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“Will I make it or will I make a fool of myself”: Polish-English certified interpreters’ experience of anxiety

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Abstract

The paper presents a study of the psycho-affective factor of anxiety experienced by Polish-English certified interpreters while performing certified consecutive interpreting. The first part of the article sketches the theoretical background of the study, by focusing on interpreter psychology, a subfield of interpreting studies offering the methodological scaffolding for the study of interpreting-related psychological phenomena, and on anxiety as one of the components of the interpreter’s psycho-affectivity. What follows is an overview of certified interpreting in the Polish context. The major part of the article provides an insight into the study of the certified interpreters’ experience of anxiety—its types, causes, linguistic and extra-linguistic manifestations. What emerges from the study is that anxiety is quite a potent psycho-affective factor which is likely to obstruct certified interpreting performance and lower the quality of its outcome—the oral output.

Keywords: certified interpreting; interpreter’s psycho-affectivity; psycho-affective factors; anxiety.

1. Introduction

What can nowadays be observed in interpreting studies is its greater orientation towards multidisciplinary, understood as transferring methodological concepts and research methods from other disciplines and exploiting them for the needs of investigating interpreting phenomena. One of the areas from which interpreting scholars have been borrowing theoretical and methodological frameworks is psychology, thereby contributing to the development of the field of interpreting studies which may be known as *interpreter psychology* (Walczyński, 2019). This area of scholarship offers the methodological frameworks for exploring a variety of psychological aspects of the interpreting process. One of such psychological phenomena which need profound investigation is the interpreter’s psycho-affectivity constituted by the so-called psycho-affective factors.

The paper presents a fragment of a large-scale research project about interpreters’ psycho-affectivity carried out among 76 Polish-English certified interpreters in the form of online surveying. Thus, the scope of this study is limited to the presentation of the factual, attitudinal and behavioural data related to certified interpreters’ experience of anxiety. In other words, the study addresses the views the certified interpreters hold of themselves and their certified consecutive interpreting practice in the context of anxiety which they experienced at different stages of the interpreting process. What emerges from the study is that there are manifold causes of anxious feelings as well as their numerous manifestations—both in the linguistic as well as non-linguistic aspects of interpreting performance. Thus, anxiety is also an essential component of the so-called *psycho-affective sequence*—a multifaceted network of reactions occurring among stimuli, psycho-affective factors and the interpreter’s responses visible in his/her linguistic and non-linguistic performance (cf. Gorman, 2005).

The paper starts with some preliminary remarks concerning the psycho-affective strand of interpreter psychology, with anxiety at its centre. What follows is a short overview of certified interpreting in the Polish context. However, the major part of this contribution is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the data provided by a sample of 76 Polish-English certified interpreters on their experience of anxiety, its causes as well as linguistic and extra-linguistic manifestations. The discussion is supported by a collection of quotes excerpted from the answers to the questionnaire items, which shed some light on how the respondents view their experience of anxiety. Finally, the paper offers some implications for interpreter training which could, at least to some extent, mitigate the negative impact of anxiety on certified interpreting performance. Generally speaking, it seems that anxiety is one of the few psycho-affective factors which have the potential of adversely affecting nearly all components of the certified interpreting process and its outcome—the target text, disrupting in this way interpreter-mediated communication.

2. Interpreter psychology as a research framework for studying interpreters’ experience of anxiety

In recent years, interpreting studies have been rapidly developing. Among many themes touched upon by interpreting scholars are those related to the psychological aspects of the interpreter’s profession. For this reason, it may be advocated that this subfield of interpreting studies could be termed “interpreter psychology”. It tries to account for a variety of psychological phenomena occurring during the process of interpreting. Those phenomena can be of two-fold nature: they can be related to the cognitive aspects of interpreting or they can be linked to the psycho-affectivity of interpreting act participants. Therefore, with a view to the character of those phenomena, what may be postulated is that interpreter psychology has two interrelated strands: the cognitive one and the psycho-affective one.

However, so far relatively more advanced research has been carried out within the cognitive strand by such prominent scholars as Gerver (1976), Seleskovitch (1975), Moser-Mercer (2008) or Gile (2009, 2015), to mention just a few. They have explored cognitive phenomena inherent in interpreting like, for instance, working memory, information retrieval, input comprehension and processing or cognitive load. The psycho-affective strand, although presently attracting more and more interest (cf. Brisau et al., 1994; Bontempo & Napier, 2011; Kurz, 2013; Colonomos, 2015; Korpál, 2017), is less abundant in the body of research with still many lacunae and research questions waiting for a thorough study.

One of the aspects explored within the psycho-affective strand of interpreter psychology is the issue of the interpreter’s psycho-affectivity, which may be defined as a continually active, complex and multidimensional component of the interpreter’s psychological construction. Due to the continuity of its activity and vulnerability to external factors, it may affect nearly all constitutive elements of the interpreting process.

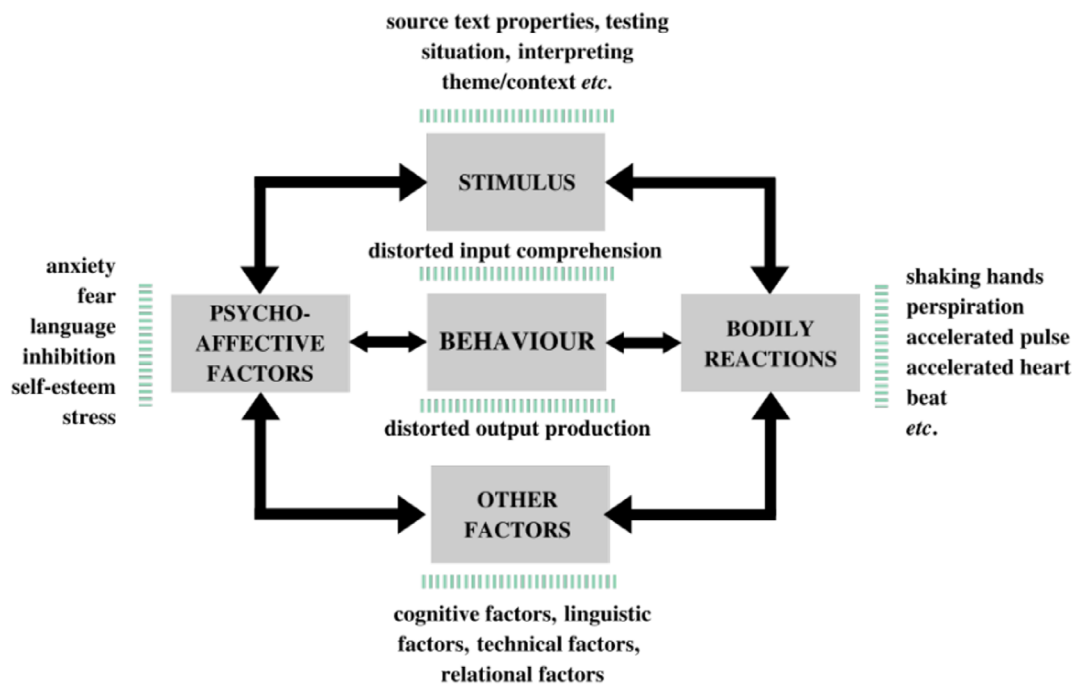
The interpreter’s psycho-affectivity is constituted by the so-called psycho-affective factors which have been found to condition interpreting performance. Those factors can be defined as “individual personality traits” (Arnold & Brown, 1999: 8) which manifest themselves in a variety of interpreter’s emotions, feelings, thoughts and attitudes. Several studies (e.g., Kurz, 2013; Korpál, 2017; Walczyński, 2019) of psycho-affective factors experienced by interpreters have provided ample evidence to suggest that, during their work, interpreters, like all other people, are affected by the activity of those psycho-affective variables and that is why the stereotypical concept of an interpreter as a “transparent”, emotionally uninvolved “voice” of interpreting act participants is merely an idealisation which—in real life—is hardly attainable.

Among the psycho-affective factors are anxiety, fear, language inhibition / language ego / language boundaries, personality dimension (i.e., extroversion/ambiversion/introversion), self-esteem, motivation and stress. All of them form an essential component of the psycho-affective sequence (cf. Gorman, 2005), which is a complex network of interrelations and inter-

actions among the stimulus, psycho-affective factors, interpreter’s behaviour(s) and bodily reactions as well as other variables of cognitive, technical and relational nature. Walczyński’s model (2019: 563), in its expanded version presented in Figure 1, seems to capture the essence of the psycho-affective sequence. A stimulus (e.g., people participating in an interpreting act, i.e., primary participants for whom the interpreter interprets, and/or their verbal and non-verbal behaviours) can provoke the activation of a given psycho-affective factor (e.g., anxiety), which—in turn—can trigger the operation of other factors (e.g., memory retrieval problems). This can result in the way interpreter performs interpreting. For instance, the interpreter may miscomprehend the source utterance or fail to transfer the complete source meaning in the target language. Moreover, it can also affect the interpreter’s body with such bodily reactions as increased perspiration or accelerated pulse being the manifestations of psycho-affective factors. As argued by Walczyński (*ibid.*), “(...) [t]he (...) model accentuates this complex nature of the interpreter’s psycho-affectivity as well as the many interdependencies occurring among the stimulus, psycho-affectivity, behaviours, bodily reactions and other factors”.

FIGURE 1

Psycho-affective sequence (Walczyński, 2019: 563)



As stated above, one of the psycho-affective factors which have the highest potential of hindering interpreting performance is anxiety. In psychology, anxiety is often viewed as “an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterised by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system that accompanies these feelings” (Spielberger, 1972: 19). Moreover, because it is sometimes

“[...] associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension” (Arnold & Brown, 1999: 8), some scholars equate anxiety with stress (cf. Arnaiz-Castro & Pérez-Luzardo Díaz, 2016). However, at times, stress, the experience of which is partially due to external factors, can intensify the experience of anxiety (cf. Korpala, 2017; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008) and, therefore, those two terms should not be considered synonymous. Other researchers claim that anxiety is “[a] general term roughly meaning worry and concern of a fairly intense kind” (Richards, 2009: 21). What is stressed in some definitions of this psycho-affective factor is that anxiety is a response to some danger. For instance, Reevy et al. (2010: 83) believe that it is “[a] reaction to a perceived threat”, Piechurska-Kuciel (2008: 28) claims that it is “(...) a socio-psycho-biologic phenomenon experienced as a foreboding dread or threat resulting from the individual’s appraisal of a situation and of their capacity to deal with it”, while Riskind et al. perceive anxiety as “[...] an anticipatory state of active preparation for dealing with threat” (Riskind et al., 2000: 837). At this point, it should be highlighted that, because of the presence of threat, the above-quoted definitions of anxiety partly overlap with the explanations of fear. Both of those psycho-affective factors are classified as basic emotions (e.g., Strongman, 2003) and they are at times explained with regard to each other. What is crucially different is that, as regards anxiety, the danger is subjective (i.e., a person may see some threat in a given situation which is not objectively hazardous), while fear involves the actual threat, objectively existing in the real world. For this reason, it may be stated that interpreters experience anxiety more often than fear although there are some contexts in which fear may be activated (e.g., in interpreting in conflict zones or during wars).

Anxiety can be classified into several types. However, of relevance to the study reported in the further part of this paper are two classifications. The first taxonomy is related to the effect of anxiety. Hence, there is *facilitative/beneficial anxiety* and there is *debilitative/inhibitory anxiety*. Another classification is broader and presents two general types of anxiety: *archaic anxiety*, related to the interpreter’s past events, and *existential anxiety*, which is further divided into *acceptance anxiety*, *orientation anxiety* and *performance anxiety* (cf. Heron, 1989). Acceptance anxiety may ensue when the interpreter is unsure of whether he/she will be accepted as a legitimate participant in the interpreting act or whether other participants will recognise the importance of the figure of the interpreter, without whom the interpreter-mediated interlingual communication act may not be successful. Orientation anxiety may result from the interpreter’s thoughts related to whether he/she will understand what will happen during the interpreting act. Not only does it refer to comprehending the source language message but it is also associated with the entire interpreting context—who speaks when, when to halt the input production and start interpreting, when to take notes and when to pause, etc. The third type of anxiety—performance anxiety—is strictly related to the interpreter’s view of his/her skills (i.e., the command of languages, interpreting skills, etc.). Quite often, interpreters’ experience anxiety is directly linked to the so-called *rumination*—a kind of obsessive thoughts about the interpreters’ alleged deficiencies in interpreting or linguistic competences as well as about their self-perceived low quality of the interpretation delivered.

It has already been stated that the interpreter’s psycho-affectivity as a whole has only recently become an object of inquiry for a growing number of interpreting scholars. Nevertheless, there have been some interesting studies trying to relate anxiety to interpreting performance. Among such research endeavours are, for instance, the proposal of “interpreter’s psycholinguistic profile” (Brisau et al., 1994), which—next to the linguistic factors (i.e., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension, delivery) and neurolinguistic factors (i.e., attention, memory, cerebral lateralisation)—makes a direct reference to psycho-affective factors (i.e., self-concept, cognitive style, real-life knowledge, anxiety, attitude, stress resistance, metacognition). As regards anxiety, the scholars state that anxiety—in its both forms: the facilitative and debilitating ones—is likely to affect interpreters at work. For this reason, interpreters should be familiarised with the effects of this psycho-affective factor and the ways in which they can mitigate its negative impact. Thus, such knowledge should be incorporated into interpreter training as part of the “interpreter’s psycholinguistic profile”.

Anxiety has also been investigated with reference to interpreter training. For example, Jiménez Ivars and Pinazo Catalayud (2001) studied the relationship between the experience of anxiety and trainee interpreters’ experience in interpreting. Using a set of correlations of the data collected from questionnaire surveys and examining public speaking confidence (i.e., a revised version of the Confidence in Public Speaking Questionnaire (Méndez et al., 1999)) and anxiety (i.e., the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, Gorsuch & Lushene, 1988)) as well as trainees’ consecutive interpreting exam, they tested three hypotheses: (1) about the relationship between speaking in public and anxiety (i.e., the more trainees are afraid to speak publicly, the more anxiety they experience); (2) about the relationship between speaking in public and interpreting quality (i.e., the more trainees are afraid to speak publicly, the worse quality their interpretations manifest); (3) about the relationship between anxiety and interpreting quality (i.e., the more anxious trainees are, the worse quality their interpretations manifest). Generally speaking, the results of the studies confirm the first hypothesis. As regards the second hypothesis, the authors found evidence to refute it. Moreover, they also argue that in their case, trainees could have experienced facilitative anxiety which helped them perform better. In the case of the third hypothesis, it was also not validated, which can be explained by the fact that, when faced with an interpreting task, trainee interpreters focused on performing consecutive interpreting, rather than on concentrating on their experience of anxiety. Overall, what may be cautiously concluded from the study is that anxiety does not necessarily have to be a negative factor, decreasing interpreting quality.

Another study examining anxiety in the context of interpreting was carried out by Chiang (2009) at nine universities in Taiwan which offer courses in Chinese-English interpreting. Chiang, who used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), supplemented with the Background Information Questionnaire—a demographic data-collecting survey—, demonstrated that anxiety is often present in interpreting training. He also found that foreign language anxiety (i.e., anxiety related to the use of a foreign language; in this case—English, which was the trainee interpreters’ target language) was experienced by

only approximately 30% of trainee interpreters. However, trainee interpreters’ experience of foreign language anxiety was less severe than in the case of other target language learners. One reason for this could be the fact that one *per* ten Taiwanese trainee interpreters participating in the study exhibited more confidence in using English since they had a better command of this language. However, for others, foreign language anxiety was still an obstacle to deal with. To overcome it, Chiang offers a few implications for interpreter training, among which there is a need to further develop trainee interpreters’ skills, mainly listening and speaking, which are mostly exploited by interpreters. Moreover, the scholar also postulates introducing a more positive psycho-affective framework which would foster trainee interpreters’ development of self-confidence by putting them in more successful interpreting tasks than those bringing failure. In this way, trainee interpreters’ level of anxiety, including foreign language anxiety, can decrease, thereby contributing to a better interpreting performance.

Foreign language anxiety and interpretation anxiety were also examined by Abed and Mohammed (2011). They used two scales—Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) and Interpretation Classroom Anxiety Scale (Chiang, 2006)—in order to measure the experience of those types of anxiety among 32 students. The scholars wished to obtain answers to two research questions: (1) about the occurrence of interpretation anxiety and its distinction from foreign language anxiety; (2) about the levels of both types of anxiety experienced by the subjects. Based on the outcomes of the research procedure, Abed and Mohammed concluded that indeed an interpreting class invokes more anxiety than a class devoted to foreign language learning. For this reason, they observed that there is such a phenomenon as interpretation anxiety which differs from general foreign language anxiety. Moreover, they also established several sources of interpretation anxiety (e.g., a motivation, low self-confidence, negative past interpreting experiences, input material properties as well as interpreting course aspects like, for instance, evaluation or the figure of the instructor). To limit the impact of the experience of negative anxiety on trainee interpreters’ performance, the scholars also suggest three implications for training. First of all, they recommend organising anxiety-free classroom settings in which trainee interpreters would not have to experience this psycho-affective factor. Secondly, they postulate using more technology in interpreter training. Finally, they believe that a course in interpreting should be taught in a more realistic setting, i.e., in an interpreting lab which would put trainee interpreters in a more probable situation. While the first two implications seem to be slightly far-fetched, especially because interpreting at large is rarely anxiety-free, and the authors do not provide ample justification for them, the third one seems legitimate.

One more study which needs a mention is the one carried out by Timarová and Salaets (2011), who examined the role of the so-called “soft skills” in interpreter training candidates’ self-selection. To investigate what properties candidates exhibited, they used three tests—the Inventory of Learning Styles (Vermunt & Rijswijk, 1987), the Achievement Motivation Test (Hermans, 1968/2004) and the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (Grant & Berg, 1948), which measured the levels of learning styles, achievement motivation and cognitive flexibility, respectively, among self-selected trainee

interpreters against a control group. As regards anxiety, the results of the tests indicate that those trainee interpreters who opted for interpreter training experienced slightly more facilitative anxiety and less debilitating anxiety, which, as the scholars argue, “[...] suggests greater tolerance of stress, again a trait highly desirable in interpreters [...]” (Timarová & Salaets, 2011: 50). Moreover, the scholars were also interested, among others, in the levels of debilitating and facilitative anxiety experienced by successful (passing) and unsuccessful (failing) trainee interpreters. Surprisingly, they found that there are no significant differences between the levels of debilitating anxiety between those two types of trainee interpreters. One argument justifying such a state of affairs is that those successful trainee interpreters might have developed some coping tactics which would mitigate the adverse impact of debilitating anxiety. Such trainees were also characterised by higher levels of facilitative anxiety, which may mean that anxiety could, to some extent, contribute to the success of some trainee interpreters by helping them interpret better.

As has been shown, the issue of anxiety experienced by interpreters and trainee interpreters is studied by more and more interpreting scholars within the frameworks of the psycho-affective strand of interpreter psychology. It seems that more profound studies of how this psycho-affective factor conditions the interpreter’s behaviours and the resulting interpreting performance can contribute to a better understanding of the intricacies of the interpreting process, by filling in some lacunae existing at the interface of interpreting and psychology. It is hoped that the discussion of the experience of anxiety occurring in the context of certified interpreting may—at least to some extent—help to bridge some of such gaps.

3. Certified interpreting in Poland as a psycho-affectively demanding profession

Certified interpreting is practised globally. However, in different countries, the term “certified interpreter” may refer to interpreting professions with different ranges of duties. Nevertheless, because the study reported in the next part of the paper was carried out among Polish-English certified interpreters, the Polish context of certified interpreting is presented. Hence, in Poland, this type of interpreting is performed by interpreters who have been granted the status of a certified (court) interpreter following a certification procedure. This procedure typically differs across countries and, perhaps for this reason, not everywhere it is such a psycho-affectively demanding profession.

The profession of a certified interpreter (and translator) is regulated in Poland by the Act on the Profession of a Certified Translator passed in 2004. Since in Poland there is no formal division between certified translators and certified interpreters¹, all certified translators are

1 This study pertains to interpreters and for this reason the denomination “certified interpreter” will be used.

at the same time certified interpreters and thus they are also obliged to provide interpreting services for those who do not speak Polish in certification-requiring contexts, the examples of which include court proceedings, legal actions in a notary’s office, police interrogations or questioning in an immigration office. Thus, certified interpreting in the Polish context pertains mostly to legal settings.

All individuals wishing to become certified translators/interpreters must undergo a difficult testing procedure administered by the State Examination Committee functioning in Poland’s Ministry of Justice. The success rate is relatively low since “[t]he examination for certified translators/interpreters is very difficult with the success rate not exceeding 25%” (Cieślik, 2016: 7)². This difficulty can be attributed to several factors. First of all, the texts to be translated may be linguistically difficult, so a profound command of the source and target languages is a prerequisite. Secondly, the texts quite often refer to very complex legal issues, so candidates need to demonstrate familiarity with the legal systems of the countries in which the source and target languages are used. Thirdly, the examination itself is usually the context in which candidates’ psycho-affectivity may manifest itself in the subjective experience of the more negative than positive psycho-affective factors such as anxiety, stress, lower self-esteem, stronger language inhibition or firmer language ego.

Generally speaking, albeit prestigious and proving the certified interpreter’s extraordinary interpreting skills, linguistic abilities and expertise, the profession can indeed be described as psycho-affectively demanding at least for several reasons which will also be highlighted in the next part of this paper. Among them are the obligations imposed on the representatives of this profession, including the certified interpreters’ necessity to be available nearly all the time, low remuneration in comparison to the skills and knowledge required, the imbalance of power observed during court proceedings or police interrogations or occasional disregard for the figure of a certified interpreter as a central figure of the interlingual communication act, without whom it would not take place. As will be shown below, those issues are often raised by Polish-English certified interpreters as the potential reasons for their experience of anxiety (and other negative psycho-affective factors).

4. Polish-English certified interpreters’ experience of anxiety: study

The investigation of Polish-English certified interpreters’ experience of anxiety is just a small fragment of a large-scale (mostly qualitative) study on the psycho-affective factors in consecutive interpreting (Walczyński, 2019). However, the discussion in this paper is narrowed down to the study participants’ views of their experience of anxiety ensuing in connection with certified

2 Translated from Polish by the author.

consecutive interpreting³. Thus, the focus of this paper are the opinions on the subjective experience of this psycho-affective factor expressed by practising certified interpreters who reflect on their work and in this way give an insight into the real-life challenges of certified interpreting.

Anxiety, along with the other psycho-affective factors, was studied among a sample of 76 Polish-English certified interpreters practising consecutive interpreting who shared their opinions on a variety of aspects of their psycho-affectivity in an online survey administered in July/August 2018. The survey contained 46 questions. In the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to provide factual information about their age, sex, education in interpreting completed, the year of becoming a certified interpreter, experience in consecutive interpreting and in certified consecutive interpreting. The questions included in the second part of the questionnaire were related to general feelings experienced during certified consecutive interpreting and to the psycho-affective factors studied (i.e., anxiety, fear, language inhibition / language ego / language boundaries, personality type, self-esteem, motivation and stress). Thus, the respondents were asked about whether they experience a given factor, and if yes, what its causes might be as well as how a given factor influences the respondents in terms of their interpreting performance (i.e., the so-called “linguistic dimension”) and bodily reactions (i.e., the so-called “extra-linguistic dimension”). In other words, the respondents were asked to specify what types of mistakes they observe in their outputs could result from the studied factors. They could either refer to the problematic areas included in the survey as hints (i.e., omissions, grammatical errors, lexical errors, phonetic errors) or specify the linguistic problems on their own. Likewise, in answering the questions about their bodily reactions, they could either refer to the reactions provided in the survey as hints (i.e., shaking, sweating, increased heart rate, increased pulse, body tension, increased gesticulation) or mention their own. In several questions, based on some typical characteristics provided in the questionnaire, the respondents were additionally asked to self-determine their personality type, level of their self-esteem, sources of their motivation and the influence of stress. Generally speaking, surveying turned out to be a research method, thanks to which it was possible to gather a wealth of data concerning the subjective experience of the studied psycho-affective factors.

The request to participate in the study was sent to more than one thousand certified interpreters of English based in Poland. However, only 76 of them decided to participate in the research by providing answers to all the questions. Among them, there were 55 females (72%)

3 Since this paper is based on the data collected in the course of a large-scale research project discussed at greater length in Walczyński (2019), the exemplification of certain phenomena and trends (i.e., the certified interpreters' quotes) was borrowed from the above-mentioned source (Walczyński, 2019: 473-482). However, thanks to the reviewers' insightful comments, some quotes were translated from Polish once again to make them more understandable. Moreover, because of the principle of data anonymity, no sources are given to particular quotations to make it impossible to identify the respondents.

and 21 males (28%). Their age ranges from 29 to 74, with the average age being 46 and the median being 44. As far as their experience in the profession of a certified interpreter is concerned, there was one certified interpreter who started this profession in 1975 and one who became a certified interpreter in the year of the study (i.e., in 2018). However, the average length of the experience in this profession was nearly 14.5 years while the median was 14. Based on the data regarding the average age and average experience, it might be speculated that the respondents could have developed certain tactics helping them mitigate the adverse effects the psycho-affective factors (including anxiety) could have on their work.

Another essential set of factual data is related to the frequency of providing certified consecutive interpreting. 6 certified interpreters (8%) interpret consecutively in the certification-requiring contexts very often (several times a week), 19 respondents (25%) do it often (several times a month) while others do it rarely (once/twice a month; 23 certified interpreters—30%) or very rarely (several times a year; 28 respondents—37%). The answers provided by the certified interpreters to the question about the frequency show that the length of the experience does not have to go hand in hand with the frequency of practising this type of interpreting. When certified consecutive interpreting is performed rarely or very rarely, the certified interpreters may have certain doubts about how well they can do it; they may be unsure of the level of their skills and expertise in this field, which may manifest itself in a variety of the psycho-affective factors experienced.

Anxiety can develop in the context of certified consecutive interpreting since it is just the entire interpreting situation, with its institutional embedding, its participants and theme, that may be regarded as a subjectively perceived threat. Hence, 42 respondents (55%) declare the experience of anxiety ensuing in the course of certified interpreting. The remaining 34 certified interpreters (45%) state that they do not feel anxious when faced with the task of certified consecutive interpreting. Interestingly enough, what results from the analysis of the respondents' gender and their declared experience of anxiety is that more women than men have anxious feelings (34 female certified interpreters—62%, as compared to 8 male respondents—38%). However, a remark needs to be made here: females outnumber males in the sample and, for this reason, the above result, and the conclusion drawn on its basis, may—at least partially—be biased.

Another analysis of the factual data can shed more light on anxiety felt by the respondents. It seems that the frequency of performing certified interpreting is directly linked to the growing experience of anxiety since among those interpreters who interpret rarely (16—70%) and very rarely (17—61%) anxiety is the most common. Those who do it very often and often experience less anxiety (2—33%, and 7—37%, respectively). This observation corroborates the assumption that the more frequent the practice of certified interpreting is, the less anxious the interpreters are.

What emerges from the responses provided by the certified interpreters to the survey questions is that, in the majority of cases, they experience inhibitory anxiety which affects their linguistic and cognitive skills, resulting in the deterioration of the quality of both the certified interpreting process and the output. There was only one answer showing that anxiety was facilitative:

TABLE 1

Facilitative anxiety: example

FACILITATIVE ANXIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater focus and concentration, as if the outside world ceased to exist.
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Moreover, the certified interpreters spoke about the two above-mentioned general types of anxious states—archaic and several subtypes of existential anxiety. Archaic anxiety was directly linked to the respondents' past events and little experience in this type of interpreting. The following collection of quotes shedding some light on this issue proves this:

TABLE 2

Archaic anxiety: examples

ARCHAIC ANXIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling unwell, for example when I had to interpret for 5 hours in the court immediately after the inflammation of the larynx, still weakened and coughing; sleep deprivation, tiredness—I had several situations in which the interpreter was used as a “pawn” in a game. That happened during negotiations (in private companies). [The respondent might have meant that he/she felt as if she was used as a tool to win the negotiations.] • Insufficient experience in providing such [certified consecutive interpreting] services. • Lack of knowledge, inadequate practice, lack of sufficient skills
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As regards the type of existential anxiety which came to the fore in the certified interpreters' answers was performance anxiety. The respondents expressed quite many concerns over their skills. The first aspect which they were unsure of was their lexical resources. What can be regarded as a factor inducing their performance anxiety was their thinking about incomplete mastery of terminology related to a given certified interpreting act and lack of the related expertise in this field. The following responses may support this view:

TABLE 3

Performance anxiety related to lexical and domain competence: examples

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY RELATED TO LEXICAL AND DOMAIN COMPETENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of missing a vocabulary or having an unknown topic to interpret. • Fear of the ignorance of the subject matter and therefore ignorance of terminology. • Lack of language equivalent. • Not knowing vocabulary, making mistakes, difficulties in understanding. • Predicting that there will be a sentence/vocabulary/phrase that I will not know and I will not be able to get out of it. • The fact that I do not know the exact professional term (but it happens rarely and takes a short time).
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In some cases, performance anxiety was strictly related to the certified interpreters’ cognitive skills. It is generally known that interpreting at large is a cognitive activity in which numerous cognitive processes have to take place for the interpreter to produce a decent quality oral output. Thus, the respondents’ anxiety develops as a result of their fears of malfunctioning mental processes. This is visible in the following answers:

TABLE 4

Performance anxiety related to cognitive skills: examples

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY RELATED TO COGNITIVE SKILLS

- “Mental block”.
- Difficulty with the memorisation of the whole statement.
- Lack of faith in my own abilities.
- Uncertainty.
- Uncertainty whether I will remember everything, whether I can keep up.

Given the above statement, it has to be borne in mind that sometimes in the context of the studies on performance anxiety, scholars speak about *the impostor syndrome*—a kind of defensive mechanism developed by people who are “[...] talented and competent individuals [who] regard themselves as inept and [who] are constantly afraid of being ‘exposed’” (Piechurska-Kuciel, 2008: 41). For this reason, it may be tentatively suspected that at least some of the respondents could be characterised just by this syndrome as far as their interpreting performance is concerned. However, more research on this issue is needed to cast more light on this syndrome in the context of anxiety experienced by interpreters.

The next subtype of existential anxiety identified in the respondents’ answers was orientation anxiety related to their understanding of how to behave during the certified interpreting act in a given institution. Such anxious feelings are caused by two major factors—the institutional contexts and other participants. The following fragments can be quoted to substantiate the above statement:

TABLE 5

Orientation anxiety: examples

ORIENTATION ANXIETY

- A new situation, new people, a new accent (e.g., Nigerian English).
- Creating a situation of being misunderstood or misunderstanding something.
- It is sometimes contact with the criminal world.
- Misleading the interlocutors, by misunderstanding the interlocutor, especially when he speaks quickly or with a strange accent or about the topic I am not really familiar with.
- When the person accused, convicted or interrogated is not always proficient, then maybe I will not understand him, maybe he will not understand me, and maybe it will have a significant impact on his future fate, or maybe I will meet him on the street.

The last subtype of existential anxiety identified in the data provided by the certified interpreters is acceptance anxiety. Generally speaking, acceptance anxiety emerges when the respondents realise that the position of a certified interpreter in a given interpreting act is uncertain, i.e., the parties of the proceedings do not give due respect to the interpreter and do not notice the centrality of the interpreter in this communicative situation, without whom communication could not take place. For such reasons, the certified interpreters develop acceptance anxiety since they are afraid that they will not be accepted as a legitimate and necessary participant. The following fragments show some of the respondents’ opinions proving their experience of acceptance anxiety:

TABLE 6

Acceptance anxiety: examples

ACCEPTANCE ANXIETY

- Fear of being suspected of having an insufficient level of competence.
- Fear of criticism, fear of making a mistake, fear of a situation in which I will not know how to interpret.
- Like in the case of feelings before interpreting: today, many people know English well enough to notice inaccuracies or mistakes in interpretation.
- Ridicule, total “stumbling”.
- The moment when I miss a word and I’m afraid of my negative assessment of my skills.
- The possibility of making a fool of myself.

Overall, it can be stated that two major factors induce all types of anxiety discussed above. First of all, there is much rumination concerning the interpreters’ alleged gaps in their knowledge and deficiencies in their skills. It is thus clear that the respondents underestimate themselves. Secondly, the respondents seem to see a source of their anxious feelings in the entire institutional embedding of certified interpreting as well as in other individuals participating in interpreter-mediated communicative acts.

The respondents were also asked about how their experience of anxiety manifests itself in the manner in which they interpret consecutively. As regards the linguistic aspects of their certified interpreting performance, the certified interpreters declare that their anxiety contributes to various types of mistakes (lexical problems; zero renderings, i.e., omission of input information; grammatical mistakes, or phonetic problems). However, in several cases, the respondents state that they observe a few problems during a single interpreting act which can be attributed to their experience of anxiety. Selected responses show that—in the respondents’ opinions—anxiety may lead to difficulties of different nature (see table 7).

However, since not all interpreters in the studied sample declare the experience of anxiety, it is also worth looking at those answers in which they state that anxiety does not develop during their certified interpretations. Some of the answers can be found in table 8.

TABLE 7

Linguistic exponents of anxiety: examples

LINGUISTIC EXPONENTS OF ANXIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammatical errors, despite very good knowledge of grammar; lexical errors, rather no phonetic errors; lack of the use of the best equivalents. • I simplify so much that it hurts, sometimes I skip the content if it is not crucial; I use a very simple language; I synthesise; phonetic errors occur sporadically. • Most commonly—grammatical mistakes; repeatedly repeating the same content to ensure that it has been transferred. • Sometimes I cannot remember a very simple word, e.g., a sofa. In addition: omission of content, grammatical errors, lexical errors, phonetic errors. • The occasional omission of content, use of descriptive equivalents, sometimes errors in pronunciation (not always consistent use of British English and Americanisation of phonetics). • The omission of content or a possible change of content; suspension; grammatical errors may occur, and it has the greatest influence on pronunciation.
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TABLE 8

No experience of anxiety: examples

NO EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety always disappears when the interpretation begins. • I do not feel anxiety, the problem for me is the inability to interrupt the speech of the interpreted person and therefore I forget or I sometimes distort that person’s lengthy utterances. • It seems to me that anxiety does not manifest itself. I do it forward and that’s it. Perhaps phonetically, sometimes, I speak with an accent. • [When thinking about my anxiety during interpreting, I only notice] the excessive use of fillers (“yyy”), pauses. I do not notice other [linguistic] mistakes as such. • [I do not observe anxiety] so it does not affect the language level.
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The above discussion shows that anxiety can have the potential of obstructing the interpreting process by affecting the linguistic dimensions of the transfer of the source information into the target output. It often does so by hindering the production of a grammatically, lexically and phonetically correct output which is equivalent to the input.

One more aspect studied with reference to the certified interpreters’ experience of anxiety is how this psycho-affective factor influences the non-linguistic dimension of the interpreting process. In other words, the respondents were asked about the extra-linguistic exponents of anxiety (i.e., bodily responses, facial expressions, gestures, vocalics, etc.). What emerges from the wealth of data on this aspect is that anxiety results in many non-linguistic exponents which differ from one certified interpreter to another. Among them are body tension, increased sweating, dry throat, shallow breathing, accelerated pulse, increased gesticulation, hot flush. Sometimes several indicators occur at a time. The following quotes refer to those exponents:

TABLE 9

Extra-linguistic exponents of anxiety: examples

EXTRA-LINGUISTIC EXONENTS OF ANXIETY

- Accelerated heartbeat, accelerated pulse, body tension, sweating hands, general nervousness.
- Body tension, accelerated heartbeat, immobility, stiffening of facial muscles, which leads to an increased effort to articulate sounds correctly.
- Body tension, accelerated pulse.
- Body tension, irritability.
- In the somatic dimension: excessive sweating, dry mouth, sometimes hoarseness, tense posture.
- Nervous tics, accelerated heartbeat, dry mouth, body tension.
- Shaking hands, sweating, increased gestures.
- Stuttering, shaking, sweating.
- Trembling voice, body tension.

As has been demonstrated, the certified interpreters participating in the study provided a vast collection of data concerning their experience of the psycho-affective factor of anxiety which—in the majority of cases—is likely to hinder the interpreting process and adversely affect the quality of the output. The anxious feelings have numerous causes, of which the most significant seem to be the respondents' rumination and low self-appraisal (i.e., they undermine their overall interpreting competence) as well as the contextual embedding with its actors. Besides, anxiety has various linguistic (i.e., deteriorated linguistic correctness and omissions) as well as extra-linguistic exponents (i.e., different undesired and unnecessary bodily reactions).

At the end of this section, one remark must be made. What should be highlighted is that the qualitative study of anxiety presented above relied on the data provided by the certified respondents themselves and, for this reason, all the statements made throughout this paper should be treated as referring only to anxiety which was subjectively experienced by the certified interpreters. To put it differently, the study was not based on an objectively measured set of data because in this particular case such a research endeavour—owing to its complexity, time-consumption and the unavailability of a larger number of respondents willing to take part in the project—would be unfeasible. However, such examination would greatly enrich the understanding of what occurs when certified interpreters undergo some anxious states, what are they caused by and how anxiety affects interpreting performance (i.e., what linguistic and extra-linguistic manifestation it can have).

5. Concluding remarks: implications for interpreter training

The investigation of anxiety, conducted among a group of 76 Polish-English certified interpreters, has brought several interesting observations. First of all, anxiety is a potent negative

psycho-affective factor. It can emerge either as archaic anxiety (related to past events and experience) or as existential anxiety (related to present and future situations). Quite many components of the interpreting process can trigger the experience of anxiety. Hence, it can ensue as a result of the interpreter-internal (usually negative) thinking (i.e., rumination) or as a result of external factors (institutional contexts, other individuals taking part in the interpreting act, etc.), thereby affecting the interpreter’s performance, his/her orientation and thinking about his/her acceptance by other people involved in the interpreting act. Likewise, it can have manifold exponents, observed in the decrease in the linguistic correctness of the output, inadequate equivalence or the interpreter’s bodily responses, kinesics or vocalics.

Based on the above-presented study of anxiety, several implications for interpreter training can be offered. First of all, admission to interpreter training should be preceded by aptitude testing. The testing procedure, however, should verify not only candidates’ linguistic competence. It should also seek to screen out those candidates who are psycho-affectively unable to pursue interpreter training. It is already common knowledge that interpreting is a psycho-affectively challenging activity, in which stress, anxiety and other psycho-affective phenomena occur regularly. Thus, aptitude testing should also include the assessment of candidates’ psycho-affective predispositions, which is in line with what has been strongly advocated by several scholars (e.g., Schweda Nicholson 2005; Timarová & Salaets, 2011; Shaw, 2011; Zannirato, 2013). Secondly, in the course of interpreter training, trainee interpreters should be familiarised with interpreter psychology since both major concepts studied in its frameworks—cognition and psycho-affectivity—are the core of interpreting performance. Besides, trainee interpreters should be introduced to some tactics (e.g., relaxation techniques or the techniques aiming at changing some hindering thinking patterns like, for instance, accepting imperfection in interpreting), which would help them combat the negative influence of at least some of the psycho-affective factors. Thirdly, interpreter training should be provided in supportive psycho-affective frameworks. It means that trainee interpreters should be made aware that psycho-affective factors can adversely influence their performance but it does not have to be tantamount to low interpreting quality. In other words, trainee interpreters’ psycho-affectivity should be fostered and strengthened by instructors who ought to make it clear that professional interpreters also at times fail to understand the input correctly or fail to use adequate linguistic means to transfer the source information into the target output. In so doing, instructors should teach trainee interpreters that interpreting is just like any kind of communication—what is of priority is the transfer of information between two languages, which not always can take place in a perfect and spotless manner.

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