Young Interpreters' Coping Strategies – an Interview Study

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Abstract
The article investigates coping strategies of young interpreters. For the purpose of the study, young interpreters are defined as relatively inexperienced (up to five years of practice) interpreters who are no longer students. In the literature there is a plethora of studies on stress among trainees and experienced professionals, but that has not been the case with interpreting novices. In order to verify the problems young interpreters face, semi-structured interviews with eight interpreters were conducted. It turned out that young interpreters rely on problem- and emotion-oriented coping strategies to a similar degree.

Keywords:
coping, Interpreting Studies, qualitative methods, semi-structured interview, stress

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, translation studies an interdisciplinary discipline. Throughout the long history of the discipline, scholars have made numerous attempts to categorize different areas of research. One of the most comprehensive endeavors is James S. Holmes's "the Map" published in his seminal work *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* (1988). The term *translation studies* (TS) itself is derived from Holmes's work. Holmes divided TS into two key categories: pure and applied. The pure sector was further divided into theoretical and descriptive categories. In order to highlight the background of the present study, the descriptive branch of translation studies (DTS) will be described in detail. There are three divisions of DTS: function-, product, and process-oriented. Function-oriented DTS focuses on the context rather than on the text, examining the socio-cultural environment of the text, as well as the times when it was translated. Product-oriented DTS analyzes existing translations and compares a translation with the original text. Lastly, process-oriented DTS refer to psychological aspects of translation. This approach perceives translation as "a black box" where cognitive processes occur (Munday 2008:10-11). Korpal (2016) observes that the last decades of the 20th century have seen a cognitive turn in Translation and Interpreting studies as the question of the interpreter aptitude has been one of the most relevant debates in the literature. In addition to language command and cognitive skills, scholars have begun to examine psycho-affective factors such as stress resistance, motivation, or anxiety.

2. Interpreting and stress

Interpreting is generally considered as one of the most demanding activities. A number of studies has confirmed its stressful nature. Kurz (2003) names the following factors which invoke stress among interpreters: the need to keep a high level of focus during the whole assignment, considerable cognitive load, time constraints, the confined nature of the booth, and fatigue. These factors are said to elicit objective stress. Gile (2009:188) coined the phrase "problem triggers" to describe factors which require deepened processing capacity and are particularly seen as difficult by interpreters. Thus, the presence of them might impair the quality and accuracy of interpretation, as well elicit more stress. Among such factors are proper names, enumerations, morphological and syntactic features of the source language, strong foreign accent, rate of delivery, and numerical data.

Stress has been one of the most discussed notions in psychology, but also in the context of disciplines focusing on foreign languages and its applications such as pedagogy or applied linguistics. For the sake of brevity of the paper it is impossible to give a comprehensive outline of stress theories here, thus only the most relevant frameworks will be discussed in this article. For a detailed overview of studies on stress and coping mechanisms, see Baqutayan (2015).

One of the pioneers in terms of stress theories is Hans Selye who introduced the term *stress* in 1926. According to Selye:

> Stress is defined as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand, where nonspecific refers to those common changes produced by a variety of agents, or stressors. In everyday we distinguish between two types of stress effects, namely eustress and distress, depending upon whether stress is associated with desirable or undesirable results (1980:93).

Commonly, stress is perceived as something negative and detrimental to one's health. However, Selye discusses *eustress* as a factor referring to aspects of stress, as stressful situations can be perceived as challenging and motivating. If that is the case, overcoming them may result in boosting one's self-esteem and positive responses to future stressors (Suedfeld 1997:851). The main criticism of Selye's theory is it concentrates almost solely on biological aspects of stress and the organism's biological response to stressors. Psychological processes are not given priority in his model. Scholars have since focused on non-biological processes which play a role in stress response. One of the most fundamental models is the transactional model of stress by Lazarus and Folkman. According to them:

> Psychological stress is a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being (1984:31).

Stress is thus perceived as a dynamic process and a transaction (relationship) between individuals and their environment. Therefore, people can appraise stressful situations as challenging or threatening (Lazarus, 1966). Coping, in turn, is defined as *cognitive and behavioral efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal and/or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction* (Folkman 1984:843). Lazarus and Folkman have distinguished two fundamental forms of coping: emotion- and problem-oriented coping. The former refers to efforts made to control emotional consequences of stressful situations. The aim of such strategies is to weaken emotional distress perceived by the individual. The latter, on the other hand, involves actions aimed at solving the task itself or efforts to alleviate stressful circumstances (Lazarus and Folkman 1984:150-152). In order to broaden the model, Endler (1997) introduced avoidance-oriented coping which is characterized by the lack of attempts at altering the situation. While all three strategies can be beneficial in different contexts, studies have shown that problem-oriented coping is the most effective one, whereas in the long run avoidance-oriented coping is associated with poorer adjustment (Endler & Parker, 1999).

Emotion-oriented coping	Problem-oriented coping	Avoidance-oriented coping
- Humour - Acceptance - Distancing	- Time management	- Rumination - Procrastination - Passive-aggressiveness

- Seeking social support - Accepting responsibility - Positive reinforcement - Self-control	- Obtaining instrumental and social support - Problem-solving - Planning - Restraint coping - Active coping	- Social withdrawal - Losing hope - Avoiding the situation

Table 1 *Ways of Coping Mechanisms (Endler, 1997)*

3. Literature review

A number of qualitative studies that has contributed to Interpreting Studies, most of which used semi-structured interviews. Green et al. (2012) explored interpreters of Kurdish refugees and their experiences of working in mental health services of the United Kingdom. It turned out that the traumatic stories they interpret had negative impact on them. The authors suggested that refugee interpreters need support, which can be realized by supervision sessions concentrating on developing coping strategies. Similarly, a Danish study by Holmgren (2003) investigated working conditions of interpreters who worked for the Danish Red Cross. The results showed that the interpreters experienced severe emotional distress. Further, psychological reactions of them were highly maladaptive, as they included sleep deprivation, ruminating, mood swings and lack of concentration. A study by Watanabe (2012) investigated Japanese interpreters working in an international hospital in Thailand. Two themes were identified: interpreters as problem solvers, and emotional labor and compassion fatigue. Thus, qualitative research in Translating and Interpreting Studies is multicultural, as interpreters reported similar problems and difficulties regardless of culture.

Kállay and Vissu-Petra (2014) compared first and second year students of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) with a corresponding sample of 74 female participants from the general population. The study showed that EMCI students were on average less stressed and more conscious as regards their emotions than the general population, but they also tended to rely on maladaptive coping strategies such rumination and blaming others. Moore (2020) investigated coping mechanisms of novice sign language interpreters. The participants of her study mentioned positive self-talk, reflection, and contact with animals as strategies which helped them relieve stress before a difficult assignment. Also, being judgmental and skewing information were discussed as factors giving them anxiety about interpreting. Martínez-Gómez (2020) conducted a qualitative study involving young language brokers. In their accounts on sources of positive emotions they mentioned feelings of pride, achievement, and joy. An opportunity to develop their language skills and a feeling of solidarity were discussed as well. On the other hand, difficulties included lack of confidence in their skills, interpersonal tensions between family members, and a sense of responsibility.

The existing quantitative literature research concerning psychological and physiological aspects of interpreting usually differentiates between two groups: professional interpreters and trainees (Riccardi et al. 1998; Kurz 2003; Tang and Li 2015; Korpal 2017). The present study aims at specifying the characteristics of another group – young freelance interpreters who do

not have much experience in their profession, but already finished their university education. Investigating such a group may provide valuable insight as to which elements of university education are most relevant and beneficial in occupational contexts, and how young interpreters develop their strategies and work on their craft during the first years of their practice.

Some studies have also investigated coping strategies that interpreting trainees implement in their assignments in the classroom. Kao and Craige (2013) stated that problem-focused coping was a predominant strategy among participants. However, Korpal (2017) in his mixed-method study comparing interpreting trainees with professionals discovered that while problem-oriented strategy was mentioned by both groups, positive reinterpretation and self-esteem, both of which belong to emotion-focused strategies, played a significant role as well. This finding suggests that preferences as regards coping strategies change in time; one of the aims of the present study is therefore to comment further on the process of developing such strategies by investigating a group that is, as far as interpreting experience is concerned, situated between professional interpreters and trainees.

4. Methods

4.1. Study design and participants

The aim of the study was to investigate young interpreters' coping strategies related to stressors and to discover specific problems related to their profession. Furthermore, the goal of the study was to understand how young interpreters perceive their roles, what challenges they come across while interpreting and how they cope with difficult situations. In order to provide a complex picture of their perspectives, the questions referred not only to the occupational environment, but also touched upon the perception of the profession among family and friends. The participants were young interpreters who hold a degree in Translation Studies or a related discipline, and work as interpreters at least as freelancers. They also came from monolingual families and did not spend more than a semester in a country in which their working language is spoken. This was done in light of recent research on bilingualism which suggested that there are significant differences in emotionality when one uses native or foreign language (Dewaele 2004; Caldwell-Harris 2014).

4.2 Data collection and procedures

Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participants of the study. The interviews were conducted in Polish, then they were translated into English by the author of the paper. The interviews took place individually – five of them were conducted at the University of Warsaw where the author works. Three of the interviews were scheduled after the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, therefore, they were conducted via Skype. Participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were informed about the goal of the research, and the author received their consent to record and interpret the data. After the data had been collected, they were transcribed verbatim. To ensure anonymity of the participants, their names were replaced by symbols, ranging from S1 to S8. In order to avoid response bias, participants were encouraged to add their own comments during the interview. They were told that no answer is right or wrong, and there was no time limit as regards the length of the interview.

4.3. Development of interview questions

Interview questions were developed on the basis of a literature review. They touched upon both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of aptitude. Then, they were consulted with a qualitative researcher working in the field of psychology and a recent alumnus of Translation Studies from the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. The final interviewing protocol was followed by clarifying questions, if necessary.

5. Qualitative analysis

In the qualitative interview transcripts, four main categories were identified: A) Principles of the profession and its reception; B) Emotions with regard to the profession; C) Coping with difficult situations; D) Self-perception and self-improvement. Exemplary quotations were provided in tables below.

A1: Reception of the profession among friends
- They are impressed, it has an aura of prestige. They imagine that every interpreter is an ideal interpreter. So my memory is perfect, my language skills are flawless, not necessarily native ones. This is the stereotype that is often recurring: knowledge of native language is not as important, and since I am an interpreter I act like dictionary: I know everything about the language, culture… They are impressed. In their mind we are, well, there is a great mind power inside of us [S2]
- It's good. I mean, it is kind of, moderately prestigious, let's say. Yeah, you must know the language very well, they say. [S4]
- I think people underrate interpreters a bit. I don't know about other languages, but I have a feeling that English if often belittled. It is believed that C1 level is a standard, but I'd say it's closer to B1+. People don't say it directly, but I feel that they respect interpreters from other languages more. But there are people who respect my profession and admit they wouldn't be able to do this, so there is some prestige here. [S7]

A2: Reception of the profession by clients
- Clients very often want to work even for free because it is just, just a few sentences, some scattered phrases. So they wouldn't want to pay for it, just treat it as a favor. [S3]
- The Polish are demanding, critical. I had a situation when this made interpreting harder, looking at the faces… well, it is said that everyone knows English, thinks he or she knows… There is some criticism involved just by this kind of reception. […] The threshold of tolerance is low, as far as the Polish are concerned. [S6]
- I think the overall awareness of the profession has improved over the years, but I still think many clients do not realize that being an interpreter is a difficult job. The concept of booths seems to be completely alien for some. I also think that they are surprised at how much our services cost. But that's mostly the case with private clients, not corporations or organizations. [S8]

A3: Language preferences
- It's strange, but in my case from Polish into English. It stems from the ease, I mean, English is more malleable. In a Polish into English interpretation I can modify the words, start interpreting even not knowing how the sentence ends. From English into Polish… very often I don't really know what the point of the speaker is, and I have a delay, I can't start. [S6]
- This is a really good question. I think I prefer from Spanish into Polish. Why? This is somehow connected with cognitive processes, because, well, because it happens, for example, that if I was speaking Spanish with someone, and then I switch into Polish, I'm adding Spanish words. And when I speak Polish, and then Spanish, this doesn't happen as often. Something like that. [S4]
- Definitely into English, I interpret… Definitely I'm less stressed when interpreting into English and way more into German, because in Polish the verb is always at the beginning of a sentence. In German, the verb is very often at the end, and this is demanding, this is very demanding.

	This is, well, a question of interpreting the grammar of Polish into the grammar of German. [S3]
	A4: Characteristics of a good interpreter
-	A good translator definitely has to be self-confident. He has to act that he is self-confident, has to convince the audience that what he says is true. He has to have a good technique of note taking. […] He has to have a good voice which people would enjoy listening to, and of course, how to say it, language competences, this is a foundation. [S3]
-	First of all, flexibility. I have worked with interpreters who, instead of solving problems, were causing them. If I from the get go work with somebody who starts complaining, sees only problems, there's no booth, no good equipment, doesn't want to find a solution such as "Hey, it is loud, we have to speak louder", but has a feeling that there will be problems, well, there will be problems then. So flexibility. But a good interpreter should be humble. I can't imagine a situation in which somebody from the audience corrects me and I'd ignore that completely. [S6]
-	He should be empathetic, be able to talk to the other person, people he interprets. He should be engaged. I think that if you are not emotionally invested, you will not interpret something well, and even the client will feel treated instrumentally, that's what I think. [S4]
-	Like I said – being able to use his voice or face. But also communicativeness, flexibility. It might not be obvious, but good physical condition. Maybe not in simultaneous interpreting, but in business contexts or generally in consecutive interpreting you are standing all the time, or you keep following someone, so you need some basic stamina. [S7]
	A5: The role of feedback
-	Aside from my time at university, I have never received feedback. [S5]
-	It happens, but rarely. I'd say I receive feedback around 25% of times. I think clients usually don't know much about language and they think that if I interpret, then I must be good. If anything, I receive feedback from people I interpret, speakers. [S7]
-	I think if someone wants me to interpret I assume that this person doesn't speak this language, although recently I got an assignment form a girl who speaks English but doesn't feel as confident to interpret, so if I had received feedback that everything went well, that would have been nice because she knows something about English. I might have felt a bit better inside, but a thank you is enough for me, and of course money. [S2]

Table 2 *Main category A: Principles of the profession and its reception*

Theme A1: Reception of the profession among friends

Young interpreters reported that their profession is respected by their friends or family, although it was reported that they do not know much about the specifics of the job. The perception is rather stereotypical and focused on technical aspects, rather than emotional. One person mentioned that the perception of interpreters may vary depending on their working languages, with English being underestimated in comparison to more exotic languages. Furthermore, interpreters seem to be respected more than written translators.

Theme A2: Reception of the profession by clients

Interpreters stated that their clients tend to be critical and demanding, and they often fail to provide interpreters with appropriate equipment. On the other hand, it was reported that the situation was better than it used to be, thus the awareness as regards the profession might be growing, albeit it is a slow process.

Theme A3: Language preferences

Participants stated that they usually interpret from Polish into their working languages. However, some of them had scarce experience in interpreting from a foreign language into Polish. The malleability of a foreign language was named a factor in interpreters' preferences, as well as their experience in interpreting onto a foreign language.

Theme A4: Characteristics of a good interpreter

Interpreters named aspects pertaining mostly to personality traits. Self-confidence was named the most important aspect of being good at interpreting. Flexibility and ability to work under pressure and stressful conditions were regarded as desirable as well.

Theme A5: The role of feedback

It turned out that feedback is given to young interpreters rather sparingly. If they receive feedback, it is given to them by speakers, rather than clients. Positive feedback was reported to be a pleasant aspect of interpreting and some of participants expressed desire to receive it more often.

B1: Remembering of assignments
- Not really, heh. I mean, maybe what the general topic was, but when it comes to some details – not really. No… More so the speaker I had to interpret rather than what he was talking about. [S4]
- I don't remember, even the first one. Never remember the details, or what was happening around me. [S3]
- Back then, I really wanted to ask them if it was good, but I thought they would see this as a weakness. Interestingly, I don't remember exactly what I was interpreting, I just don't remember the text. [S8]
B2: The first assignment
- Lots of stress, but at the same time a lot of excitement. [S1]
- After high school, I took part in a conference, and the interpreter was there. It was a consecutive interpretation, from English into Polish. Something happened on the last day of the conference, he had to come back to his town. I was asked if I could, because I knew the organizers, I had to interpret. I was like "there's nobody else?". There wasn't. So, I was 19 at that time, very nervous, grabbed the microphone, I stood in the center of the hall. Everything was very dynamic, but I thought it went pretty well for a debut, it gave me a feeling of being good at something, especially because people were approaching me saying "hey, that was good, is this your job?". I think this was a good starting point. [S6]
- It was even before I started my studies. I was very stressed, way more than now. I stood aside, so that as few people as possible could see me. My voice was shaking, that's for sure. However, it was a challenge, so I managed to stay to the end. [S5]
B3: Satisfaction
- Oh well. You know, a sense of a job well done, when I interpret the output relatively faithfully, and, if possible, nicely. Also, a chance to deepen my general knowledge. [S1]
- I'm always happy when I can interpret, I think I feel satisfaction. It's difficult to say why. I'm always happy when I can use my knowledge of a foreign language, and this is, well, let's say, facilitation of communication with other people. It's a kind of challenge, at least in your own opinion. I tend to check new things, it's something for development. [S5]

- Satisfaction that I managed to interpret something that wouldn't be understood without me. The fact you interpreted something which was completely foreign. The fact that, after all, thanks to interpreters the world becomes more, more of a unity, because there are no borders between one language and another. Even though such borders do exist, the interpreter can build a bridge between them. It sounds grand, but that's the way it is. Uniting people with one another, that happens if we interpret for a large audience. I think this feeling of satisfaction is every time. Sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller, it also depends how happy I am with my performance. [S3]
B4: Stress and type of working language - It depends, but I can image a situation in which interpreting into Polish would be more stressing than into English. [S5] - Like I said before, when I interpret into a foreign language, I feel stronger emotions. Maybe it's connected with seeing something as a challenge, tough to say. Stress probably is a bit higher, but it's a kind of positive stress. [S7] - Every contact with Italian, be it active or passive, is a big emotional load. The emotions are always there, but the language doesn't have a huge impact on them. Maybe I was more stressed when I didn't know Italian that well as now, but now it doesn't have a big impact on me. [S8]

Table 3 *Main Category B: Emotions with regard to the profession*

Theme B1: Remembering of assignments

According to participants, only selected aspects of assignments tend to be remembered. Speakers than topics of their speeches are remembered. It was also reported that the first assignments are well remembered, but with time they tend to be treated less emotionally.

Theme B2: The first assignment

According to participants, the first assignment was a stressful situation. Interpreters were able to precisely describe the situation, speakers, topics, and organizers of the event. Some saw the first assignment as a challenge, which helped them to cope with the situation. In most cases their first assignment took place before they started studying. The emotions named after having finished the assignment were pride, self-respect, and excitement. The significance of receiving positive feedback was named a factor in their desire to continue interpreting.

Theme B3: Satisfaction

Satisfaction was acknowledged as a recurring aspect of their in their interpreting work. A chance to expand their general knowledge as well as being able to form a sense of community around their clients was mentioned. Also, a bridge metaphor was used – interpreters were perceived as ambassadors who enable communication between people from different cultures. Interpreters saw their work as important and relevant to people. Moreover, a boost in self-confidence was mentioned to occur after a successful interpreting.

Theme B4: Stress and type of working language

Subjects reported that they are slightly more engaged when they interpret from a foreign language into Polish. However, they perceived this aspect as motivating rather than stressful. Moreover, a task-oriented approach was dominant in their accounts. Interpreters also said that their level of stress was higher when their proficiency of their working languages was lower.

C1: The day before the assignment
- Assignments are assignments. I try not to think about them, sometimes, if I have the materials, I go through them. If I have the materials, for example with a specific sentence, I'm work out the problems strategically. But it's not like I interpret the whole speech before, especially since once I did that and it turned out that I was given the wrong materials, and my speaker started talking about something completely different. [S6]
- I try to prepare well. Simple as that. I go to sleep early, eat well – this is crucial, heh. [S7]
- I try to walk around and walk the stress off. Stop concentrating on the act of interpretation, just go with the flow. Of course, if we are talking about specialized translations, I try to absorb the vocabulary, revise something. But the day before is for relax and chill. [S8]
C2: Reactions to their mistakes
- It depends, it depends when I realize that. Sometimes it's too late, once I corrected myself only the second time the word was uttered. It's such a fast situation that it's tough to correct myself instantly. If I see a mistake and I know how to correct it, I do it. Sometimes I feel less confident. Once I didn't know the word and the speaker hinted what his word was, and I didn't feel good about it. It was a simple word, but I knew it, I just couldn't recall it in that moment. It doesn't disrupt the process of interpretation, but in such a moment I feel a bit incompetent. [S5]
- I am ashamed, heh. Above all, I'm ashamed. I just look how others react, whether they realized that or not. If so, I try to act as if everything is all right. If not, I say that I made a mistake, and the proper meaning is this and that. [S4]
- I don't like such situations because it gets me out of the rhythm. I'm more annoyed with that than stressed – I know that the interpretation will suffer regardless. If I can correct it fast enough, I do it. If not, I tell myself "well, tough luck", and I try to go with the flow. [S7]
- Most of the times I try not to laugh, I find it funny. Well, it also depends on how serious this interpreting is. [S6]
C3: Distance and self-irony
- I keep telling myself that nobody will die if I make a mistake. [S2]
- I try to tell myself at the very beginning… I have my saying that I tell myself before I start: "bigger events were crashed". This helps me distance myself a bit. I conclude that if there was somebody who could do a better job than me, he'd be here. If the organizers believe that I am good, then I just do my job, and I think I try to have some distance, not to worry. [S6]
- Chill and self-distance. The awareness that we all make mistakes. Paradoxically, purism may do more harm than good. [S8]
C4: Interaction with speakers
- I think you can feel more confident if you hear how somebody speaks. I think this could help by initiating a kind of relationship so that you can feel more comfortable with this person. [S5]
- I feel best when I exchange a few words with the speaker. Some human contact, yeah. Not, well, mechanically. What's more, he was Spanish, earlier speakers were from Latin America. This is easier, these people are more open, they initiate this contact. They see me, walk up to me, and we have a small conversation. [S4]
- Before the interpretation we even talked, and it really helped me clear everything up. [S2]
- The speakers are not aware of the fact they are being interpreted and interaction with them can change it. [S6]

Table 4. *Main category 3: Coping with difficult situations*

Theme C1: The day before the assignment

The day before the assignment was named as highly stressful. Avoidance-oriented strategies, such as blocking negative thoughts and going for a walk were mentioned by subjects. However, task-oriented strategies were also named (revising vocabulary, thinking about potential problems in interpreting). The degree of stress perceived the day before varied according to their perceived subjective significance of assignment. An assignment for friends or acquaintances was seen as less stressful than one for somebody they did not know.

Theme C2: Reactions to mistakes

Emotion-oriented and task-oriented strategies were mentioned by interpreters. As regards the former category, shame and annoyance was mentioned as prevalent emotions felt after the mistake was made. Humor was also named as a strategy of coping, which is an example of a positive emotion-focused coping technique. However, task-oriented strategies, such as trying to come up with an equivalent, were mentioned. Regardless of the type of strategy, participants reported that making a mistake is a situation that gets them out of their rhythm and has rather negative impact on their performance.

Theme C3: Distance and self-irony

Distance was seen as a crucial factor in preparation to assignments. Self-irony helped interpreters to be at peace with making them.

Theme C4: Interaction with speakers

Contact with other people was discussed as a stress-relieving factor before interpreting. If interpreters have an opportunity to talk with speakers, they do so. It was reported that their performance would improve after contacting speakers. Interaction with speakers was also named a facilitating aspect.

D1: The Polish language
- I try, but it's difficult, because of so many nuances, I try to care about my Polish, although I know that this is getting off the beaten tracks. If I use Polish as my native language, the mistakes will keep on occurring. They or some accretions. But I do try to discover what is a mistake and what is not, I try to remember about it and use it. And I read a lot. It helps me to keep touch with a different, let's say, register. [S6]
- I read books and consult our language clinic in case of any doubts. [S1]
- Hmm, regretfully, I have to admit that I don't train it. It's sad, because it definitely would be helpful. Sure, I read books, articles, but I don't do anything more. [S5]
- I try to read articles from newspapers, newspapers of high quality, but I admit that I don't train Polish very often. [S8]

D2: The choice of the profession
- Most of all, it was related to lifestyle. Namely, prospects of trips, but I also thought I had some talents to do this, linguistically speaking. [S1]
- I started studying English because I would be hopeless at anything else. Or so I thought at that time, it might have been an easy choice. Anyways, it started with first interpreting classes, it was already Masters. I noticed I was pretty good at it, better that most of the year, so I decided to go that route. [S7]
- This profession seemed way more prestigious than being a teacher, and I had only these two choices. It was a question of prestige, I thought my earnings would be better, so there's that. That's why I made that decision, what happened later, that's a different story. [S3]
- It began with the fact I studied Translation; I've always liked challenges. It is really connected with auditory aspects, sounds, melody, etc. That was my beginning, my first contact with interpreting, more classic types: consecutive, simultaneous… It's a kind of challenge. [S4]

D3: Diction and articulation
- I lack the technique and I would like to get some experience as to how to work with the voice. [S3]
- I try to work on my diction – I said before that this profession reminds me that of an actor. I know that you must know how to use your voice. I have a coursebook and I do the exercises. [S7]
- I should, but when it comes to voice hygiene, I try to do some articulation exercises before the interpretation. I'm a teacher by profession, also an interpreter, recently I have dabbled in organized tours… I work with my voice. It's not easy, takes a lot of practice, time… [S6]

D4: The role of talent
- You can train a lot of things, but, you have to have that something extra, something difficult to define, but sometimes you can see who is among the very best, and who is merely among the very good. I hope I'm in the first group, at least that's my goal! [S8]
- You can train it in a way, but not really… No, not everyone can be an interpreter. I don't think everyone can do it. [S4]
- I think it's 30% of talent and passion, and 70% of hard work and craft. It's similar to writing, I have a feeling that these are very similar disciplines. It's said that interpretation and translation is a reconstructive work, but I don't think so. If we're talking about documents, the sure, but if it's something creative, then it's much more difficult a job.
- I'd say 20% talent, and the rest – work, preparation, and practice. Simply put, experience. [S1]

Table 5 *Main Category D: Self-perception and self-improvement*

Theme D1: The Polish language

Interpreters perceived their Polish as an important aspect of their job. They do not take part in specialized courses, but they try to work on accuracy and switching between registers on their own. It was reported that native language was a neglected aspect of their craft, as in some cases participants expressed regret that they do not spend enough time on the Polish language. Also, the lack of specialized classes on university was mentioned.

Theme D2: The choice of the profession

Prestige and lifestyle were mentioned as important factors regarding the choice of the profession. Also, positive feedback after first interpretation classes proved beneficial to interpreters' motivation. Another factor that was named in this section was a challenging nature of the profession.

Theme D3: Diction and articulation

Similarly to Theme D1, participants acknowledge the importance of these skills. One person admitted that the knowledge as regards voice emission, which was gained during his pedagogical training, has proven to be instrumental in his career as an interpreter. Those who did not receive formal education in this regard noted that they try to develop these skills on they own. Participants perceived diction and articulation as skills which are difficult to master, but helpful in everyday practice.

Theme D4: The role of talent

Talent was mentioned as a factor which does not play a crucial role, it is difficult to achieve absolute mastery without it. On the other hand, talent on its own was perceived as insufficient. A metaphor of writing was used – it takes practice in both disciplines, as experience was said to be another key component. Talent was not named explicitly by interpreters – it was described as something imponderable, pertaining to something intangible.

6. General discussion and limitations

One of the fundamental aims of the interview-based study was to collect qualitative data on stressors in interpreting and young interpreters' ways of coping. The results illustrate that stress is an essential part of the profession, which is in line with previous research. However, coping strategies reported by young interpreters were varied and typically included both problem- and emotion-oriented ones. Avoidance-oriented coping was not reported by participants. The results of the study may thus complement Korpal's (2017) experiment which suggested that self-esteem and positive reinterpretation (emotion-oriented strategies) were predominant in the accounts of trainees, but it was unclear whether those strategies would actually be implemented in interpreting practice. This study shows that young interpreters use both types of strategies to a similar degree. While emotion-oriented strategies (distance and self-irony) were predominant in the accounts of young interpreters, problem-oriented strategies (e.g. focus on the task and preparation) were also mentioned by the interviewees. Therefore, young interpreters adjust their strategies to a given situation.

The level of stress varied depending on the assignment. Firstly, one might observe that the highest level of stress was observed when the participants recalled their first assignment. The first assignment was also well-remembered by all participants, whereas further interpretations were recalled rather fragmentarily. This finding has its evidence in neuroscientific research as people tend to remember stressful events better due to stress-induced plasticity in the amygdala (Roozendaal et al. 2009). One can thus see that perceived stress decreases with more interpreting practice. Moreover, some assignments were seen as less stressful, particularly those commissioned by their friends. Such assignments were not seen as demanding, and the emotions accompanying them were not debilitating and closer to eustress than distress. It is worth noting that most of the studies in the literature focused on interpreters working in extreme environments. The aim of this study was to discuss stressors and coping strategies of interpreters working in more ordinary conditions, e.g. in tourism, culture, and education. Therefore, their stress level was probably lower than interpreters' working with refugees.

It needs to be taken of the account that the results of the study are preliminary, and it is impossible to generalize them. Further research is necessary to verify them. Some issues of the study as well as possible room for improvement will be discussed below.

The results of the study might prove beneficial in designing a follow-up quantitative study which would provide more definite answers as regards the development of coping strategies and well-being of young interpreters. Organizing a focus group with some of the participants might provide an ample opportunity to discuss the themes further. The study captures the changes in coping strategies to a limited degree. A longitudinal study in which the participants in which the participants would be interviewed in different stages of their careers might capture how young interpreters change their strategies and attitude towards interpreting. Such a study could also be accompanied by obtaining qualitative data from other sources than interviews (diaries, surveys, journals) which would improve the reliability the results and validate their interpretation. The study might also be replicated internationally to verify whether the problems that the participants of this study encountered are Poland-specific. Further conclusions might be obtained by conducting a similar interview-study involving a comparison between two interpreting modes (consecutive and simultaneous), as no quantitative studies have been conducted in which the two modes would be compared as regards their stressfulness..

What is more, the study investigated only the perspective of young interpreters. Future studies might also explore the perspective of others (i.e., friends, colleagues, clients) regarding the profession of interpreter to verify whether young interpreters' accounts are valid. This might bring forward valuable insight as regards public awareness of the profession and what should be done to improve it. The perception of interpreters revolved around technical aspects of the profession (language proficiency, good memory, strong cognitive skills), whereas factors pertaining to psychological aspects were scarcely mentioned. According to the interviewees, the portrayal of an interpreter is thus incomplete oversimplified. As interaction with speakers was mentioned as one of the key factors facilitating the process of interpreting, it might be beneficial to inform speakers at various events that they are being interpreted. Furthermore, the interviewees reported that they wish they received feedback after having completed the assignment. It was mentioned that if they do receive comments, they are mostly negative. This finding is in line with previous research as Sakamoto and Foedisch (2017: 345-346) discovered that while translators consider negative feedback a good learning opportunity, positive feedback often does not reach them and it is a sign of a weak rapport between the client and the translator. This may suggest that the awareness as regards the profession is still relatively low in Poland. The conclusions of the article can thus be treated as guidelines as to what should be done to raise that awareness and how to educate clients about the intricacies of the profession of interpreter. A fruitful cooperation between both parties might help interpreters in enhancing their performance, and clients/speakers in receiving an improved product.

Overall, young interpreters perceived the profession as prestigious and challenging, but satisfactory and offering numerous chances for self-development. Facilitating interaction with others, prestige, contact with people, and facing challenges were main factors behind the choice of the profession. Also, in their accounts they touched upon factors pertaining more to personality and internal factors such as flexibility or communicativeness. They also are eager to work on their craft. Talent was seen as only a small part of the profession; experience was mentioned as a factor more important than talent. Stress-coping strategies may thus change with experience.

In conclusion, the results offer a perspective regarding what is taught at university and how that theory is confronted with practice. It might be beneficial to introduce courses on stress management and coping in university education so that young interpreters would be able to implement them consciously.

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