs of the country, such practices tend to be viewed as taboo, and the people who practice them are therefore considered to be immoral. This is because the use of such practices to make a living is considered inappropriate in Islam, the dominant religion of the country. Moreover, the Jordanian community views Gypsies' practice of such professions as a contradiction and hypocrisy, especially when they claim to be Muslim. Previous interviews conducted with Gypsies found that they believe in supernatural powers, and tend to adopt the major religion of the environment where they live, in order to avoid conflict and to survive (Al-Absi and Al-Absiová 2014, 85). As Fonseca explained, "it is commonly said that Gypsies are irreligious, adopting the going faith as it suits them in hopes of avoiding persecution" (2011, 48). Considering the status of Gypsies in Jordan, particularly the unintegrated group, the present article seeks to provide an in-depth exploration and analysis of the linguistic barriers to reaching this minority group amid the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2 Objective

This study seeks to address the health of the unintegrated Gypsy minority in Jordan amid the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic, namely those who still have a nomadic lifestyle and constantly travel the country, and as a result suffer from a high rate of illiteracy. Specifically, this study seeks to assess the approach to communication adopted by the Jordanian government to manage the pandemic, in terms of this linguistic minority. The study aims to illustrate that these nomadic Gypsies lack access to information, and that their understanding and handling of the pandemic is dominated by superstitious beliefs. Finally, it seeks to provide a strategy for addressing the linguistic constraints of communication with the Gypsy minority in the country.

2.3 Hypotheses

The study employed three hypotheses regarding the Jordanian authorities' communication approach for addressing the Gypsies in the country in its attempt to manage the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic.

1. The Gypsies possess an oral culture, in which their mother tongue, the Domari language, supersedes Arabic. Their lack of linguistic mastery of Arabic hampers communication with the authorities, who believe that all the Gypsies in Jordan speak and understand Arabic;

2. No communication mediums were established with, nor was linguistic content provided by the authorities for, Gypsies in Jordan, who were therefore marginalized and neglected by the Jordanian authorities in the context of addressing the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic;

3. No awareness of coronavirus/Covid-19 was present among the Jordanian Gypsies, with the predominance of superstitious beliefs among them constituting a risk that jeopardized their health and that of the wider community in which they lived.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 Study design and participants

The data used by this study was drawn from a recently completed qualitative investigation that recruited 63 individuals who participated in semi-structured interviews. The age range of the participants varied from 13 to 71 years. Due to the study's objective, the eligibility criteria that determined the inclusion of the participants was not only their ethnicity, but also their lifestyle. In other words, the participants were all Gypsies, and all adopted a nomadic lifestyle. Sedentarized Gypsies, who spoke fluent Arabic, and who were integrated in the majority community, were excluded because the study sought to examine how the communication process with the nomadic sub-group was affected by their constant travelling and lack of literacy, in terms of their lack of access to a written language, either Arabic or Domari, that was impacted by their constant relocation. The study therefore purposefully targeted nomadic Gypsies living in camps and tents manly on the fringes of Zarqa city, Jordan.

Those interested in participating were contacted directly about engaging in a short interview. These interviews were undertaken in the participants' camps, and on roads at traffic lights where many engaged in peddling cheap sunglasses and chewing gum, and begging. It should be highlighted that direct contact with the participants was not easy to achieve, due to the extant linguistic and social barriers, as their Arabic was poor and the researchers were strangers to them; Gypsies privilege a lack of contact with other groups. In order to overcome this, a third party from the Gypsy community was hired to introduce the researchers, and to provide interpretation services. The interpreter was an ex-member of the nomadic Gypsies who is now sedentarized and works as a taxi driver in Zarqa. He expressed his willingness to cooperate with the researcher in exchange for payments.

Out of 121 potential participants who met the criteria outlined above, namely individuals of Gypsy ethnicity and a nomadic lifestyle, only 63 agreed to take part in the interviews. The majority of the participants are from Zarqa, with a few number of participants who happened to be there as guests or visiting relatives. The distribution of the sample is provided in Tables 1-3. The oral interviews were the only possible means of data collection, as all the participants were illiterate. The participants provided their informed consent to take part in an interview verbally, before the interview.

The interviews were short, simple, and auto-recorded. They were transcribed verbatim, and lasted on average for seven minutes. The reason for such short interviews was that the interpreter was not a professional. Indeed professional interpreters do not exist among the Gypsy population, as discussed later in this paper, which meant that the questions were necessarily short and simple. Open-ended questions were limited, and sought concise answers, due to the concern of misinterpretation if the questions were overly complex and required long answers. All the interviews took place in Zarqa city, Jordan.

In the analysis of the interviews, the themes were predetermined according to the aims of the study, and sought to test and validate the hypotheses thereof. The questions were designed to obtain brief answers. Certain themes emerged, providing rich information about the current integration measures, and the causes of, and reasons for the Gypsy minority's marginalization in Jordan. However, these matters are

not discussed in this paper, as they lay beyond the scope of the study. The interviews were semi-structured, with both open- and closed-ended questions developed to test and validate the hypotheses of the study. Examples of the closed-ended questions are, Amid the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic, have you been contacted by any state official? Have you received any health support, or been checked by Epidemiological Survey Teams? Were you notified of the lockdown imposed by the state? And, is illiteracy common among nomadic Gypsies? Meanwhile, the open-ended questions included, if you spoke Arabic perfectly, would you volunteer to translate for your community? If coronavirus infected a member of your community, what would you do? And, how would you protect yourself against coronavirus? The participants received nothing for their participation, although the interpreter was paid per hour.

Table 1: Age of the participants.

Age	Number
10-20	11
21-30	14
31-40	14
41-50	10
51-60	9
61+	5
Total	**63**

Table 2: Educational background of the participants.

Educational background	Number of participants
illiterate	63
literate	0

Table 3: Citizenship of the participants.

Citizenship	Number of participants
Jordanian	63
Other	0

Table 4: Mother tongue of the participants.

Languages	Number of participants
Domari	63
Arabic	0
Other	0

2.4.2 Analysis

2.4.2.1 Arabic and Domari

Although the Gypsies' inhabitation of Jordan preceded the establishment of the Jordanian state, and the status of all interview participants as Jordanian citizens, the participants' knowledge of Arabic was very poor, and was restricted to speaking and listening comprehension. In terms of their mother tongue, Domari, their reading and writing abilities were poor, but their speaking and listening comprehension in the language was perfect. In other words, the Gypsy community is an oral culture, and 100% of the sample stated that they spoke Domari fluently. Their weakness in Arabic was attributed to their constant

travelling, which meant that their children did not receive regular schooling, hindering their integration with the Arabic-speaking community. Moreover, Gypsies sometimes settle on the fringes of cities where schools are not available. The participants' knowledge of Arabic was acquired through contact with native speakers at an early stage, when as children they peddled simple products on the streets. As a result, their Arabic vocabulary was largely restricted to situations related to selling or begging, namely instrumental language. Moreover, the younger the participant, the weaker their Arabic skills were.

By contrast, the participants spoke and understood Domari perfectly, regardless of their age, because it was their mother tongue, used in communication in daily life, whereas Arabic was used only when making their living, or in formal contexts. Table 5 shows the percentage of Arabic and Domari proficiency among the participants, according to their age.

The findings therefore validated the first hypothesis of the study that Gypsies possess an oral culture, in which Domari is the dominant language, and is the sole means of communication among the Gypsy community, while their knowledge of Arabic is very poor. This has consequences for communication between them and the authorities.

Table 5: Arabic and Domari proficiency (speaking-listening)[3]

Age	Number	Arabic		Domari	
		Fluent	Not fluent	Fluent	Not fluent
10-20	11	18%	82%	100%	0%
21-30	14	28.5%	71.5%	100%	0%
31-40	14	43%	57%	100%	0%
41-50	10	50%	50%	100%	0%
51+	14	64%	36%	100%	0%

2.4.2.2. Communication medium and linguistic content

Having established that Domari was the only language used by the participants for communication in their daily life, the second hypothesis of the study was tested.

Amid the coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic, the Jordanian government sought to reach the inhabitants of the country via different platforms, such as websites, TV channels, radio, phone apps, and social media. The receipt of correct data was invaluable, because the potential damage caused by misinformation could exacerbate the spread of the disease. Moreover, the ability to obtain accurate information from official sources was also vital for limiting potential panic. Every individual, in accordance with the Jordanian law, Article 7 and the international law Article 19 – Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 – has a right to free and accurate access to information. Therefore, members of minority language communities, such as Gypsies are included. However, the analysis of the interviews demonstrated that the nomadic Gypsies were excluded linguistically by the nation's authorities, due to the language barrier, and there was therefore a significant gap in the dissemination of information. Table 6 shows the percentage responses to questions regarding the linguistic content of information, and the communication medium.

Table 6: Response regarding the linguistic content of information, and the communication medium, by percentage.

Question	Yes	No	A little
Have you received any information in Domari about coronavirus/Covid-19?	0%	100%	0%
Has anyone from the Ministry of Health, or any official, reached you regarding coronavirus/Covid-19?	0%	100%	0%
Do you have any knowledge of the disease?	88.8%	7.9%	3.1%
Have you ever been tested by Epidemiological Survey Teams?	1.5%	98.5%	0%

As demonstrated in Table 6, all of the participants confirmed that nobody from official sources had tried to contact them, or to provide them with any sort of information about coronavirus/Covid-19. In fact, their awareness of the disease was only obtained via personal observation, with 93.6% of the participants only becoming aware of the situation after finding the streets where they made their living empty, and the shops closed. Moreover, they knew nothing about the lockdown imposed by the authorities, only learning about it via the word of mouth spread by their peers. In addition, 98.5% of the participants confirmed that they had not undergone random sample testing by the Epidemiological Survey Teams sent by the Ministry of Health to ensure that an area was free of coronavirus cases. Only one participant had undergone this test, explaining that it was conducted when they were roaming the city, and not in the camp where they lived. This validated the second hypothesis of the study that the Jordanian authorities did not attempt to establish any sort of communication with, or provide any assistance to Gypsies to help with addressing the pandemic.

2.4.2.3 Misinformation and superstition

As these findings demonstrate, although they are Jordanian citizens, the country's Gypsy population does not enjoy the same right of access to information as their Arabic-speaking counterparts. This is due to the language barrier that jeopardizes their health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, illiteracy is high among Gypsies, and can be a precursor to a lack of awareness about many issues, including health. When rates of illiteracy are high in any community, a lack of knowledge about a certain situation can engender superstitions. Indeed, Gypsies have certain superstitions about the origin of diseases, and the way they are cured (Petrova 2003, 126). In this study, the participants were asked about coronavirus, its origin, transmission, protection measures, and cure. In addition to their existing knowledge of the disease, which was entirely incorrect, they were read a short briefing obtained from the Ministry of Health website, which was interpreted for them; they were then asked several questions. Most of the participants believed that the disease was not as serious as the briefing claimed, and some even tried to convince the interviewers that such information was baseless. Additionally, the majority of the participants (87.3%) attributed the cause of the disease to demonic powers, while the remaining 12.7% were unsure. Some even explained a traditional medicine remedy to cure the disease that was suggested by an elderly

community member, known as the traditional healer, or the herbalist. The cure was to prepare lukewarm water, in which chicken guts and lentils had been boiled, and to drink it every morning, which is the time when the demons of diseases rest. According to these individuals, this cure is suitable for any flu-like symptoms, including those of coronavirus/Covid-19. Those who were unsure about the cause of the disease assumed that it is due to contact with non-Gypsies, and that Gypsies do not contaminate each other.

Table 7: The percentages of responses regarding misinformation and superstition.

Questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Do you think that coronavirus/Covid-19 is dangerous?	0%	92.1%	7.9%
Do you think that the cause of the disease is a virus?	0%	87.3%	12.7%

2.4.3. Discussion

This study highlights the exclusion of the Jordanian Gypsy minority by the Jordanian authorities, as a result of the language barrier, regardless of the authorities' social responsibility towards this speech community, as "there is a pressing need to increase access to information by people from diverse cultures who use different languages" (O'Brien et al. 2018, 630). Gypsies are at a heightened risk of exposure to coronavirus, because of the unevenness of the distribution of information, and to the fact that rates of illiteracy are extremely high among this minority group. Although it does not lie within the scope of this study, this illiteracy could be attributed to many factors on the part of the Gypsies, such as their preferences for a nomadic lifestyle, and on the part of the government, such as a failure to make serious attempts to sedentarize them (Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005, 206). Their constant relocation means that Gypsies preserve their native language, Domari, and cultural norms in a way that causes a poor awareness of Arabic and Arabic culture. Moreover, their paucity of schooling affects their beliefs, specifically those concerning myths and superstitions.

For this community, understanding the Arabic language is solely a means for them to make a living, and there is therefore only an instrumental attachment to the language (Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005, 212). Consequently, Jordanian Gypsies tend to segregate themselves from wider Jordanian society, which contributes to the preservation of their language, and the exclusion of Arabic. Nevertheless, the Jordanian government is responsible for reaching this minority community in times of emergency. As nations collaborate globally to communicate accurate information in a bid to curb the coronavirus pandemic's impact, a government must also make all efforts to do so with its citizens and residents. Due to the linguistic barrier between other Jordanians and the Gypsies living in the country, Gypsies were denied their right to obtain accurate information about the disease; they were contacted neither directly nor indirectly by officials, Moreover, the Domari language is not supported as a translation service in the private and public sector, purely because nobody in Jordan is registered as Domari-Arabic translator. An email sent to the Jordanian Translators Association (JTA) asked if any translators were registered on their

database whose language pair was Domari-Arabic. The JTA responded that this language pair did not exist, and never had (Jordanian Translators Association 2020).

In terms of beliefs, Gypsies in general tend to be preoccupied with superstition and magic, due to their lack of education, and this has made the Jordanian community and the dominant religion view them with suspicion (Petrova 2003, 126). The present study found that this was particularly true of the participants' beliefs about coronavirus/Covid-19. According to the findings, many of the participants believed that a disease cannot be communicable from a Gypsy to another Gypsy, and that contamination can only occur when a Gypsy makes contact with a non-Gypsy. A non-Gypsy is considered to be anyone who does not share the same lifestyle and ethnicity as Gypsies, who use the word *Gadje* in a pejorative way to denote non-Gypsies (Schaefer and Zellner 2011, 13). Interestingly, the present study found that the participants attributed the cause of disease to demonic powers, which paralleled the attitude of other Gypsies, such as those living the United States, who believed that evil spirits and the devil spread diseases among dirty houses (Ritter and Hoffman 2010, 318). Among Gypsies, cures for diseases are often traditional recipes and rituals, such as the cure for any flu-like symptoms cited by the participants of the present study that involves inducing the sick person to drink lukewarm water every morning, in which lentils and chicken guts have been boiled. Another superstitious belief is that, primarily male, Gypsies should not stay at home, rather they should roam to seek their fortune and to make a living. Such beliefs contradict the measures implemented by the authorities during lockdown in Jordan, in which a curfew was imposed on every citizen to limit the spread of coronavirus. In addition, Gypsies believe that dying in bed is not suitable for them, as their soul would not ascend to heavens (Alwan 2019).

None of these factors should constitute an excuse for the government to justify inefficiency in communicating with, and reaching Gypsies. Indeed, in the current pandemic, at the time of writing, nations were leaving the awareness raising stage, and seeking to prevent the spread of the disease and to resolve the crisis. The Jordanian government is responsible for providing assistance to, and informing its Gypsy populace of any new updates about coronavirus, and for protecting them. Elsewhere in the world, while many dialects spoken in China that are not known to everyone, the country made sure to reach all of its citizens during the pandemic crisis by providing handbooks that included all the main sentences and words used in diagnosis and treatment to its medical assistance teams, in order to facilitate communication with patients (Yuming 2020). Moreover, China expanded this project to reach international residents from all foreign linguistic backgrounds, including, but not limited to, Arabic, English, and Spanish (Yuming 2020). Using this example, the Jordanian government might employ a similar linguistic, anti-epidemic approach to provide assistance to its Gypsy populace, in order to control and prevent the spread of the virus.

Despite the oral nature of the Gypsies' culture, and the lack, or the non-existence, of professional Domari-Arabic translators, there is no excuse for the government to deny Gypsies their rights, and specifically those in the context of the pandemic, as those concerned fall under the international human right stipulated by the United Nations (UN), by which every individual has "the right to the highest

attainable standard of health and obligates governments to take steps to prevent threats to public health and to provide medical care to those who need it" (Amon and Wurth 2020, 399). Therefore, the Jordanian government is obligated to provide any possible life-saving interventions to everyone, without exception (Department of Global Communications 2020, 2), because "health strategies should address not only the medical dimensions of the pandemic but also the human rights and gender-specific consequences of measures taken as part of the health response" (Department of Global Communications 2020, 4).

The present study employed an in-group community to conduct interviews with Gypsies, and the Jordanian government might do similarly on a larger scale. Indeed, many members of the Gypsy community in the present study expressed a ready willingness to volunteer as interpreters, especially the older members of the group whose Arabic was better than their younger counterparts. Such individuals are highly appreciated and employed amid crises in general, and play an important role in curbing disasters and supporting emergency periods, because timely and effective communication between stakeholders is essential for responding to and mitigating the impact of a crisis (Alexander and Pescaroli 2019, 147). In TS terms, these individuals are known as 'citizen translators', and are community members with at best little training, who primarily conduct translation on a voluntarily basis (Federici et al. 2019; Federici and Cadwell, 2018). These translators are crucial in emergency contexts for dealing with minority groups whose language is not widely supported, such as in the case of Gypsies in Jordan. Therefore, authorities should take the initiative to qualify citizen translators amid crises by initiating programs of crisis translation for volunteers. The aim of such programs is to familiarize trainees with multilingual communication processes, in the context of emergencies, focusing on the "need to supply translation or interpreting services in language combinations that are not available on the market" (Federici et al. 2019, 248). By doing so, the Gypsies in Jordan, and other similar minorities, would be informed about a crisis, and the related services and assistance provided by the authorities.

While a professional translator would not work on a voluntary basis, in crisis settings, and in the absence of translators who support minority languages, such as that of the Jordanian Gypsies, the use of citizen translators is justified, despite their lack of training. Indeed, this study could not have been accomplished without having a citizen translator who assisted the researchers in communicating with the study sample. This study therefore argues that it is both ethical and recommended to use the services of such translators in emergency situations, such as the current pandemic, as the approach can connect minority language groups, such as the Jordanian Gypsies, to important and credible sources of information for their own safety.

In addition to communicating information, citizen translators have the advantage over outsider translators of being able to access their own community easily, and to establish trust, as they already know the community. Moreover, as O'Mathúna et al. observed, "they may have far greater reach into the community through their social relationships, networks of trust and knowledge of existing power structures and politics" (2020, 64). The efficacy of this close relationship was instantiated in the report produced by Allen and Duckworth (2017) in the wake of the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire in west London,

which stated that citizen translators were important members of the rescuing team, who bridged the gap between the community and the authorities, since "the council was invisible, everything seemed impossible and there was little to no empathy at state level". Due to the element of urgency in a crisis situation, and in the absence of qualified translators, some translation service is better than none, because information dissemination in crisis situations is critical, and of a great value for potentially saving lives.

3. Conclusion

Amid crises, access to information is a human right of every individual, no matter the situation. In such circumstances, urgent decisions are required, often without any form of planning, especially when dealing with a multilingual community. The Jordanian Gypsies are a minority community with a distinct language that suffers from different forms of marginalization, one of which is linguistic. The nomadic lifestyle of many of these Gypsies means that they constantly relocate, and consequently receive little schooling, which, combined with the preservation of their language, Domari, affects their attempts to learn Arabic. Furthermore, illiteracy is common among this community, among which belief in superstitions and myths predominates. Their lack of education means that the Gypsies adopt an oral Domari culture, and neglect Arabic, the only official language of country.

It is important to establish a medium of communication with all communities, by means of translation, which is a management tool for risk reduction and trust building, and is vital in the context of a crisis response to provide timely, accurate communication. In the case of the Jordanian Gypsies, a professional translation service that supports the Arabic-Domari language pair is provided by neither the public nor the private sector, which means that the community was excluded from communication countering the coronavirus pandemic. Such a service is vital in this crisis situation to ensure the delivery of accurate information, and to counter the spread of misinformation that could be as damaging as the disease itself. Therefore, the health policy of the Jordanian authorities must be revised to include the vulnerable community of Gypsies by providing healthcare language services, because the lack of communication between the decision makers and the Gypsy community affects the course of action taken to counter the spread of coronavirus/Covid-19.

The necessary communication of information requires the authorities to employ translators and interpreters, in order to reach every individual. The dearth or nonexistence of translators/interpreters in a multilingual crisis setting engenders an unpredictable course when seeking to deliver information from the crisis manager to the stakeholders. For this reason, crisis or citizen translators are often used to provide language support when professionals are not available. Such individuals are considered to be part of risk reduction and contingency planning, and play a critical role in the exchange of information. It is highly recommended that the use of citizen/crisis translators is adopted for communicating with communities such as the Jordanian Gypsies, who have little schooling, a high rate of illiteracy, and superstitious beliefs. Moreover, the Jordanian authorities should develop a policy, in consultation with academic institutions and community volunteers, to train and qualify citizen translators/interpreters to

provide support in crisis management situations. Indeed, developing such a program, and involving Gypsy volunteers, would ensure social justice and integration, as well as foster community engagement, and demonstrate respect by addressing the needs of the Gypsy community.

الترجمة التطوعيَّة وقت الأزمات: غجر الأردن في خِضم جائحة كورونا

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الوضع الصحي لغجر الأردن أثناء جائحة كورونا، والخدمات اللغويّة المتوفرة وأثرها في الصحة العامة وخلُصت الدراسة إلى أن الأقلية الغجرية بالأردن مهمشة من السلطات المعنية في محاولتها للسيطرة على الوباء، وتُعدُ هذه الدراسة كمية ومعتمدة على النموذج الإثنوجرافي في استخراج البيانات من العينة المستهدفة، وتُظهر النتائج أنَّ تهميش غجر الأردن يُعزى إلى لغتهم (المعروفة بالدوماري) وهي لغة لا تدعمها خدمات الترجمة بالأردن، ونتيجة لندرة التعلم بين أفراد هذه المجموعة، وارتفاع معدلات الأميّة، إلى جانب إيمانهم القوي بالقوى الخارقة، والخرافات فإن إدراكهم لمفهوم المرض يشوبه الكثير من الأخطاء مما يجعل تعرضهم لمخاطر مرض كورونا أعلى من غيرهم، مما يؤدي إلى إلحاق الأذى بهم وبالمجتمع المحيط. وتوصي الدراسة بأن تقوم السلطات والجهات المعنية كوزارة الصحة والهيئات الأكاديميّة بإطلاق برنامج تدريبي لتأهيل أفراد المجتمع الغجري لتقديم خدمات الترجمة كمتطوعين في أوقات الأزمات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ترجمة الأفراد، كوفيد 19، إدارة الأزمات، ترجمة الأزمات، الغجر، الأردن.

Endnotes

[1] This paper uses the word 'translation' to refer to both written and oral modes of translation activity, except when it is necessary to make a distinction between the two.

[2] The word '*Nawar*' is mistakenly used by the majority population of Jordan to denote two minority communities. These communities share some characteristics, such as being nomadic, living in camps, and traditionally making a living by begging and peddling; however, they differ drastically in terms of their origin and language. The first community are also known as *Kawash*. They are native speakers of Arabic, adopt Bedouin customs and traditions, and are descended from a famous Arab clan called *Bani Murah*. The second community, which is the concern of this study, are usually known as *Ghajar* (Gypsies). They were originally descended from people from the north of India, and their native language is Domari. The term 'Gypsy' is used in this paper to refer to this latter minority community.

[3] The assessment of Arabic and Domari proficiency was based on the participants' own judgment.

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