

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE CONTEXT OF TRAINING FUTURE INTERPRETERS: THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA

DOC. MGR. SOŇA HODÁKOVÁ, PHD.

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
shodakova@ukf.sk

MGR. LÍVIA KODAJOVÁ

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia
livia.kodajova@ukf.sk

Abstract

Mental health is increasingly recognized as a critical issue in interpreter training. Interpreters frequently encounter cognitive and emotional stressors (Moser–Mercer et al., 1998; Valero-Garcés, 2005). Despite growing awareness, interpreter education often lacks structured support for emotional regulation and stress management – skills essential for maintaining performance and well-being. In Slovakia, the mental health of interpreters gained attention following the Ukrainian refugee crisis, which saw many interpreting students thrust into crisis situations with little preparation (Hodáková and Ukušová, 2023). This chapter, based on survey data from 116 students and 12 interpreting teachers across Slovak universities, highlights the urgent need to integrate resilience and personality-focused training into interpreter education. Recommendations include expanding Nitra's 'Mental Hygiene' course and embedding personality-based activities into practical interpreting training, especially for future public service interpreters.

Keywords: interpreter training, mental health, personality-based activities, public service interpreting

1. Introduction

Mental health is one of the fundamental megatrends that, along with other major topics such as technology, demography or ecology, are and will continue to significantly influence the development of our society (Zukunftsinstitut, 2024). Currently, mental health problems affect one in eight people in the EU (MentalHealth4All, 2024) and represent one of the most common causes of

incapacity for work, comparable to civilisation diseases. Stress and coping with pressure in the workplace is a topic that is also relevant to the interpreting profession.

Research in interpreting confirms that stress is a relevant factor that impacts interpreter performance in any interpreting setting (Moser-Mercer and Künzli and Korac, 1998; Kurz, 2003). When assessing the degree of stress, the relationship between external influences and internal conditions is decisive. Stress caused by identical external conditions varies in intensity between different people, but also within the same person if their internal conditions change. The intensity and quality of the perceived stress therefore depend on the conflict between the total demands of the external environment and the person's ability to cope with them. The way in which a person copes with stress does not depend so much on objectively measurable pressure, but primarily on how much pressure they subjectively feel and what significance they attach to it (Bratská 1992).

In connection with a potential source of stress in interpreting, Dean and Pollard (2001, p. 4) argue that the demands on interpreters are linguistic (related to the process of language transfer), environmental (based on assignment settings), interpersonal (related to all participants in the communication) and intrapersonal (linked to psychological and physical factors on the part of the interpreter). In this context, Bontempo and Napier (2011, p. 87), identify several requirements for interpreters in several areas: general cognitive abilities (e.g., general intelligence, memory, attention, concentration), language skills, and affective factors (e.g., self-efficacy, negative affectivity, goal orientation).

And while many of the demands on the interpreter are common for different settings, there are also some specific challenges, for example, depending on the type of interpreting. In conference interpreting, stress is prototypically linked more to issues of coping with time pressure, information-saturated texts, overall cognitive load or stage fright, for example (Hodáková, 2022). Public service interpreting represents different settings, such as interpreting in asylum procedures, in police departments or in health care, that may present challenges for interpreters primarily in terms of working conditions, such as unpredictable working hours, lack of preparation time (McDowell et al., 2011; Park et al., 2017), emotionally challenging situations, e.g. when dealing with serious diagnoses or crisis situations such as attempted suicide (Park et al., 2017) or unclear role expectations from clients (Geiling, 2023). Naturally, the demands placed on an interpreter's personality are considerably more complex than this simplified overview suggests. Even within the realm of Public Service Interpreting (PSI), interpreters may face situations that pose significant cognitive challenges. Conversely, in the context of conference interpreting, practitioners may be required to manage considerable emotional strain. However, in this chapter, we will focus primarily on individual personality characteristics that affect the mental health of interpreters.

Research suggests that interpreter should possess certain personality traits and skills that enable them to work in stressful situations (Gile, 1995; Kurz, 2003). One of the individual characteristics that predict interpreter's reactions to stress is

affectivity. Negative affectivity is understood as a psychological disposition for maladaptive coping with stress since it is associated with a negative self-concept and influences feelings of anger, hostility, sadness, and dissatisfaction (Watson and Clark, 1984). Interpreters with higher levels of negative affectivity generally perceive themselves as less competent and experience higher levels of occupational stress (Bontempo and Napier, 2011). Perceived stress is also related to the degree of (need for) control. Research confirms that interpreters experiencing lower levels of control over the demands of their profession and less decision freedom are at a higher risk of developing burnout syndrome. Similarly, interpreters' tendencies toward perfectionism increase their risk of burnout (Schwenke, 2012).

2. Training interpreters in the field of mental health in Slovakia: current status

Many authors stress the importance of training and education with regards to mental health (Tribe and Raval, 2003; Anderson, 2011; Valero-Garcés and Alcade Peñalver, 2021; Geiling, 2023). The gap between the demands of the profession and the available educational support can increase interpreter's vulnerability to occupational stress.

In order for interpreters to be helpful to others, it should be a priority that they know how to take care of themselves and their mental health. Yet, education and training in this area is very limited. Given space constraints, this section focuses directly on the Slovak educational context and omits a broader overview of pilot initiatives. If interested, readers can find more information, for example, in Delizée et al. (2024), González Campanella (2024).

In Slovakia, efforts to include mental health issues in the education of future interpreters are concentrated exclusively in one university. It is among the few systematically structured mental health modules available in interpreter education in Central Europe. The Department of Translation Studies at the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra has been offering the course *Mental Hygiene for Translation and Interpreting Students* for Master's degree students since 2015. This is a course focused on mental health issues of future translators and interpreters in general, regardless of whether they are going to be conference or public service interpreters or for example literary or audiovisual translators. The duration of the course is one semester (26 class hours). Regarding the student expectations, we have collected data from 55 students over the past five academic years. Before the beginning of the course, we asked participants through an anonymous open-ended questionnaire what they would like to learn in the course. The most common responses (listed in order from most frequent) were:

I want to learn:

- how to manage/regulate my own emotions;
- how to cope with the fear of failure (in an exam, in interpreting);
- how to manage conflicts and relationships;
- how to master time management;
- how to cope with cognitive load in interpreting (demands on memory, attention);
- how to deal with fear and uncertainty about my own professional future;
- how to manage stage fright and improve public speaking.

Effective emotion management thus emerged as an important training need, that the described course seeks to reflect in the form of initial training in working with emotions on all three levels – cognitive, physiological and holistic. The course aims to provide students with a reflective knowledge of their own mental health (through study of available literature and group discussions), as well as practical skills in working with their own emotions (by familiarising themselves with individual and interpersonal strategies and practicing specific techniques). However, given the general focus and the short duration, the training is relatively limited in scope. The Department is currently looking for ways to expand the education and training offerings for future interpreters in the areas of their personality and mental health. With this goal in mind, we conducted a survey among interpreting students and teachers focusing on their preferences regarding the inclusion of personality work in the training of future interpreters. The results of the survey are presented in the next section of this chapter.

3. The present research

The exploratory research connected with the role of personality traits in interpreting was conducted as a follow-up survey to questionnaire-based research previously carried out as a part of Master's thesis (Kodajová, 2024). As mentioned, the first objective of this survey was to explore the viewpoints of students and teachers of interpreting on the current state of addressing the topic of personality traits within interpreter training. The second objective relates to discovering preferences of both research samples regarding potential inclusion of feedback and exercises that would reflect on the specifics of each student's personality traits. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this topic rooted in connection with the field of psychology, the third objective lies in examining the opinions of pedagogical personnel on the possibilities of complementary education or courses devoted to the intersectionality between interpreter training and psychology.

3.1. Research design

The initial survey was carried out in the span of December 2023 and February 2024 among students and teachers of interpreting from three universities in Slovakia, that offer study programmes focused on translation and interpreting – Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Comenius University in Bratislava and Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica – in the form of two questionnaires with one of them being designed for students and the other for teachers. Both questionnaires were distributed online in two waves by means of electronic mail and social media.

The follow-up survey was subsequently conducted the next year and the answer collection process lasted from February 2025 until May 2025. During the distribution process among students, the respondents were notified of the possibility, that they might have completed the questionnaire previously and were therefore instructed not to fill it in again. The aim of this precaution was to minimise the risk of potential duplicate responses. Due to the limited number of interpreting teachers in Slovakia influenced by the number of universities and size of the country itself, the probability of obtaining responses from new respondents among teachers was quite low¹. Therefore, the target research sample for the follow-up survey consisted solely of students of interpreting from the three aforementioned universities in Slovakia and as a result of international cooperation, also students of interpreting from the University in Vienna. For the purposes of distributing the questionnaire at a university situated in German-speaking environment, the questionnaire has been translated into German by the author, and the students were given both language variations. The research sample for the follow-up survey consisted of 63 respondents, thus, the questionnaire has been completed by 116 students in total.

The potential research sample group comprised of students was restricted by a single criterion: the completed attendance of at least one seminar focused on interpreting prior to completing the questionnaire. As for the second research sample consisting of interpreting trainers, no restrictions applied, since the number is already severely limited. The restrictive criterion was applied for both the initial survey as well as the follow-up.

To maximize the reliability of the data obtained, none of the questionnaires included questions regarding the respondents' university affiliation. As the survey provides an overview of the current situation in Slovakia, the research did not focus on comparing the perspectives of students and educators across the aforementioned educational institutions. Moreover, omitting such questions was

1 Translation and interpreting as a study programme is offered at 4 universities in Slovakia, which limits the number of interpreting teachers and students. Considering the assumed total number of teachers proportionate to the number of universities, 12 respondents constitute a relatively representative sample.

a deliberate choice to reduce the risk of respondents tailoring their answers in order to choose or provide what they would consider as desired.

Both questionnaires (see Appendix 1 and 2) consisted of seven questions in total, with the first two focused on gathering data relevant to the composition of the individual research samples. The questionnaire for students included six closed questions – where respondents were to select from predefined options – and one semi-closed question that allowed for an open-ended response. The first item addressed students' gender identity, followed by a second question aimed at categorizing respondents according to their level of study. The third question examined students' perceptions of the degree to which personality influences career choice. Questions four and five explored students' interest in engaging with their own personality characteristics during interpreter training, as well as the extent to which they felt this topic was addressed during interpreting seminars. The sixth and seventh question focused on students' views regarding the inclusion of personality-focused content in interpreter training, specifically in terms of preferred scope and implementation form. The semi-closed seventh question enabled students to propose additional suggestions beyond the listed options.

The second questionnaire, designed for interpreting trainers, also contained seven questions with five of them being closed and two semi-closed, one of which allowed the selection of multiple responses. The first two questions gathered data on years of interpreting experience and years of experience in teaching interpreting. The third question aimed to assess the extent to which teachers perceive a demand among students for attention to personality traits during interpreting seminars. The fourth item examined whether respondents felt they had a sufficient amount of knowledge from psychology to address students' inquiries on the topic. Questions five and six focused on teachers' interest in receiving recommendations or methodological guidance related to personality psychology, as well as their preferred formats for such resources. The final question mirrored the last item in the student questionnaire. The purpose of including it in here was to enable a comparative analysis of students' and trainers' perspectives on the preferred forms of integrating work with personality traits into interpreter training or the broader curriculum of translation and interpreting study programmes. The decision to include this question in both questionnaires was made specifically to facilitate this comparison.

As for the ethical considerations, in accordance with the institutional guidelines of the authors' home university, formal ethics approval was not required for this type of exploratory questionnaire-based research. Participant anonymity was protected, since no identifying information, including university affiliation or e-mail addresses, was collected at any stage of the data-gathering process. The data are accessible exclusively to the researcher and are stored securely in a dedicated folder on Google Drive. Prior to completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed that submission of the completed questionnaire

constituted their informed consent to the processing of their responses for research purposes.

The potential limitations of the survey may lie in the number of respondents who completed the questionnaires, since the quantity of respondents in both research sample groups was based on voluntary participation or availability, limiting the representativeness of the sample and generalizability of the findings. This limitation is particularly significant with regard to the group of teachers who completed the questionnaire, although, it is proportionate to the selected research sample, that was focused on the Slovak context. The second limitation of the presented research is the absence of institutional differentiation. Even though it is justified, the omission limits the ability to analyse differences or trends across respondents from various universities. Another possible limitation might lie in the selected research method and its restricted scope, since questionnaires may fail to capture the complex nature of cognitive and emotional aspects present in interpreting, especially in comparison with other methods (e.g. interview). However, the selected method provided a sufficient amount of data required for such exploratory research. Lastly, due to the specifics of the national context, the survey being situated within Slovakia may reflect local educational systems and attitudes. Findings stemming from the research may not be easily transferable to other countries, cultures, or language training contexts.

3.2. Results

Since the research consists of two separate questionnaires, the results contain an extensive amount of data, therefore, due to the limited range, only the most relevant results of the survey will be presented in the following chapter. Due to the identical structure of the original as well as the follow-up questionnaire targeted at students, the results of both will be presented jointly.

As mentioned, the first two questions in both questionnaires focused on obtaining data about the composition of both research sample groups – students (n=116) and teachers (n=12) of interpreting. In case of the first research sample, data from the initial and follow-up survey will be presented jointly. According to the results (see Figure 1), 103 respondents (88.8%) were female and 11 male (9.5%) while 1 student (0.9%) chose the category *other* and 1(0.9%) opted for the last listed answer *prefer not to say*. The majority of students who completed the questionnaire were at Master's level of university studies, specifically 77 students (66.4%), and the rest totalling 39 students (33.6%) were pursuing a Bachelor's degree at the time of the completion of the questionnaire (see Figure 2).

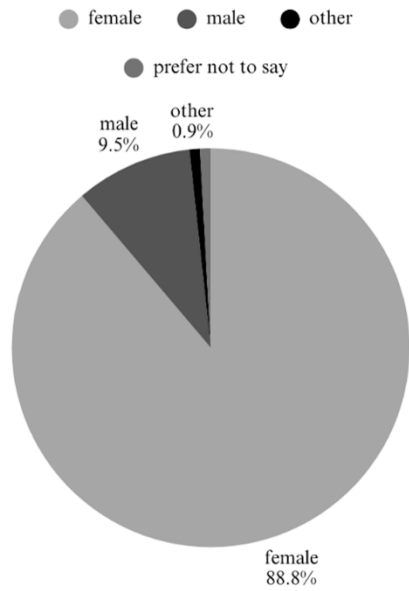


Figure 1. Composition of students based on their gender

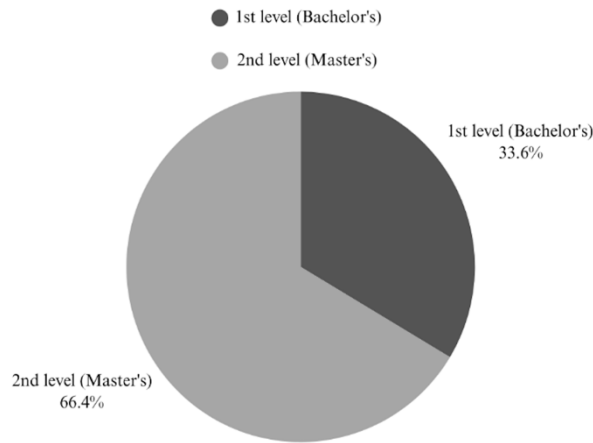


Figure 2. Composition of students based on the level of university studies

The following question explored the students’ perception regarding the influence of personality characteristics on their future career path (see Table 1), where 92 students (79.3%) are of the opinion that personality has a substantial influence on the choice of a future career. 23 (19.8%) students opted for the answer *probably, but the influence is only minor* while 1 student (0.9%) considers the influence to be present only rarely in some cases.

Table 1. Influence of students' personality traits on the choice of future career

Question no. 3: Do you think your personality has influence on your decisions about your future career path?	Students' answers	
	No. of students	Percentage
Yes, I think it has a significant impact	92	79.3
Probably, but the influence is only minor	23	19.8
Probably no, it is possible, but only in some cases	1	0.9
No, it has no influence	0	0

Subsequently, the fourth question was devoted to the students' stance on creating space within interpreter training for including work with their individual personality characteristics (see Figure 3). The respondents' opinions varied with 91 students (78.4%) expressing certain interest in exploring this topic during their interpreter training followed by 23 respondents (19.8%), who were favourably disposed towards exploring this topic, but simultaneously do not consider it a priority. Two students (1.7%) from the research sample had a negative stance and would rather focus on different aspects of interpreting.

Since the sixth question partially overlapped with the fourth, the results for the fifth question will be presented in the succeeding paragraph (see Table 2). The sixth question touched upon similar subject as the fourth, although, it differed in straightforwardness and wording, which had a less subjective nature. Based on the results from the sixth question (see Figure 3), 72 students (62.1%) would definitely prefer the interdisciplinary approach between interpreting and personality characteristics to be implemented into training, while 39 (33.6%) students think it probably should be implemented, and 5 students (4.3%) opted for the answer *rather not*. The graph below (Figure 3) presents both sets of results jointly for the purposes of visual comparison between the differing proportions of answers.

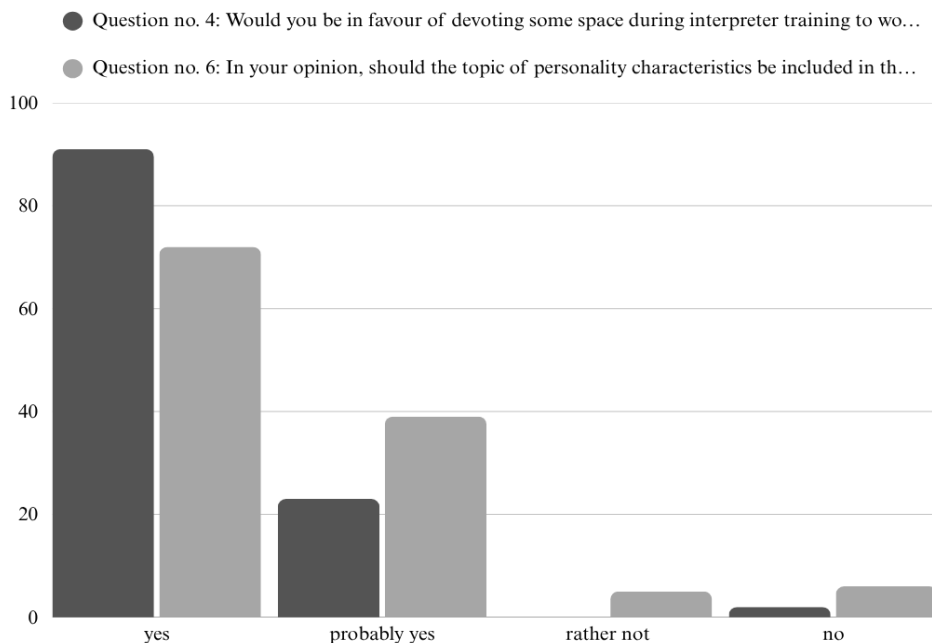


Figure 3. Students' stance towards implementation of personality-related activities

The fifth question of the first questionnaire was dedicated to the students' perception of the scope, in which interpreting teachers address the topic of personality characteristics. According to the majority of the respondents' answers (see Table 2), the inclusion of the topic of personality is not being sufficiently covered during the interpreting seminars with 53 (45.7%) students describing the degree of coverage as insufficient and 18 students (15.5%) choosing the option *not at all*, signifying that the discussed topic is touched upon to no extent. 38 students (32.8%) consider the degree of inclusion to be partially sufficient, while 7 (6%) students are of the opinion that the topic is addressed sufficiently.

Table 2. Degree of incorporation of personality-based activities into the teaching process

Question no. 5: Do trainers explore the topic of personality characteristics during seminars?	Students' answers	
	No. of students	Percentage
Yes, sufficiently	7	6
Somewhat yes, partially	38	32.8
Not quite, insufficiently	53	45.7
Not at all	18	15.5

The last question of the questionnaire designed for the group of students focused on the preferred implementation forms of engaging in work with personality characteristics in interpreter training (see Table 3). The respondents had the opportunity to propose their own suggestion beyond the already listed options, however, none of them opted to do so. The most frequently chosen answer was *testing and accordingly tailored short exercises (10-15 minutes) during interpreting seminars*, that was selected by 50 respondents (43.1%), followed by a *certain amount of lessons (e. g. 2-3) within an existing course*, that would be devoted to the topic of personality characteristics and their influence on interpreting, chosen by 29 respondents (25%). The third most popular implementation form among students was a *separate course* dedicated to this topic with 24 students (20.7%) opting for this possibility, while another 13 students (11.2%) would prefer a workshop/series of workshops instead of incorporating the topic directly into the study plan. The fifth option *I would not incorporate it at all* was not selected.

Table 3. Students' preferred forms of implementing personality-based activities into training

Question no. 7: Were it incorporated, which form would you prefer?	Students' answers	
	No. of students	Percentage
Testing and accordingly tailored short exercises (10-15 minutes) during interpreting seminars	50	43.1
Separate course	24	20.7
Certain number of lessons (e. g. 2-3) within an existing course	29	25
I would not incorporate this topic directly in the study plan; however, I would prefer a workshop / multiple workshops	13	11.2
I would not incorporate it at all	0	0
Other	0	0

As for the second questionnaire, the presented results were collected solely throughout the initial research and represent the viewpoints of interpreting teachers (n=12). Similarly, as in the first questionnaire, the first two questions provide information about the composition of the second research sample group, specifically, years of interpreting and pedagogical experience (see Figure 4).

According to the results, 6 respondents (50%) have accumulated 2-5 years of experience in providing interpreting services followed by the second most frequently selected option of *more than 10* years, that was chosen by 4 teachers (33.3%). Additionally, 2 teachers (16.7%) selected the third option – range between 5 to 10 years of experience as interpreters. The following question touched upon the years of experience relating to the pedagogical praxis in educating and training future interpreters, where 6 teachers (50%) from the research sample stated they have *more than 10* years of pedagogical experience, while another 5 respondents (41.7%) have been teaching interpreting for 2-5 years and 1 respondent (8.3%) has less than 2 years of experience as an interpreting teacher.

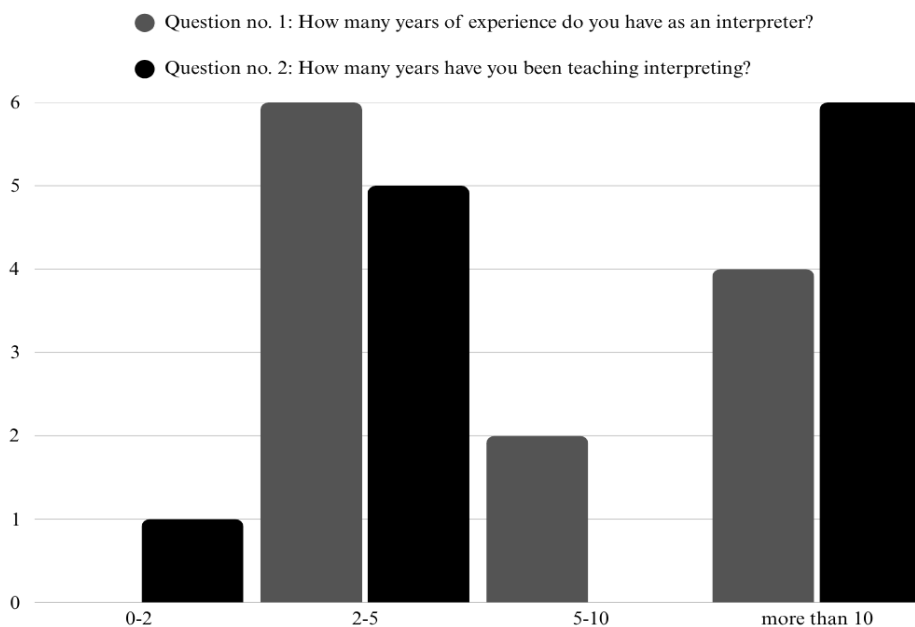


Figure 4. Teachers' years of experience in interpreting and teaching interpreting

Subsequently, the focus of the survey lay on mapping the perceptions of teachers regarding the work with personality characteristics during interpreting seminars and comparing them with results from the survey with students. In the third question, teachers were asked, whether their students seek advice or guidance that reflects their individual personality traits during interpreting training (see Table 4). The highest number of teachers selected the first option *Yes, they often ask for feedback and advice reflecting their personality*, that was chosen by 4 respondents (33.3%). The second and third option were both selected by 3 respondents (25%), who observe the demand for individually tailored feedback less frequently, while 2 teachers (16.7%) have never registered such questions.

Table 4. Teachers' perceived demand for specific individually tailored advice from students

Question no. 3: When teaching interpreting, do you register a demand from students for recommendations/advice that would take into account their particular personality traits?	Teachers' answers	
	No. of teachers	Percentage
Yes, they often ask for feedback and advice reflecting their personality	4	33.3
Somewhat yes, sometimes they do ask for feedback and advice reflecting their personality	3	25
Not quite, this topic is brought up only occasionally	3	25
No, I have never encountered such questions/requests	2	16.7

In order for the teachers to be able to provide students with guidance that would factor in their individual personality characteristics, such tailored feedback requires a certain level of knowledge from the field of personality psychology, stress management or various anxiety/stage fright coping techniques. Thus, in the fourth question, the objective was to map the teachers' perceptions of their own knowledge of psychology and the results show, that the majority of teachers totalling 7 (58.3%) perceive their knowledge as sufficient enough to provide students with answers or recommendations to certain questions, while 3 respondents (25%) feel completely comfortable in terms of providing knowledgeable answers (see Table 5). None of the teachers chose the option *Not at all, I would not be able to answer those questions*, however, 2 teachers (16.7%) stated they deem their knowledge in this field as insufficient and do not consider themselves proficient enough to provide relevant feedback.

Table 5. Teachers' perception of their knowledge of psychology in the context of teaching interpreting

Question no. 4: Do you feel proficient enough in the field of psychology to be able to answer those questions eruditely?	Teachers' answers	
	No. of teachers	Percentage
Yes, I think I have enough knowledge to guide students	3	25
Rather yes, I would be able to answer some questions	7	58.3
Not quite, my knowledge around this topic is not sufficient	2	16.7
Not at all, I would not be able to answer those questions	0	0

The following question and the corresponding results explored teachers' stance towards potential complementary educational course or material, that would enable them to broaden their knowledge in terms of interdisciplinary intersection between interpreting and psychology (see Figure 5). The respondents expressed positive attitude towards this option with 9 teachers (75%) opting for decided

interest and 3 teachers (25%) expressing partial inclination towards potential additional education.

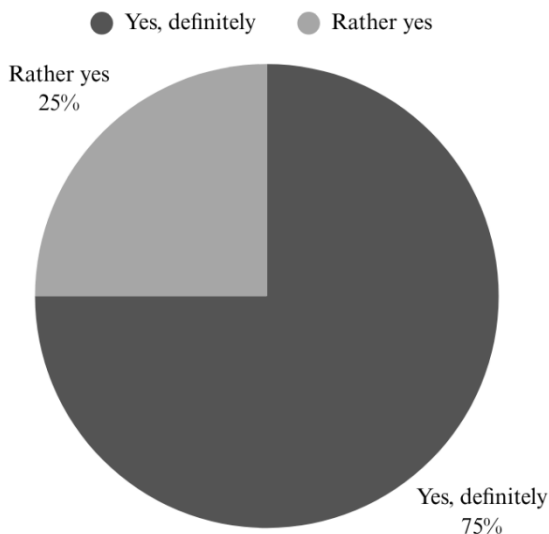


Figure 5. Teachers' interest in complementary education in personality psychology

Following the topic of complementary education for interpreting teachers, the sixth question was devoted to the preferred forms of such additional educational course or materials that would prove to have maximal effectivity in terms of the obtained information and its potential use in the teaching process (see Table 6). For this question, multiple answers could have been selected by one respondent. The most popular option was *methodological seminar* with 9 respondents (75%) opting for this suggestion, that was followed by *audio/video recording of several module lectures*, that was selected by 8 teachers (66.7%). Identical number of teachers (7 = 58.3%) chose two options – that being a *written publication* or the possibility of inviting an expert on this topic to an interpreting seminar – while one teacher (8.3%) selected audio/video recording of one extensive lecture. Apart from selecting some of the already listed answers, the respondents also had the possibility to suggest their own answers, with two respondents opting for this opportunity. One of the additional answers contained specific combination of the listed options, that has been added to the numbers presented in the table. The second additional answer provided no specific combination or suggestion; the exact wording is included below.

Table 6. Teachers' preferred forms of additional education in the field of psychology

Question no. 6: If yes, which form should these recommendations/directions take?	Teachers' answers	
	No. of teachers	Percentage
Written publication (e.g. concise handbook in both printed and electronic versions)	7	58.3
Audio/video recording of one extensive lecture	1	8.3
Audio/video recording of several module lectures	8	66.7
Methodological seminar	9	75
Inviting an expert on this topic to a seminar	7	58.3
Other	1	8.3

Additional answer: *"A combination of several forms would be a optimal solution, depending on the needs of individual students."*

The last question mirrored its counterpart from the first questionnaire for the purposes of comparing the preferences of the individual research sample groups and, thus, focused on obtaining data regarding the preferred form in which the topic of personality characteristics could be incorporated into interpreter training. The listed answer options included the possibility of suggesting an original implementation form, that was used by one teacher, whose suggestion is included below in its complete form and wording. According to the second research sample, the most preferred answers correspond with the first questionnaire. The first option: *testing and accordingly tailored short exercises (10-15 minutes) during interpreting seminars* was chosen by 4 teachers (33.3%) as well as the third option with the suggestion of dedicating a certain number of individual lessons within an existing course. 2 respondents (16.7%) would prefer such implementation to occur outside of the study plan, in the form of single or multiple workshops. *Separate course* as the second option in the questionnaire was chosen once (8.3%).

Table 7. Teachers' preferred forms of implementing personality-based activities into training

Question no. 7: In which form would you incorporate work with personality types into interpreter training within the study plan?	Students' answers	
	No. of students	Percentage
Testing and accordingly tailored short exercises (10-15 minutes) during interpreting seminars	4	33.3
Separate course	1	8.3
Certain number of lessons (e. g. 2-3) within an existing course	4	33.3
I would not incorporate this topic directly in the study plan; however, I would prefer a workshop / multiple workshops	2	16.7
I would not incorporate it at all	0	0
Other	1	8.3

12th answer: *“After a pilot testing phase, it would be possible to concretise the possibilities of application to interpreter training. Depending on the specific needs of individual students, which often vary, a combination of several of the abovementioned suggestions would probably be appropriate. I consider it appropriate to test the students and, on that basis, to select adequate short exercises in the interpreting seminars and, if necessary, to add a series of further workshops.”*

3.2. Discussion

The previous subchapter provided an overview of viewpoints from students and teachers of interpreting in relation to the interdisciplinary intersection between personality characteristics and interpreting. In the following section of this chapter, the most notable findings from the survey will be highlighted and accompanied by a set of recommendations based on the results of this survey. This series of recommendations will be presented solely in this chapter, however, some aspects related to the general principle and nature of these recommendations may overlap with the corresponding part of the aforementioned Master's thesis (Kodajová, 2024).

One of the most crucial outcomes of this research is the fact that 95.7% of students expressed either decisively positive or partially positive stance towards implementing the intersectional topic of personality psychology and interpreting within interpreter training taking place at universities in Slovakia. When the aforementioned percentage of students is juxtaposed with the findings of the second questionnaire, a slight divergence becomes apparent between students' declared interest in the topic and the frequency with which teachers report encountering related questions during interpreting seminars. Specifically, 7 teachers (58.3%) indicated that such questions arise either very often or at times, whereas 5 respondents (41.7%) reported either no experience or only rare instances of student inquiries in relation to this matter. This inconsistency might be the result of students' limited awareness or understanding of the relevance of personality traits to practical interpreter training. Due to the complex nature of interpreting, the evaluation of performances during interpreting seminars is influenced also by time constraints, since it is crucial to cover other aspects of each students' interpreting performance. Nonetheless, the findings underscore the value of proactive approach from the pedagogical personnel in addressing this theme and integrating foundational content related to this topic into the curriculum.

The recommendations described in this subchapter were designed with emphasis on the potential implications on mental health of students while drawing from the results of both surveys, especially the preferred implementation forms based on the viewpoints of both students as well as teachers. When creating the recommendations various aspects and factors were considered, including the benefits and drawbacks related to the specifics of university settings and

teaching conditions in Slovakia – first and foremost relating to the limited number of professionals with qualifications in the area of interpreting as well as in psychology. Additionally, the recommendations were designed with the intention to serve as a set of possible forms of incorporating a specific interdisciplinary approach without prescriptive tendencies.

A. Incorporating work with personality characteristics into interpreter training with emphasis on the effects on mental health of students.

Based on the results of the first survey designed for students of translation and interpreting, the respondents expressed clear interest in exploring this topic either as a firmly anchored aspect within the study plan or as an additional workshop or a series of workshops outside of the study plan. Therefore, the first recommendation relies on the inclusion of working with students' personality characteristics throughout the interpreter training. The individual departments at Slovak universities have specific personal limitations in the context of the interdisciplinary nature of this topic, that restrict the possible forms of implementing it within their study plan. The former option could serve as a potential solution for this issue that would otherwise act as a barrier in the effort to incorporate the topic into the study plan. The inclusion of engaging with specific personality characteristics has the potential of creating space for self-reflection and a deeper understanding of an individual's emotions or stressors, that may negatively impact not only the interpreting performance, but also the perception of an individual's abilities and skills.

B. Implementing the aspect of students' personality characteristics into interpreter training in various forms.

The issue of interdisciplinary approach rooted in psychology in terms of interpreter training has been previously connected with the potential of developing psychological skills such as locus of control, self-efficacy or explanatory style (Atkinson and Creeze, 2014; Atkinson, 2014). This approach lies emphasis not only on the development and improvement of students' interpreting skills, namely linguistic, technical and cultural competence, but also on acquiring tools that could complement the professional expertise with improved resilience during the interpreting process and simultaneously serve as an aid in preventing the aforementioned psychological issues, that affect interpreters due to the complex and often stressful nature of their profession. A systematic approach to addressing issues such as burnout syndrome, occupational stress or vicarious trauma by means of teaching students various coping strategies and emphasizing the importance of mental health can be carried out with regard to the individual student's personality characteristics, thus, increasing the effectiveness of the teaching process.

In terms of interpreter training, such strategies and coping mechanisms could be implemented in various forms based on the personal and technical capacities of the individual departments. Based on the preferences of respondents from both research sample groups, the second recommendation would be to incorporate the aspect of students' personality characteristics into interpreter training in relation with the development of and improvement of psychological skills in the form of testing and correspondingly tailored short exercises that would be part of interpreting seminars. This type of implementation would allow for systematic engagement of improving psychological skills, that would lay emphasis on mental health of students and potentially serve as preventative measures against nowadays frequently occurring psychological issues.

In order to address the topic of personality's influence in the process of developing interpreting skills as well as the requirements on interpreter's personality in relation to pursuing interpreting as a profession in a broader context, the second recommended form of implementation would be a separate course dedicated to the intersection between interpreting and coping strategies that would take into account individual students' personality characteristics. This recommendation is included with the awareness that it requires a member of pedagogical personnel, who is an expert in the corresponding topic. When considering the Slovak context in terms of the mentioned implementation forms, the third recommended form takes into consideration the possibility of inter-departmental cooperation, as it illustrates a potential solution to the issue of personnel limitations. In order to provide the students with the opportunity of engaging their personality characteristics in terms of interpreter training, the integration of a certain number of lessons within an existing seminar presents itself as an effective form, especially in connection with inter-departmental cooperation, since it allows for the invitation of such expert to introduce the theoretical and practical principles of this topic. The third implementation form would create space for cultivating various methods to mitigate potential development of mental health issues or the effect of stressors affecting the students' interpreting performance with the guidance of teacher, who specializes in this interdisciplinary approach. Their involvement across multiple university settings would allow students from different institution to receive detailed feedback that links their interpreting performance to personal psychological traits, while also enabling instructors to witness expert-led teaching. Such firsthand observation could inform and enrich their own pedagogical approaches, fostering a continuous exchange of expertise that supports both professional advancement and student-focused development.

4. Conclusion

This chapter underscores the growing importance of addressing mental health in the education of future interpreters in relation to their individual personality characteristics, particularly within the Slovak context. Since interpreting students face increasingly the challenges of complex and emotionally demanding scenarios – exemplified most recently by the Ukrainian refugee crisis – it has become evident that traditional curricula, that are currently in place, fall short in equipping them with the psychological skills needed to mitigate potential mental health problems and maintain well-being.

Strengthening existing initiatives, such as the “Mental Hygiene” course, that is embedded in the study plan for future interpreters and translators in Nitra, and incorporating the aspect of psychological skills and support into practical interpreter training has the ability to enhance both professional readiness in challenging environments and personal development.

Given the complexity of the requirements for interpreters (Dean and Pollard, 2001; Bontempo and Napier, 2011), we believe that although the findings of the presented research and recommendations for interpreting training relate to the Slovak educational settings, the chapter confirmed the importance of taking into account the mental health needs of future interpreters in their training. In this way, it will be possible to reflect in teaching not only the requirements of interpreting practice but also the broader needs in the context of current societal developments.

References

- Anderson, Arlyn. 2011. Peer Support and Consultation Project for Interpreters: A Model for Supporting the Well-Being of Interpreters Who Practice in Mental Health Settings. *Journal of Interpretation*. [Online] RID Publications 21 (1). Article 2. Available from: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol21/iss1/2>. [Accessed: 20th July 2025]
- Atkinson David P. 2014. Developing Psychological Skill for the Global Language Industry: An Exploration of Approaches to Translator and Interpreter Training. *Translation Spaces*. [Online] John Benjamins. 3 (1). 1–24. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.3.01atk>. [Accessed: 29th July 2025] <https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.3.01atk>
- Atkinson David P. and Creeze Ineke H. M. 2014. Improving Psychological Skill in Trainee Interpreters. *International Journal of Interpreter Education* 6 (1). 3–18.
- Bratská, Mária. 1992. Vieme riešiť záťažové situácie? [Can We Handle Stressful Situations?]. SPN.
- Bontempo, Karen, and Jemina M. Napier. 2011. Evaluating Emotional Stability as a Predictor of Interpreter Competence and Aptitude for Interpreting. *Interpreting*. [Online] John Benjamins 13 (1). 85–105. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1075/intp.13.1.06bon>. [Accessed: 20th July 2025] <https://doi.org/10.1075/intp.13.1.06bon>
- Dean, Robyn K., and Robert Q Pollard Jr. 2001. Application of Demand-Control Theory to Sign Language Interpreting: Implications for Stress and Interpreter Training. *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*. [Online] Oxford University Press 6 (1). 1–14. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/6.1.1>. [Accessed: 20th July 2025]
- Delizée, Anne et al. 2024. Preventing Vicarious Traumatization in Mental Health Settings: A Training Course for Interpreters. *FITISPos International Journal* [Online] 11 (1). 28–43. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.37536/FITIS-Pos-IJ.2024.11.1.383>. [Accessed: 20th July 2025]
- Geiling, Angelika. 2023. Psychische Gesundheit Und Arbeitsbedingungen von Dolmetschenden in Der Arbeit Mit Geflüchteten Menschen. Doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2023.
- Gile, Daniel. 1995. Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training. *John Benjamins*. [https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.8\(1st\)](https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.8(1st))
- González Campanella, Alejandra. 2024. Emotional Labour and Affective Skills in Public Service Interpreting: Expanding the Competence Models. *FITISPos International Journal* [Online] 11 (1). 44–64. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2024.11.1.379>. [Accessed: 18th July 2025]
- Hodáková, Soňa. 2022. Kognitívne procesy a osobnosť v tlmočení čo prináša ich výskum študentom? [Cognitive Processes and Personality in Interpreting: What Their Research Brings to Students?]. Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre [Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra].
- Hodáková, Soňa, and Jana Ukušová. 2023. From the Booth to the Field: Interpreters' Current Situation in the Context of the Refugee Crisis in Slovakia. In Valero-Garcés, C. (eds.) *TISP En Transición / PSIT in Transition*. Alcalá de Henares: Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Kodajová, Lívía. 2024. Úloha osobnostných predpokladov v pedagogickej intervencii u budúcich tlmočníkov [The Role of Personality Traits in Pedagogical Intervention in Future Interpreters]. Master's Thesis, Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre [Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra].
- Kurz, Ingrid. 2003. Physiological Stress during Simultaneous Interpreting: A Comparison of Experts and Novices. *Interpreters Newsletter* 12 (2003): 51–67.

- McDowell, Liz; Messias, Deanne K. Hilfinger and Estrada, Robin Dawson. 2011. The Work of Language Interpretation in Health Care: Complex, Challenging, Exhausting, and Often Invisible. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* [Online] 22 (2). 137–147. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659610395773>. [Accessed: 18th July 2025]
- MentalHealth4All. 2024. Your wellbeing is worth taking care of. Available from: <https://www.mentalhealth4all.eu/>. [Accessed: 18th July 2025].
- Moser-Mercer, Barbara, Künzli, Alexander and Korac, Marina. 1998. Prolonged Turns in Interpreting: Effects on Quality, Physiological and Psychological Stress (Pilot Study). *Interpreting*. 3 (1). 47–64. [https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.8\(1st\)](https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.8(1st))
- Park, Elyse R; Mutchler, Jan L; Perez, Giselle et al. 2017. Coping and Resiliency Enhancement Program (CARE): A Pilot Study for Interpreters in Cancer Care. *Psycho-Oncology*. 26 (8) 1181–1190. [https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.8\(1st\)](https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.8(1st))
- Schwenke Tomina. 2012. Sign Language Interpreters and Burnout. *Journal of Interpretation*. [Online] 20 (1). 31–54. Available from: <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/joi/vol20/iss1/7> [Accessed: 19th July 2025]
- Tribe Rachel and Raval Hitesh. 2003. *Undertaking Mental Health Work Using Interpreters*. Routledge.
- Valero-Garcés Carmen and Alcalde Peñalver Elena. 2021. Empathy in PSI: Where We Stand and Where to Go from Here. *FITISPos International Journal*. [Online] 8 (1) 17–27. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPosIJ.2021.8.1.298>. [Accessed: 20th July 2025].
- Watson David and Clark Lee A. 1984. Negative Affectivity: The Disposition to Experience Negative Aversive Emotional States. *Psychological Bulletin* [Online] 96 (3) 465–490. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.96.3.465>
- Zukunftsinstitut. 2024. Megatrend Gesundheit. [Online] Available from: <https://www.zukunftsinstitut.de/blog-megatrend-gesundheit>. [Accessed: 20th July 2025].

Appendix 1 (The role of personality traits in pedagogical intervention regarding the training of future interpreters - students)

1. Please, select your gender identity.
 - a) Female
 - b) Male
 - c) Other
 - d) Prefer not to say
2. What level of university studies are you currently enrolled in?
 - a) 1st level (Bachelor's)
 - b) 2nd level (Master's)
3. Do you think your personality has influence on your decisions about your future career path?
 - a) Yes, I think it has a significant impact
 - b) Probably, but the influence is only minor
 - c) Probably no, it is possible, but only in some cases
 - d) No, it has no influence
4. Would you be in favour of devoting some space during interpreter training to work with personality characteristics? (e.g. anxiety, stage fright, extraversion/introversion)
 - a) Yes, I would definitely appreciate this initiative
 - b) Probably yes, it does sound interesting, but I do not consider it to be that important
 - c) Not quite, but I am not strictly opposed to the idea
 - d) No, I have nothing to gain from it, I would rather focus on different aspects
5. Do trainers explore the topic of personality characteristics during seminars?
 - a) Yes, sufficiently
 - b) Somewhat yes, partially
 - c) Not quite, insufficiently
 - d) Not at all
6. In your opinion, should the topic of personality characteristics be included in the curriculum?
 - a) Yes
 - b) Rather yes
 - c) Rather no
 - d) No
7. Were it incorporated, which form would you prefer?
 - a) Testing and accordingly tailored short exercises (10-15 minutes) during interpreting seminars
 - b) Separate course
 - c) Certain number of lessons (e. g. 2-3) within an existing course
 - d) I would not incorporate this topic directly in the study plan; however, I would prefer a workshop / multiple workshops
 - e) I would not incorporate it at all
 - f) Other

Appendix 2 (The role of personality traits in pedagogical intervention regarding the training of future interpreters - trainers)

1. How many years of experience do you have as an interpreter?
 - a) 0-2
 - b) 2-5
 - c) 5-10
 - d) more than 10
2. How many years have you been teaching interpreting?
 - a) 0-2
 - b) 2-5
 - c) 5-10
 - d) more than 10
3. When teaching interpreting, do you register a demand from students for recommendations /advice that would take into account their particular personality traits?
 - a) Yes, they often ask for feedback and advice reflecting their personality
 - b) Somewhat yes, sometimes they do ask for feedback and advice reflecting their personality
 - c) Not quite, this topic is brought up only occasionally
 - d) No, I have never encountered such questions/requests
4. Do you feel proficient enough in the field of psychology to be able to answer those questions eruditely?
 - a) Yes, I think I have enough knowledge to guide students
 - b) Rather yes, I would be able to answer some questions
 - c) Not quite, my knowledge around this topic is not sufficient
 - d) Not at all, I would not be able to answer those questions
5. Would you be in favour of some recommendations or guidelines regarding this topic?
 - a) Yes, I would definitely be in favour
 - b) Rather yes, I would consider learning more about this topic
 - c) Not quite, I do not see it as a priority
 - d) No, I do not see the point and use
6. If yes, which form should these recommendations/guidelines take?
 - a) Written publication (e.g. concise handbook in both printed and electronic versions)
 - b) Audio/video recording of one extensive lecture
 - c) Audio/video recording of several module lectures
 - d) Methodological seminar
 - e) Inviting an expert on this topic to a seminar
 - f) Other
7. In which form would you incorporate work with personality types into interpreter training within the study plan?
 - a) Testing and accordingly tailored short exercises (10-15 minutes) during interpreting seminars
 - b) Separate course
 - c) I would not incorporate this topic directly in the study plan; however, I would prefer a workshop / multiple workshops
 - d) I would not incorporate it at all
 - e) Other