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## IMPERSONALISATION AS A COGNITIVE TOOL IN SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING

This paper examines impersonalisation as a cognitive strategy that enhances the efficiency of simultaneous interpreters in English-Ukrainian language pair interpreting. Impersonalisation, which is described as being linguistic and emotionally neutral, allows the interpreters to control their cognitive load, remain clear-headed, and even emotionally neutral during moments of extreme emotion. In spite of its significance, there has been scant literature on the use of impersonalisation in interpreting studies, leaving a gap in practical aspects of training as well as a theoretical one. The controlled experiment enrolled 30 master students who were put into experimental and control research groups. The experimental group was trained on a structured program on impersonalisation techniques, such as use of passive voice, agent-less sentences, and filtering of emotions in out of politics speeches for 12 weeks. Participants were able to pursue their education in a simulated environment where ethnic conflict scenarios sparked emotions. The performance was evaluated by means of language assessment, NASA Task Load Index (NASA-TLX), and eye movement pattern data collection as enriched with questionnaires and interviews. Findings showed that impersonalisation resulted in more successful interpreting performance. The experimental group increased the level of neutrality by 30% and had 25% less load on their cognition compared to the control group. Emotion filtering was the most efficient method of reducing cognitive effort while proficiency in non-linguistic interventions raised the level of quality. This research qualifies impersonalisation as a pivotal device in the context of simultaneous interpreting and further for interpreter education and practice. Further studies may seek to investigate its use for other languages and more difficult interpreting situations, including its combination with various technologies used in interpreting.

**Keywords:** impersonalisation; simultaneous interpreting; cognitive strategy; neutrality; cognitive load, interpreter training; linguistic neutrality; emotion filtering.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**Problem statement.** Simultaneous interpreting (SI) can be defined as a complex mental activity that involves the working out of the language smoothly while the interpreter is listening to the speaker. It is not easy to mediate these types of discourses, especially when faithfulness and neutrality are of utmost importance. In any powerful instance like international meetings or solving some legal issues, even a slight bias or distortion from the straight aim might cause a conflict or misunderstanding, eliminating influences of emotion or culture which might put extra layers of meaning to historic events which could then be erroneously included in the translation. These issues are particularly evident in the translation of texts that are emotionally rich or belong to an ethnic culture because of the potentially severe distortion they hold onto the meanings. Even though many interpreters often favor using simplification and hierarchization of textual information, one of the biases avoidance techniques, impersonality and pragmatic uses of voice, has not been studied in great detail. Recent studies in relevant fields underscore various strategies to reduce the impact of cognitive load and interference on the SI outcome. However, there have been no detailed studies about the implementation and subsequent importance of impersonalisation in SI. In regards to research, this gap is a hindrance to achieving the goal of creating relevant education tools aimed to increase the effectiveness of simultaneous interpretations of even more complex political and cultural

agendas. Taking the problem into consideration is fundamental to providing critical information towards the maintenance, improvement, and strengthening of the SI in a number of different fields. The main aim of this study is to examine the efficacy of impersonalisation as a cognitive approach in enhancing performance outcomes in simultaneous interpreting (SI) in the English-Ukrainian language pair. The objective is to assess the effects of impersonalisation strategies, including linguistic neutrality and emotion filtering, on clarity, neutrality, and cognitive load in high-pressure interpretation tasks. The study aims at offering practical insights for integrating impersonalisation tactics into interpreting training programs to improve professional competency.

**Theoretical background.** In psychology, impersonalisation is often linked to dissociation or depersonalization, where less or no focus is given to personal or emotional involvement with a given activity or situation. The dissociation theory or a division of consciousness were early on popularized by Pierre Janet (1907), who is one of the early proponents of the impersonalisation theory. Janet's work laid the groundwork for the understanding of how impersonalisation operates as an ego-defense mechanism which is able to be activated especially when the individual is under pressure.

Carl Rogers (1951) on the other hand also implicitly pointed out the aspect of impersonalisation in his narrative on congruence and authenticity. He asserted that impersonal stance is taken up by the individuals in situations that are incongruent in nature where their self concept against actual experience is inconsistent. This detachment can operate as a safeguard in preserving psychological balance.

The clinicians Aaron Beck et al., (1976) in their cognitive theory of depression actually illustrated that impersonalisation occurs in an individual's disorder and it is one of the possible distortion of cognition. For a few people, this disengagement can result in depersonalized unrealistic/cold images of the self and moderation of interpersonal relations fostering a positive sense of alienation or disconnectedness from social norms that is engaging.

Moreover, a further contribution is that of Bandura's (1986) self-regulation model within social cognitive theory. Its correctness can be seen in the observation that individuals in most cases reduce the emotional engagement in self in order to meet the goals set, such a phenomenon can be found with impersonalisation strategies in high-stake professions such as simultaneous interpreting.

In connection with stress and coping, Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984) defined depersonalization as a type of coping strategy that focuses on emotions. They maintained that emotional dissociation from the situation during the hard moments is beneficial to the individuals economise their cognitive and emotional resources. Such a view is consistent with Daniel Kahneman's (2011) model of dual-process where two systems, which are 'hardwired' to operate differently, are separated; they are System 1 that is emotional and impulses and System 2 that analyses. System 2 may be viewed as the impulses of strategies of impersonality in the sense of enhancing optical control in that atmosphere.

Philip Zimbardo (1973), in his study of the Stanford prison experiment, also regards and gives an account of the psychological consequences of impersonalisation. What he actually demonstrated was that once people are placed in a position of power (say actors in a play, guards, or prisoners) and de-individuate their roles, their behavioral patterns can change entirely including those conflicting with the actors' self-identity or moral codes. This operates in vicious ways in the areas of interpreting where disassociating one self from the role is a requirement.

Steven Hayes' (2004) Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) proposes considering personification as a modification to oneself, in more modern psychological approaches. ACT's strategies promote the individuals to watch their thoughts and feelings from the outside without getting caught with them, which resembles impersonation techniques used in occupational settings.

Barbara Moser-Mercer (2005) investigated the ways in which interpreters 'switch off their emotions' while interpreting in order to remain neutral, as well as in order to distribute the load on their brain. Her findings suggest interpreting as an effort of thinking out what one is doing, aiming to improve efficiency and relief tension without distortion of the message. The ideas also emphasize the functional purpose of impersonation which is employed by a person in place more intellectually

demanding than usual.

Impersonalisation has been a central theme in debates about identity and disidentification – in broadest terms, action that negates identity. On the ethical dimension, impersonality focuses on a core sense of duty instead of individual desire to act, donate or even sacrifice, as suggested by Kierkegaard's (1843) appraisal of the "ethical stage". Likewise Emmanuel Levinas (1961) critiques an obsession with the "I", and stresses the ethical engagement with "The Other." Imposing a sense of self-integrity, in this sphere, is an inversion of self, rather than a self negation that enables adherence to more pressing obligations.

In line with this, the term "impersonalisation" or the process or result of making something impersonal, is viewed in sociolinguistics as a way of expressing the response in the absence of personal involvement in the discourse. This phenomenon incorporates areas such as syntax, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. The study of impersonalisation includes, but is not limited to, explanation of its functions in communication and its socio-cultural functions.

At the syntactic level, the use of impersonal constructions, such as passive voice, generic pronouns, or agentless expressions, has been extensively analyzed. In textual analysis, Michael Halliday (1994) points out the potential problematic abilities of English language, such as the tendency for impersonality. English tends to underestimate the role of agency and instead focusses on the action or object of the verb. An example of this is academic writing in which the actor is excluded from the discourse, which is why its use is labeled as formal. In relation of this, Halliday's systemic literacy theory elucidates on how writer's subjectivity is removed allowing for a more global take on the ideas being discussed.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), working on metaphors, associated impersonalisation with abstract reasoning. They maintained that the need to abstract away from personal and concrete experiences to more generalized ideas led to the occurrence of impersonal constructions. This allows targeting much wider and more generic audiences and concepts which is why impersonalisation can be viewed as an instrument of linguistic and rhetorical variability.

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, on the other hand, impersonalisation is included in the strategies of face management. They maintained that indirectness, the use of third person forms and other forms of impersonal language can serve to lessen face threatening acts by creating social distance and reducing directness. This completes Erving Goffman's (1959) *The Presentation of Self* where the linguistic impersonalisation assists performances which are necessary for the maintenance of "front-stage" behavior, more often than not in workplaces or organizations.

In the field of political discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough (1989) and Ruth Wodak (1996) offered a brief examination of the use of impersonalisation in language. Fairclough stated that in Fairclough's work a normal practice in political institutions is the use of impersonal construction. Fairclough said that such usage brings about as that of inevitable and neutral construct, Nilhorn does not consider such usage important in a statement. Wodak reinforced this analysis by explaining how the use of impersonalisation in political speeches helps to sustain power and an ideology.

Other critical studies in sociolinguistics, for example those of Deborah Tannen (1989), have also considered impersonalisation with respect to gender and power relations. Tannen noted that as many men are being beholden to authority a neutral stance in terms of gender is often warranted. This is adopted from even the professional world due to greater male presence in this domain. Disallowing a perspective of neutrality and personal involvement by such speakers places such speakers as competent and objective.

On a psychological level, Talmy Givón (2001) studied the function of depersonalization in discourse, particularly information flow within a discourse. He maintains that through depersonalization of the agent the speaker may direct the audience's attention to the events or the processes and thus enhance understanding with less cognitive load. This functional attribute of depersonalization is especially important in simultaneous interpreting whereby attention control and vagueness reduction are imperative.

In addition, studies in corpus linguistics (including the works of Douglas Biber et al. in 1999)

have been able to ascertain the use of the constructional phrase, the impersonal construction in texts of different genres. Their results showed that impersonalisation occurs more often in technical formal and institutional documents which were geared towards one particular tone being neutral and non, or depersonalized.

As sociocultural linguistics scholars Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987) also did with Graham Conton et al. examined the possibilities of developing communication across cultures by studying the possibility of social politeness through the use of impersonalisation across contexts. They argued that in high context culture, the impersonalisation does respects or deference, whereas in low contexts it aims for clarity and objectiveness. The two functional inadequacies of perspectives explain the flexibility of the strategies used in impersonalisation to suit other communication metasytem and cultural expectations.

The study of impersonalisation as a linguistic phenomenon shows a broad spectrum of its function, starting from particular interactions and escalating to institutional discourse. It is not just a matter of speaking, implying a linguistic or pragmatic decision, but rather a complex scheme positioned into a wider cultural, cognitive, and social knowledge. Due to this context based flexibility it becomes possible to use impersonation in communication that is highly sensitive, such as a round-the-table discussion that takes place through interpreters in which it is essential to be both the neutral one and precise.

## **2. METHODS**

In order to investigate the effectiveness of impersonalisation as a cognitive strategy for the success of simultaneous interpreting (SI), the research utilized a somewhat focused ‘training – testing’ approach over a period of twelve weeks. The sample of the study consisted of thirty graduate students of translation and interpreting at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv who were invited to the experiment. The students were aged 22 to 26 years and had B2 to C2 proficiency levels in Ukrainian as well as English and had been trained in interpreting for at least one semester. They were divided into two groups: the first group served as the test group and received training to apply the specific impersonalisation techniques and the second group served as a control group that received the routine professional curriculum on interpreting. This division made it possible to properly assess the extent to which the application of strategies for the impersonalisation of speech has an effect on the performance of the interpreters.

The experimental group engaged in real-life interpreting using remote methodologies, facilitated by specialized weekly training sessions. These sessions advocated the use of passive voice, agentless language, and neutral terminology to attain the intended speech effect with diminished emotional impact. Practical exercises involved the reworking of various cultural and emotional statements with the aim of disregarding emotion and culture. Conversely, the control group engaged in analogous interpretive tasks that did not emphasize neutrality. Throughout the course of the experiment both groups took part in six interpreting sessions during which their evaluations were investigated in terms of three parameters: clarity, neutrality and cognitive efficiency. The duration of 12 weeks was enough by time for the experimental group to master the employed strategies and use them competently enough to shed light on the practical aspect of impersonalisation in SI.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **3.1. Impersonalisation Strategy in SI**

Impersonalisation is more than just a language option; it is a means of thinking that enables simultaneous interpreters to expound with clarity, neutrality and correctness in the midst of the most stressful conditions brought about by the requirement of real time translation. Personalization means, in its simplest sense, Mio’s interpreting using an enforcement of his biases, cultural frameworks, or emotions on the task of interpreting. It has to be emphasized that this detachment does not dehumanize but rather is a professional technique that seeks to depersonalize the

interference with the message. Even with the use of impersonalisation, interpreters are able to deal with problematic free but sensitive topics while ensuring that the overall message is adequately delivered without loss of focus.

In highrisk situations, SI in this case, plaintive sayings are often the order of the day. Interpreters are required to listen, grasp, interpret, and quote in a flow. The above per se increases the cognitive demand tremendously as interpreters tend to use emotions and personal assumptions while the source material incorporates layers of relevance carrying strong cultural values or feelings. Impersonalisation solves this problem by concentrating the interpreter's effort from active translation to passive restating. Passive constructions, agentless expressions, and neutral terminologies are some examples of how interpreters can depersonalize communication and retain the essential message devoid of any self-centered interference. This not only alleviates the need to process large amounts of information but also the chances of misunderstand or exaggeration are much lower.

Also, people's feelings are neutralized, also, a very important rule of professional ethics in interpreting. Rather, interpreters ensure that their language is free from the range of emotion, imagery or personal favourites so that the intended audience, in this case the readers, across the globe will not be disheartened by any cultural touchstone or charged in such a manner that alters the core idea. For instance, arguments can be made that turning politically polarising speeches into emotionally neutralised language still preserves the message behind the speech. This not only encourages effective communication between the two parties involved, but increases the level of trust, since the interpreter is assumed to be a third party without bias.

Aside from such advantages, it is a form of protective mechanism for the interpreters in the long run. Emotionally toned-down remarks help lessen the feeling associated with the exercising of interpreting such sensitive content. Since in this field the interpreters don't hear feeling but rather the form and word combinations, they are able to work for a long time without getting tired and, consequently, compromising the quality of work. For this reason, the authors agree and affirm that impersonalisation is not simply just a tactic but rather a conscious method in which the cognitive and emotional load is properly handled during the enthralling process of interpreting.

### **3.2. Experiment outcome**

The results of the experiment were quite positive as the three month period signalled measurable improvements in the impersonalisation strategy's effectiveness on SI performance which was the goal of the experiment. The language pair that was English-Ukrainian which is seen as a good fit due to the substantial grammatical and cultural differences the two languages have, particularly when testing the effectiveness of impersonating techniques. The outcome also indicated that the interpreters of the experimental group who were properly trained, performed more neutral, with less cognitive demands and more accurate than the control group.

#### **Month 1: Introduction to Impersonalisation Techniques**

For the entire first month, the participants from the experimental group were provided with the basic concepts of how to produce interpreting work impersonally including neutral terms, passive voice constructions and agentless expression while maintaining faithfulness to the language. Guided exercises were in popular during training sessions as they dealt with interpreting without the use of words that show sentiment or emotion. Participants demonstrated their ability to neutralize the emotionally loaded phrases while interpreting for instance "an outrageous act of injustice" was changed to «an act deemed unjust».

At the close of the first month, the experimental group interpreted the texts relatively neutrally so that they raised their scores by 10%, a result that was corroborated by the linguistic analysis of the interpreted products.

The somewhat lower scores on the NASA-TLX can be explained by the fact that they had to grapple with facts rather than with concepts that included an emotional component. Nevertheless, the changes were not great, but the respondents felt that they were better equipped to deal with the emotionally charged content.

## Month 2: Practical Application and Pragmatic Strategies

The second month focused on cultural aspects with more active strategies employed such as emotion filtering and cultural reframing. The training consisted of rendering culture-bound discursive events, such as political speeches and ceremonial addresses, with a neutral and universal understanding in mind. For example, in a culture as American as this one, phrases like 'a ticking time bomb' would be replaced with 'an urgent issue that needs to be solved' in circles where it is deemed appropriate.

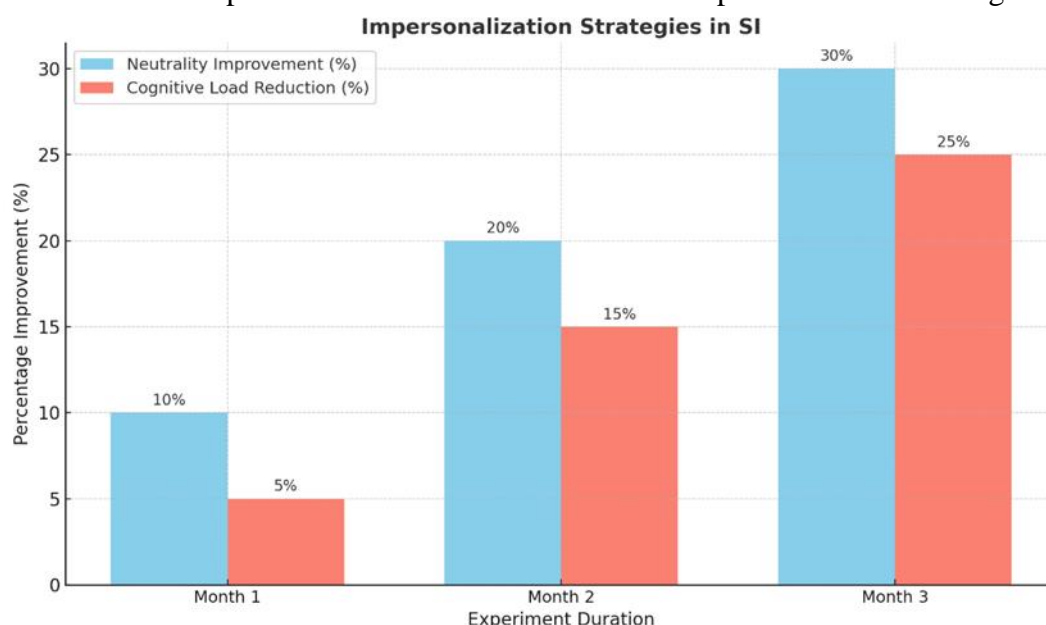
By the end of the second month, significant progress was observed. There was an increase in the use of impersonal constructions by 20% in the experimental group firstly and secondly this group demonstrated considerably better results in clarity and neutrality than the control group. Eye-tracker data indicated that the experimental group hardly gazed at the emotionally charged segments which may be an indication of being more active cognitively. Participants also came to that viewing concept of neutral equivalents for reframing less culturally bound ones reduced the mental effort required for grasping the notion of such reframes.

## Month 3: Mastery and Real-Time Performance

In the third month, all the techniques learned were to keep practice and apply together including integration of linguistic neutrality, pragmatic reframing, and control of cognitive load.

Advanced exercises included interpreting high-stakes content such as humanitarian appeals and international relations. Trainings introduced content-directed pauses and approximating techniques to assist participants deconstruct the emotionally or thematically dense discourse into contexts manageable.

At the end of the experiments the experimental group demonstrated a level of general neutrality that was above the baseline measurement of that trait by a percentage of 30 and a sense of cognitive load that was lesser by 25 in comparison to their baseline measurements. Of the techniques that were employed, emotion filtering appeared to be the one with the most powerful effect on the reduction of cognitive load, whereas linguistic neutrality techniques appeared most beneficial in enhancing the clarity and objectivity of the interpreted output. The linguistic analyses conducted indicated that there was an increase in the employment of the passive voice and agentless constructions which implied a shift towards a broad use of impersonalisation strategies.



## Summary of Positive Outcomes

The experiment has unequivocally showed that the use of particular strategies of impersonalisation substantially enhances the effectiveness of SI of English into Ukrainian languages. Avoiding emotionally charged and culturally loaded aspects these interpreters adequately

rendered the interpretations in loose reformulation that did not distort the meaning. The gradual application of language, pragmatic and cognitive strategies over the 3 months made sure that the interpreters were capable of using and integrating language strategies during interactions which accomplished the substantial shift of impersonalisation as a productive strategy during SI training and practice.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research proved that the strategy of impersonalisation is a highly successful cognitive tool in the enhancement of performance in simultaneous interpreting. Focused pragmatics, language shifters and cognitive load reduction worked to improve the clarity, neutrality and accuracy of interpreters' outputs while minimizing the amount of cognitive output required from the interpreters. The steady advancement of the experimental group during the entire three months period only validates the need for introducing impersonalisation strategies in the training of interpreters. These findings are important for practical work more so with the fact that in hi-tech and emotionally deep interpreting, the challenges of being neutral is evidently inevitable.

Even though this work has provided a basis for the understanding of the usefulness of the strategy of de-personalization, there is still plenty of room and studies to be conducted. For instance, speakers of some languages may be tested utilizing these strategies in future studies especially those that have vast deviances in culture and grammar. It would also be worthwhile to determine the potential impassable range that employment of personalisation has on interpreters' ability to withstand pressure and the level of their performance. Similarly, it is interesting how this impersonalisation may be extended, aided by improving technologies like AI and machine-assisted interpreting in the future.

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**Сергій Скрильник. Імперсоналізація як когнітивний інструмент у синхронному перекладі.** У цій статті розглядається імперсоналізація як когнітивна техніка, що підвищує ефективність роботи перекладача-синхроніста в англо-українському парі перекладу. Імперсоналізація, яка характеризується як лінгвістично та емоційно нейтральна, дозволяє перекладачам контролювати своє когнітивне навантаження, зберігати ясний розум і навіть емоційно нейтральну поведінку в моменти сильних емоцій. Незважаючи на важливість цього методу, про його використання в навчанні усного перекладу практично не писали, що залишає прогалину як у теоретичних, так і в практичних аспектах навчання. У проведеному контрольному експерименті взяли участь 30 магістрантів, які були розподілені на експериментальну та контрольну дослідницькі групи. Експериментальна група протягом 12 тижнів навчалася за структурованою програмою з технік знеособлення, таких як використання пасивного стану, безособових речень та фільтрування емоцій у позаполітичних промовах. Учасники мали змогу продовжувати навчання у змодельованому середовищі, де сценарії етнічних конфліктів викликали емоції. Ефективність роботи оцінювалася за допомогою оцінки мови, індексу навантаження NASA (NASA-TLX) та збору даних про рух очей, доповненого анкетуванням та інтерв'юванням. Результати показали, що знеособлення призвело до більш успішного виконання усного перекладу. Експериментальна група підвищила рівень нейтральності на 30% і мала на 25% менше навантаження на когнітивну сферу порівняно з контрольною групою. Фільтрація емоцій виявилася найефективнішим методом зменшення когнітивних зусиль, тоді як володіння нелінгвістичними прийомами підвищило рівень якості. Це дослідження визначає імперсоналізацію як важливий прийом у процесі синхронного перекладу, а також у навчанні та практиці перекладачів. Подальші дослідження можуть бути спрямовані на вивчення його використання для інших мов і більш складних ситуацій усного перекладу, включаючи його поєднання з різними технологіями, що використовуються в перекладі.

**Ключові слова:** імперсоналізація; синхронний переклад; когнітивна стратегія; нейтральність; когнітивне навантаження; тренінг перекладача; лінгвістична нейтральність; фільтрація емоцій.

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