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INTERPRETING TABOO: DEVELOPING AND EVALUATING STRATEGIES IN THE TRANSFER OF TABOO LANGUAGE

Summer MOUALLEM
University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)

ABSTRACT: Taboo is anything which is said or done that is seen as offensive or embarrassing. Equally it is an agreement amongst people to NOT say or do something as it may be seen as embarrassing or offensive! To interpret taboo is hard within the same language community as the definition of taboo differs according to many factors such as gender, age, social class, era and context, but it is even harder to interpret between two language communities especially if the two belong to cultures that are vastly different. However, omitting taboo can lead to severe consequences that may have legal implications or may even be fatal; hence it can no longer be ignored. Some scholars have described taboo in its cultural and linguistic forms while others discuss to a small extent a method to translate swear words by freeing them from their referential duties. However, not much literature has been found so far on interpreting or the teaching of interpreting of taboo or on the consequences of avoiding interpreting taboo. This paper will attempt to raise awareness of the consequences of not interpreting taboo in public service interpreting (PSI). The author has undertaken a pilot study on 20 public service interpreting students, as part of her PhD research, with the aim of showing and quantifying attitudes towards interpreting taboo and to compare them with what is described in the literature review.

Key words: Taboo, interpreting, training, culture.

INTRODUCTION

Interpreters look at taboo differently according to their cultural and religious background; gender also plays a role in their choice of whether they deal with taboo or not. Raising awareness of what is taboo, be that spoken or body language taboo, and what would happen if taboo was not dealt with correctly during interpreting events, should help interpreters in accepting the need to interpret such things. Having guidelines to help them along the difficult path of doing what they may see as an unacceptable task would lead to fulfilment of this target. Through years of teaching translation and interpreting, many students have either refused to interpret specific speeches because they were given by someone they disagreed with politically, or they would not interpret certain words, even in medical settings, because they considered them to be taboo, such as bodily functions, ladies' undergarments and certain body parts; yet all those are vital for effective communication between a doctor and a patient. It soon became clear that guidelines and training in practicing those guidelines would help greatly in such situations.

Most research on taboo has been in the field of sociolinguistics, mainly studying the origins of taboo word usage, to the reasons behind the use of such words, discussing the effect of their use on society, but not much is found regarding methods of translation (Trudgill, 1988).

Eco (2003), McEnery (2009), Hughes (1998), Allen and Burrige (2006) and Baker (2008) describe the effect of taboo on language and on culture plus the link between taboo and translation. For example, Allen and Burrige (2006) look at how words evolve through the use or avoidance of taboo words. Other scholars look at other aspects of taboo (impoliteness) and communication (Bousfield, 2010). Andersson and Trudgill (1990) discuss bad language, indicating that sometimes swear words cannot be interpreted literally as they are used to express emotion rather than for the sake of swearing per se, so if a person uses the word shit, it is suggested we 'free' the term of its literal meaning (i.e.: excrement) from its referential duties, and then we can use it to express emotions and attitudes; this is relevant to the subject in hand.

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*Corresponding author: Summer MOUALLEM- icemstoffice@gmail.com

Terms of Reference and Classifications of Taboo

Taboo, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (OALD) (2002: 1322) is 'a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing as people find it offensive or embarrassing'. OALD (ibid) also defines taboo as 'A general agreement not to do something or talk about something'. As for taboo words specifically, they are defined by the OALD (ibid) as 'words that many people consider offensive or shocking, for example because they refer to sex, the body or people's race'. All languages have taboo terms, the British anthropologist Edmund Leach (cited in Andersson & Trudgill, 1990: 14) has suggested that taboo words, in English, fall into three major groups, they are

- a. 'Dirty words' relating to sex and excretion, such as fuck,
- b. Words that have to do with the 'Christian religion', such as Jesus Christ
- c. Words that are used in 'animal abuse', such as bitch, cow.

However, these groups can be blurry, and may merge into each other; turning what was once blasphemous, for example, into a non-blasphemous term in current use such as the word 'gee!' which was originally Jesus, (current: non-blasphemous originating from a blasphemous term).

Another classification by Abrantes (2005) of taboo topics divides them into

- a. Fear based topics (Death, diseases)
- b. Shame based topics (Sex and bodily functions)
- c. Politeness based topics (insults)

This change in the status of what is nowadays considered to be taboo, and what is not, demonstrates the rapid changes within different societies; it also highlights one of the difficulties in interpreting taboo since an interpreter needs to stay abreast of what is currently acceptable and what is not.

Breaking taboos can lead to punishment, which is meted out depending on which taboo was broken (Thomas, cited in Freud, 1919). This punishment could be self-regulated, or if that taboo was against the God or a priest, then God or the priest will punish you. However, if the broken taboo has the potential to affect the whole community or someone other than the person who broke the rules, then with time, it became that society would take it upon itself to punish the offender; in fact, this is seen by some as the origin of punishment in society. The breaking of taboos makes the offender himself a taboo item too.

Significance of Taboo and Frequency of Its Use

Although taboo is about words and expressions we are not supposed to utter, we find that people use such words almost daily. The use of taboo reflects many aspects, such as a person's emotional state at the time of uttering such terms (anger or frustration), or it can simply be an indicator of the speakers' values or beliefs, or even their personality (vulgar, or cool and hip, for example). The relationship between interlocutors and their audience, the context and the moral or cultural code and attitude of the society, all affect what is seen as taboo (Allan & Burridge, 2006; Wardhaugh, 2006). According to the neuro-psycho-social (NPS) theory of speech, we use swear words driven by autonomic reactions caused by feelings, such as pain or anger or similar; while on the other hand, we use taboo terms, such as dirty jokes, deliberately, using the right half of our brains for strategic purposes. This is shown in people with neurological disorders, who have lost their ability to construct creative sentences but who still have the ability to swear articulately to express their emotions (Jay, 2000, cited in Ardó: 2004).

The importance of recognising taboo terms, and the ability to handle their interpretation in a sensitive manner stems from the fact that misunderstandings could easily arise when members from different communities meet and converse, and while one speaker may utter a phrase that indicates warmth in his own culture, it may be inadvertently offensive and insulting to the member of the other culture, the end result being that they part on bad terms (Lakoff, 1975). This could have dire consequences had the two parties been political adversaries or business negotiators. Despite this, there are not many theories on the translation (therefore the interpretation) of taboo words, possibly because in some societies, the use of taboo words may lead to punishment. What complicates matters here is that taboo can also be things that are not used or words that have not been said (Trudgill 1988); this adds another difficulty when researching this topic as how can one interpret what has not been uttered?

Once the consequences of not interpreting taboo are pointed out and guidelines are in place, it is hoped that the embarrassment factor would disappear, leading to a more professional output. An example of possible dire consequences of misinterpreting taboo is that of a Bengali rape victim, where the female Bengali interpreter was too embarrassed to interpret accurately the question in court, 'did penetration take place?' she rendered it as 'did lovemaking take place?'. The response by the victim could have been 'No' as penetration through rape is not equal to penetration through lovemaking, and this may have led to the alleged rapist to be set free and for the case to be dropped altogether.

Paying attention to, and applying guidelines on interpreting taboo, will not only lead to a more accurate, faithful and efficient interpreting, but once the interpreters understand why people swear and use bad language it will

help them realise when a situation is threatening to get out of hand. For example, in mental health assignments, where the gradual increase in bad language may indicate a negative change in the patient's mental status that may lead to disruptions and maybe even violence. Training interpreters who aim to work in the health sector to be aware of those signs means they will ensure they interpret those 'bad' words appropriately hence allowing the healthcare worker to make an informed decision on the gradual deterioration of the patient. With a lack of such awareness, the interpreter may assume the bad language is due to bravado only, so he may ignore it altogether which may later create a difficult and awkward situation for him and the healthcare professional. The avoidance of such situations can only lead to better conditions for patients needing interpreting services as well as for the healthcare worker looking after them. This can be extended to those needing interpreting in legal or business settings too.

Taboo and Interpreters

Currently, interpreters make their own decisions regarding the extent to which they interpret taboo units such as swear words or words implying bodily functions or of a sexual nature, not realising the effect this has if they omitted or diluted such terms. A study conducted by Hale (2007) shows how interpreters perceive their own roles. In answer to a question sent to 293 participants, many interpreters answered that their role was to interpret faithfully and accurately and that it was not their role to explain cultural nuances or ambiguities; one went as far as to say that his role was to: 'ensure that communication has occurred, but not necessarily to ensure that the information has been understood. That is the responsibility of the parts involved'; another sees his role would extend to educating the parties at a cultural level, if the situation necessitated this; while a third sees his role as a cultural bridge amongst all parties involved, and a fourth sees that by brokering communication on cultural issues, he is thus breaking the rules of his Code of Ethics. Further, this Hale study showed that the role of interpreters, as seen by the interpreters themselves, is seen differently depending on the various interpreting settings. Many interpreting training providers focus on the transfer of linguistic skills and coping techniques and leave the ethics' training for the student to obtain as they go along building their experience. Angelelli (2004: 47) asks if it is fair to expect interpreters to be cultural ambassadors. She writes how some interpreters admit that culture was not a part of their training, while others are happy to bridge any cultural gap they are faced with, if they are able to do so. According to Angelelli, AIIC members think that conference interpreters do not interact with their clients as they think that they shielded by their booths; they do concur though, that they are communication facilitators, but more importantly, they think that their AIIC Code of Conduct requires them to be neutral, and nothing more; they think it is not their job to explain. There is clearly a dichotomy here between conference interpreters, who are not part of this study, and Public Service interpreters and how each one sees their role regarding intercultural mediation and this must be borne in mind when, and if, further studies are to be conducted on this matter.

Scholars have highlighted the difficulties interpreters face in certain settings. In public service interpreting, some of the difficulties in interpreting taboo could be attributed not just to language but also to the logistics of the settings. Yudina (1982) discusses the way the physical distance between the client and the interpreter or the way they are facing each other and how these can negatively affect the standard of interpreting; this is because the interpreter is unable to see the reaction of his interpreting on his client. This problem is naturally exacerbated if the words being interpreted include some which are considered to be taboo.

Theorists have differed greatly about the extent an interpreter should go to in order to facilitate communication amongst all parties involved. Clarifying the role of interpreters is relevant when deciding whether interpreting culturally linked matters such as taboo should be interpreted or not. As seen earlier, choosing to not interpret taboo which may not be uttered but implied, can be destructive with dire consequences either legally or financially; linking this to the role of interpreters within the confines of any Code of Ethics may make it easier for inexperienced interpreters to handle.

Interpreters as Cultural Mediators

Seleskovitch (1978) has what could be seen as the first account of the interpreter's role as a cultural mediator since the 1950s. She sees that interpreters are there to explain cultural differences rather than pretend that those differences do not exist. The extent of the interpreter's intervention varies according to many factors amongst which would be the interlocutors' knowledge of each other, their education background and more significantly, the distance between their languages and cultures. Larson (1998) states that translators, and by extension: interpreters, have to consider not only the two spoken languages but also the two cultures associated with those languages, since, in his opinion, there will be concepts in the source language which do not have lexical equivalents in the target language. This is due to many differences including cultural differences. Many other theorists see that translators and interpreters have two barriers to overcome: the first being the linguistic barrier and the other a cultural barrier. Ignoring one aspect and separating it from the other can be a risky business and can lead to negative consequences as mentioned earlier.

According to Al-Omari (2009) communication differs also depending on the type of culture the person belongs to; Arabs for example belong to a high context culture where their systems of communication are very complex that they rely heavily on body language, intonations, idioms and hidden meanings of words. Low context

cultures (Scandinavians for example) on the other hand are more direct in their speech and they tend to say what they mean (with words).

Cultural differences have been divided by Jones (2002) into two types: the first being the Explicit Differences where the speaker refers to things and systems that exist in one culture but not the other (examples include culture specific catchphrases, academic institutions); here the interpreter needs to explain those missing concepts to fill the gap. Implicit Differences include irony, the speaker's hyperbole, and understatement and so on. These implicit gaps are more difficult to convey to the listener as the interpreter in these instances will be 'betraying' the speaker's intentions. An example of this would be when the speaker would say 'maybe': for most Arabs this is mostly an indication of a refusal, while for Westerners, it means they will be thinking about the matter in hand. This is vital to know and convey if a person is interpreting at business meetings, for example. The same for the word 'problem' which for the Japanese could be extremely negative and might impede communication or negotiations in a deal; an interpreter would be better off replacing this word with 'difficulty or challenge' which is received by the Japanese in a slightly more acceptable way. In such instances, as we can see, it is seen as the interpreter's role to make their audience understand those undercurrents even if they have to re-word those utterances so the listeners can fully understand what was originally said, or by using appropriate synonyms and then through their non-linguistic means, for example: tone of voice (Ibid).

Ultimately, an interpreter faced with having to extend his role to that of mediator of matters that are cultural and non-linguistic (non-verbal, paralanguage) will have to rely on his experience to judge whether his intervention is the correct one or not; however, as Kondo (1997) warns that when bridging cultural gaps, interpreters must be careful not to over interpret, and more importantly, they must not assume the delegates' role; he argues that interpreters must only interpret what is said and they must not interpret what has not been said; this last statement conflicts with interpreting taboo, as we have already seen previously that much of taboo issues relate to what has not been said. Additionally, if the interpreter is to be faithful not to the linguistic structure or meaning, but to the sense of the spoken message, then both explicit and implicit information should be relayed to the audience to ensure no ambiguity is present.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method approach to the main research shall be followed: quantitative in the form of a questionnaire and qualitative in the form of an interview. However, for the purposes of the Pilot Study and this paper, only the questionnaire shall be undertaken. The quantitative part of the research is aiming to calculate the frequency of incidents facing interpreters when handling taboo and the frequency of the methods they choose when such things occur and the intensity of their reactions and attitude to such occurrences, while the qualitative part aims to emphasise the process and meaning of their responses.

The questionnaire, which is really a means to an end, is designed based on the major theories seen in the literature review and which include,

a. Pragmatics (Grice's maxims of communication (1989), Austin's Speech Acts (1962) and Searle's Indirect Speech Acts (1969); the notion of face as described by Bousfield (2010); Brown and Levinson (1987) plus the notion of supposition and presupposition as described by Fawcett (1997). In addition to Bousfield (2010) and Culpeper's discussion (2011) on the models of politeness, impoliteness and implicature.

b. Dynamic equivalence as discussed by Nida (1964), Newmark (1998), Bassnett-McGuire (1991), as this theory is concerned with *the effect* words have, which fits with this research well.

The questionnaire method is appropriate to use in this research as the responses from it will identify gaps and difficulties interpreters face when dealing with taboo in addition to highlighting consistencies of their handling of taboo with what is found in the literature review. Dörnyei (2011) sees this method as a reliable source of collecting statistical data, and that it allows us to collect answers using specific questions that are central to the study. Further, Dörnyei (2011) sees questionnaires as a form that allows us to ask factual questions (age, gender, qualifications), behavioural questions (what they do or have done in the past, in this instance, dealing with interpreting taboo) and attitudinal questions (beliefs, opinions, values), all of which are relevant to this type of research.

Although the questionnaire part of the research will be in a structured and formal way, it shall also be descriptive (Descriptive statistics) where the aim is to use the questions to give an overview of whether the respondents do handle taboo, for example, or not, and if so, how. Descriptive statistics as a process describe patterns of behaviour and relationships between them; such techniques use tables, charts and other diagrams to present data. This method makes it easier to identify patterns that may not be so easily identifiable from raw data (Brewer, 2007). For the type of research required here, there is no requirement for a more rigorous technique to explore the data as what is required is the detection of possible patterns only.

The pilot questionnaire was distributed to practising public service interpreters and to DPSI (Diploma in Public Service Interpreting) students. The respondents are chosen so that they are of a variety of social, religious and ethnic backgrounds and their age groups will also vary greatly. This sample falls under the category called by Dörnyei (2011) 'convenience sample' where it is easy and convenient to send the questionnaire to the

respondents as they will be chosen from public service interpreting registers, and where the respondents have certain features related to the purpose of the investigation.

The questionnaire includes questions related to personal details of the respondents as this may shed a light on reasons behind how they handle taboo as it will look at the age, cultural and religious background and the gender of the respondent. There will be questions on how interpreters would (or indeed already have done so) handle certain situations when faced with taboo. The results of those questionnaires, in addition to what is summarised from any theoretical research, will be collated and converted into guidelines that may be used in practice and in training at universities and interpreting institutes.

The questionnaire was sent via an internet survey site; respondents were assured of anonymity and that the Data Protection Act would be adhered to.

The expected bias includes non-respondents in the first instance, plus information bias, where the respondents may lie in their answers, plus social desirability bias. In-depth, open-ended interviewing is a useful and appropriate tool where the information bias could be overcome and where the respondents answer more freely and from their own frame of reference rather than being confined by the structure of pre-arranged questions (Brewer, 2007). However, interviewer bias might come into play as the respondents may feel they need to respond in a certain manner in the presence of the interviewer (Brewer, 2007). The expected responses will be a mix of 'prospective' where it is expected that students will anticipate how they would handle taboo when finally they enter the workplace. This has the disadvantage of the students responding in a manner they think is expected of them rather than responding in how they would truly behave in real life. On the other hand, interpreters who are already practising and who may have come across taboo already will give 'retrospective' responses which have the disadvantage of relying on their recall.

The disadvantage of this method according to Brewer (2007) is that it is seen as more subjective than objective in its evaluation, but the advantage is that it is seen as the ideal for discovery and description. Further, Brewer (2007) sees it as an optimum method to broaden our understanding and increase the possible interpretations of human behaviour, which is relevant in this context. In addition to the disadvantages identified by Brewer (2007), (Dörnyei (2011: 41) lists the weaknesses to include the potential 'over-reading' of the individual responses which is due to the relatively smaller sample size numbers used in such a method in addition to the researcher role, personal bias and idiosyncrasies when analysing the data, there is also the lack of methodological rigour and finally the lengthy time it takes to process the data collected this way.

The sample selected for this research was chosen using the 'simple random selection' method to a certain extent inasmuch as the respondents have to be either interpreters or trainee interpreters, but the numbers of each sample may not be equal.

The minimum number required to make this a viable method of collecting data is 100 according to Dörnyei (2011: 99) but it was decided that a larger number should be sent (about 200). The use of a number larger than the minimum required allows for a safety margin to be applied which may be needed due to unforeseen circumstances, such as participants dropping out from one aspect of the study as suggested by Dörnyei (2011). The figures were decided on when looking at The (UK) National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) which currently holds 2200 interpreters on its register (sourced January 2014). Dörnyei (2011: 99) suggests, as a rule of thumb, that we should use a range between 1-10% of the sample population, which means the minimum acceptable for this study should be about 20, which is the number used for this pilot study, while the higher range comes in at about 200, which is the number suggested for the full study.

The Pilot Study

The initial responses of the questionnaire were as follows:

1. Which of the following would you personally consider to be taboo in everyday life?

This is based on the various definitions of taboo as listed by scholars such as Eco (2003), McEnery (2009), Hughes (1998), Allen and Burrige (2006) and Baker (2008) who agree that taboo varies from one culture to another. Taboo differs greatly between Western and non-Western cultures and students need to learn that although a term may not be taboo in their mother tongue, it may indeed be a serious taboo in their other language and therefore they must deal with it appropriately.

This will answer the question of whether guidelines to interpret taboo are necessary or not. The response shall be expanded on later by sub-categorising what each religious/ cultural background responses matched which category to add more detail in the training of taboo awareness.

2. How would you deal with interpreting taboo?

The strategies listed for this question are based on what is found in the literature review of interpreting culturally linked items (there is scarce, or no, literature on interpreting taboo specifically) from strategies such as Ivir (1987), Venuti (1995) and Nida's dynamic equivalence (1964). The responses will give an indication of the current trend in trainees' thinking which can guide in formulating the guidelines.

3. When interpreting taboo, do you: Maintain eye contact / Avoid eye contact

Eye contact is paramount in any interpreting event as part of the communication and raising confidence and building rapport with the client (Kondo, 1997); this is more important when it comes to interpreting sensitive matters such as taboo.

4. If swearing is accompanied by lurid gestures, do you: Mimic the gestures / Ignore the gestures

This is also part of the overall communication process and must not be ignored especially as some cultures may not understand the gestures and may not see them as lurid and the effect hence will be diluted, so it is the interpreter's role to interpret them correctly and appropriately (Kondo, 1997).

Should some respond that they might use a little of both strategies, then this shall be followed up by an interview and the outcome analysed accordingly.

5. Do you find it easier to interpret taboo

Into your mother tongue (You are used to hearing and using such terms)

Out of your mother tongue (It doesn't feel real when you say them in the other tongue)

I don't see any difference in relationship to the direction

I don't know; I don't interpret taboo

This question is based on the directionality of uttering taboo; research found that it is easier to swear using not your mother tongue, but the other language that you associate with (Allen and Burrige, 2006; Trudgill, 1988).

This responds to the question of the directionality aspect rather than the linguistic aspect of difficulties in interpreting taboo.

6. Is it appropriate to ignore taboo when interpreting?

This question is based on the theory that states that if we fail to interpret cultural nuances then this would lead to possible irreparable loss of communication (Lakoff, 1975, Alexieva, 1999; Nolan, 2005, Lewis 2012).

This question will also give us a deeper insight into the perception of interpreters and interpreting trainees regarding the possible conflict between the Codes of Ethics and taboo interpreting.

7. Knowledge of both language cultures helps me deal with taboo

Lewis 2012, Alshaer (2012) and Newmark (1998) all see culture and language to be inseparable. Therefore, cultural awareness must be raised. This is for normal interpreting in any case but perhaps linking culture to taboo in the guidelines will emphasise the point further.

8. Having guidelines on interpreting taboo would help me when faced with interpreting it

This shows how respondents might feel the need for structured training to feel more confident in interpreting taboo. Training competencies in translation, and therefore interpreting, have been detailed by Hatim (2001) plus Schäffner and Adab (2000). This is in response to the question on whether having guidelines will have any impact on the interpreters' competence or not.

SUMMARY and FINDINGS

Below we find the results to the questions posed to the trainees.

1. Which of the following would you personally consider to be taboo in everyday life? (Please tick as many as appropriate)

Sexism	40%
Racism	40%
Religious taboo (Blasphemy)	45%
Ageism	30%
Bad, offensive language (Swearing, cursing, insults)	50%
Sexual taboo (Bodily functions)	50%
Political in-correctness	30%
None	15%

2. How would you deal with interpreting taboo?

Omit totally	10%
Lower the tone/ harshness of the taboo	20%
Use exact equivalence in target language (Keeping tone and level of taboo)	50%
Substitute with a less harsh phrase/word	40%
Interpret literally if no equivalent exists	25%
Explain to others that 'these are not my words'	30%
Not sure/ Don't know	5%

3.	When interpreting taboo, do you	
	Maintain eye contact	60%
	Avoid eye contact	40%
4.	If swearing is accompanied by lurid gestures, do you	
	Mimic the gestures	65%
	Ignore the gestures	35%
5.	Do you find it easier to interpret taboo	
	Into your mother tongue (You are used to hearing and using such terms)	45%
	Out of your mother tongue (It doesn't feel real when you say them in the other language)	50%
	I don't see any difference in relationship to the direction	0%
	I don't know; I don't interpret taboo	5%
6.	Is it appropriate to ignore taboo when interpreting?	
	No, we need to be faithful	60%
	No, there are consequences if we ignore taboo	60%
	Yes, it is embarrassing	5%
	Yes, we must not encourage this kind of speaking	0%
	Yes, the others will think it is me talking 'dirty'	5%
7.	Knowledge of both language cultures helps me deal with taboo	
	Agree	95%
	Disagree	5%
	Don't know	0%
8.	Having guidelines on interpreting taboo would help me when faced with interpreting it	
	Agree	100%
	Disagree	0%
	Not sure/ don't know	0%

DISCUSSION

This remains a study in its initial phase, but even at this stage we can see how sexual taboo and swearing take the lion share (50%) when it comes to trainees identifying with taboo; this is closely followed by blasphemy at 45% and then sexism and racism (40% each). This corresponds with what theorists have classified and defined taboo where those categories were top of their lists too.

For the matter of dealing with taboo, using equivalence was suggested by 50%, followed closely by 40% saying that they would substitute the taboo term with a less harsh term. Looking further into those figures, in an attempt to see if the literature reviews match real life today, and in order to ascertain whether this choice of strategy is due to religion or not, the researcher looked into the various religions of the respondents. Equivalence was a clear winner among Christians and those who define themselves as having no religious affiliations, while Muslims use this strategy but at a lower percentage than the other two categories; Muslims seem to favour more the strategy of substitution where they replace the offensive words with softer ones, or in the case where they do use equivalence, they inform the audience that the words they are saying are not actually their own words, reflecting the embarrassment factor involved here. Christian trainees also use substitution but at a more frequent rate than their Muslim peers (30% more). Interestingly enough, for the strategy of omission, only 1 trainee identified with this strategy (Bahai faith), which is encouraging news as this strategy, as seen in the literature review, can have dire consequences and must not be followed. This is also confirmed in the responses to Question no. 6, regarding the appropriateness of interpreting taboo; where 92% agree that taboo must be interpreted, although this figure is halved when it comes to the reasons why they think it should be interpreted: 46% think we should interpret taboo as a matter of fidelity to the speaker, while an equal number (46%) think it should be interpreted as there may be consequences if taboo was left out. Of the remaining 8%, half (4%) think it is embarrassing, while the other 4% worry that the listeners may think it is them 'talking dirty'; this emphasizes the need to train future interpreters on the consequences of not interpreting taboo, regardless of its severity, and on the need to get them accustomed to it while training in order to avoid future embarrassment in their working lives, where it really matters.

For non-verbal communication (Gestures and eye contact) the average was about 60% who agree that they should mimic the speaker's non-linguistic communication. This shows that we need to work harder when training future interpreters to show them the significance of this aspect of communication. Theorists agree that much of our real communication comes through our non-linguistic mode, and hence it certainly should not be ignored by interpreters.

The question regarding culture showed that 95% agree that knowledge of the cultures of their language pair would facilitate their interpreting of culturally linked words, of which taboo is one. Again, this highlights the need to train interpreters not just on linguistic matters, but also on cultural ones. This is quite important, in the light of how some interpreters perceive their role as mere machines that transfer words into another language, rather than act as cultural mediators in order to facilitate effective communication.

The final question asking if the trainees would like to see guidelines to help them interpret taboo terms, the response was unanimous (100%), which clearly indicates the lack of such guidelines in their training and the urgent need to draft some and to include them in any training programme.

CONCLUSION

It was evident that there is a need for guidelines for taboo; the guidelines clearly need to link culture to taboo, underlining the importance of dealing with taboo, within the framework of the Interpreting Codes of Ethics. The guidelines should include training suggestions such as raising awareness of the different types of taboo, and how taboo varies in type and severity across cultures, and that training in practising how to deal with it, in order to reduce the embarrassment factor, should probably be bi-directional rather than just into the mother tongue. Training in recognising taboo gestures and un-uttered taboo should also form part of the guidelines.

Most of the initial findings match and reinforce the literature review so far, but as the questionnaire has only been distributed to students, there is a need to widen the net to include practitioners in order to check if the initial findings stand when it comes to experienced interpreters.

What now needs to be done is to send questionnaires to a larger number of interpreters and interpreting students (200) in order to verify that the majority of them do follow their own rules on interpreting taboo and to confirm the need for the guidelines. Some responses to this pilot questionnaire raised new questions that need to be answered before the final guidelines are written. sub-categorising and matching some of the responses according to the ethnic background in order to highlight the differences that arise according to those backgrounds.

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