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Emotions, stress and related phenomena in public service interpreter and translator education and training / Emociones, estrés y fenómenos relacionados en la formación de intérpretes y traductores para los servicios públicos

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Abstract: This article introduces the special issue on the topic of emotions, stress, and related phenomena in public service interpreter and translator training. In it, we provide background and context for the special issue, discuss issues of ethics in interpreting research involving learners, examine four dimensions of the psycho-affective that need to be considered in interpreter and translator training, and report on an exploratory classroom activity aimed at helping students to process emotions and stress related to on-site placement.

Keywords: Psycho-Affectivity; Emotions; Interpreter Training; Interpreter Education; Research Ethics in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

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Resumen: Este artículo presenta el número especial sobre el tema de las emociones, el estrés y los fenómenos relacionados en la formación de intérpretes y traductores para los servicios públicos. Abordamos los antecedentes y el contexto del número especial, exploramos cuestiones de ética en las investigaciones de la interpretación en las que participan estudiantes, examinamos cuatro dimensiones de lo psicoafectivo que deben tenerse en cuenta en la formación de intérpretes y traductores, e informamos sobre una actividad exploratoria en el aula destinada a ayudar a los estudiantes a procesar las emociones y el estrés relacionados con las prácticas in situ.

Palabras clave: Psicoafectividad; emociones; formación de intérpretes; educación de intérpretes; *é*tica de la investigación en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje.

1. Introduction

In June 2022, the European Society for Translation Studies (EST) held its triennial Congress in Oslo, Norway. At the Congress, Marcin Walczyński and Urszula Paradowska convened a panel on the topic "Psycho-affectivity in translator and interpreter education," with seven papers covering topics such as community interpreters' stress and accent (Paweł Korpal and Christopher D. Mellinger), interpreting and translation students' experience of stress in relation to non-native source texts (Andrea Hunziker Heeb), emotional support for community interpreting trainees (Michal Schuster), self-esteem and impostor syndrome among interpreters (Lara Domínguez Araújo), psycho-affective factors and their impact on trainee interpreters' consecutive interpreting performance (Marcin Walczyński), thesis-writing anxiety experienced by translation students (Urszula Paradowska), emotional intelligence in translator education (JC Penet), and managing emotions and empathy among refugee interpreters working in Turkey (Asli Polat-Ulas). The panel was well-received and generated much positive discussion. A day or two later, over dinner in Oslo, the possibility of a special issue of a journal focused on the same topic was discussed, and that conversation eventually led to this issue of *FITISPos International Journal*, titled "Emotions, stress, and related phenomena in public service interpreter and translator training."

Emotions, stress, and other psycho-affective phenomena are highly relevant in the education and training of translators and interpreters in a range of contexts and settings. Public service interpreters are regularly involved in emotionally complex and high-stress situations as part of their jobs. Whether working in courts, hospitals, social services, schools, immigration, refugee services, or any of the settings in which they may carry out their jobs, they encounter situations that range from relatively-low-stakes to acute and high-tension, from tragic to joyful, and everything in between. Interpreting requires the interpreter to witness and re-present, with their own body, the spectrum of human experience and emotion (Herring, 2021; see also Bahadir, 2010; Shlesinger, 2015; Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012). Interpreters and translators working in public service settings must, therefore, be well-prepared to confront and cope with emotions and stress. The preparation of interpreters and translators for these aspects of their work has not, however, traditionally been a central focus of attention. In the past few years, however, more scholars and educators have begun to consider psycho-affective aspects of interpreting and translation and of interpreter and translator education, as illustrated by the contributions to the EST panel and to this special issue. We hope that this interest will not only be sustained but continue to grow, and that the research findings and pedagogical tools arising from it will have lasting, positive impacts both at the macro (e.g., professional organizations and codes of conduct, program curricula) and micro (e.g., individual educators and interpreters) levels.

This feature article begins with a discussion of research ethics as it pertains to studies involving learners, in Section 2. This topic is highly relevant both to the special issue and to the field in general, given the frequency with which students are participants in translation- and interpreting-focused research and in light of this special issue's focus on teaching and learning. The section is not intended as a detailed exploration of all possible issues related to student-involved research, but rather as an overview that highlights a number of salient issues for researcher-educators to consider. Section 3 examines four dimensions of the psycho-affective that need to be considered in interpreter and translator training. In Section 4, in the form of a case study, we present an example of a classroom activity aimed at supporting learners' processing of emotions and stress in the context of an internship course. Section 5 contains a brief conclusion and acknowledgments.

2. Ethical dimensions of research involving learners

In Translation and Interpreting Studies (T&IS), students have been and continue to be frequent participants in research. Indeed, this special issue's focus on interpreter and translator training presupposes research carried out with student participants. Over the past couple of decades, ethical considerations related to the scholarship of teaching and learning, which by nature involves researchers studying students, whether their own or otherwise, have begun to attract more scholarly interest (e.g., Fedoruk, 2022). This is not a topic that has historically received a great deal of attention in the Interpreting Studies literature, although some recent publications suggest that this could be changing. Papers such as those by Urdal (2023) and Tiselius (2021) are valuable contributions to the discussion of student-involved research in T&IS, drawing attention to ethical dimensions of studies in which scholars' own interpreting students are the participants in their research. One section of a feature article does not allow for an in-depth exploration of or guidance on the ethics of student-involved research. However, given the special issue's focus on teaching and learning, we wish to highlight some ethical considerations which we believe to be highly relevant and worthy of attention from educator-researchers in T&IS.

Regulatory aspects of formal ethics review for research involving students vary from country to country and even from institution to institution, with approaches ranging from those that designate classroom-based, pedagogically-focused research as low-risk and exempt from formal ethics approval processes to those that classify students as a vulnerable group requiring special protections and require extensive ethics review (Lees et al., 2021; Fedoruk, 2022). With regard to scholarly journals' requirements for reporting on ethical dimensions of student-involved research, it has been noted that these also vary widely (Lees et al., 2021). Within T&IS, it is common to find publications describing student-involved research that do not mention a formal ethics review process or address ethical considerations. Reports of studies carried out by educator-researchers in their own classrooms, with their own students, do not consistently engage with issues such as the educator-researcher's positionality and reflexivity vis a vis students, informed consent, and safeguards for student research participants.

The existence of variations and inconsistencies with regard to requirements for ethics review and discussions of ethics in publications should not, however, be taken as an indication of lack of importance or relevance of the ethical dimensions of student-involved research. In our view, teacher-researchers' consideration of and reporting on processes and safeguards related to research ethics issues should not be predicated on institutional requirements. Rather, topics such as ethical research design, informed consent, power differentials, positionality, and safeguards related to participant vulnerability should be

examined at every stage of the research process and included in published research reports as a matter of course.[1]

In considering the ethics of student-involved research, one area for examination is our aims when we undertake such research, whether with our own students or with others' students. While such studies may have a variety of aims, a substantial portion of this research in the field of T&IS is classroom-based, with a pedagogical focus (Gile, 2004; Pöchhacker, 2010), often involving researchers' own students as the population being studied. When considering undertaking student-involved research, it is important to ensure that the choice of students as a study population is made on the basis of their suitability in light of the research aims and questions, rather than on the basis of convenience, keeping in mind that "the ethical principle of justice requires that the burdens of research should not fall unequally on a particular group simply because they are available" (Comer, 2009, p. 101). Relatedly, McGinn (2018, np) reminds us that "students are students first. Therefore, no research project that involves students should ever take primacy over teaching and learning in a course."

When discussing the situation of teachers who undertake research in their own classrooms, there is a distinction to be made between the ongoing tweaking and evaluation that teachers undertake as part of good teaching practice, on the one hand, and more formal, structured research studies, on the other. It is routine and necessary for teachers to make changes, to try out new materials and practices, and to assess the effects of the adjustments they have made. For McGinn (2018, np), such everyday teaching activity shifts into the realm of research, and thus requires increased ethical scrutiny when "the purpose of reflections shifts from enriching one's personal professional practice to providing generative information for others." When educators undertake such activities with the aim of sharing their findings with the scholarly community, they not only take on the dual role of educator-researcher; they also take on responsibility for ethical dimensions and concerns related to research ethics.

The dual role of teacher and researcher creates tensions that are deserving of critical reflection and examination, and which must be thoughtfully navigated. As Bunnell et al. (2022) point out, teachers and learners encounter tensions as a matter of course in the classroom, even when no research is being carried out. Although classrooms are understood to be places for trial and error, experimentation, and growth, the modern day classroom is also a "high-stakes assessment space" (p. 138), in which learners are expected to perform and demonstrate competency while teachers are supposed to ensure that learners meet measurable milestones. When we undertake classroom-based research, particularly research involving our own students, additional tensions and considerations must be reflected on and addressed. As teachers, we have a "fiduciary relationship with students that involves an obligation to act in the best interests of students and to facilitate student learning" (McGinn, 2018, np), whether as part of our regular classroom activities or as part of a classroom-based research project. As researchers, we have in mind a set of research aims and questions and a desire to build knowledge and understanding and disseminate it, but, at the same time, we have a duty to "protect students as research participants" (Lees et al. 2021, p. 519). These two roles and their attendant responsibilities may align at some moments and under some conditions, but in other cases, they may conflict, requiring the teacher-researcher to make difficult decisions while navigating complex situations.

[1] See also Tipton's (2024) cogent argument and outline for comprehensive integration of research ethics into master's- and doctoral-level programs of study.

Power differentials and the vulnerability of students as research participants are among the major issues to be considered when undertaking student-involved research (Comer, 2009; McGinn, 2018). There are a number of nuanced discussions of these issues in the literature on scholarship of teaching and learning, including Lees et al. (2021; 2024), Bunnell et al. (2022), Fedoruk and Lindstrom (2022), and Innocente et al. (2022). These scholars examine multiple perspectives on student vulnerability (including student perspectives) and discuss safeguards and relationally-focused approaches to student-involved research. For details of their lines of argument, we refer readers to the just-cited papers; here, we limit ourselves to presenting a few key points.

In highlighting aspects of student vulnerability, McGinn (2018, np) notes that "despite assurances to the contrary, students may believe their decisions about participating in research could affect course grades, influence relationships with their instructors, or limit their future educational opportunities." McGinn also notes that student-participants in "close-knit" educational programs (a descriptor which would apply to many if not most interpreting programs) may feel a distinct set of pressures, given the extended and close nature of the relationships developed in such programs and the likelihood that instructors will be encountered in multiple courses and that students may be dependent on recommendations or support from instructors as they move forward in their studies or careers. Other scholars have approached questions of vulnerability and power differentials from different perspectives while still acknowledging them as centrally important to ethical student-involved research. For example, Innocente et al. (2022, p. 113) argue against approaching vulnerability as an "intrinsic" or "static" state; instead, in their view, it is necessary to examine "how research processes may create vulnerability, such as coercion through incentives or power dynamics that shape voluntariness." They go on to argue (*ibid*.) that "vulnerability in research can be mitigated, or even eliminated, with careful reflection on research protocols, power asymmetries, and environments." Additional perspectives on student vulnerability are offered by the participants in Lees et al.'s (2024) study of students' own thinking about their vulnerability as (prospective) research participants; the student-participants in this study placed importance on familiarity and a trusting relationship with the educator-researcher, viewing this as a protective factor against vulnerability, rather than as a factor creating increased vulnerability. The potential for relational aspects to be a positive aspect of student-involved research is also discussed by Bunnell et al. (2022, p. 143), who argue that:

> Given the relational nature of teaching and learning, SoTL ethics should also attend intentionally to these relationships through practices that seek to foster and nurture trust. An ethical research design would explicitly describe how one seeks to minimize risk while also maximizing student agency and relational trust.

Considerations of space and scope do not allow us to explore the range of relevant perspectives and considerations in depth, nor to offer a detailed guide to ethical student-involved research. For that reason, we have not included concrete advice about aspects of research design, participant safeguards, or other practical aspects. Rather, we encourage colleagues to engage with the literature cited in this section and to seek out additional material relevant to their contexts and research interests. We hope that the material presented in this section will serve as an impetus for critical, reflective thought and action.

3. Dimensions of psycho-affective aspects of interpreting

In the call for papers for this special issue, we drew attention to four dimensions of the broader theme of psycho-affective aspects of interpreting: (i.) the after-effects of occupational exposure to trauma and stress; (ii.) the need for interpreters to be able to effectively comprehend and reconstruct aspects of communication related to emotions and stress, including empathic communication, rapport, and politeness; (iii.) interpreters' ability to manage their own emotions and stress during the interpreted interaction (that is, the psycho-affective dimension of online self-regulation) and (iv.) stress and emotion in the context of teaching and learning. Although all of these dimensions of the psycho-affective have been addressed in the literature to a greater or lesser extent, there is a need for increased and sustained attention to be paid to each of them, particularly in studies approaching them through the lens of teaching and learning. In this section, we briefly highlight existing work and draw attention to areas that would benefit from further scholarly attention and empirical investigation.

3.1. Occupational exposure to trauma and stress

Over the last several years, a growing body of research has shed light on the effects of exposure to trauma and stress on interpreters, including the potential for interpreters to suffer from vicarious trauma and burnout (Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012; Lai et al., 2015; Crezee et al., 2015; Harvey, 2015; Schwenke et al., 2014; Schwenke, 2015; Shlesinger, 2015; Mehus & Becher, 2016; Geiling et al., 2021). Interpreters' experiences of such effects may be compounded if they have not been adequately prepared to anticipate and cope with them. Given that in many countries and contexts interpreters working in public service and community settings may have minimal pre-service training (Bao, 2015; Kim, 2017; Mikkelson, 2017), it cannot be assumed that all or even most interpreters are indeed adequately prepared for occupational exposure to trauma and stress. In some cases, particularly in emergency or conflict situations (e.g., Tryuk, 2016; Ali et al., 2019), interpreting services may be provided on an ad hoc basis by individuals with no specific training or preparation related to public service interpreting. In the case of interpreters who have received formal training, the curricula of their programs may or may not have addressed issues related to coping with emotionally complex situations and the potential for vicarious trauma. Moreover, public service interpreters are often members of the migrant communities they serve, and – through their interpreting work – they may be repeatedly re-exposed to personal, family, and cultural trauma.

Exposure to such situations without appropriate pre-service training can endanger the interpreter's emotional stability and adversely impact their psychological well-being (e.g., Bancroft, 2017). The urgency of providing appropriate training and preparation for interpreters working in public services and potentially traumatic environments is brought into stark relief by current events, with armed conflicts, climate change, and other types of upheaval and unrest leading to continued displacement and migration. Current interest in preparing interpreters for this aspect of their work is evidenced by the fact that multiple papers included in this special issue describe teaching interventions and curriculum modules focused on teaching trainee interpreters about vicarious trauma and coping/self-care strategies (i.e., González Campanella, this issue; Delizée, Bennoun, Dutray, Pierard & Weber, this issue; Du, this issue; Sultanić, this issue).

3.2. Interpreters' handling of emotions and related psycho-affective elements of discourse

Interpreters' ability to comprehend and reconstruct psycho-affective aspects of discourse and communication plays a role in the effectiveness of interpreters' work and, therefore, in the success (or lack thereof) of the interactions they interpret. There is a substantial body of literature describing and analyzing interpreted interactions from the perspective of emotions, empathy, stress, rapport, and related phenomena (e.g., footing, politeness, face management). To cite only a few examples, interpreters' (un)awareness and (non) rendition of rapport-building strategies in police interviews, with attendant consequences, is discussed by authors such as Mulayim, Lai & Norma (2015) and Gómez Bedoya (2022), while interpreters' impact on empathic communication in medical consultations has been reported on by Krystallidou et al. (2020) and Theys et al. (2022), and rapport management in mental health consultations has been investigated by Rodríguez Vicente (2021). There is also a substantial body of literature on interpreter education that touches on the need to incorporate these aspects into curricula and class activities. In addition to the studies cited above, readers are referred to the handbooks edited by Tipton and Desilla (2019) and by Gavioli and Wadensjö (2023) and to the volume edited by Cirillo and Niemants (2017) as good points of entry into the relevant literature.

Several scholars have convincingly argued that interpreting students need to be exposed to theory and have opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in the practical (skill-focused) interpreting exercises they undertake as part of their learning (see, for example, Hale, 2007; Orlando, 2016; Angelelli, 2017, 2020; Ozolins, 2017; Arumí Ribas, 2020). While there are some extant recommendations for modules and classroom activities aimed at introducing interpreting students to theoretical and practical aspects of interpreted interactions related to empathy, rapport, and similar phenomena (e.g., Rodríguez Vicente, 2021; Sultanić, this issue), there is a lack of pedagogically-oriented studies focused on these aspects of interpreted interactions and on learners' acquisition of knowledge and skills related to these areas. There are also few materials that introduce relevant theories and research findings in a structured, classroom-ready fashion. In our view, the time and conditions are ripe for scholars and educators to begin to empirically investigate productive approaches to teaching and learning about this dimension of the psycho-affective in interpreting and to create theoretically sound yet approachable and practical resources for use by teachers and learners; in connection with this point, we note that the simulation method described by Martin and Ruiz Rosendo (this issue) might be effectively adapted for use in this type of learning exercise.

3.3. Online self-regulation of emotions and stress

The third dimension of the psycho-affective to which we wish to draw attention is interpreters' ability to manage their own stress and emotions during performance, as part of online self-regulatory processes (Herring, 2018). Interpreters must be able to effectively regulate their emotional and stress responses in order to navigate emotionally-charged situations while continuing to effectively carry out the complex cognitive, social, and interactional processes and tasks involved in interpreting. A number of publications discuss interpreters' experiences of stress and emotion during task performance, including topics such as stress, anxiety, fear, emotional stability, and self-care (e.g., Valero-Garcés, 2005; Ruiz Rosendo, 2020; Rajpoot, Rehman & Ali, 2020; Korpal, 2021; Walczyński, 2021a; Korpal & Mellinger, 2022). However, online self-regulation of emotion and stress in the area of public service interpreting has not, to date, been a major focus of scholarly inquiry, although Herring (2018) discusses interpreters' online monitoring of their own and others' affect during interactions. Various

aspects of the acquisition of interpreting skills – primarily in the context of conference interpreting – are well-documented in the literature (e.g., Setton & Dawrant 2016; Gillies 2017), but there are relatively few studies related to the development of self-regulation of affect.

3.4. Psycho-affectivity in teaching and learning

The last dimension of the psycho-affective that we wish to address is that of emotions, stress, anxiety, motivation, and other similar phenomena in educational contexts – that is, as they relate to learning and teaching. A variety of aspects related to psycho-affectivity may play a role in an interpreting classroom, where they may contribute – positively or negatively – to students' learning and in-class performance. The phenomena mentioned above can be grouped under the label "psycho-affective factors." These factors, manifesting themselves in a range of emotions, states, moods, thinking patterns, and attitudes experienced by an individual learner, are often linked to how trainee interpreters view themselves as learners and as future professionals, thus influencing their interactions with and reactions to others (e.g., fellow students, the instructor) and their approaches and reactions to training activities. They are important building blocks of the interpreter's psycho-affectivity, which can be viewed as "a continuously active, intricate and complex part of each interpreter's psychological make-up which – because of its continuous operation and susceptibility – affects nearly all the constituent elements of the interpreting process and its outcome – the target text" (Walczyński 2019, p. 14).

Psycho-affective factors are an important constituent of an interrelated network of stimuli, feelings, behaviors, bodily responses, and other factors, which Gorman (2005, p. 5) calls "the sequence of emotional activity." Drawing on this concept, Walczyński (2019, p. 563) argues that psycho-affective factors (e.g., anxiety, stress) may be triggered by such stimuli as source text properties, aspects of the setting, or other contextual features (e.g., setting-related, interlocutor-related). Once activated or triggered, such factors can lead to actions (behaviors) such as an increase in disfluency or omissions and to physiological reactions such as increased pulse or perspiration. By extension, such a psycho-affective sequence can also be observed in interpreting training, especially at its initial stages, when students start to notice that some of their problems with delivering good-quality interpreting may be linked to the experience of psycho-affective factors and the way they are regulated.

The role of emotions, anxiety, stress, personality, and other aspects of psycho-affectivity in interpreter and translator training has been discussed by scholars such as Jiménez Ivars and Pinazo Calatayud (2001), Bontempo and Napier (2011), Schweda-Nicholson (2005), Johnson (2016), Korpal (2017), Wu (2016), Lee (2018), Prada Prada (2019), Walczyński (2021b), to name just a few. Many of these authors highlight that real-life interpreting is an emotionally taxing and rarely stress-free activity and that a variety of psycho-affective factors may (and indeed do) influence both trainees in interpreting education and interpreters in their work. Addressing such issues both in research and in the classroom is thus a necessary step.

The fact that psycho-affective factors are of central importance in interpreter education can be attested to by a growing number of studies in which students' performance is linked with the experience of stress (e.g., Kurz, 2003; Korpal, 2017), anxiety (e.g., Jiménez Ivars & Pinazo Calatayud, 2001; Chiang, 2009) or varying levels of self-esteem/self-efficacy (e.g., Lee, 2018). Anxiety in the context of learning is also addressed by two contributions to this special issue – García Fernández & González Montesino (this issue) and Paradowska (this issue).

It is also argued that since the interpreter's psychological properties may influence performance, there is a need to include psycho-affective components in aptitude testing. For instance, Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas (2008, p. 42) suggest that candidates' "soft factors" (i.e., "personality, motivation and teachability") should also be examined as part of the aptitude test since certain levels of those properties may indicate whether or not a student will be able to learn and perform interpreting. Similarly, Timarová and Salaets (2011) argue in favor of including psychological aspects (i.e., response to anxiety and motivation) into aptitude tests as they may be of indicative value in terms of the probability of succeeding in competing interpreter training and in performing the job of an interpreter. What is more, Bontempo and Napier (2011) postulate that emotional stability could also be related to interpreter competence and, therefore, may be included as a category of an interpreting aptitude test. In another study, Korpal and Jasielska (2019) state that another psychological construct – empathy/emotional response – may become one of the yardsticks for gauging interpreting aptitude. Finally, Su (2023) examined interpreting trainees' emotions and emotional development and linked them to interpreting competence, suggesting that it could also be one of the categories used to measure interpreting aptitude. This overview of research in which attempts were made to correlate psycho-affective attributes with aptitude testing suggests that psycho-affectivity may contribute, at least to some extent, to how a learner learns interpreting. It also suggests that psycho-affective aspects could potentially be screened, along with aspects such as command of languages and cognitive skills, as part of pre-training screenings or admission processes. Further research is warranted, as insights gained from such studies may help design better aptitude testing instruments offering more predictive value as regards interpreting training candidates who are psychologically fit for the job.

The final aspect to address in this section is research on students' psycho-affectivity and emotions in connection with performing interpreting tasks in the classroom. In many such studies, scholars have used psychometric tests developed within psychology to examine, for instance, trainee interpreters' personality dimensions and their potential correlation with successful training completion (i.e., Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)) (Schweda-Nicholson 2005) or students' motivation to engage in interpreting training (i.e., Achievement Motivation Test) (Timarová & Salaets, 2011). One relevant study in this context is Walczyński (2019), whose qualitative study on consecutive interpreting trainees' experience of psycho-affective factors used a range of data sources, including audio recordings of student performances, transcript of students' performances, students' notes, and a protocol combining introspection with retrospection. In the analysis phase, output errors, delivery strategies, notes and protocol data were analyzed and triangulated in order to shed light on psycho-affective aspects of performance.

The study found that anxiety (viewed as a reaction to a subjectively perceived negative event), stress (seen as a psycho-physiological response to demanding situations), language ego (understood as learners' identities in relation to their language skills and the associated communicative performance, with certain limits, i.e., language boundaries, allowing (or not) those learners to experiment with not (fully) internalized aspects of language competence) and self-esteem (learners' own evaluations and perceptions of themselves in relation to other people, settings, events or tasks) were classified as those factors whose activity was negative. Their external manifestations were most visible in, for instance, sweat stains and crumpled fragments of the paper of notes or heavy breathing and sighs identified in the recordings of the outputs. Under their influence, the students delivered outputs that were deficient in terms of the language used and content transferred from the input, as emerged from the error analysis and the analysis of interpreting strategies employed. Motivation was the psycho-affective factor, which was identified as positive, whereas both personality and fear (seen as a reaction to an objectively existing threat) were of no importance. The

study also showed that, among the factors, there are many interrelations that, at times, form a kind of chain reaction in which one factor activates another and this, in turn, triggers the experience of yet another one. Moreover, the research also pointed to the fact that novice interpreters can experience the negative activity of their psycho-affectivity, and those negative feelings do not have to diminish along with the growing interpreting experience, broader knowledge, or skills.

Inasmuch as the affective dimension plays a crucial role in public service interpreting learning, further research into aspects such as motivation, self-esteem, stress, and emotional self-regulatory capacity is needed. Results from such studies could not only enrich our understanding of what happens in a classroom in terms of the affective domain but also contribute to improving public service interpreting teaching methods.

4. Exploratory case study: Self-portraits as an aid to processing emotions and stress related to on-site placements

In this article, we have argued the need for sustained scholarly attention on several dimensions of the psycho-affective within the realm of interpreter education. A natural outgrowth of such work would be an increase in reports describing and evaluating teaching interventions designed to support learners as they acquire relevant skills and knowledge. In this section, we take advantage of the opportunity to share a case study of a trial of an innovative classroom-based practice to aid students in their processing of emotions and stress related to their participation in on-site placements in the context of an internship class. In light of our discussion of the ethical dimensions of student-involved research in Section 2, the report also addresses ethics-related issues in some detail.

On-site placements (practicums, internships, job shadowing) are invaluable opportunities for experiential learning and growth. Such placements feature a number of potential stressors and are likely to lead to a range of feelings in any student, including concerns about entering a new and unfamiliar setting, meeting new people, and receiving evaluations and feedback related to job performance. For interpreting students going on-site to observe or interpret interactions in settings such as a hospital, school, courtroom, or community setting, the placement period may also involve their first exposure(s) to the type of emotionally-charged, sensitive content discussed in the preceding section.

In this sub-section, Herring (co-author of this commentary) briefly presents a pilot of a classroom activity aimed at providing interpreting students with an avenue for reflecting on and processing feelings related to their on-site internships. The activity was inspired by language portraits, which have been used as a tool to engage people in the exploration of their multilingual selves, both in the context of teaching and learning and in research studies (Busch, 2016; Kusters & De Meulder, 2019). There are many possible variations of the activity, materials, and prompts provided to participants, but the basic process is as follows: learners or research participants are provided a blank sheet with an outline of a human being on it (see Figures 1 and 2 below). They are given a prompt or question related to their multilingual repertoire and then given the opportunity to color, write, and/or draw in (and potentially around) the outline. After the language portrait is completed, a period of discussion or reflection on the language portrait generally follows (e.g., a discussion with a peer or a written reflection – for learners; a narrative explanation or interview – for research participants). As Kusters and De Meulder (2019, np., following Busch, 2017; emphasis in the original) highlight, language portraits "help to explore the *lived experience* of *language.*" They also provide an opportunity for people to reflect on and explore their experiences

in a visual medium, in contrast with the usual tendency for reflective opportunities in learning environments to be text-based. Given the potential for a self-portrait activity to serve as a productive tool for reflection and processing of psycho-affective aspects of on-site placements, Herring trialed a modified version of the self-portrait activity with interpreting students enrolled in an internship class.

In the fall semester of 2023, students in a required internship class taught by Herring were shown an example of a completed self-portrait template and invited to create their own self-portraits reflecting their feelings and thoughts regarding internships. The instructor presented the activity as one that she felt might be helpful for them as they prepared for and completed their internships. She said that at each meeting of the course (five meetings spaced over sixteen weeks) she would make blank templates and coloring/drawing tools available for anyone who wished to participate. The activity was optional and was not graded. Students had the option to turn in any self-portraits to the instructor or not, as they chose; they also had the option to take the template home and complete it outside class time if they wished. Given the trial and voluntary nature of the self-portrait activity, there was no class discussion of the completed self-portraits during the semester.

After the semester ended and grades were posted, students received an email inviting them to opt in, should they desire, to a study examining the effectiveness of the self-portrait exercise in aiding students to process their internship experiences. The study had received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Century College. The invitation email was sent to students by a college administrator rather than by the instructor. The instructor did not engage in direct recruitment of students in order to reduce the possibility that they would feel pressured to consent to participation. Students wishing to participate contacted the instructor directly, after which an informed consent document was shared with the students and their understanding was confirmed and signatures obtained. Participating students were given the option to submit a written reflection on their self-portraits or to participate in a reflective interview via Zoom; they were also given the option to opt in or opt out of having their anonymized portraits included in any report on the research. They were assured that they would have the opportunity to review the write-up of the study and to (dis)approve the inclusion of their reflections and/or self-portraits at that stage. Two students elected to opt into the study, consented to have their self-portraits reproduced for publication, and submitted written reflections. The draft report (that is, the draft of this section of this article) was shared with the students for their comments and (dis)approval before it was finalized for publication.

The self-portraits produced by students during the semester demonstrated a range of approaches to the activity. Some students completed only one self-portrait, while others completed one during or after each of the five class meetings. Some students used only the space inside the outline of the figure, while others used the whole page. Some wrote and drew extensively, while others colored but did not write or draw. Both of the students who consented to participate in the research aspect of the activity completed a self-portrait at the first class meeting of the semester, and one of them completed a second self-portrait later in the semester. Their self-portraits from the first week of class are reproduced in Figures 1 and 2 below. Rosa[2] filled in the outline of the figure with blocks of bright, contrasting colors, while Darla did a combination of writing and drawing and included some elements outside the outline of the figure.

[2] Names are pseudonyms selected by the students.

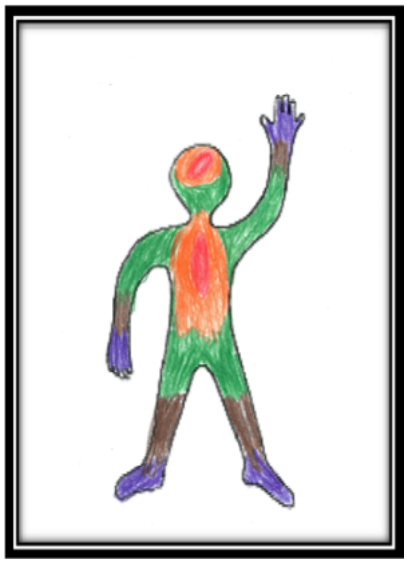

Figure 1 Initial Self-Portrait by Rosa

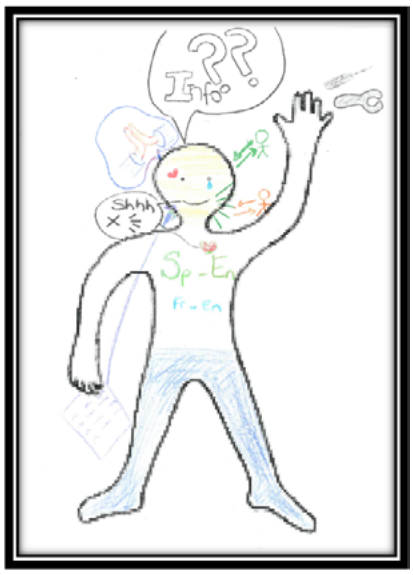

Figure 2 Initial Self-Portrait by Darla

Rosa's reflection on her self-portrait, completed approximately five months after she had made it, comments on her thought process as she made it:

> I saw it as a bit of a challenge to sit there and think what you wanted to include, what you didn't want to include, (I know some people included words and other nice details), and just overall what you wanted to present as how your inner self's feelings were. On my end, I decided to do mine without words since I didn't believe I had much to say or describe in the portrait at the time.

Despite her self-expressed belief that she did not have much "to say or describe," she goes on to explain the meaning of the choice and placement of the colors within the outline of the figure, noting that the more "vibrant," fiery colors are located at the core of the figure, as an inner (and thus, protected, or hidden) layer, while the green and brown represent a

second, "calmer and under control" outer layer. Rosa also comments on the aspirational nature of the second layer: "I think this second layer also reflected what I overall wanted to achieve, or was striving for, since it happened to be the bigger areas within the whole portrait."

The blue at the extremities represents anxiety and nervousness related to novel experiences to be encountered during the internship. Rosa also relates a new insight that came to her during her post-internship reflection on the self-portrait: "feet take you places and hands open and close doors, so my unconscious knew I would find myself doing something new I hadn't done and a part of me would be hesitant at first."

In reflecting on her two self-portraits approximately five months after completing them, Darla highlights a contrast in her feelings and perspective on her work as an interpreter, both as part of the internship and as part of her employment. With respect to her first self-portrait, she explains the symbolism of the various elements:

> … my voice muted so I could focus on the ideas communicated by the parties … a tear in one eye, and a heart in the other reflecting the realities to which we are exposed … The heart is the way that I want to perform so I can offer the best of me to both parties. I draw a pair of hands praying as Faith is very important to me … . In one hand I draw some tools, so I don't forget all I have learned (tools) … I wrote "Info???" over the head as a constant need to better prepare for each encounter …. On the right hand, I have a text as a commitment to never stop learning. Finally, in my chest, I wrote my working languages.

She describes this self-portrait as a "very optimistic vision of what I was starting to do as an interpreter." She then describes her second portrait (which is not reproduced here) as having been drawn during a period during which she had been involved in two highly-challenging cases involving trauma, as part of her interpreting job. With regard to the second portrait, she says:

> I remember that it wasn't as pretty and optimistic as the first one. To begin with I felt highly frustrated. I remember that I didn't put a smile on the face, because at that time I thought that what's expected from an interpreter is unachievable. … All the enthusiasm I felt with the first one was gone. I didn't have anything happy to draw. I remember drawing tears and question marks as my frustration was palpable. I have difficulties in my introspection because I couldn't see anything else beyond that.

Both students' reflections suggest that the experience of creating written reflections on their self-portraits after the fact helped them to gain insight into the relevance and helpfulness of creating self-portraits as a way to scaffold reflection and processing of emotions and experiences:

> At least in my case, I believe the activity was helpful in a way that it allowed me to have insight into seeing the emotions I described and prompted me to think about why I felt that way. Naturally this area of analyzing why I feel a certain way doesn't get explored unless something or someone prompts it to be thought of, so having this done … was interesting to look at and analyze. (Rosa)

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> I understood then that the Self Portrait is interesting in many ways. On one hand, it is not a static perspective of ourselves. It shows us at a particular moment in time. And I think this is very valuable because it shows us that despite the difficulties we face in our job, we can bounce back! On the other hand, I also think is very important to take this "journey" of introspection and search within ourselves what matters to us as interpreters and what we can change. … Each Self Portrait will carry the emotions, challenges, joys, and frustrations we are facing then and we can learn a lot from that. (Darla)

As noted above, students in this pilot of the activity were not required to complete self-portraits, nor to participate in discussion or reflections on them as part of class activities. However, the voluntary, post-course reflections submitted by Rosa and Darla suggest that the activity has the potential to aid students in processing their feelings related to undertaking a new type of experiential learning activity (that is, an on-site placement) and to traumatic or otherwise challenging situations that they encounter in such placements. Further empirical research would be needed to explore how self-portraits can most effectively be used in this type of context, especially with regard to achieving a balance between the creation of opportunities for reflection and processing, on the one hand, and taking care not to cause more stress by pushing students to engage in activities and discussion that they may not be comfortable with (e.g., drawing/coloring, sharing their feelings and reactions with classmates or teachers). The trial of this activity is reported on here in the hope that it will inspire others to continue to seek out – and empirically evaluate – novel approaches to addressing psycho-affective aspects of learning to interpret and of professional interpreting practice.

5. Conclusion

In proposing and editing this special issue, our hope was to draw the attention of researchers and educators to a range of psycho-affective dimensions of interpreting. As discussed above, public service interpreters face a number of challenges related to emotions, stress, and other related phenomena. Aspects of stress, emotion, personality, and so forth also impact teaching and learning. In this article, we have drawn attention to several of these aspects, as well as presented an argument for increased attention to research ethics related to the scholarship of teaching and learning and provided a case study of an intervention related to processing emotions and stress associated with on-site placements. We hope that the issues addressed in this article will serve as inspiration and impetus to colleagues involved in research and education who share our interest in the psycho-affective aspects of interpreting and of teaching and learning. We also join the calls made by scholars such as Orlando (2016; 2019) and Kadrić and Pöllabauer (2023) for the expansion of training-of-trainers opportunities; to their persuasive arguments, we would add an emphasis on the importance of addressing the psycho-affective dimensions discussed in this commentary in such endeavors.

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