Insults, offensive language, and taboo words in court interpreting in Spain: A corpus study of interpreted renditions by higher education students

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Abstract: The court interpreter's performance is integral to ensuring a fair trial. When dealing with insults, offensive language, and taboo words it is especially important to interpret renditions accurately and completely, as uttered insults or other expressions of verbal violence may be considered an aggravating factor of an offence, or they may in themselves constitute the offence of defamation [*injuria*] or defamatory allegation of a criminal offence [*calumnia*] under the Spanish Criminal Code. An experimental study was carried out in order to test the hypothesis that students with a good language and interpreting skills are unable to interpret this type of rendition in a court setting. A corpus was created compiling the renditions of 46 higher education students while they did the interpreting exercises from a collection of specific teaching materials based on the use of audiovisual recordings of real criminal trials (Hunt-Gómez, 2013). There were 123 renditions per student, with a total number of 5,658 renditions, of which only those containing insults, offensive language, or taboo words were analysed, transcribed, and categorised according to the student's ability to convey meaning and to express the intensity of the original message. Results showed that dealing with impolite or taboo language was an added difficulty for students, despite their command of both their working languages and interpreting techniques. Consequently, interpreting training should include specific exercises in order to trigger students to produce a pragmatic equivalent when dealing with these types of renditions so that future interpreters are equipped with the appropriate strategies when faced with real-life situations.

Keywords: Interpreter training; profanity; court interpreting; taboo language; Spain

1. Introduction

Despite the right to the assistance of an interpreter in legal proceedings being guaranteed in law (Spanish Criminal Code, 2016; Directive 2010/64/EU), and the increase in the quality and availability of court-interpreting training programmes, Spain clearly needs a standardised certification for court interpreters. Even though the Spanish educational sector has seen an increasing number of initiatives and materials devoted to interpreter training specifically in legal settings, ranging from undergraduate subjects to master's courses and interinstitutional projects, a proper court interpreter certification is still lacking (see Hunt-Gómez, 2017).

Research has defined the role of the court interpreter as the search for a

complete and accurate rendition that allows the parties to accomplish their interactional goal (Pérez-González, 2016), and is, therefore, pragmatically equivalent (Hale, 2014; Hunt-Gómez, 2018). Along the same lines, the Code of Conduct of one of Spain's most prominent associations in the field, the Professional Association of Court and Sworn Interpreters and Translators (APTIJ), states that renditions must be interpreted accurately and in full 'without changing the content or intention of the message' (APTIJ, 2010). Also, offensive, or vulgar language must be preserved, keeping the emotion and tone of the original language (Schweda Nicholson & Martisen, 1995).

In court interpreting all these guidelines are paramount, as not following them may result in a different trial outcome. When dealing with insults, offensive language, and taboo words an accurate and complete interpretation that conveys the emotion and tone of the original becomes particularly significant because those words may be deemed an aggravating factor under section 22.4 of the Spanish Criminal Code (1995) or may even constitute an offence of defamation or defamatory allegation of criminal offending under sections 206 and 208 thereof. Studies on impoliteness have shown that interpreters tend to neutralise speech acts which are threatening (Magnifico & Defranq, 2016). In this context, it must be noted that serious consequences may arise from modifying the degree of impoliteness of the words that feature in a trial (Berk-Seligson, 2017).

This paper explores how Spanish-speaking students, from four different Spanish universities, who were proficient in English and with an intermediate command of interpreting, conveyed insults, offensive language, and taboo words in a quasi-real court-interpreting exercise. Using a smaller corpus, a previous study had been made which suggested that further research was necessary (Hunt-Gómez, 2018). In order to provide more conclusive results, the study was replicated, this time with a much greater number of participants.

1.1 Are we trained to interpret impoliteness?

When learning a second language, polite and formal registers are favoured and impoliteness is rarely included in the curriculum (Horan, 2013; Liyanage et al., 2015; Mercury, 1995; Mugford, 2008). Furthermore, despite learner interest, teachers do not normally cover impoliteness and curious learners must rely on the internet or other informal channels to answer any questions they might have around this (Hunt-Gómez, 2020).

In the case of legal-interpreting training, a considerable amount of literature has been published on the need to maintain the tone, register and illocutive force of the original rendition (Berk-Seligson, 2017, Magnifico & Defranq, 2016, Hale et al., 2020). Also, professional associations such as the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators in the USA (NAJIT, 2002) and equivalent organisations in other countries have established theoretical instructions and guidelines on how to interpret profanity used in court (see Hale et al., 2020). However, there are relatively few reality-based didactic materials which directly confront students with insults, offensive language, and taboo words.

1.2 Interpreting impoliteness with the court's permission

One of the key issues when interpreting in court is that of achieving accuracy, which has been defined as a pragmatic reconstruction of the source language message in the target language (House, 1997). Even though in theory it may be easy to achieve pragmatic equivalence, in practice it is not usually that straightforward. Interpreters, however, must convey the content in the target language at the first attempt, and

that first attempt must produce the same effect as in the original language, which means that interpreters must be pragmatically competent (Hale et al., 2019). When focusing on impoliteness, the problem becomes greater as the meaning and intention of insults or offensive expressions is not included in foreign language curricula in formal teaching contexts and, what is more, insults have many nuances closely linked to particular cultures.

Some authors consider that insults, offensive language, and taboo words should not be translated as it is practically impossible to achieve a rendition that provides the necessary degree of accuracy (Ivansson & Carroll, 1998). However, completeness is one of the most critical requirements for court interpreting, and, more importantly, a speech act may constitute an offence in itself.

Given that it is not possible to omit information, some procedures for rendering the best possible utterances have been described by various academics. Hatim and Mason (1990) recommend maintaining not only equivalence in the propositional context, but also the illocutive force. Attention has also been focused on conveying the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of the original term (Rojo López & Valenzuela Manzanares, 2000). Hale and colleagues (2020) advocate the use of a pragmatic equivalent, regardless of its semantic meaning, and highlight the importance of the interpreter's knowledge.

Despite the proliferation of courses and materials designed to improve the quality of court interpreting studies (Abril-Martí & Del Pozo Triviño, 2020; Del Pozo Triviño, 2022; Hunt-Gómez & Gómez-Moreno, 2015; IVY, 2011; Michelson, 1999; Townsley, 2011, among others), Spanish court interpreting students need more practical training in conveying insults and offensive utterances, applying the ethical and professional guidelines they receive as part of their training (Hunt-Gómez, 2017). This lack of practical training leads to a lacuna precisely where the correct rendition of insults, offensive language, and taboo words is crucial to the trial. Another important aspect is the common assumption that professional interpreters 'can and must hide their emotions to project an image of impartial, professional interpreter' (Valero-Garcés & Abkari, 2010: 52). An important feature when dealing with profanity is the ability to maintain a professional attitude, as will be explained in more detail in the analysis, and so as to train future court interpreters in this particular area two previous studies were conducted.

The first was an international project by the University of Rennes Haute Bretagne (France) and University Pablo de Olavide (Spain) (Hunt-Gómez et al., 2014). Postgraduate students were confronted with insults, offensive language, and taboo words, which they had to interpret using didactic material that included recordings of real criminal trials. Results showed that most students found the experience useful in respect of both issues mentioned above. It allowed them to practise how to translate this type of expression, and how to face unpleasant or highly emotional situations, which are all too frequent in court interpreting. The second study analysed the renditions produced when confronted with insults, offensive language, and taboo words (Hunt-Gómez, 2018). All 12 participants had received interpreting training and had a good command of English. The methodology applied can be considered the pilot for the study reported on below. As expected, results showed that even if students had a good command of both their working languages and had received specific interpreting training, their performances were unsatisfactory when confronted with insults in court-interpreting settings, and specific training in that area was needed. However, the study revealed that when interpreting insults, offensive language, and taboo words, many participants tended to tone down or even omit the rendition due to personal

or cultural limitations.

Based on the same approach, the present study sought to confirm the results obtained in the previous study, but this time using a larger and more heterogeneous sample. The study explored how Spanish-speaking university students who have received specific interpreting or translation training, convey insults, offensive language, and taboo words into English (as their B language) when acting as interpreters using court-interpreting training material based on authentic trials. The first hypothesis was that participants without specific Court Interpreting training would not be able to produce acceptable renditions, an 'acceptable rendition' being one which conveys the full message and its illocutive force. The second hypothesis was that confronted with offensive utterances trained interpreters would show a tendency to produce milder versions, or even avoid them completely. If these two hypotheses were to prove correct, a case will be made for the need to devote particular attention to the interpreting of insults, offensive language, and taboo words in court-interpreter training.

2. Methodology

The following sub-sections explain the methodological procedures followed. In general terms, the methodology is similar to that applied in Hunt-Gómez (2018). In this case the sample is much more extensive and, maybe due to different training levels and the participation of subjects from several institutions, more heterogeneous, and the analysis includes an additional second part.

2.1. Corpus compilation

In order to compile a corpus of renditions of interpretations of insults, offensive language, and taboo words used in court settings, subjects used specific Court Interpreting training materials based on videos of Spanish criminal trials in which interpreting between Spanish and English was provided (Hunt-Gómez, 2013). The didactic material used is audiovisual training material specifically dedicated to court interpreting training based on real criminal trials (Hunt-Gómez & Gómez-Moreno, 2015) and takes into account well-known translation subcompetences (Kelly, 2007).

Participants had to complete a two-stage interpreting exercise. The first consisted of a contextualisation where they were given the interpreting brief and were provided with some information regarding the contents of the trial. They were also shown an explanatory video to introduce them to the workings of a Spanish criminal trial. In the second stage they worked with the didactic material. Participants had to watch segments of a video that had been divided into 123 interventions. After each rendition they had a dedicated space to convey the meaning in the alternative language, as in Hunt-Gómez & Gómez-Moreno (2015). All utterances produced were recorded.

Despite a total number of 123 renditions per participant, only four of them included insults, offensive utterances, or taboo language. This study focuses on the interpreting of these renditions because lack of an adequate conveyance may lead to a different trial outcome and, therefore, the four selected renditions were analysed even though they represent just 3.2% of the sample.

The renditions analysed were the following:

1. *Le pregunte que si le ha dicho expresiones como 'eres una mierda de madre'. Que se lo vaya traduciendo: 'eres una mierda de madre'. [Ask him if he has told her expressions like 'you are a shit mother'. He can start translating 'you are a shit mother'].*
2. *La pregunta es que si él en alguna ocasión, bien de palabra bien por mensaje, le ha dicho a ella: 'eres una mierda de madre'. [The question is if he has told her, orally or by message, 'you are a shit mother'].*
3. *Yes, she is a shit mother, yes.*
4. *Que si le ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra gorrona', mentirosa y zorra gorrona, que si se lo ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra'. ['That if he has ever called her 'liar' and 'sponging slut', 'liar' and 'sponging slut' if he has ever called her 'liar' and 'slut'].*

Therefore, as there were 46 participants, the final corpus of analysis consisted of 184 interpreted utterances in which insults, offensive language, and taboo words were included, i.e., 46 renditions of each of the four utterances.

2.2 Participants

Forty-six subjects participated in the study, 11 male and 35 female. All participants were university students who had a good command of both languages and had received interpreting training. The universities were selected following convenience criteria. Student distribution by university is in Figure 1.
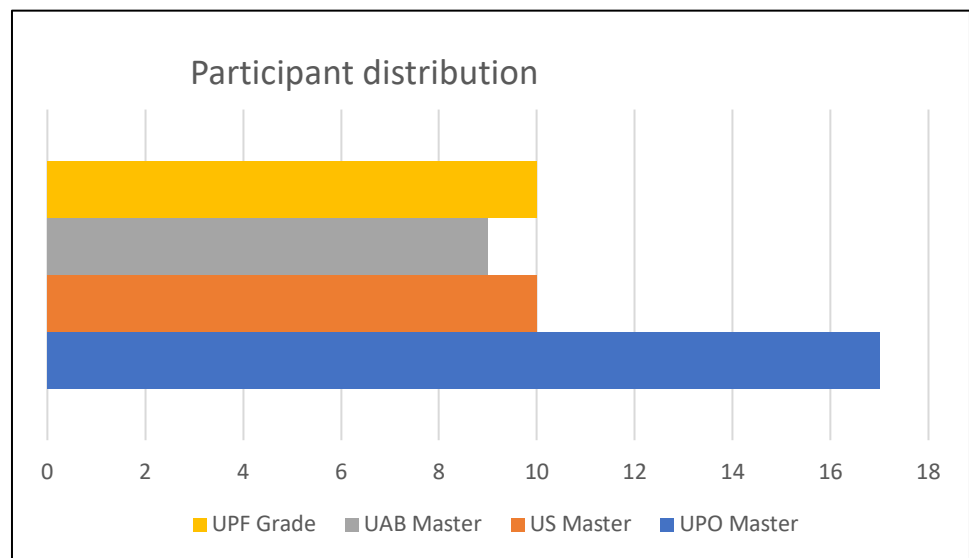

Figure 1: Participant distribution by studies.

The sample consisted of 26 participants, of whom 16 were post-graduate students and 10 were undergraduates (Figure 1). In the case of University Pompeu Fabra (UPF), in Barcelona, undergraduates were in the third year of the Degree in Translation and Interpreting; and the undergraduates at Pablo de Olavide University (UPO) in Seville were in the fourth and final year. They had all received some introductory training in bilateral and consecutive interpreting by the time they participated in the study.

The post-graduate students were selected from three different master's degrees. Those from UPO were students of the Master's degree in International

Communication, Translating and Interpreting, in which one of the seven modules is devoted to interpreting and there is a compulsory subject called Social Interpreting (six ECTS credits) that includes specific training for court interpreting, among other interpreting-related subjects. The post-graduate students from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) were enrolled in the Master's degree of Legal Translation and Court Interpreting. This is the only master's level programme in Spain specifically aimed at preparing students for court interpreting. Two of its seven modules are devoted to court interpreting, each of them of nine ECTS credits. The first is an introduction to the basics of court interpreting, and the second focuses on court-interpreting strategies and practice. Students from the University of Seville (US) were enrolled in the Master's in Translation and Interculturalism. All of them had chosen an optional subject called Translation of Legal and Economic Texts (two ECTS credits). One three-hour session of the programme was specifically dedicated to practising court interpreting.

All students participated voluntarily, and personal data was eliminated as it was not considered relevant to the study. None of the participants had any prior professional experience. Data was collected from the academic years 2014-2015 through to 2017-2018.

2.3 Corpus analysis and categorisation procedures

The renditions produced were transcribed and entered into Excel worksheets. A double classification criterion was applied to categorise the transcribed excerpts produced by the participants in the exercise described.

The first aspect analysed was whether the rendition was translated completely, bearing in mind that, as explained in the first section, an accurate and complete rendition of the original message is crucial in the court-interpreting setting. Once those interpreted utterances that conveyed the information had been identified, they were classified by the translation strategy used by participants when exposed to a highly emotionally loaded utterance, in accordance with the strategies suggested by Ávila-Cabrera (2016), namely: softening or toning down, maintaining, intensifying, or toning up, neutralising, or omitting. Interestingly enough, these categories are similar to those applied by Magnifico and Defranq (2016) when analysing impoliteness in interpreted renditions. Other strategies, such as meta-commenting, interrupting or postponing interpretations (Felberf & Šarić, 2017), were not applied as they were not identified in the sample. The manner in which participants interpreted the four interventions in the trial described in the Corpus Compilation section was analysed and utterances were categorised as adequate or inadequate. Recent work on the interpreting of profanity applied an analysis applying a hierarchy of four categories that rate from omission to pragmatically equivalent (Hale et al., 2020). For the purposes of this paper, and bearing in mind the pedagogic purpose of the exercise performed, renditions were only considered adequate if they maintained the illocutive force and completely conveyed the message of the original utterance.

3. Analysis of results and discussion

Analysis of the results shows that the vast majority of the participants were able to correctly interpret the content of the original utterance (Figure 2). Of the 184 renditions analysed, 85% (n=156) conveyed the content of the original. Consequently, there were 28 interventions in which the content was not transmitted,

amounting to 15% of the total. In general terms, the percentages may appear adequate, however, in the context of a trial, every utterance is or may play a decisive role.
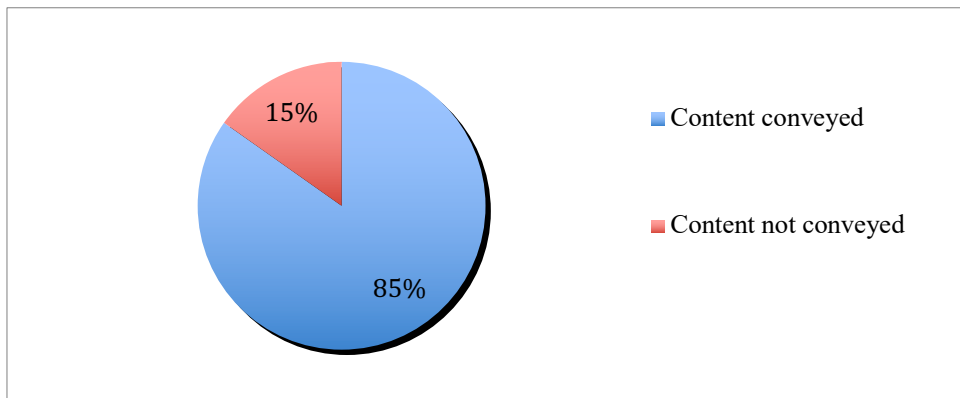

Figure 2. Utterances categorised according to rendition of content.

Interpreted utterances that managed to correctly convey the content of the original rendition were categorised according to the strategy applied when faced with controversial terms, insults, offensive language, or taboo words (Figure 3). Fifty-eight per cent (n=91) of these renditions were considered adequate, as they maintained the tone and intensity of the original rendition and expressed it in the target language. This left 42% of the renditions (n=65) where the meaning of the original intervention was not conveyed in the target language.

While toning down or even omitting the original term may be an acceptable strategy for dealing with insults, offensive language or taboo words in other settings, they are not acceptable when interpreting in court. As expected, and confirming the second hypothesis of the study, toning down and illocutive force of the original message was the second-most applied strategy, employed in 23% (n=36) of the interventions which conveyed the content. Omitting the controversial term was the strategy applied in 12% (n=19) of the renditions. One unexpected result was the intensification of the force of the offensive expressions, which was the strategy chosen in 7% (n=10) of the interventions.
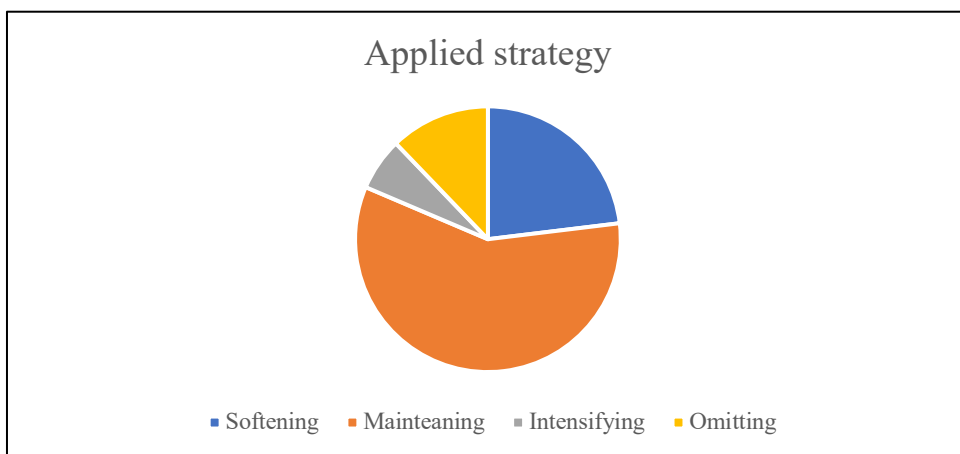

Figure 3. Utterances categorised according to the strategy applied.

In general terms, slightly under half of the interpreted renditions analysed could be considered adequate in a court-interpreting setting, that is to say, only 49% (n=91) of the 184 interventions from the criminal trial were interpreted adequately. In the next section, renditions are examined individually, and explanations are given for the different results.

3.1 Results by rendition

This section sets out one by one the four interpreted utterances that were selected. In the first part, the interpreted renditions will be separated into two different groups: those renditions which conveyed the content of the original message and those that did not. Renditions which conveyed the meaning will be classified by the strategy applied when rendering the illocutive force, in accordance with the classification created by Ávila-Cabrera (2016).

3.1.1. "*Le pregunte que si le ha dicho expresiones como 'eres una mierda de madre'. Que se lo vaya traduciendo: 'eres una mierda de madre'. [Ask him if he has told her expressions like 'you are a shit mother'. He can start translating 'you are a shit mother'].*
At one stage of the questioning of the defendant, who was an English-speaking, middle-aged man, the prosecutor required the interpreter to ask him if he had ever said to the complainant expressions such as 'You are a shit mother.' Then, to make the meaning clear, the prosecution repeated the insult. This rendition has a frequent grammatical construction in Spanish *mierda de* + noun and can normally be considered mild. In English, the construction *shit/shitty* + noun, as in *shit job* or *shitty apartment*, can be considered a pragmatic equivalent. However, the figure of the mother includes sexist connotations and goes against the ideal role a mother should play. Therefore, it can be considered more than a mild insult (Hunt Gómez, 2018).

In Table 1, the results of the classification of the utterances produced by the participants are shown. One includes the number of renditions that have satisfactorily conveyed the meaning and the other those that did not. The classification has been made also by type of studies, differentiating between undergraduate and post-graduate.

Table 1: Utterances categorised according to content conveyance of "*Le pregunte que si le ha dicho expresiones como 'eres una mierda de madre'. Que se lo vaya traduciendo: 'eres una mierda de madre'.*

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-graduate	Total
	UPO	US	UAB		UPF	
Content conveyed	15 (88%)	7 (78%)	8 (80%)	30 (83%)	4 (40%)	34 (74%)
Content not conveyed	2 (12%)	2 (22%)	2 (20%)	6 (17%)	6 (60%)	12 (26%)

Results show that nearly 75% of the utterances conveyed the content of the original rendition in the target language. One example of this is the interpretation of UPO Participant 4 (female), which was: *'Have you ever told her "you are a shit mother"?'*. On average, postgraduate students, who had received more extensive training, produced better results than undergraduates, which is consistent with the

conclusions of Hale and colleagues (2019), which highlighted that the higher the level of training, the better the interpreter's performance.

Some examples of utterances where the content was not conveyed are as follows:

- *Have you ever called her sick mother?* [UPO Participant 4- female]
- *Have you ever called her sick mother?* [US participant 4- female]
- *Have you ever said to her expressions like you are a bullshit of a mother?* [UFP Participant 10 female]

In some cases, the content was conveyed but extra information or clarifications were added, differentiating the final utterance from the original:

- Have you ever told her that she was a [Pause] bad mother ...or a shit mother? [UAB Participant 3- female].

Table 2: Utterances categorised according to the strategy applied when interpreting *"Le pregunte que si le ha dicho expresiones como 'eres una mierda de madre'. Que se lo vaya traduciendo: 'eres una mierda de madre'.*

	Master's			Total Master's	Grade UPF	Total
	UPO	**US**	**UAB**			
Content conveyed	15 (88%)	7 (78%)	8 (80%)	30 (83%)	4 (40%)	34 (74%)
Strategy applied						
Toned down	2	4	3	9 (33%)	2 (50%)	12 (35%)
Maintaining - ADEQUATE RENDITIONS	**13**	**3**	**5**	**21 (67%)**	**2 (50%)**	**22 (65%)**

Once identified, the renditions conveying the original content were categorised according to the strategy used to address insults, offensive language, and taboo words (Table 2). Results show that 65% of the interpreted utterances can be considered adequate as they completely transmitted the meaning of the original intervention as well as the illocutive force and intensity. Again, predictably, results show that post-graduate students' interventions are better than those of the undergraduates, which confirms the results of Hale and colleagues (2019). In all the renditions not considered adequate the strategy applied was softening the intensity. Examples of them are: '*He is asking if you have [ehhh] told her that she is a horrible mother or some insults like that*' [UPF Participant 3 female], where the insult is replaced with a negative adjective or '*Have you ever told her that she was a ...[Pause] bad mother ...or a shit mother*?' [UAB Participant 6 Female], where the insult is replaced by a negative adjective and only afterwards a pragmatic equivalent is provided. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that when confronted with profanity, interpreters tend to tone down the utterance (Hale et al., 2019, Jacobsen, 2008, Magnifico & Defrancq, 2016, Hunt Gómez, 2018).

3.1.2. "*La pregunta es que si él, en alguna ocasión, bien de palabra bien por mensaje, le ha dicho a ella: 'eres una mierda de madre'". [The question is if he has told her, orally or by message, 'you are a shit mother']*

As the trial progressed, and as the defendant did not give the expected answer, the prosecutor insisted on asking "*La pregunta es que si él, en alguna ocasión, bien de*

palabra bien por mensaje, le ha dicho a ella: 'eres una mierda de madre. The insistence of the prosecutor made it clear that the insult was an element of importance. Even if at this point of the trial the initial shock of dealing with insults should have faded, with participants having had more time to prepare an interpreting strategy to apply in such situations, some students may have experienced more difficulty when introducing the insult for the second time as they may have wished to maintain the cohesion of their rendition

Table 3: Utterances categorised according to content conveyance of *'La pregunta es que si él, en alguna ocasión, bien de palabra bien por mensaje, le ha dicho a ella: 'eres una mierda de madre"'*.

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-graduate	Total
	UPO	**US**	**UAB**		**UPF**	
Content conveyed	17 (100%)	7 (78%)	9 (90%)	33 (92%)	6 (60%)	39 (78%)
Content not conveyed	0	2 (22%)	1 (10%)	3 (8%)	4 (40%)	7 (22%)

The results of this second interpreted rendition were slightly better in terms of conveying content, reaching an average of almost 80% of interpreted utterances in which the content was conveyed. In the case of post-graduates, the number of correctly interpreted utterances in terms of content reached 90%, and it improved by 20% for undergraduates (Table 3).

Table 4: Utterances categorised according to the strategy applied when interpreting *"La pregunta es que si él, en alguna ocasión, bien de palabra bien por mensaje, le ha dicho a ella: 'eres una mierda de madre'"*.

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-graduate	Total
	UPO	**US**	**UAB**		**UPF**	
Content conveyed	17 (100%)	7 (78%)	9 (90%)	33 (92%)	6 (60%)	39 (78%)
Strategy applied						
Toned down	3	4	7	14 (42%)	3 (50%)	17 (44%)
Maintaining - ADEQUATE RENDITIONS	**14**	**3**	**2**	**19 (58%)**	**2 (33%)**	**21 (54%)**
Intensifying					1 (17%)	1 (2%)

In Table 4, it can be seen that the strategy applied in over half of the interpretations rendered was one of maintaining the tone and intensity of the original utterance, which places them in the category of adequate renditions. Some examples are *'Have you ever told to her written or verbally that she is a shit of a mother?'* [UAB Participant 10- male], or '*The question is, have you ever either verbally or by text messages told her that… she is a shit mother?*' [UPO Participant 9- female].

One interesting aspect is that almost all of the other 50% of the utterances that conveyed the content used a toning down strategy (44%). Unfortunately, by lowering the illocutive force they fail to transmit the meaning of the original and, therefore, these utterances are not adequate for a court-interpreting setting.

Examples include: '*Did you either text or verbally told her that she was a shitty mom?'* [US Participant 2- female] where an informal word, typically used in familiar or child-linked context is produced instead of the neutral and more formal *mother*, or '*The question is she is a very bad mother?…'* [US Participant 9- male].

It is noteworthy that one of the participants used a higher intensity insult, intensifying the effect of the original: *'The question is if on any occasion, have you told to your wife via… via text message or orally you fucking suck as a mother'* [UPF Participant 8- female]. This result may be explained by the fact that, in formal English as a L2 training, little attention is devoted to teaching how to use insults, offensive language, and taboo words and, consequently, 'learners have no choice but to negotiate themselves the conventions regarding such language use' (Liyanage et al., 2015, p. 114).

3.1.3. 'Yes, she is a shit mother'
The rendition analysed next is the answer produced by the defendant in English that needs to be interpreted into Spanish: '*Yes, she is a shit mother'*. It must be noted that in previous interventions an adequate pragmatic equivalent for "shit mother" was provided: *mierda de madre/ madre de mierda.* Even though the question refers to what the defendant allegedly said in the past, the defendant uses the present simple in his answer, as if stating something always or generally true. Furthermore, he does not answer with a yes or no; he repeats the insult contained in the question. When interpreting the rendition, these two aspects should be maintained in order to transmit the same illocutive force.

Table 5: Utterances categorised according to content conveyance of 'Yes, she is a shit mother'.

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-grade	Total
	UPO	US	UAB		UPF	
Content conveyed	17 (100%)	8 (89%)	8 (90%)	33 (94%)	10 (100%)	43 (94%)
Content not conveyed	0	1 (11%)	1 (10%)	2 (6%)	0	3 (6%)

As shown in Table 5, in this case, there are no differences in correctly conveyed utterances when comparing post-graduate and undergraduate students. Nearly all participants succeeded in rendering the content of the original intervention. Those who did not succeed in conveying the meaning failed to reflect the defendant's use of the present tense to mean that she is still a shit mother. For example, '*Sí. Le dije que era una mierda de madre' [Yes, I told her that she was a shit mother*] [UAB Participant 4- male].

For the renditions to be considered adequate, they had to convey the intensity of the insult in addition to transmitting the content. According to the interpreting strategy applied, all post-graduate participants who correctly transmitted the meaning maintained the tone of the insult, and their renditions were considered adequate (Table 6). However, only 50% of undergraduate renditions maintained the tone and intensity. One of the participants toned it down: '*Sí. Creo que no es una buena madre. [Yes. I believe that she is not a good mother]* [UPF Participant 9- female]- and four of them omitted it. Some examples of the renditions that avoided including the controversial expression were: *'Sí, sí que se lo ha dicho' [Yes. He did tell her]* [UPF Participant 1- male] or simply *'Sí' [Yes.]* [UPF Participant 4- female].

Table 6: Utterances categorised according to the strategy applied to interpret 'Yes, she is a shit mother'

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-graduate	Total
	UPO	US	UAB		UPF	
Content conveyed	17 (100%)	8 (89%)	8 (90%)	33 (94%)	10 (100%)	43 (94%)
Strategy applied						
Toned down					1	1 (10%)
Maintaining - ADEQUATE RENDITIONS	17	8	8	33 (100%)	5	38 (50%)
Omitting					4	4 (40%)

3.1.4.'Que si le ha dicho la palabra mentirosa y zorra gorrona, mentirosa y zorra gorrona, que si se lo ha dicho la palabra mentirosa y zorra'. ['That if he has ever called her a liar and a sponging slut, liar and sponging slut, if he has ever called her a liar and a slut'].
The fourth and final interpreted rendition analysed was produced in Spanish by the prosecutor and interpreted into English. It was addressed to the interpreter to be translated to the defendant. In the original message, the speaker used intonation to highlight the words that he wanted including in the rendered version. He even repeated the terms '*mentirosa*' [liar] and '*zorra gorrona*' [sponging slut]. The first can be considered very offensive and the second an extremely strong insult (Hunt-Gómez, 2018). The original utterance was '*Que si le ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra gorrona', mentirosa y zorra gorrona, que si se lo ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra'*.

As shown in Table 7, most participants were able to convey the content of the original utterance (87%). The first offensive word, *mentirosa* [liar], posed no difficulty in the search for a pragmatic equivalent. Results show that the second insult, *zorra gorrona,* presented a greater degree of difficulty. In a previous analysis of the insult *zorra* it is concluded that the various synonyms with differing degrees of intensity that had not been learnt in a pragmatic context [prostitute, whore, bitch, slut, tart, hooker, trollop, strumpet, and so on], together with the difficulty of not knowing how to translate *gorrona,* caused failure to transmit the content in most cases. For example, one student did not find a translation for *zorra* [bitch] and then used the Spanish word with an interrogative intonation: *'Ahh have you ever called her liar and ah and ah filthy…filthy …¿zorra?...'* [US Participant 4 - male]. Another student did not include the insults and, consequently, did not convey the message: *'Have you ever told her that she was a liar or that she was a… a….'* [UAB Participant 2 - female].

Although the rate of correctly conveyed content reached nearly 90%, interpreted renditions classified as adequate only amounted to 48%, or less than half (Table 8). The most noticeable result when analysing the renditions produced is that one-quarter omitted at least one controversial term, particularly the term *gorrona.* As stated above, that may be due to lack of knowledge of a pragmatic equivalent or

even of the meaning of the term in the language of origin. Some participants (12.5%), toned the intervention down by softening the intensity of the terms used and adding some hesitations, for example, *Ummmm ahhh ...have you... have you said ah to her if she is a liar of... ah...bitch... a sloppy bitch?* [UFP Participant 2-female] or *So have you said to her liar and cheeky bitch...cheeky bitch have you said?* [UAB Participant 4, male]. Another interesting and surprising result is that 35% of the participants produced interpreted renditions which presented a higher degree of intensity and offensiveness than the original one, such as *[Um] Have you...[uh] called her...a liar and a fucking whore [ooh]* [UPF, Participant 8-female], which may be deemed stronger as it uses the adjective *fucking* as an intensifier, with the noun *whore* as a pragmatic equivalent for *zorra*. It must be noted that it is the same participant that intensified the insult in the previous example. It seems possible that this particular student lacked pragmatic competence in the field of impoliteness, as pointed out by previous works on taboo language and appropriacy in second-language learning (Mugford, 2008, Hunt-Gómez, 2020, Horan, 2013, Liyanage et al., 2015).

Table 7: Utterances categorised according to content conveyance of *'Que si le ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra gorrona', mentirosa y zorra gorrona, que si se lo ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra'*.

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-graduate	Total
	UPO	US	UAB		UPF	
Content conveyed	16 (94%)	6 (67%)	8 (80%)	30 (83 %)	10 (100%)	40 (87%)
Content not conveyed	1 (6%)	3 (33%)	2 (10%)	6 (17%)	0	6 (13%)

Even though it has not been included in the analysis categories, it is important to note that some reactions of the participants were highly unprofessional and inappropriate in court: one student prefaced his rendition with swearing in Spanish, three laughed when they heard the controversial words, and another three introduced exclamations such as *Ooh!* into their renditions. Also, the number of interpreted utterances containing hesitations was high.

Table 8: Utterances categorised according to the strategy applied when interpreting *'Que si le ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra gorrona', mentirosa y zorra gorrona, que si se lo ha dicho la palabra 'mentirosa' y 'zorra'*.

	Master's			Total Master's	Under-graduate	Total
	UPO	US	UAB		UPF	
Content conveyed	**16 (94%)**	**6 (67%)**	**8 (80%)**	**30 (83 %)**	**10 (%)**	40 (87%)
Strategy applied						
Toned down		2	3	4 (13%)	1	5 (12,5%)
Maintaining - ADEQUATE RENDITIONS	16	2	1	18 (53%)	1	19 (48%)
Intensifying					8	8 (20%)
Omitting		4	4	8 (27%)	6	14 (35%)

4. Conclusions

If they convey the meaning of the original, interpreted renditions of insults, offensive language, and taboo words can be considered adequate in many contexts. However, in the case of court interpreting, there is the additional requirement of maintaining the intensity and level of offensiveness, that is, achieving a pragmatic equivalent, both in terms of sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics.

As stated in the opening paragraphs, it must be borne in mind that insults and taboo or offensive language are not included in formal teaching settings. Therefore, despite the amount of exposure to the second language they have through films, series, videogames and music, learners of a second language are normally not as exposed to that vocabulary as people who know it as part of their first language, and they receive less feedback in social situations than do native speakers. Consequently, they tend to lack a sound command of that vocabulary. The problem arises when an interpreter is needed in a field in which accuracy and completeness are fundamental, as in court interpreting, where the way in which utterances are conveyed into the target language can greatly influence the outcome of a particular trial. Furthermore, court interpreting is an extremely demanding task that has many added difficulties, such as dealing with unpleasant and potentially distressing subjects and situations – disputes, child abuse, domestic abuse, among others – (Valero-Garcés, 2015), the need to produce an adequate and immediate rendition, a lack of recognition of the profession, and so on.

Taken to its logical conclusion, the right to be assisted by an interpreter in criminal trials, established in many laws (Ortega-Herráez, 2011, Hunt-Gómez, 2019), entails specifically trained court interpreters who provide due guarantee of a fair trial. To achieve this, these professionals must receive specialised quality training. The number of centres offering court-interpreting courses is increasing and the quality of the programmes improving (Hunt-Gómez, 2017). Also, there is clear guidance on how to deal with insults or taboo or offensive language when interpreting in legal settings. However, the problem may arise when interpreters are confronted with utterances containing profanity and they are unable to produce a pragmatically equivalent rendition.

In that regard, the analysis of the results obtained, where more than half of the renditions produced were not considered adequate, has made it clear that students need to acquire specific strategies and techniques to confront insults, offensive language, and taboo words if they are to become court interpreters. This aspect is paramount because in such a specialised and sensitive context these types of expressions can greatly influence the outcome of the trial. Therefore, results partially confirmed the first hypothesis, which stated that participants might be unable to produce satisfactory interpret of insults, offensive, and taboo words in court-interpreting settings, reinforcing the need for specific training in order to be able to produce pragmatic equivalents in court-interpreting settings. Given the importance that an accurate and complete transmission of the message has in a criminal trial, the results obtained –where 42% interpreted renditions were not considered acceptable– appear to indicate that specific specialised training for future court interpreters is needed.

Further, the second hypothesis was that when confronted with these types of expressions subjects might tend to produce toned-down utterances in the target language or even omit them. This has also been confirmed as, apart from maintaining the tone and illocutive force, which was considered the adequate solution, when the content was correctly conveyed, 23% of the renditions were

toned down and the illocutive force of the controversial term was softened; 12% were directly omitted. This is consistent with previous studies (Hunt-Gómez, 2018; Magnifico & Defranq, 2016). As explained in the opening paragraphs, these strategies are not considered valid in court interpreting.

Although they are not specifically explored in this study, factors other than a lack of specific training may influence the interpreter's renditions when confronted with controversial terms, such as lack of knowledge of the semantic field in the target language, or personal or cultural limitations when reproducing insults, offensive language, and taboo words. This study did not include a comparative analysis of male and female participants and the extent to which they either toned down or intensified instances of rude language in their renditions. A very interesting study could be undertaken to verify if, as concluded by Magnifico and Defranq (2016), female interpreters were in fact to render the most unmitigated utterances when confronted with profanity, giving more weight to professional demands than to sociolinguistic determinants. In future investigations, it might be possible to use different, less Manichean methodological classifications, following the model established by Hale i.e., (2020) for police interpreting.

Overall, this study adds weight to the argument that, in addition to theoretical guidelines regarding conduct and practice, interpreters should complete specialised hands-on court-interpreting training in how to deal with insults, offensive language, and taboo words.

Acknowledgement

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