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Terminology as a Trigger of Polish-English Certified Interpreters' Psycho-Affective Factors

Introduction

While providing consecutive interpreting services, interpreters experience a range of emotional states. At times, they get angry toward the content they must render into the target language; on other occasions, they become sorrowful when conveying deeply distressing news from a physician to a patient. They may also share in their clients' joy, experiencing positive emotions. However, interpreters frequently experience the influence of their psycho-affectivity, which can be triggered by virtually any aspect of the interpreting process. They may experience stress due to the complexity of an assignment, when interpreting in the presence of high-status individuals, uncertainty about their ability to handle a given topic or even fear when working in conflict- and war-stricken zones. This demonstrated that interpreters engage emotionally with their work, navigating a spectrum of psycho-affective states – some externally triggered, others internally.

One such trigger is terminology, which – alongside domain-related knowledge – constitutes an integral part of interpreter competence.

The first section of the paper outlines the theoretical background necessary for discussing the results of a study that explores certified interpreters' experience of psycho-affectivity. Various perspectives on interpreter competence and its subcomponents are examined with particular attention given to psycho-affectivity and psycho-affective factors. The second section investigates how terminology, particularly in highly specialised fields such as law, can intensify adverse psycho-affective responses, potentially leading to a decline in interpreting performance and output quality.

Generally speaking, this paper aims to present findings that shed light on why terminology – especially one associated with specialised domains – can act as a trigger for interpreters' psycho-affective factors.

1. Interpreter Competence

Odd as it may seem, interpreter competence has not been a central concept in interpreting studies. However, this does not mean it has been entirely neglected as several studies have addressed the issue, particularly within interpreting pedagogy. Like

translation pedagogy, interpreting pedagogy is a subfield of interpreting studies that primarily focuses on interpreter education, competence, skills, and teaching methods (cf. Piotrowska, 2019). Interpreting pedagogy is often placed alongside interpreter education. The latter pertains to “comprehensive learning through academic and professional studies in pursuit of higher-order curriculum aims and goals, which (...) in part define a profession” (Sawyer & Roy, 2015, p. 124) whereas the former is “grounded in deliberate and reflective practice (...) that culminates in the automaticity and case-based reasoning processes characteristic of high levels of expertise” (*ibid.*, pp. 124–125). Given that both fields revolve around developing interpreters’ skills and expertise, it is worth examining interpreter competence more closely.

Interpreting scholars have conceptualised interpreter competence in various ways, leading to the development of multiple models. For instance, Franz Pöchhacker defines it as “(...) the congruence between task demands (performance standards) and qualifications” (2004, p. 166). Sylvia Kalina (2000) highlights the skills necessary to facilitate successful multilingual communication, including cognitive and psycho-affective abilities (*e.g.* rapid processing and memorisation skills, stress resistance, self-motivation), an excellent command of both source and target languages, transfer abilities, domain expertise, cultural awareness and adherence to ethical principles (Kalina, 2000 and 2002). An extension of Kalina’s framework is Albl-Mikasa’s (2013) model, which organises interpreter competence into five skill clusters corresponding to different phases of the interpreting process. These include pre-process skills (*e.g.* command of languages, familiarity with a specialised domain and its terminology), in-process skills (*i.e.* input comprehension, transfer and output production), peri-process skills (*e.g.* cooperation, stress resistance, sense of professionalism *etc.*), post-process skills (*e.g.* terminology review, quality control) and para-process skills (*e.g.* knowledge of interpreting business environment, professional standards *etc.*). Albl-Mikasa’s model provides a realistic depiction of the competences required at each stage of professional interpreting. Iwona Sikora and Marcin Walczyński (2015) offer another model, specifically addressing interpreter competence in the context of the European Union. Given the role of European Union-employed interpreters in facilitating interlinguistic transfer across twenty-four official languages, their model includes linguistic, domain-related, interpersonal, intrapersonal, socio-cultural, information-processing, and European Union-specific competences (*e.g.* awareness of EU values, norms and the interpreter’s role in multilingual European Union institutions). The National Network for Interpreting (2023) in Great Britain has also developed a model of interpreter competence. Its “Interpreting Skills Map” presents an extensive range of linguistic, communicative, interpersonal, intrapersonal, physical, public-speaking, thematic, transfer, note-taking, and professional skills. Furthermore, there has been a growing trend toward conceptualising interpreting competence as an umbrella construct. Beyond traditional components such as linguistic proficiency, interpreting strategies, domain knowledge and cultural awareness, recent studies emphasise the importance of soft skills, emotional resilience and psychological factors in interpreting performance (cf. Russo, 2022; Hlavac, 2023; Liu & Zhang, 2023; Su, 2023; Xu, 2023).

The outlined approaches indicate a consensus that interpreter competence consists of a combination of skills, expertise and personal attributes that enable high-quality interpreting in diverse contexts. Expanding on this understanding, Walczyński (2019) proposes a comprehensive model comprising ten subcompetences: linguistic subcompetence (*i.e.* active knowledge of source and target languages), interpreting subcompetence (*i.e.* skills in exploiting interpreting strategies, transfer skills, note-taking and note-reading skills), general knowledge subcompetence (*i.e.* background information knowledge, world knowledge), cognitive subcompetence (*i.e.* attention division skills, prolonged attention maintenance skills, working memory, information retrieval skills), psycho-affective subcompetence (*i.e.* empathy, emotion and affect reception, regulation and self-regulation skills), social subcompetence (*i.e.* cooperation and coordination skills, constructive feedback and meta-information provision skills), domain-related subcompetence (*i.e.* knowledge of a given domain and related terminology), intercultural subcompetence (*i.e.* knowledge of cultural differences and skills of bridging them), business subcompetence (*i.e.* knowledge of and adherence to business standards) and preparation subcompetence (*i.e.* knowledge, including terminology, acquisition skills, familiarity with the potential challenges and ways of facing them). These subcompetences are interrelated as seen in the interplay between linguistic and domain-related competences. A well-developed domain-related subcompetence enhances the interpreter's command of specialised terminology, aiding both input comprehension and output production. Conversely, insufficient terminology knowledge – whether due to inadequate preparation or time constraints – can intensify negative psycho-affective factors such as anxiety, stress, fragile language ego and diminished self-confidence. Managing these challenges falls within the scope of psycho-affective subcompetence. Thus, interpreter competence can be understood as an intricate combination of interdependent skills, expertise, and predispositions that enable interpreters to perform their duties effectively, professionally, and ethically.

2. Interpreter's Psycho-Affectivity and Psycho-Affective Factors

The aforementioned psycho-affective subcompetence is directly linked to the interpreter's psycho-affectivity, typically studied within interpreter psychology. Combining interpreting studies and psychology, this subfield provides theoretical and methodological scaffoldings for both the psycho-affective and cognitive studies of interpreters and interpreting. Thus, interpreting scholars engaged in such research exploit the methods and instruments developed within psychology to study interpreters' behaviours, reactions and mental states during their work. Consequently, interpreter psychology can be considered a profession-restricted branch of occupational (industrial/organisational) psychology which investigates individuals' psychological responses, behaviours and attitudes in professional settings (*e.g.* Doyle, 2003).

It has long been recognised that interpreting is a complex activity that extends beyond the mere use of two languages, involving various aspects of the interpreter. Scholars in the previous century identified stress as a key factor in interpreting,

highlighting its omnipresence in the profession (*cf.* Sanz, 1931; Longley, 1978; Klonowicz, 1992 and 1994; Zeier, 1997). More recently, researchers have increasingly focused on the psycho-affective factors and emotional dimensions of various types of interpreting. The relative scarcity of studies in this area – especially compared to cognitive interpreting studies – may stem, at least in part, from the long-standing belief that interpreters should be transparent, emotionally unengaged and unresponsive professionals whose primary responsibility is to convey the source message in the target language. However, an increasing number of studies (*e.g.* Cifuentes-Férez & Meseguer Cutillas, 2018; Korpál & Jasielska, 2019; Korpál & Mellinger, 2022; Rojo López & Caldwell-Harris, 2023) demonstrate that interpreting is often an emotion-laden and psychologically challenging activity, that interpreters often experience various pre-, in- and post-interpreting emotional states and that the psycho-affective factors may significantly influence their performance.

As remarked earlier, various aspects of the interpreter's psycho-affectivity often transpire during the interpreting process, affecting its various phases and, ultimately, the target text. For this reason, the interpreter's psycho-affectivity, the study of which still has many lacunae, requires a more thorough examination.

The interpreter's psycho-affectivity may be defined as a continually operating and highly complex mechanism residing within the interpreter's psyche. Due to its constant operation and vulnerability to external stimuli, it has the potential to affect all aspects of the interpreter's performance (Walczyński, *op. cit.*). The concept of the interpreter's psycho-affectivity is inextricably related to psycho-affective factors, described as "individual personality traits" (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 8). These internal psychological characteristics determine the interpreter's emotional and physiological reactions to various stimuli, impacting their self-perception, skill assessment, interactions with others in interpreter-mediated communication or responses to different interpreting conditions.

What should be noted at this point is that each interpreter's psycho-affectivity may work differently. There are two basic arguments underlying this claim. First, interpreters vary as individuals; what stresses one interpreter may motivate or bring joy to another. Thus, psycho-affective experiences are not universal and each person may react differently to the same stimulus. Second, different types of interpreting may evoke different psycho-affective factors. For instance, a community interpreter working in consecutive or liaison mode in an oncological hospital is likely to experience more negative states (*e.g.* stress, anxiety) than a conference interpreter working in simultaneous mode in the protected environment of the booth. Likewise, by performing whispering in a trench, a war interpreter, assisting soldiers fighting against the enemy, will undoubtedly experience fear more intensely than a certified interpreter providing his/her consecutive interpreting services at the police station where a robbery victim testifies. These examples illustrate that psycho-affective factors are not universally experienced across all interpreters. Instead, they vary, depending on the type of interpreting, contextual conditions and institutional settings.

Psycho-affective factors influence individuals across various spheres of activity, with language acquisition and learning being among the most studied domains.

Applied linguists have examined how factors such as anxiety, fear, language ego, personality dimension, self-esteem, motivation or stress shape the foreign language learning process. These same factors have also been found to play a crucial role in interpreting, influencing interpreters' linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, emotional states and attitudes during their work.

The first factor – anxiety – manifests itself as a state of worry, trepidation and uneasiness, stemming from the interpreter's negative view of a future event that may expose some lacunae in his/her competence. Importantly, in objective terms, the event is neither hazardous nor detrimental to the interpreter himself/herself. Anxiety experienced by interpreters can take several forms. First, there is *facilitative/beneficial anxiety*, which provides mental energy to help the interpreter manage the task effectively, and there is *debilitative/inhibitory anxiety*, which may weaken the interpreter's potential to deal with the interpreting service. *Archaic anxiety* is related to the interpreter's past negative experience involving, for instance, low-quality interpreting performance. *Existential anxiety* refers to current and future events; it may be subdivided into *acceptance anxiety* (i.e. whether the interpreter will be accepted as a legitimate figure in the interpreter-mediated communication act), *orientation anxiety* (i.e. whether the interpreter will be able to keep track of the interpreting act by knowing when to start, pause and finish interpreting) and *performance anxiety* (i.e. whether the interpreter's skills and expertise will be sufficient to perform high-quality interpreting) (cf. Heron, 1989). It will be demonstrated later that the interpreter's anxious feelings can be directly linked to interpreters' concerns over their familiarity with terminology.

The next factor which interpreters may experience is fear. Unlike anxiety, it is caused by the actual, objectively existing danger which may harm the interpreter. For this reason, interpreters working in conflict zones or during war activities can have fearful thoughts as their lives may be in peril. Because of its nature as an objective threat, it is unlikely that fear is caused by the interpreter's thinking about his/her domain-related competence, which also encompasses terminology.

Language ego is another psycho-affective factor. It can be understood as the limits to which the interpreter is capable of exploiting his/her linguistic subcompetence. Transcending those limits (i.e. language boundaries) may produce some mistakes (Guiora & Brannon & Dull, 1972). For fear of making mistakes, interpreters may avoid using the less internalised language forms (i.e. pronunciation patterns, grammar constructions or lexical units) as mistakes made while exploiting these incompletely mastered structures may contribute to enfeebling the interpreter's language ego, defined as his/her perception of what he/she is as a speaker/interpreter of a foreign language. This psycho-affective factor may also be triggered by terminological problems consequent upon the interpreter's insufficient skills and knowledge. However, professional interpreters can overcome the problem of terminological deficits by employing appropriate interpreting strategies, like, for example, omission or use of generic terms.

Personality dimension (i.e. extroversion, ambiversion, introversion) also plays a role in interpreting. Generally speaking, this factor determines the sources

of positive emotions, feelings and attitudes. Extroverts derive them from external sources – other people, events or objects while introverts prefer to seek them within themselves. Interestingly, some studies (e.g. Schweda-Nicholson, 2005) have demonstrated that even an introverted person can be a high-performing interpreter whose job is related to speaking and focus on human interaction (stereotypically characteristic of extroversion) as individuals may adopt different “masks” in professional and private settings. Thus, it is safe to contend that pointing to any cause-and-effect relation between terminology and personality is challenging.

Self-esteem is a psycho-affective factor related to how the interpreter evaluates himself/herself (*i.e. global/general self-esteem*), his/her skills and expertise (*i.e. intermediate self-esteem*) as well as his/her potential to successfully work in a given situation (*i.e. situational self-esteem*) or even to successfully deal with a given interpreting task (*i.e. task self-esteem*) (e.g. Hepper, 2023). In the case of this factor, it is relatively easy to demonstrate that the levels of self-esteem may be conditioned by the interpreter’s perception of his/her domain-related subcompetence and familiarity with the domain terminology.

Let us examine one more psycho-affective factor relevant to the interpreter’s job – (achievement) motivation. This component of human psycho-affectivity is related to the sources of inspiration and drives that arouse people’s willingness and readiness to engage in a given activity. Thus, interpreters may be *externally/extrinsically motivated* by, for instance, remuneration or reputation. They may also experience *internal/intrinsic motivation*, which originates from their internal needs. Of course, the question of terminology may be linked to external motivation since, for example, the presence of other professionals (e.g. judges, attorneys) may make interpreters learn the crucial aspects of some domain and the related specialised terminology before the interpreting act. The development/enrichment of the knowledge of some thematic domain and its specialised lexis can also be driven by the interpreter’s internal need for professionalism or sense of duty.

The final psycho-affective factor is stress, which is ubiquitous in interpreting (e.g. Klonowicz, 1992; Kurz, 2003). It is often viewed as a psychological and physiological response to a stimulus. Alessandra Riccardi understands stress “(...) as a psychological reaction experienced when an individual feels an imbalance between task requirements and the resources available for coping with them” (2015, p. 405). In other words, interpreters experience stress when they see that a given interpreting task is so demanding that their skills and knowledge may not suffice to deal with it properly. However, apart from the debilitating nature of stress (*i.e. distress*), some interpreters – under the influence of stress – may feel an upsurge of mental energy (*i.e. eustress*), resulting in greater readiness to perform interpreting.

The psycho-affective factors discussed above operate within an interconnected psycho-affective sequence (*cf.* Gorman, 2005), wherein external stimuli activate emotional responses, influencing interpreters’ verbal output and physiological states. In its most extended model (*ibid.*), the sequence includes the stimulus (e.g. the properties of the input), which triggers the activity of a psycho-affective factor (e.g. anxiety, language ego), which then can activate some verbal behaviour

(*e.g.* distorted delivery of the output) as well as manifest itself in the interpreter's body (*e.g.* trembling hand, accelerated heartbeat). This all can affect other factors (*e.g.* the interpreter's cognitive abilities, interpreting act participants' relations). It is worth reiterating that the four components, of which psycho-affective factors are specifically inherent in the interpreter, are entangled in a complex constellation of mutual triggering and interdependences, which, as stated by Phil Gorman, "(...) will have an effect on [the interpreter's] behaviour, in ways that are far from predictable or sequential" (2005, p. 5).

As presented above, because of its complexity, components and the influence it may have, the interpreter's psycho-affectivity deserves more profound studies, the outcomes of which could enrich our understanding of how various aspects of emotions, feelings, internal states and attitudes condition, curb and support the interpreter's work.

3. Terminology as a Trigger of Polish-English Certified Interpreters' Experience of Psycho-Affective Factors

It has already been mentioned in passing that terminology can be an essential factor in triggering the interpreter's psycho-affectivity, mostly anxiety, language ego and stress. This conclusion is based on a study conducted among seventy-six Polish-English certified interpreters who were asked to complete a rather lengthy survey regarding their subjective experience of psycho-affective factors.

In Poland, certified interpreting, also known as sworn interpreting, is primarily performed in the institutional settings of courts, police stations, border guard stations, notary offices and register offices. In these contexts, bilingual communication takes place through the interpreter either as sight translation or consecutive interpreting (and, though less frequently, as whispered interpreting). Due to the nature of courtroom interactions, police interrogations, contract negotiations, testament openings or bilingual wedding ceremonies, certified interpreters – professionals with officially confirmed qualifications, granted upon successfully passing a difficult and psychologically taxing examination – are expected to demonstrate highly developed skills and expertise, collectively forming interpreter competence. A key component of interpreter competence is domain-related subcompetence, which encompasses knowledge of a specific thematic domain (*e.g.* law) and its terminology. When institutions such as courts, the police or notary offices summon a certified interpreter, they assume – by default – that the interpreter has relevant skills and domain-specific expertise.

Since Poland lacks official guidelines concerning training future certified interpreters, no universal format for certified interpreter education exists and various interpreting schools emphasise different aspects of the profession. Some offer training in both sight translation and consecutive interpreting (the most common types of certified interpreting in Poland) while others additionally train students in simultaneous interpreting (rarely performed in Poland as certified interpreting). Some university courses for future certified interpreters include developing trainees' psycho-affective

subcompetence whereas others focus on technological aids used in remote interpreting. However, a shared feature of most curricula offered by Polish interpreting schools is the development of students' law-related subcompetence and legal terminology, which are indispensable for performing certified interpreting in the settings of judicial institutions.

The principal objective of the qualitatively oriented research project was to verify the assumption that the interpreter's psycho-affectivity is a continually operating module of the interpreter's psychological make-up, which can be triggered by numerous seemingly insignificant elements of the interpreting process. Five research questions were posed: (1) Which psycho-affective factors are experienced by certified interpreters during (consecutive) interpreting?; (2) What is the character of those psycho-affective factors – is it negative and therefore debilitating or positive and therefore facilitative?; (3) What are the linguistic and extra-linguistic exponents of the subjective experience of psycho-affective factors?; (4) What are the interdependences among these factors?; (5) Does the impact of the psycho-affective factors diminish along with the growth in experience and the development of interpreter competence? Due to space limitations, this paper addresses only selected aspects of these research questions. It should also be noted that the study presented here is one of four case studies, the full accounts of which are provided in Walczyński (2019).

The study was carried out among a group of seventy-six Polish-English certified (*i.e.* sworn) interpreters who are officially registered in the Register of Certified Translators and Interpreters maintained by Poland's Ministry of Justice. They were invited to fill in an online questionnaire consisting of forty-six questions about their experience of psycho-affective factors, potential causes as well as their verbal and non-verbal manifestations. Unfortunately, the response rate was relatively meagre (approximately 3%) because, at the time of the study, there were more than 2,500 Polish certified interpreters of English. However, considering the specific nature of interpreting research – where small research populations (*e.g.* Chen, 2017) are common due to the limited number of highly skilled professional interpreters and the challenges in recruiting them for research – this sample size is not so small. Therefore, the number of respondents who provided data on their experience of psycho-affective factors suffices to draw some local (*i.e.* studied group-restricted) conclusions. This aligns with Jemina Napier and Sandra Hale's assertion that a small sample size in interpreting research "(...) is not a problem in and of itself as long as care is taken not to claim generalisation when reporting the results of such research" (2015, p. 258).

The data obtained were predominantly qualitative. They were analysed interpretively in the form of a narrative report accentuating certain trends that emerged from the respondents' responses. The report also included direct quotes from the respondents' answers (translated from Polish into English) as illustrations of the observed phenomena. Consequently, the method of data analysis was interpretive inquiry as this paper presents an interpretation of the respondents' statements. In this regard, the study aligns with Pöschhacker's observation that "(...) the prevalence of nonnumerical, qualitative data in interpreting studies, usually in the form of text or discourse, places interpretive inquiry at the center of the scientific method

in interpreting” (2011, p. 15). Additionally, some quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to outline key characteristics of the study sample.

Apart from behavioural and attitudinal data, the respondents provided information concerning their experience in the certified interpreter profession. The average experience among the participants was fourteen years, with one interpreter having over forty years of experience and another having obtained certified interpreter status only a few months prior to the study. Equally noteworthy were the findings on consecutive interpreting experience at large (as it is the most commonly practised mode of interpreting), even outside contexts requiring certification. The average experience was sixteen years with fifty-one respondents (67%) reporting more than a decade of experience. The most extensive experience recorded was forty-three years while the shortest was a few months. Notably, the research findings do not indicate that increasing experience significantly reduces the impact of psycho-affective factors.

In the course of the study, it turned out that three major psycho-affective factors are triggered by the domain-related subcompetence and terminology and therefore their character is mostly negative and debilitating. These are anxiety, language ego and stress. The experience of anxiety ensuing during the act of certified interpreting was reported by forty-two interpreters (55%), the impact of weaker language ego by fifty-two (68%) and stress by sixty-four (84%). Those figures further corroborate the observation that the psycho-affective factors do not necessarily diminish in intensity with accumulated interpreting experience.

When answering the questions devoted to particular psycho-affective factors, the respondents were additionally requested to provide textual justifications for their answers.¹ For instance, in the section on anxiety, many respondents wrote about the terminology of a given domain – predominantly law-related) – as one of the causes of their anxiety. This is reflected in selected quotes from the respondents’ surveys:²

- Fear of missing a **vocabulary** or having an unknown topic to interpret.
- Fear of the ignorance of the topic and, therefore, ignorance of **terminology**.
- For years – the same thing – the fear of the insufficient knowledge of **specialised vocabulary**, especially when there is no possibility for preparation.
- Gaps in my knowledge – **vocabulary, phrases**, sometimes interpreting does not go the way we would like to, which means that not good phrases were used, there was no precision, that generally interpreting can go smoothly. However, there are some shortcomings which bring about dissatisfaction.

¹ Sometimes, the same or highly similar explanation was provided by a respondent in answers to multiple questions about different factors. In such cases, the response was classified based on the questionnaire section in which it appeared, as each section was dedicated to a specific factor.

² The quotations form part of the data set collected for the research project presented and discussed in Walczyński (2019). They were derived from the respondents’ survey answers and translated by the paper author from Polish into English. An attempt was made to maintain as much as possible the sense and structure of the original texts. The quotations used as the exemplification of phenomena and tendencies observed have been directly borrowed from Walczyński (2019, pp. 455–551).

- I am afraid there will be a **word/phrase** which I will not be able to render.
- Lack of **language equivalent**.
- Lack of self-confidence in my skills, unfamiliarity with the topic, thinking that I would not deal with it, that I will not know some **words** or that I will not be able to get out of a difficult situation/task *etc.*
- Not knowing, making mistakes, difficulties in understanding.
- Predicting that there will be a sentence/ that I will not know and will be unable to get out of it.
- Sometimes, in the course of the trial, some unexpected (*e.g.* in the trial for damages, where I was told to be prepared to discuss the financial aspects of paying the damages, the trial unexpectedly turned into discussing skin transplants and medical complexity). But I have to admit that this does not stress me nor paralyses me; it is an intellectual challenge which I have always met.
- The fact that I do not know the (but it rarely happens and takes a short time).
- The moment when I miss a and I'm afraid of my negative assessment of my skills.
- Uncertainty about how I will do, whether something will not surprise me, for instance, the language which the foreigner uses (slang, sometimes verbosity, sometimes unclear pronunciation, sometimes).
- Uncertainty concerning which may come up; the fear that I will not know some.

From the respondents' answers, it clearly emerges that terminology is a significant trigger of their anxiety. Certified interpreters may recognise that developing interpreter competence is a continuous process and that it is impossible to fully master the entire terminology associated with a given domain. This awareness may contribute to their anxiety when anticipating potential terminological challenges. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is that some certified interpreters may not be familiar with specific interpreting strategies that could help them overcome terminological difficulties. Alternatively, there may have been insufficient time for terminological preparation prior to the interpreting assignment. The most commonly enumerated linguistic exponents of terminology-related difficulties include omissions (zero-renditions of a given term), lexical errors (use of a non-equivalent term) and explication (use of a descriptive equivalent or using circumlocution).

Let us now look at how terminology activates the interpreter's language ego. Like anxiety, several reasons contribute to the weakening of interpreters' language ego, one of which is terminology. The respondents report that the awareness of lexical deficiencies undermines their language ego and may, in turn, increase instances of language inhibition. The following excerpts from the certified interpreters' answers illustrate this claim:

- Awareness of gaps in my **specialised language** knowledge, awareness of the incomplete understanding of concepts and processes behind this vocabulary.
- Awareness of lack of **knowledge of vocabulary**.

- Lack of certainty as to the use of appropriate language structure, the peculiarity of the **jargon** used in the interpretation.
- Lacks in **vocabulary**.
- No familiarity with the **word** to be interpreted.
- No **terminology**.
- Uncertainty as to the choice of the correct **words**.
- Uncertainty as to the correctness of a **word**, **phrase** or collocation.

As seen above, specialised terms can inhibit interpreters' performance. The respondents add that when they cannot immediately recall a target-language equivalent, they prefer not to experiment with the lexicon as doing so might endanger their already fragile language ego if a mistake occurs. Consequently, they avoid exploiting specific phrases they are not sure of, opting instead for zero-renditions, descriptions or simplified language with less complex terms or even colloquialisms. Occasionally, they ask for additional clarification and check terms (if possible) in online dictionaries, using their mobile phones.

Finally, it is worth examining how the certified interpreters conceptualise terminology as their stressor. The respondents admit to being influenced by external stressors while performing certified interpreting. These include the institutional contexts of interpreting, other interpreting act actors and their behaviours as well as the working conditions, in which the respondents are required to interpret. Moreover, it seems that, among several internal stressors (*i.e.* respondents' thinking about their interpreting abilities, cognitive skills and other psycho-affective factors), terminology comes to the fore. This is evident in the following selection of excerpts:

- Cases of **very specialised vocabulary** or practices used in a given industry.
- I have not been in a foreign language country for a long time, so I feel the lack of knowledge and uncertainty of the **vocabulary** and structures used.
- Insufficient **lexical competence**.
- **Lack of vocabulary**, incorrect pronunciation.
- **New vocabulary** or **concepts** that I do not even know in my mother tongue.
- **Professional terminology**.
- Sometimes lack of **words**.
- Sometimes, if there is **specialised terminology** that I may not be familiar with.
- **Specialised vocabulary**.
- Vocabulary that appears unexpectedly outside the expected themes.

The stress experienced by the certified interpreters manifests itself in omitting the interpretation of unfamiliar terms, using wrong target-language equivalents or, interestingly, taking incomplete and/or illegible notes.

To conclude, all three psycho-affective factors – triggered, among others, by terminology – are reflected in linguistic behaviours and bodily reactions. The most commonly enumerated linguistic exponents include omissions (zero-renditions of a given term), lexical errors (using a non-equivalent term), simplification (substituting less specialised terms or colloquialisms for specialised items) and explicitation

(using descriptive equivalents or circumlocutions). Some interpreters note that several indicators can occur at the same time. As regards the most frequent extra-linguistic indicators, the interpreters mention increased gesticulation, body tension, sweating, hot flushes and accelerated heartbeat. Interestingly, many of these indicators coincide. Ultimately, all of these may negatively affect the quality of the interpreter's performance and – consequently – the target-language output.

Concluding Remarks

The above discussion clearly shows that terminology is a potent trigger of the interpreter's psycho-affective factors. This triggering operates on at least two levels. First and foremost, terminology – or rather the interpreter's unfamiliarity with it – is likely to stimulate the negative operation of the psycho-affectivity as the interpreters do not have a given lexical item in their mental lexicon. This may be a consequence of never having encountered the term in previous interpreting practice or simply forgetting it. Another aspect revolves around retrieving the term from memory in high-pressure interpreting contexts such as courtrooms, police stations, or notary offices, where both cognitive and psychological demands are intense. Thus, it is clear that terminology difficulties may culminate in the activation of both psycho-affective factors and cognitive ones. This corroborates the view that terminology may be an essential aspect of the psycho-affective sequence: the source-language term, which the interpreter has heard for the very first time, may trigger the experience of anxiety, language ego or stress and these may further result in the semantically incomplete and inequivalent target-language output, bringing about – at the same time – the physiological response in the interpreter's body (like shaking hands, voice production difficulties or increased use of gestures). Additionally, it can affect other dimensions of the interpreter's performance, for instance, note-taking or impeded concentration or shortened attention span.

In conclusion, there is no denying that terminology may be regarded as one of the most common triggers of the interpreter's psycho-affectivity. However, it should not be viewed as some insurmountable obstacle since professional interpreters tend to overcome terminological deficiencies by using the strategy of prior preparation (if possible) or employing specific tactics, which Daniel Gile refers to as “decisions made when encountering difficulties” (2009, p. 14). Strategies such as omission, description, explicitation, and implicitation enable interpreters to handle new terminological content effectively. Moreover, in consecutive interpreting, when all other strategies and tactics fail, interpreters may seek clarification from other participants, who are usually within close proximity. By employing these strategies and tactics, interpreters can manage their psycho-affective factors triggered – among others – by terminology. Indeed, professional interpreters actively use them. Moreover, many of them realise that terminological gaps, slips and mistakes occur regularly and perfection in interpreting is rarely attainable. This is especially true given the psychologically demanding nature of interpreter-mediated communication, where experiencing psycho-affective factors is the norm rather than the exception.

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Abstract

This paper offers insight into the interpreter's experience of psycho-affective factors triggered, among others, by terminology, which is one of the most commonly cited reasons for interpreters' negative assessment of their skills and expertise as well as for their declared lower interpreting performance and output quality. The first part of the study discusses interpreter competence and its subcompetences, along with a brief review of the concepts of psycho-affectivity and psycho-affective factors. The second part of the paper focuses on how terminology, an essential aspect of the competence of certified (sworn) interpreters who provide their services in highly specialised law-related settings (e.g. courts, police and border guard stations or notary offices), can evoke anxiety, language ego and stress in interpreters. The discussion relies on the data obtained for the study, concentrating on the psycho-affective factors experienced by the interpreters, their causes, and their manifestations. The research indicates that deficits in terminology and problems with its retrieval can activate psycho-affective factors, ultimately contributing to a lowered quality of interpreting performance and target-language output generated by the interpreter.

Keywords

terminology, interpreter competence, interpreter psychology, interpreter's psycho-affectivity, psycho-affective factors, certified interpreter