



Towards a tool for the integrated management of the interpreter's prior preparation: A pilot study

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Abstract: The interpreter's prior preparation for a specialised assignment poses a constant challenge for professionals given the usual time constraints experienced in interpreting. The use of an integral application that optimises the prior preparation process from a dual linguistic and extralinguistic perspective will allow the interpreter to contextualise the topic of the event in an agile and effective manner. In order to define the basis on which this application should be designed, this study, which is part of a larger one focused on analysing the way in which prior preparation and glossary elaboration are approached at different educational and professional levels, aims to respond to three objectives: identifying the nature of the main drawbacks encountered by interpreters when preparing for an assignment; identifying the factors that interpreters recognise as determining in increasing the degree of their preparation; and, finally, identifying the interpreters' future prospects in terms of prior preparation. To this end, a questionnaire was developed aimed at working professional interpreters, to which 41 subjects have responded so far. The preliminary data collected will allow us to initially define the guidelines that will mark the development of the application that aims to combine the linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge acquired by the interpreter for each new assignment in order to guarantee the most effective contextualisation of the speaker's words and, consequently, achieve the greatest degree of success.

Keywords: glossary; prior preparation; terminological application; linguistic knowledge; extralinguistic knowledge.

1. Introduction

Up to now, the interpreter's prior preparation has been taken for granted or dealt with only tangentially, despite its importance and the thoroughness with which it deserves to be approached (Luccarelli, 2006). Situations in which interpreters have to deal with highly specialised subjects are recurrent, just as it is very common for professionals to lack the necessary time to prepare and



master the terminology specific to the communicative act they will be attending as interpreters, its specialised phraseology, or other lexical units that are inherent to it (Corpas Pastor, 2021).

Comprehension is one of the complex cognitive processes that occur in the development of simultaneous interpreting (Díaz-Galaz *et al.*, 2015) and is part of the series of sequential sub-processes that occur from the very moment the interpreting assignment materialises (Jiang, 2013). Such comprehension, as explained by Díaz-Galaz *et al.* (2015), must be understood as a dynamic process in which micro- and macro-processing operations are intertwined with the aim of generating a linguistic or abstract representation of a specific element. In this sense, micro-processing deals with low-level operations that unravel the linguistic contents of a discourse, while macro-processing explores the way in which linguistic units are integrated into a communicative situation in relation to prior knowledge. Comprehension is vital in interpreting, and the knowledge needed to facilitate comprehension is not always explicitly presented in a discourse, so interpreters must be familiar with the subject matter in order to understand the speaker's ideas quickly and contextualise them in the specialised knowledge system shared by all participants involved in the communicative act (Fantinuoli, 2017).

Languages cannot be considered isomorphic, i.e., they do not follow identical lexical and structural patterns, so the idea of exact correspondence between linguistic units must be shunned (Gile, 2009). Moreover, Gile (2009) points to an additional difficulty which is often overlooked, and which has pragmatic and stylistic values at its root. The use of a given word in the source language may have a completely different value in the target language, even though they may potentially be perceived as equivalent concepts.

It can therefore be noted that it will be the context the one providing this additional pragmatic and external value to the terms specific to a particular field of knowledge. In this sense, it is not only necessary to have a certain level of familiarity in relation to technical terms that may be new to the interpreter's ears, but also to other elements specific to the field of knowledge or of a more general nature in order to contextualise the interpretive action itself and thus increase the availability of these terms so that they can be accessible at any time during the interpretive act (Setton & Dawrant, 2016).

The contextualisation of a subject and of the terms that shape its structure necessarily involves the action that knowledge exerts on the interpreter's work in general. It seems obvious to affirm that the interpreter is expected to have linguistic knowledge, while extralinguistic knowledge plays a fundamental role both in the comprehension and in the subsequent reformulation phases (Gile, 2009). In the same vein, Pérez-Luzardo Díaz (2005) states that the interpreter must not only have lexical and semantic knowledge, but must also have cultural, world, encyclopaedic and basic knowledge, accompanied by a strong interest in current issues to contextualise the message and relate it to existing knowledge in the field. In other words, the higher the level of familiarity with the topic of the event in question, the better the final result of the interpretation (Manole, 2019).

Consequently, it seems plausible to argue that general knowledge goes hand in hand with linguistic knowledge insofar as both are essentially part of the same process (Gillies, 2013). Just as it seems sensible to state that interpreters' knowledge base rarely contains the information necessary to be able to carry out a specific assignment, so *ad hoc* knowledge – understood as knowledge



acquired for a specific interpreting job – is regarded as a core piece of the interpreter’s work (Gile, 2009).

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) (1999/2016) argues that, in order to ensure the quality of the interpreting event, the organiser should provide interpreters, as far as possible, with documentation, reference materials and glossaries that can guide them in the correct exercise of their professional work. This would help to avoid *groping* interpreting, which occurs when the professional interpreter only knows the venue and time where the event is to take place and is only given a brief agenda to the meeting, which is often subject to change. This type of interpretation may be caused by elements that may occur in isolation or by the concurrence of several of factors at the same time – lack of documentation by the organisation, lack of time for adequate prior preparation or deviation from the initially agreed theme by the speaker (Gallego & Tolosa, 2012). On rare occasions, interpreters receive documentary material from the event organisers, which means that preparation takes place with very little time in advance, resulting in a heavy workload that cannot be absorbed within the time available (Corpas Pastor, 2021).

These conditioning factors complicate the interpreter’s task and lead to a lack of precision in the content expressed in the target language. In other words, they hinder the interpreter’s anticipation, understood as the correct activation of a linguistic item in the face of a perceptual input (Chmiel, 2021) expressed by a speaker. Prior preparation minimises the risk of a mismatch between the knowledge of the person attending an event and the semantics of the discourse being delivered. If the two are correctly combined, meaning emerges, which is nothing other than new knowledge based on inference (Chernov, 2004). In this sense, the interpreter must be aware, as can be seen from the above, of the context in which the enunciated discourse is framed, as well as of the terminology of the specific field of specialisation in which it is found. In short, knowledge contributes to the enrichment of comprehension processes (Díaz-Galaz *et al.*, 2015) in a significant way.

Therefore, prior preparation, whether terminological (linguistic) or documentary (extralinguistic), must be carried out conscientiously and effectively, by means of tools that allow for greater optimisation of the time – usually scarce – available to the interpreter for the execution of this task. Such tools should encourage a more holistic preparation environment in which linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge intertwine, understanding knowledge as a combination of language, content, and situational experience (Fantinuoli, 2017). This is the main motivation behind the development of the present study, the ultimate aim of which is to lay the foundations for the design of a practical application that interpreters can use to achieve effective prior preparation that brings together all their linguistic and extralinguistic preparatory research in a single consultation environment in order to achieve greater efficiency in their professional performance.

2. The relevance of knowledge for the interpreter

It would be plausible to establish that, in general, interpreters do not possess the same degree of topic specialisation as the speaker they are interpreting. Thanks to prior preparation, interpreting professionals manage to reach a sufficiently high threshold of knowledge to be able to cope with the interpreting task they have been entrusted within the usual time constraints (Faber, 2010).



In a simple equation, Gile (2009) defines comprehension as the sum of the interpreter's linguistic knowledge and extralinguistic knowledge. To this mathematical structure he then adds a third element that is equally primary and should not be disregarded: analysis. Analysis is the instrument to be activated when knowledge of the language and extralinguistic knowledge are not sufficient to guarantee understanding. In this sense, it must be taken into consideration that such analysis, which Gile (2009) defines as *deliberate*, must always be developed taking into account the time constraints imposed by the interpretative activity itself.

It can be inferred, therefore, that knowledge is certainly the essential tool that interpreters can make use of in order to achieve a coherent and cohesive target message. This knowledge must allow for a full contextualisation of the subject matter of the event in question, not only from a purely terminological perspective, but also from an extralinguistic prism that allows the interpreter to have the tools to be able, when the time comes, to develop the analysis that Gile (2009) included in his equation.

Linguistic knowledge is directly linked to the acquisition of the terminology of a specific field, including its specific phraseology and the stylistic expressions commonly used among those who share this specialised information (Fantinuoli, 2017), which is of relevance to the interpreter insofar as those who attend an interpreted discourse expect the professional who delivers the target message to elaborate it with the expressive rigour of the field (Gile, 2009).

Extralinguistic knowledge is the instrument that facilitates the contextualisation of the speaker's words within a specific field of knowledge in which its members share concepts and knowledge that are usually unfamiliar to the interpreter. Having extensive extralinguistic knowledge enables interpreters to understand what they are talking about, which will also facilitate re-expression in the target language in a more idiomatic and fluent manner (Gillies, 2013). In order to be able to analyse what is being said, interpreters must have a high level of understanding of the subject matter they are interpreting: a level which, while not that of a specialist, must be higher than that of any ordinary person with a certain level of education (Seleskovitch, 2010). The interpreter must have the will to understand, as well as the necessary knowledge to be able to do so, far from being considered a specialist in the subject, but sufficiently in line with its contents to ensure that the target message is explicit and avoids the hypothetical (Lederer, 2003).

This extralinguistic knowledge can be considered multifaceted as it includes broad general culture, world, encyclopaedic and background knowledge (Pérez-Luzardo Díaz, 2009). In our view, each of these types of knowledge plays an important role in the interpretative work and should not be disregarded in any way as they allow the content of any event to be contextualised from the different perspectives from which speakers wish to explore it.

3. Documentation and terminology: The cornerstones of prior preparation

As has been pointed out, information needs in the field of interpreting have a linguistic and extralinguistic origin, are multilingual, are clearly attached to a subject and a culture and come from different fields of specialised knowledge (Sales Salvador, 2022). It is now time to determine the way in which this knowledge is fed by interpreters in order to be able to cope with their professional



work during an assignment. In this sense, terminology, together with documentation, serve as tools to satisfy the information needs in terms of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge respectively.

Documentation must be developed on the basis of techniques and procedures with which interpreters must be familiar in order to be able to access, select and retrieve the information that is most useful for resolving any doubts they may have in relation to the subject of study (Recoder Sellarés & Cid Leal, 2004). Therefore, documentation is the tool that allows the interpreter to establish a roadmap towards the identification and resolution of the documentary problems that may arise in the performance of the interpreting task or the information needs identified, always within a specific context (Sales Salvador, 2006).

Terminology is directly related to the study of the different units that make up a field of knowledge from a linguistic perspective. However, this discipline must be understood from a position far removed from the conception of specialised knowledge stored in watertight compartments where the terminology is specific to each field of knowledge without interaction with other areas (García de Quesada & Montero Martínez, 2003).

The interpreters' task is, therefore, to initiate a research exercise to locate the terms identified as belonging to an area of knowledge within a conceptual system while at the same time broadening their knowledge base in the field until they reach the degree of specificity required to locate such terms (García de Quesada & Montero Martínez, 2003). Therefore, a clear directionality is identified in the interpreter's terminographic work, which must be governed by the guidelines set by the discourse itself and the subject matter in which it is framed.

Almost naturally, a symbiotic relationship is identified between terminology and documentation, insofar as terminological units are both language and knowledge (Cabré Castellví, 2000). Documentation, for its part, can be understood as the environment in which interpreters can nourish themselves with terminological resources, since it is in documents that terms display their full informative potential, while at the same time serving as a gateway to extralinguistic knowledge that will enable them to create a well-founded context.

An effective terminological research process combined with an adequate documentation process will, in our opinion, enable the interpreter to create a reliable picture of the context in which the information load of the event is framed. Maintaining a high degree of familiarity with this context will allow for a better interpretation of the linguistic units while promoting inference and the correct construction of the target message (Faber & León-Araúz, 2016).

4. Prior preparation and technologies: the glossary, a tool with potential

Undoubtedly, the technological explosion of recent decades has encouraged expert knowledge to transcend the barriers of the specific scientific fields to which it belongs to become more accessible to users with a cultural level that is not necessarily high (Ortego Antón, 2016). The new batch of interpreters are digital natives and digital immigrants, which undoubtedly makes them more technological professionals than their predecessors (Álvarez-Pérez & Pérez-Luzardo Díaz, 2022), something that is evident in the extensive use and regular presence of tablets in the interpreting booth (Prandi, 2020).



The elaboration of glossaries is part of the contextualisation process, as reading materials in advance of the event allows for the extraction of the terms that will populate this terminological tool (Jiang, 2013). However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the glossary fulfils an immediate communication function in a specific context (Gile, 2009), which usually takes place in extremely restrictive temporal conditions that prevent its consultation with the serenity that the translator of written texts could enjoy.

This characteristic serves as a guiding principle that drives the creation of technology-based tools that allow interpreters to interact more dynamically and fluidly with the fruit of their prior preparation process. This has given rise to instruments that favour comprehensive knowledge management, such as computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) tools (Fantinuoli, 2017), automatic speech recognition (ASR) (Corpas Pastor, 2021; Defrancq & Fantinuoli, 2021; Frittella, 2022) or solutions related to the emergence of artificial intelligence (Fantinuoli, 2018).

There are several noteworthy resources in this regard, but *SmarTerp* is perhaps the one that arouses most interest, as it combines two components that are fully valid in the professional performance of interpreting today. On the one hand, it is a remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) system whose objective is to foster the ideal conditions for providing a quality remote interpreting service from a technical perspective. On the other hand, it serves as an ASR and CAI tool that assists interpreters in those parts of speech that tend to pose a greater interpretation challenge (names, acronyms, numbers or certain specialised terms) (Frittella, 2022).

Other tools stand out, such as *KUDO Interpreter Assist* (Fantinuoli *et al.*, 2022), which, like *SmarTerp*, aims to be integrated into RSI systems, which are becoming increasingly common following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. *KUDO Interpreter Assist* offers its users two different features: a glossary generation tool on the one hand, and a real-time suggestion system on the other.

The *VIP* system (Corpas Pastor, 2021), which covers the different terminology needs of the interpreter during the preparatory phase or during the performance of their work, and *InterpretBank* (Fantinuoli, 2009; Fantinuoli & Montecchio, 2023), a system that integrates ASR and automatic terminological extraction in order to automate the terminology search process, are of a more terminological nature. Both proposals seem to share a clear objective: the streamlining of a necessary process, that of terminology research, which occurs in a context in which interpreters generally experience time constraints to carry out an effective preparatory task that allows them to tackle their interpreting work with solvency. It is precisely along these lines that our work is being developed: an incipient but valuable contribution that understands interpreters' needs in terms of prior preparation, enabling online consultation while the event is taking place and subsequent archiving to generate multi-purpose glossaries that not only include interpreters' terminological effort, but also the fruit of their documentary work.

5. Methodology

5.1 Study design and objectives

The present research is part of a larger study that is still in progress, the ultimate aim of which is to design an application for managing the interpreter's prior preparation from both a



terminological and a documentary perspective. To this end, we present the data collected so far which, in our opinion, serve as a clear indicator of the trends expressed by the subjects surveyed, enabling us to gather relevant information on which to base our conclusions.

The survey, elaborated by means of *Google Forms*, was distributed through different channels in order to maximise its dissemination. Firstly, it was shared through social networks such as *WhatsApp*, *Facebook* or *LinkedIn* so that those contacts who met the profile requirements described could participate. Secondly, printed cards with a QR code containing the survey link were produced and distributed to the participants of two congresses (Braga, Portugal, in June 2022 and Alcalá de Henares, Spain, in March 2023) in which the authors of this article participated during the period the survey was open.

Our study has three clearly differentiated main objectives: to identify the nature of the greatest drawbacks interpreters encounter when preparing for an assignment; to identify the factors interpreters recognise as determining in increasing their level of preparation; and finally, to identify interpreters' future prospects in terms of prior preparation.

With these objectives in mind, a questionnaire was designed for practising professional interpreters, consisting mainly of closed questions and, to a lesser extent, open questions, related to the way in which they prepare for an event. To this end, the set of questions was divided into four thematic blocks in order to facilitate a more structured reading of the data with a view to drawing conclusions from the responses collected.

The first of these blocks included control questions aimed at determining the profile of each of the subjects, with a special interest in elucidating the level of studies completed in relation to the practice of interpreting and the years of experience which, on occasions, served as reference values for the interpretation of some of the answers. Respondents then answered a series of questions related to their prior preparation for their professional work. Most of the questions in this block offered multiple-choice answers, although some of them allowed respondents to include different options from the ones suggested. Thirdly, interpreter respondents addressed questions related to future prospects in relation to prior preparation in their professional practice in order to identify, primarily, the factors that, in their opinion, could lead to changes in the way respondents carry out such preparatory work. Finally, the fourth block concentrated on the way in which glossaries are managed by professional interpreters as a result of their preparatory work and the factors that might motivate a change of behaviour in the future in relation to the development of this terminological tool.

5.2 Description of the sample

A total of 41 interpreters were surveyed, 32 of whom identified as women, eight as men and only one preferred not to specify his/her gender. Eight of the respondents said they had less than three-years' professional experience as interpreters, thirteen had been interpreting for between three and ten years, eight had between ten- and fifteen-years' experience, and the remaining twelve had been working as an interpreter for more than fifteen years.

With regard to their academic training, a total of nineteen respondents hold a Bachelor's degree in translation and interpreting, compared to fourteen who claim to have completed a



Master's degree in interpreting. A total of five respondents state not to have a degree but to have taken interpreting courses, while the remaining three claim not to have any degree and consider themselves self-taught.

The survey has been open for a period of almost two years, given the difficulty, as a general rule, of getting interpreters to respond to such questionnaires.

6. Results and discussion

In order to facilitate the reading of the results achieved, the percentages obtained will be analysed below in order according to the blocks into which the consultation instrument described above was divided and responded by all 41 participants. Since the results of the first block were explicitly addressed in the description of the sample, we will begin the analysis of the data collected from the remaining three blocks.

The second block, which focused on the interpreter's approach to preparatory work, yielded data on the nature of the difficulties experienced by interpreters in the preparatory phase of an assignment. The response options offered respondents a choice between difficulties of a terminological nature, selected by 63.4% (n=26) of respondents; of a thematic nature, selected by 51.2% (n=21) of respondents; and finally, a third option, suggesting linguistic difficulties such as complex syntactic constructions, accents involving a certain degree of difficulty or unnatural idiomatic constructions in the original language, selected by 46.4% (n=19) of respondents. Although the question had a partially closed structure, participants had the option of including other difficulties which were not listed in the three initial response options. Thus, 7.3% (n=3) of respondents acknowledged experiencing some difficulties with cultural aspects and the absence of documentation, while only one subject (2.4%) stated that he/she had no difficulties at all in this regard.

The results obtained in this respect seem to confirm the views expressed by Pérez-Luzardo Díaz (2005), who argues that the need for knowledge on the part of the interpreter must go beyond the linguistic knowledge itself, which is traditionally assumed of the interpreting professional. Moreover, background and encyclopaedic knowledge must be given a predominant position in the prior preparation, as is attested to by the percentages collected, although another type of knowledge, cultural knowledge, which respondents do not seem to consider excessively difficult, timidly creeps into the responses.

On the other hand, in line with the above, when asked about the determining factors that lead to a greater degree of intensity in prior preparation, 78% (n=32) of the subjects considered that the degree of difficulty of the topic of the event was the most determining factor, followed by the difficulty of terminology, indicated by 68.3% (n=28). However, only 7.3% (n=3) considered potential linguistic difficulties to be the most important determinant for a more thorough preparation, which seems to suggest that linguistic aspects such as the speaker's accent or the syntactic structures commonly used in the specific field of specialisation do not have significant



weight to determine the intensity of the preparatory work. Significant, however, are the results obtained in relation to *new topics* or the contact with a *new client*, with 58.5% (n=24) and 29.3% (n=12) respectively.

Table I: Conditions “new topic” and “new client” according to the subjects’ years of professional experience

Years of professional experience	Conditions favouring a higher intensity of prior preparation (selection)			
	New topic		New client	
	%	n	%	n
<3 years	16.7	4	25	3
3-10 years	25	6	33.3	4
10-15 years	25	6	16.7	2
>15 years	33.3	8	25	3
Total	100	24	100	12

Source: Álvarez-Pérez & Pérez-Luzardo (2024)

In this regard, it is interesting to explore the correspondence between the years of experience of the interpreters surveyed who say that they intensify their work in the preparatory phase in cases where the subject matter of the event is new to them and in the case of an assignment with a new client. It can be seen that of the 24 respondents who consider a *new topic* to be a determining factor for further preparation, those with more than fifteen years of professional experience account for 33.3% (n=8) of the sample, compared to 16.7% (n=4) of the respondents who consider this factor to be a key element and have less than three years of professional experience. The groups of interpreters with between three- and ten-years’ experience and between ten- and fifteen-years’ experience who ticked this option each accounted for 25% (n=6) of the total number of subjects. As for the *new client* factor, of all the subjects who chose this option (n=12), the highest percentage (33.3%; n=4) was concentrated in the group of interpreters who said they had between three- and ten-years’ experience, while the rest of the groups had similar percentages, as shown in Table I.

It appears from the data analysed that the group with the most professional experience is the one that, when faced with an assignment in a new subject area, understands the need to undertake a more intense preparatory process prior to the event in order to familiarise themselves as thoroughly as possible with the context of the subject. In other words, it is this group that most obviously takes on board Manole’s (2019) statement that the greater the degree of familiarity with the subject of the event, the better the end result of the interpretation. In this sense, a clear trend can also be inferred from the data collected that would allow us to determine that, the greater the professional experience, the greater the relevance of a *new topic* as a major conditioning factor for undertaking a more exhaustive prior preparation process.

Table 2: Condition “new topic” according to subjects’ interpretation training (n=24)

Training in interpreting	Conditions favouring a higher intensity of prior preparation (selection)
	New topic

	%	n
Bachelor's degree in translation and interpreting	45.8	11
Master's degree in interpreting	41.7	10
I do not have a degree, but I have done some courses	8.3	2
I do not have a degree, I am self-taught	4.2	1
Total	100	24

Source: Álvarez-Pérez & Pérez-Luzardo (2024)

It is also worth analysing the relationship between the *new topic* factor in relation to the interpreting training received by the interpreters surveyed, which is summarised in Table 2. Of the total number of subjects (n=24) who indicated that this factor determines the degree of intensity of their previous training, it is striking to note that those participants who said they had no specific interpreting qualifications and considered themselves self-taught (4.2%; n=1) and those who said they had no specific qualifications but had attended interpreting courses (8.3%; n=2) had relatively low results. On the other hand, those interpreters who have a Bachelor's degree in translation and interpreting (45.8%; n=11) or a Master's degree in interpreting (41.7%; n=10) consider that the *new topic* factor is indeed an incentive to start a more comprehensive preparatory process for an assignment. These results seem to support one of the conclusions reached by Álvarez-Pérez and Pérez-Luzardo Díaz (2022), who state that students only resort to the use of glossaries, which they define as a natural result of the preparatory process prior to interpreting, in those cases in which terminological and documentary challenges arise; understood, in our case, as a *new topic* outside the interpreter's domain. From our study, it can be inferred that this fact becomes a trend with the arrival of these students in the professional environment.

This same tendency seems to be corroborated when the subjects in our study are questioned about the frequency with which they prepare their interpretations in advance and conscientiously. Those holding a Bachelor's degree (46.3%; n=19) gave a score of five (n=10) and four (n=6), meaning that 84.2% of the interpreters surveyed with this level of education confirmed that they always or almost always prepare their assignments in advance. This group was followed by interpreters holding a Master's degree (34.1%; n=14), who also indicated their frequency as being mostly between options four (n=5) and five (n=7). In contrast, those interpreters who claimed not to have a degree represent significantly low numbers with only 12.2% (n=5) of respondents marking four or five on the scale. It seems clear that prior preparation and glossary development are ingrained in the professional DNA of interpreters with specific training in translation and interpreting.

Table 3: Perceived reduction of prior preparation time in usual fields of work according to subjects' years of experience

Years of experience	Do you find that, over the years and as you have progressed in your career, you have reduced the amount of time spent on prior preparation in your interpretations in the fields in which you usually work?	
	Yes	No



	%	n	%	n
< 3 years	8.3	2	33.3	4
3-10 years	37.5	9	16.7	2
10-15 years	25	6	16.7	2
>15 years	29.2	7	33.3	4
Total	100	24	100	12

Source: Álvarez-Pérez & Pérez-Luzardo (2024)

The results obtained in relation to the third block of questions on the progression of previous preparation at a personal level over the course of the professional career are initially approached from the respondents' perception of how their prior preparation has evolved in those fields in which they usually interpret. While 87.8% (n=36) of the respondents stated that they usually work in the same thematic fields, only 66.7% (n=24) perceive that the passage of time and the advancement of their professional career have resulted in a reduction in the time spent on preparation prior to their assignments in fields with which they are familiar. Cross-referencing these results with the interpreters' years of experience, as shown in Table 3, it is significant to note that, of the total number of respondents who said they did not perceive a reduction in time spent on preparation (33.3%; n=4), those with less than three years' professional experience and those with more than 15 years' experience showed identical percentages (33.3%; n=4). On the other hand, the figures for the yes option to this question seem to go against what might appear to be a logical upward slope indicating a greater perception of a reduction in prior preparation time as one moves up the career ladder. Instead, it is observed that respondents with less than three years of experience do indeed reflect the lowest number (n=2), making them the only group where yes was lower than no. However, while the rest of the respondents with less than three years of experience are the lowest (n=2), they are the only group where yes was lower than no. Nevertheless, while the other groups reported higher numbers of yes than no, the data collected do not allow us to be certain that the more years of professional experience in a particular subject area, the higher the percentage of interpreters who claim to reduce their preparation time because they have greater professional skills or more extensive knowledge in the particular field.

When asked about the factors that, in the opinion of the interpreters surveyed, could lead to a reduction in the time spent on preparation, a consistent 95.8% (n=23) stated that the familiarity they had acquired with the subject matter of the field meant that extensive preparation was unnecessary. On the other hand, 54.2% (n=13) of the subjects pointed to a greater mastery of interpreting techniques, followed by 45.8% (n=11) who linked this to a greater mastery of their working languages. In view of the high percentages obtained, it can be deduced that the interpreters participating in our study understand that, on the one hand, the improvement in their professional skills resulting from practice and, on the other hand, the acquisition of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge will mean that the need for prior preparation will mean a lower workload. The familiarity acquired with the subject matter enables interpreters to analyse the content of the speaker's presentation in their own language. This analysis – understood in the way Gile (2009) puts it in his equation – is the instrument that allows the contextualisation not only of the specific terms of a field of knowledge, but of the whole knowledge contained in a discourse. Linguistic knowledge is central to the interpreter, but extralinguistic knowledge is essential to be able to understand what is being



said and thus to be able to reformulate the target message with competence (Gile, 2009). Otherwise, anticipation, i.e., the correct activation of a linguistic item in response to a perceptual input (Chmiel, 2021), could be compromised and, with it, the success of the whole interpretative process.

With regard to the future outlook described for this block, it is worth noting that 53.7% (n=22) of respondents consider that there will indeed be changes in the way they approach their preparation prior to an interpreting assignment, compared to 46.3% (n=19) who consider that their performance in this regard will remain unchanged. Respondents who consider that there will be changes in the way they approach their prior preparation highlight that the factors that would most affect this include familiarity with the subject matter that makes thorough preparation unnecessary (77.3%; n=17), greater mastery of interpreting techniques (40.9%; n=9), greater mastery of working languages (27.3%, n=6) or, among others, the emergence of technical adaptations (40.9%; n=9). It is this last result that serves as a bridge to the last part of our analysis, in which we will analyse the role of the glossary in the interpreter's preparatory phase, understood as the final product of this prior task of contextualisation.

The fourth section deals with the surveyed interpreters' perception of their future use of this terminology tool. In this sense, 86.4% (n=19) of the twenty-two interpreters who thought that the passage of time would have an effect on the way they prepare for an event considered that this would also affect the way they compile their glossaries. This decision is based on a number of factors, the majority of which, in identical percentages (63.2%; n=12), seem to indicate that changes will be brought about by a greater degree of familiarity with the subject matter of the event, making extensive preparation unnecessary, and the emergence of new technical adaptations. These results seem to point that a significant proportion of the interpreters surveyed perceive that the emergence of new technical tools that allow for further optimisation of glossary development and – as already noted – of the prior preparation process as a whole, may have a significant effect on the way they approach this preparatory phase. The usual time constraints that interpreters have to face in handling most assignments have a significant effect on their preparatory phase, and there is usually little time to master the terminology and knowledge of a field (Corpas Pastor, 2021). However, this preparation, as has already been observed, has a direct impact on the success of the interpretative process, and in the face of time constraints, the use of new technologies or technical adaptations emerges as the most effective solution for optimising the process. Such tools must be fast, capable of allowing data filtering, and intuitive to ensure that prior preparation is carried out as smoothly and effectively as possible (Ortego Antón, 2016).

The interpreters consulted showed that they make active use of glossaries, 42.1% (n=8) stating that they edit these tools as a result of their previous work during the very event they attend as interpreters, compared with 57.9% (n=11) who say they do so after the conference and 26.3% (n=5) who say they produce a single initial version which they do not edit at any time. As can be seen, a large majority of respondents perceive this instrument as a dynamic and changing element.

Similarly, 73.7% (n=14) of the subjects say that they always keep their glossaries, compared with 15.8% (n=3) who say that they do so only sometimes. These figures are similar to those collected in the question on the reuse of the glossaries produced. Some 73.7% (n=14) of the subjects confirm that they sometimes reuse them, compared with 21.1% (n=4) who confirm that they always reuse them. These data are of interest in our study, particularly in terms of our conclusions, as will



be seen below. However, it can indeed be seen once again that the glossary is a living entity that has a life beyond a specific environment within a specific context and that can be useful for other assignments in the same or in other tangential lines. This seems to be in line with Sales Salvador (2022) when she states that the information needs of interpreters transcend the linguistic and extralinguistic spheres to be housed within fields or cultures belonging to different areas of specialised knowledge.

7. Conclusions

The present study set out three initial objectives, which have been achieved and which lay the foundations for the subsequent practical application of the results of the broader study in which this research is framed. On the one hand, the aim was to identify the nature of the greatest difficulties faced by interpreters in their preparatory work prior to a performance. From the data collected, it is clear that most of the drawbacks encountered during the preparatory phase have a threefold origin: terminological, thematic and linguistic. It can be seen, therefore, that the greatest difficulties are to be found in the pillars that support the process of acquiring knowledge that will favour the contextualisation of the topic of the event in question. In other words, these are problems that lie in a double perspective: the linguistic and the extralinguistic, both of which are of vital relevance to facilitate the understanding of the source message, as Pérez-Luzardo Díaz (2005) and Gile (2009) point out.

The second objective was to identify the factors that the interpreters surveyed recognised as determining in intensifying their level of prior preparation. In this respect, the data analysed allow us to conclude that the degree of technical specialisation of the subject matter of the event, the challenges it presents in terms of terminology and new topics or clients are the most important determining factors. Once again, it can be seen that the concern of the respondents arises from the inability to contextualise the contents expressed by the speaker from a knowledge perspective. In other words, prior preparation is perceived as the process that will allow them to gain confidence in the face of the unknown and thus master not only the theoretical content of the area, but also the expressive skills necessary to sound natural to the ears of the expert audience.

Finally, the third objective was to address the respondents' future perspectives on prior preparation and, consequently, on the development of glossaries as a tool for compiling all the preparation work. In this sense, an interesting conclusion emerges. In both cases, the emergence of technical adaptations that facilitate the prior preparation process will have an effect on the way in which the professionals surveyed will approach this process. It can therefore be inferred that, in the current technological context, in which the rapid incursion of tools such as artificial intelligence or ASR are producing significant changes in the optimisation of the interpreter's work, professionals show a clear predisposition to embrace these technologies as long as they allow them to make more effective use of the scarce preparation time they usually have.

Effective prior preparation favours the micro- and macro-processing analysed by Díaz-Galaz *et al.* (2015) and which lay the foundations for comprehension. This double-scale processing is based on linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge which, in the end, allows the generation of a context in which to place the words of the expert speaker addressed to an expert audience in a field that is



new to the interpreter. Therefore, this prior preparation must be carried out in the most comprehensive way possible, favouring the optimisation of each of the steps in the preparatory process. This is the origin of our proposal for the practical application of the study we are currently carrying out on the way in which prior preparation and glossary preparation is approached at different educational and professional levels. The aim is to create an application that goes beyond the elementary terminological concept of columns of terms in two or more languages. The aim is to create a tool that brings together the terminology consulted (linguistic knowledge) with the documentation analysed, allowing it to be fully contextualised (extralinguistic knowledge). It must be a dynamic and intuitive application that allows for continuous modification, in line with the dynamism of the glossary itself as an instrument. Furthermore, in our opinion, it must be a sharable tool that complies with the FAIR principles (findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability) to ensure the proper use and better exploitation of the data consulted. In short, it must be an application that optimises the interpreter's work, making it more agile in order to respond to the needs of the frantic environment in which the interpreting activity regularly takes place.

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Notes

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