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Publisher: Universidad de Granada

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A Comparative Analysis of Interpreter Trainees' Self-Reported Strategy Use in L2 English Communication and Interpreting Practice

Análisis comparativo del uso autoinformado de estrategias en intérpretes en formación en la comunicación en inglés como L2 y la práctica de la interpretación

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between strategy use in Interpreting Studies and Second Language Acquisition has received little attention, despite both fields examining how individuals address communicative difficulties through interpreting and communication strategies, respectively. This study examines self-reported strategy use in general L2 English communication and interpreting practice among interpreter trainees. Data were collected through an online questionnaire completed by 78 students enrolled in undergraduate Interpreting courses at three Spanish universities. Our results reveal similar strategy patterns in both contexts, with *guessing*, *paraphrasing*, *avoidance* and *appeal for assistance* being the most commonly used strategies, while *morphological creativity* and L1-based strategies were the least used. *Miming* and *predicting* were the only strategies with different patterns (italics used for emphasis for all these concepts throughout the article). Additionally, our results indicate that more strategies are used in general contexts than in interpreting practice, suggesting the need for further research on potential strategy transfer and the integration of strategic instruction in L2 courses within interpreter training.

Keywords: communication strategies, interpreting strategies, Interpreting Studies, Interpreter trainees, English for Specific Purposes

RESUMEN

Este estudio aúna los Estudios de Interpretación con los de Adquisición de Segundas Lenguas para examinar el uso autoinformado de estrategias en la comunicación general en inglés L2 y en la práctica de la interpretación por parte de intérpretes en formación. Para ello, 78 estudiantes de grado de tres universidades españolas completaron un cuestionario online sobre su uso de estrategias en ambos contextos. Los resultados muestran patrones similares en ambos contextos, con la *creatividad morfológica* y las estrategias basadas en la L1 apareciendo como las menos utilizadas. Las estrategias más comunes fueron *suposición*, *parafraseo*, *evasión* y *petición de ayuda*. Además, se emplearon más estrategias en contextos generales que de interpretación, lo que sugiere la necesidad de investigar la posible transferencia de estrategias y la inclusión de instrucción estratégica en las asignaturas de L2 dentro de la formación de intérpretes.

Palabras clave: estrategias comunicativas, estrategias de interpretación, Estudios de Interpretación, intérpretes en formación, Inglés para Fines Específicos

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Publication history:
Received: 15/01/2025
Revised: 26/07/2025
Accepted: 08/09/2025

ISSN-e 2340-2415

Authorship contribution statement:
All authors have contributed to the manuscript equally.

Funding:
This research was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Science (MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033) and Innovation through the predoctoral contract PRE2021-100711.

How to cite:
Humánez-Berral, P., & Hermán-Carvajal, A. (2025). A Comparative Analysis of Interpreter Trainees' Self-Reported Strategy Use in L2 English Communication and Interpreting Practice. *Sendebar*, *36,* 255-273.
https://doi.org/10.30827/sendebar.v36.32608

1. Introduction

In Translation Studies, "translation problems" are challenges every translator must address during a translation task. Nord (1991) classified them as linguistic, convention-related, pragmatic, and text-specific, while Hurtado Albir (2001) proposed similar categories, adding instrumental problems. Vargas-Urpi (2016) notes that these issues are also relevant in interpreting practice. We could hence define "interpreting problem" as any challenge or obstacle that arises during the process of interpreting, which can hinder the accurate or effective transfer of meaning between the source and target languages.

Daniel Gile, one of the most influential scholars in the study of interpreting problems and strategies, has proposed and refined his "Effort Models" over several decades. These models were "conceived as a functional didactic tool to explain the implications of high cognitive load in simultaneous interpreting with or without text, consecutive interpreting and sight translation, not as descriptive process models" (Gile, 2021, p. 139). A core principle underlying these models is that interpreters are continuously faced with unexpected situations that must be managed while operating at the limits of their processing capacity. As Gile points out (2009), one of the aims of the Effort Models is to explain interpreting difficulties, particularly recurrent issues that are widely recognized within the interpreting community and frequently discussed in the literature, but which have not been analyzed using a unified conceptual framework. These "problem triggers" include factors such as names, numbers, enumerations, fast speech, strong foreign or regional accents, poor speech logic, or poor sound quality.

This reality emphasizes the necessity for interpreters to develop a repertoire of tools to effectively address the problems they may encounter before and during their interpreting practice. In this context, interpreting strategies (ISs) are those deliberate thoughts and actions used by interpreters to prevent and overcome challenges in interpreting practice (Gile, 1995, 2009). This definition highlights the conscious nature of ISs. However, as Li (2015) argues, strategies can be employed either consciously or unconsciously, although with repeated successful use, they may become automatic and unconscious, as observed by Zanetti (1999). While some authors distinguish between "strategies" and "tactics", using the former to refer to planned actions and the latter to on-the-spot decisions (Gile, 2009), this study will only use the term "strategies". This choice aligns with the usage adopted by other scholars (e.g., Arumí Ribas, 2012; Li, 2015), and serves to maintain conceptual clarity throughout the analysis.

Li (2015) recognizes Barik (1971) and Wilss (1978) as key pioneers in the field of ISs research, particularly in the context of simultaneous interpreting. Although these early studies on the use of ISs focused on those employed in simultaneous interpreting—and there remains significant interest in researching strategies used in this modality (e.g., Bartłomiejczyk, 2006; Dayter, 2021; Wang, 2021)—, strategies have also been studied in other interpreting modalities, such as consecutive interpreting (Arumí Ribas, 2012), sight translation (Ma & Li, 2021) or liaison/public service interpreting (Vargas-Urpi & Arumí Ribas, 2014; Vargas-Urpi, 2015).

A particularly significant aspect of interpreting practice is the use of a foreign language by interpreter trainees, who are often L2 learners and speakers and may be classified as high achievers due to their advanced proficiency (Tiselius, 2024). However, as Gile observed as early as 1987, interpreter trainees frequently made linguistic errors (among other types of

errors) during their interpreting practice, even in their L1. These errors were attributed to the interpreting context, which imposes a high cognitive load on trainees, causing them to struggle with issues they normally handle with ease. Therefore, as Arumí Ribas (2012) pointed out, it is essential for interpreter training to be highly effective to provide aspiring professional interpreters with a range of strategies or techniques to address challenges such as cognitive overload.

If we focus on the linguistic aspect and the problems arising from it while interpreting, we can identify certain parallels between the strategies used in interpreting practice and the strategies used in general contexts (communication strategies, CSs). CSs are tools used by language learners to overcome linguistic challenges when attempting to communicate in a foreign language (Fernández Dobao, 2002). As mentioned, Gile (1987) observed that interpreter trainees often seemed to be less proficient in their L1 during interpreting than when speaking freely, which might suggest that this phenomenon could be even more prominent while using their L2. This task effect would mirror findings regarding CSs used by language learners in various contexts. Poulisse et al. (1990) found that the impact of proficiency was overshadowed by other factors, such as the nature of the communicative task. This was later confirmed by Fernández Dobao (2002), who observed that in highly demanding tasks, advanced learners used as many *avoidance*, *calque* and *borrowing* strategies (see Table 1 for a definition of these strategies) as low-proficiency learners. This raises a question that, to the best of our knowledge, remains unanswered in the literature: do the strategies employed by interpreter trainees in interpreting contexts differ from those they use when addressing linguistic challenges in non-interpreting contexts? This study will focus on examining their self-reported use of strategies in English as an L2 for general communication and English as a B language in interpreting.

This paper will review the literature on CSs and ISs, stressing their similarities, factors influencing both strategies, and key taxonomies for their classification. It will then outline the research questions and the methodology employed to address them. Finally, it will present the results, accompanied by their discussion and some concluding remarks that reflect on the study's main findings, implications and limitations, and suggest directions for future research.

2. Parallels between communication strategies and interpreting strategies

As already mentioned, CSs and ISs seem to share notable similarities, as both aim to address linguistic and communicative challenges. CSs, employed by language learners, help overcome obstacles in expressing meaning during interactions in a foreign language. Similarly, ISs are deliberate actions used by interpreters to manage difficulties arising in the interpreting process. Both types of strategies involve problem-solving, adaptability and a focus on ensuring effective communication despite limitations, such as gaps in vocabulary or complex linguistic structures. However, it is important to characterize both types of strategies to more precisely establish the parallels between them. To do this, the key factors that most influence the development of CSs and ISs will be highlighted, along with some of the taxonomies that have been established for both types of strategies and how they relate to each other. For the sake of clarity, definitions for all the mentioned strategies can be found in Table 1 (section 2.2).

2.1. Factors affecting CSs and ISs

As noted by Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019), several factors have been found to influence the use of CSs in L2, including proficiency level in the target language (Jourdain, 2000; Poulisse et al., 1990), influence of L1 (Tarone & Yule, 1987), personality (Luján Ortega & Clark, 2000), learning and cognitive styles (Luján Ortega & Clark, 2000), gender (Jiménez Catalán, 2003), task-related factors such as cognitive demands, time constraints and the interlocutor's role (Poulisse et al., 1990), and the use of L1 strategies (Poulisse et al., 1990).

Less proficient learners tend to use more CSs due to their limited command of the target language (Fernández Dobao, 2002; Poulisse et al., 1990). However, proficiency seems to have a limited impact on the choice of specific CSs. While low-proficiency learners often rely on *avoidance*[1], *miming* and L1-based strategies (e.g., *calque*, *borrowing* or *foreignizing*), and more advanced learners prefer L2-based strategies (Jourdain, 2000), this trend is not always consistent. Poulisse et al. (1990) found that other factors, such as the type of communicative task, often outweigh the effect of proficiency. As mentioned earlier, this appears to be the case for interpreter trainees, since interpreting could be considered a specific type of communicative task that may add layers of difficulty. This additional difficulty demands strategic responses. This is an especially relevant issue in the early stages of training, when interpreter trainees might not yet have mastered the strategies needed to overcome such challenges in their practice.

Factors that seem to influence the use of ISs include experience and topic knowledge (Arumí Ribas, 2012), (Bartłomiejczyk, 2006), modality (Bartłomiejczyk, 2006; Li, 2013; Vargas-Urpi, 2015), directionality aspects such as memory (Riccardi, 2005), and explicit strategic instruction (Li, 2013). It is important to recognize that the application of certain strategies may vary according to the interpreting modality. For example, note-taking is a particularly critical and relevant strategy in consecutive interpreting, whereas its significance may be reduced in other contexts, such as in simultaneous interpreting. Focusing specifically on the influence of linguistic knowledge in interpreting practice, Donato (2003) and Bartłomiejczyk (2006) affirm that strategy use is closely linked to the language pair and the direction of the interpreting task. In general, interpreting into the B language presents a cognitive disadvantage (Wu & Liao, 2018). However, these authors argue that strategic use and awareness of norms allow interpreters to be resourceful and efficient in achieving communicative goals.

As can be observed, the factors influencing CSs have been more extensively studied than those influencing ISs. This seems reasonable given that CSs are applied to diverse communicative contexts, whereas ISs are used exclusively in the context of interpreting. Nevertheless, certain parallels can be noted between the factors affecting CSs and ISs, such as explicit strategic instruction, task-related factors (which, in the case of ISs, are exemplified by elements such as the direction and modality of the specific interpreting task), or proficiency in the target language.

2.2. CSs and ISs taxonomies

Continuing the analysis of the parallels between CSs and ISs, the next step is to review some of the most relevant taxonomies for both types of strategies.

Regarding CS taxonomies, research on the topic has led to the publication of various classifications over the past several decades. According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997), some of

the most influential taxonomies used in the CS literature share some strategies such as *paraphrasing*, *avoidance*, *miming*, *appeal for assistance* or L1-based strategies such as *calque* or *foreignizing*.

As Su (2021) highlights, a key aspect of Faerch and Kasper's (1984) CS framework is the classification of CSs into two primary types: achievement strategies and reduction strategies. Achievement strategies involve learners developing alternative approaches to achieve their original communicative objective using available resources. In contrast, reduction strategies are used to avoid resolving a communication issue, allowing learners to abandon their initial message. Nakatani (2010) notes that achievement strategies represent active (or positive) efforts by learners to repair and maintain interaction, whereas reduction strategies reflect evasive (or negative) behavior aimed at avoiding communication challenges, a tendency often seen among learners with lower levels of proficiency.

A particularly noteworthy CSs taxonomy, which closely resembles those used for ISs, is the classification proposed by Dörnyei and Scott (1997). This taxonomy categorizes strategies into direct, interactional and indirect. Direct strategies include resource deficit-related strategies such as message abandonment, message reduction, omission (being these three strategies *avoidance*), message replacement, circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words (the four last strategies being cases of *paraphrasing*), word coinage (*borrowing*), restructuring, literal translation (*calque*), *foreignizing*, code switching, use of similar-sounding words, mumbling, retrieval, and *miming*. Within direct strategies, there are also own-performance problem-related strategies, such as self-rephrasing and self-repair, and other-performance problem-related strategies, such as other-repair.

Interactional strategies encompass resource deficit-related strategies, such as *appeals for assistance*. They also include own-performance problem-related strategies, such as comprehension checks and own-accuracy checks, as well as other-performance problem-related strategies, such as asking for repetition, asking for clarification, asking for confirmation, *guessing*, expressing non-understanding, interpretive summaries, and responses.

Finally, indirect strategies address processing time pressure-related issues through strategies like the use of fillers and repetitions. They also include own-performance problem-related strategies, such as verbal strategy markers, and other-performance problem-related strategies, such as feigning understanding.

Although these different classifications are several decades old, they continue to serve as a theoretical and methodological foundation for more recent research. One example is that of Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019), who conducted a study on the CSs used by CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning, i.e. learning non-linguistic subjects in a foreign language) primary school pupils. To this end, they analyzed, through the administration of a questionnaire, the use of the following strategies: *guessing*, *miming*, *morphological creativity*, dictionary, *predicting* and *paraphrasing*, *borrowing*, *calque*, *foreignizing*, *avoidance*, and *appeal for assistance*.

Many of these strategies may sound familiar to those with a background in translation or interpreting, as they resemble ISs. To introduce and briefly explain ISs and facilitate a comparison between the taxonomies of ISs and CSs, we draw on the works of Bartłomiejczyk (2006), Li (2013) and Vargas-Urpi (2016) for simultaneous, consecutive, and liaison public

service interpreting, respectively. Table 1 shows strategies from these studies that may align with corresponding CSs. The CSs used for comparison are based on the framework of Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019), which also informed the methodology for this research.

Table 1. Interpreting strategies and definitions (adapted from Bartłomiejczyk, 2006; Li, 2013; and Vargas-Urpi, 2016) and potential equivalent CSs and definitions (adapted from Purdue & Oliver, 1999; Poulisse, 1990; and Yule & Tarone, 1990)

ISs names	Definition	Potential equivalent CSs	Definition
Anticipation	The interpreter anticipates the occurrence of a specific source-text segment before it is spoken by the speaker.	*Predicting*	The L2 speaker anticipates upcoming language input based on contextual or linguistic cues.
Approximation, attenuation	The interpreter cannot find the perfect equivalent for a lexical element, and they provide a near equivalent, synonym, or a less precise version in the target discourse instead.	*Paraphrasing*	The L2 speaker reformulates an intended message using alternative expressions with equivalent meaning.
Direct inquiry	The interpreter seeks clarification from providers or users to determine the meaning of an unknown word.	*Appeal for assistance*	The L2 speaker asks another person for help in producing or understanding a linguistic form.
Evasion, neutralization	The interpreter avoids taking a definitive position when the source discourse lacks clarity, leaving the decision to the audience instead of misleading them.	*Avoidance*	The L2 speaker circumvents the need to use an unknown form by avoiding reference to the concept altogether.
Inferencing	The interpreter recovers lost or unclear information using the speech context and their general knowledge.	*Guessing*	The L2 speaker tries to guess what something means in English when they do not understand it.
Lexical and syntactic transfer	The interpreter relies on the source language as a basis for lexical or syntactic transfer, using target-language words that are etymologically, phonetically, or even superficially similar to those in the source language, sometimes based on tenuous similarities such as shared initial letters.	*Borrowing*	The L2 speaker uses a word or expression from their L1 when the equivalent L2 form is unknown.
		Foreignizing	The L2 speaker modifies an L1 word to conform to perceived L2 phonological or morphological patterns.
Non-verbal communication	The interpreter employs non-verbal communication cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice, to supplement or clarify verbal information when it is unclear, incomplete, or unreliable.	*Miming*	The L2 speaker uses physical gestures to convey intended meaning when lexical items are unavailable.
Omission, skipping, ellipsis, message abandonment	The interpreter pauses or remains silent, leaving some messages uninterpreted due to issues with comprehension, note-reading, or memory.	*Avoidance*	The L2 speaker circumvents the need to use an unknown form by avoiding reference to the concept altogether.

ISs names	Definition	Potential equivalent CSs	Definition
Parallel reformulation, substitution	The interpreter invents plausible elements or substitutes misunderstood ones with available information to avoid pauses or incomplete sentences due to comprehension, note-taking, or note-reading failures.	*Guessing*	The L2 speaker tries to guess what something means in English when they do not understand it.
Paraphrasing, explaining	The interpreter explains the intended meaning of a source term when the appropriate target equivalent is difficult to retrieve.	*Paraphrasing*	The L2 speaker reformulates an intended message using alternative expressions with equivalent meaning.
Transcodage, transcoding, calque	The interpreter uses a word-for-word translation when they are unable to grasp the overall meaning of the source text.	*Calque*	The L2 speaker translates an L1 expression into the L2 on a word-for-word basis.
Morphological creativity	Not documented as a strategy in Interpreting Studies.	Morphological creativity	The L2 speaker creates novel word forms by applying known morphological rules to express a concept.

As shown in Table 1, there are clear parallels between several ISs and CSs, with many of them sharing similar forms and functions despite being used in different communicative settings. This overlap suggests a possible connection between the strategic behavior that interpreter trainees exhibit in general L2 communication and in interpreting tasks. However, despite these apparent similarities, it remains unclear whether interpreter trainees use these strategies in comparable ways across contexts.

3. Research questions

Building on the theoretical framework and previous research findings that seem to lead to a connection between CSs and ISs, and noting the lack of studies comparing the use of strategies by interpreter trainees in general L2 communicative contexts and in interpreting practice, this study aims to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ 1: What patterns emerge in the self-reported use of CSs in English for General Purposes (EGP) and ISs in English for Interpreting Practice (EIP) among interpreter trainees?
- RQ 2: Are there differences in the self-reported use of strategies (CSs and ISs) by interpreter trainees between EGP and EIP contexts?

4. Methodology

This section describes the methodology followed to answer the RQs established previously. It presents a description of the participants, the instrument used for the study and the data analysis conducted.

4.1. Participants

A total of 78 Translation and Interpreting undergraduate students participated in this study, which was conducted in 2024. The cohort comprised 40 students from Universidad de Córdoba (Spain), 34 from Universidad de Granada (Spain), and 4 from Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain). Notably, some participants were international exchange students. Their primary institutions were Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, Italy (n = 2), Campus Ciels, Italy (n = 3), Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Slovakia (n = 1) and Universität Hildesheim, Germany (n = 1).

The mean age of the participants was 21.9 years (SD = 3.59), with ages ranging from 19 to 43 years, indicating a cohort made up mainly of young adults with some variability in age. In terms of gender distribution, 66 participants identified as female, 11 as male, and one as non-binary, reflecting a predominantly female sample. This gender imbalance led the researchers to decide against analyzing the data with gender as an independent variable.

Participants reported a diverse range of experience with interpreting modalities. Specifically, 73 participants had experience with consecutive interpreting, 50 with liaison interpreting, 48 with sight translation, and 21 with simultaneous interpreting. All participants indicated practicing interpreting into both their L1 and L2. The mean number of ECTS credits[2] completed in Interpreting courses by the participants was 8.69 (SD = 6.20), with values ranging from 0 (n = 8) to 33 (n = 1), and a mode of 6 (n = 42). Participants who reported having completed 0 ECTS credits in interpreting courses were included to increase variability in the experience levels among interpreter trainees.[3]

The inclusion of interpreter trainees with diverse profiles was intended to mitigate the potential influence of contextual factors such as curricular differences or instructor-specific effects.

No explicit strategic instruction on strategy identification in any context was provided. This decision was informed by the extensive literature on self-reported strategy use among young learners (Martínez-Adrián et al., 2019; Purdie & Oliver, 1999), a demographic generally considered to possess lower levels of linguistic awareness than interpreter trainees.

4.2. Instruments

The study was conducted through an online survey consisting of three parts: an informed consent form, a background information section, and questions about the use of strategies in EGP and EIP. The survey was designed to take approximately 10 minutes to complete. After participants provided informed consent, the background section collected demographic and academic information, which is detailed in the "Participants" section. The final part of the survey focused on the use of strategies in the two analyzed contexts: EGP and EIP. This approach was used as this study represents an initial exploration of the topic and is intended as a foundation for future research. Future studies are expected to incorporate additional instruments, such as a corpus of actual interpreting performances or experimental designs aimed at correlating self-reported strategy use with observed behavior.

The self-reported strategy use questionnaire was taken from the questionnaire used by Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019) and tailored to each context. The items referring to EGP contexts emphasized that those strategies referred to spontaneous communication in English in

which the participants engage as L2 speakers (not as interpreters). The same items were adapted to focus on interpreting practice. In this case, the items stressed that they referred to the use of English when participants have to interpret an original discourse or dialogue as part of their interpreter training. The questionnaire comprised a total of 20 items, with 10 items referring to EGP, and 10 to EIP. It employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never used) to 5 (used a lot). The strategies included in the questionnaire were, as anticipated in Table 1, *guessing*, *miming*, *morphological creativity*, *predicting*, *paraphrasing*, *borrowing*, *calque*, *foreignizing*, *avoidance*, and *appeal for assistance*. The *morphological creativity* strategy is included in this study because of its role in CS research, despite not having a sufficiently documented equivalent as IS. Although Martínez-Adrián et al. (2019) also included dictionary use in their study, we chose not to include this strategy, as the use of a dictionary in an interpreting setting is often not feasible. The full list of the questionnaire items is available in Appendix 1, where they appear in their original version in Spanish along with a proposed translation into English.

4.3. Data analysis

This study employs various statistical tests to address the previously established research questions. First, an additional variable for *overall* strategy use was created for each of the contexts analyzed to account for the average of all the strategies in EGP and EIP. Then, the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the different strategies were calculated for further analysis. To address the first research question, the mean score of each strategy was compared to the *overall* mean score within each context. This analysis resulted in three groups of strategies: those significantly more frequently used (higher mean score than the overall mean and p-values < .05), those averagely used (mean score higher or lower than the overall mean but p-values > .05), and those significantly less used (lower mean score than the overall mean and p-values < .05). This analysis was applied to strategies in both EGP and EIP contexts to identify the use patterns in each context. The non-parametric Wilcoxon test for paired samples was employed in this analysis because the data consisted of ordinal-level variables derived from Likert scales.

The second analysis addressed the second research question, examining differences in strategy use between EGP and EIP contexts. The *overall* strategy use variable and the ten individual variables for unique strategies were compared using the non-parametric Wilcoxon test for paired samples. This method identified potential significant differences in both *overall* and individual CS use between the two contexts.

5. Results

This section presents the study's findings, organized to address the previously outlined RQs. The results first focus on answering RQ 1, which investigates the strategy patterns observed in EGP and EIP contexts.

Table 2 presents the analysis of the strategies in the EGP context. Strategies are listed from highest to lowest mean score. In this arrangement, all strategies above the grey "Overall row" (white background) are those with significantly high use, and all strategies below it (white background) are those with significantly low use. Notably, no strategy was categorized as having

average use (grey background), suggesting a polarized pattern in strategy usage in EGP contexts among interpreter trainees. The mean score of the *overall* variable was 3.23, indicating a value close to the medium value of 3. When comparing the mean scores of individual strategies to the *overall* mean, the following were found to be significantly more frequently used: *paraphrasing* (M = 4.49), *guessing* (M = 4.01), *miming* (M = 3.79), *appeal for assistance* (M = 3.77), and *avoidance* (M = 3.58). In contrast, *predicting* (M = 2.83), *borrowing* (M = 2.58), *calque* (M = 2.55), *foreignizing* (M = 2.40), and *morphological creativity* (M = 2.31) were less frequently used, with mean scores significantly lower than the overall mean.

Table 2. Strategies in EGP contexts

Strategy	Mean	SD	Wilcoxon W	Sig.
Paraphrasing	4.49	.659	22.5	< .001
Guessing	4.01	.960	271.5	< .001
Miming	3.79	1.210	576	< .001
Appeal for assistance	3.77	1.005	573.5	< .001
Avoidance	3.58	1.099	882.5	.003
Overall	3.23	.563	–	–
Predicting	2.83	1.232	2017	.004
Borrowing	2.58	1.284	2388.5	< .001
Calque	2.55	1.191	2551	< .001
Foreignizing	2.40	1.155	2680	< .001
Morphological creativity	2.31	1.154	2699.5	< .001

The results for the strategy patterns in EIP contexts are presented in Table 3. The *overall* mean score was 2.90, close to the medium value of 3. When compared to the individual strategies, three distinct groups were identified, although the "average use" group (grey background) consisted of only one strategy: *predicting* (M = 3.10). The group of significantly highly used strategies (white background) included *paraphrasing* (M = 4.47), *avoidance* (M = 3.71), *appeal for assistance* (M = 3.56), and *guessing* (M = 3.47). Conversely, the significantly low-use strategy group (white background) included *miming* (M = 2.62), *calque* (M = 2.35), *foreignizing* (M = 2.26), *morphological creativity* (M = 1.85), and *borrowing* (M = 1.62).

Table 3. Strategies in EIP contexts

Strategy	Mean	SD	Wilcoxon W	Sig.
Paraphrasing	4.47	.785	11.5	< .001
Avoidance	3.71	1.239	399.0	< .001
Appeal for assistance	3.56	1.373	624.0	< .001
Guessing	3.47	1.066	500.5	< .001
Predicting	3.10	1.364	1119.5	.149
Overall	2.90	.566	–	–
Miming	2.62	1.389	1739.0	.033
Calque	2.35	1.115	2220.0	< .001
Foreignizing	2.26	1.156	2245.0	< .001
Morphological creativity	1.85	.955	2639.0	< .001
Borrowing	1.62	.970	2802.5	< .001

When comparing the strategy patterns presented in Table 2 for EGP contexts and in Table 3 for EIP contexts, two notable differences emerge. *Miming* is categorized in the high-use group for EGP (M = 3.79), whereas it falls into the low-use group for EIP (M = 2.62). This suggests that *miming* is a strategy predominantly employed by interpreter trainees for general communicative purposes, rather than within their interpreting practice. Additionally, *predicting* is reported to be low in use in EGP (M = 2.83), while it is averagely used in EIP. This discrepancy indicates that interpreter trainees may be less interested in anticipating their interlocutor's speech in general communication contexts but employ this strategy more during interpreting practices, even if other strategies are prioritized.

Notwithstanding, it should be highlighted that similar patterns of strategy use are found in both contexts. Specifically, *paraphrasing*, *guessing*, *appeal for assistance* and *avoidance* were categorized in the high-use group for both EGP and EIP contexts. Conversely, *borrowing*, *calque*, *foreignizing* and *morphological creativity* were consistently categorized in the low-use group. Despite these similarities, some differences in the use of individual strategies may still exist, with certain strategies being more appropriate for one context than the other. Therefore, it is essential to also examine the differences in the use of each strategy between EGP and EIP contexts.

RQ 2 targets the comparison of strategies in EGP and EIP contexts. The results for the comparisons of strategies in EGP and EIP are presented in Table 4. Upon examining the data, significant differences were observed in the use of strategies between the two contexts, as indicated by the *overall* strategy use (M = 3.23 for EGP, M = 2.90 for EIP), revealing that strategies are significantly more used in EGP contexts than in EIP. However, different tendencies are found when analyzing individual strategies across the two contexts. *Predicting* (M = 2.83 for EGP, M = 3.10 for EIP), *paraphrasing* (M = 4.49 for EGP, M = 4.47 for EIP), *calque* (M = 2.55 for EGP, M = 2.35 for EIP), *foreignizing* (M = 2.40 for EGP, M = 2.26 for EIP), *avoidance* (M = 3.58 for EGP, M = 3.71 for EIP) and *appeal for assistance* (M = 3.77 for EGP, M = 3.56 for EIP) showed no significant differences between the two contexts. This indicates that the use of these strategies is consistent across contexts, with some strategies that seem to be considered inappropriate by interpreter trainees for both contexts (*calque* and *foreignizing*), some that appear to be deemed appropriate for both (*paraphrasing*, *avoidance* and *appeal for assistance*), and one strategy considered averagely appropriate for both (*predicting*).

Table 4. Strategy comparison between EGP and EIP contexts

	EGP		EIP		Statistics	
Strategy	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Wilcoxon W**	**Sig.**
Overall	3.23	.563	2.90	.566	2195	<.001
Guessing	4.01	.960	3.47	1.066	889	<.001
Miming	3.79	1.210	2.62	1.389	1301	<.001
Morphological creativity	2.31	1.154	1.85	.955	795	<.001
Predicting	2.83	1.232	3.10	1.364	504	.187
Paraphrasing	4.49	.659	4.47	.785	144	.867
Borrowing	2.58	1.284	1.62	.970	1164	<.001
Calque	2.55	1.191	2.35	1.115	481	.093
Foreignizing	2.40	1.155	2.26	1.156	305	.113
Avoidance	3.58	1.099	3.71	1.239	446	.277
Appeal for assistance	3.77	1.005	3.56	1.373	877	.241

On the contrary, *guessing* (M = 4.01 for EGP, M = 3.47 for EIP), *miming* (M = 3.79 for EGP, M = 2.62 for EIP), *morphological creativity* (M = 2.31 for EGP, M = 1.85 for EIP), and *borrowing* (M = 2.58 for EGP, M = 1.62 for EIP) were said to be used more frequently in EGP contexts, with significantly higher mean scores. However, these significant differences between the two contexts do not indicate that these strategies are highly used in EGP and low used in EIP. As revealed by the previous analyses, presented in Table 2 and Table 3, *guessing* seems to be highly used in both contexts, while *morphological creativity* and *borrowing* seem to be lowly used in both contexts. This means that there is a consistency in the perception of appropriateness of these strategies across contexts, even if they are significantly more used in EGP than in EIP. The only strategy that seems to be appropriate in EGP while not appropriate in EIP is *miming*, as it is highly used in EGP but infrequently used in EIP. Notably, no strategy was reported to be used significantly more in EIP than in EGP.

Based on the analysis presented above, our results reveal both differences and similarities in the self-reported patterns of strategy use between general communication in English and interpreting practice. These findings are further validated by the strategy comparison between contexts, which shows that, while overall strategy use and some individual strategies are significantly more prevalent in EGP contexts, other strategies did not exhibit significant differences between the two contexts.

6. Discussion

This study examines the use of strategies in general English communication and interpreting practice among interpreter trainees. It seeks to identify patterns in the self-reported use of CSs and ISs and to explore how trainees report adapting their strategy use depending on the communicative demands of each setting.

The first research question explores the patterns of strategy use in both EGP and EIP contexts. To address this question, we analyzed the most and least frequently used strategies by interpreter trainees in each context. This analysis provided insights into which specific strategies are deemed appropriate for general communication and interpreting practice by this particular group of L2 speakers.

Our results reveal that interpreter trainees exhibit a polarized vision of strategy use, with five strategies falling into the most and least used categories in both general and interpreting contexts. The only exception was the *predicting* strategy, which was reported to be averagely used in EIP contexts. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive, given the importance of *predicting* in interpreting practice (Chernov, 1994) and the fact that *predicting* is a resource equally available in both L1 and L2 (Dijkgraaf et al., 2017). This is particularly relevant because *predicting* does not appear to be a strategy developed through strategic instruction in interpreter training (Amos et al., 2023). One possible explanation is the participants' limited experience with simultaneous interpreting, where predicting may be a more prevalent and necessary strategy. However, the *predicting* strategy is among the least frequently used strategies in EGP contexts. This may indicate that interpreter trainees feel more relaxed during general communication in English and do not feel pressured to anticipate their interlocutor's next words.

Another surprising finding is that *avoidance* emerged as one of the strategies frequently used by interpreter trainees in their interpreting practice. This outcome is notable due to its connection with omission, a common error in interpreting practice (Barik, 1971; Gile, 2021) that is often used as a criterion to assess interpreter trainees during their training process (Alonso Bacigalupe, 2023). However, it has been noted in the literature that omitting information in the target speech might be a conscious strategy used by interpreter trainees to cope with difficulties such as specific figures or proper names (Díaz-Galaz & López Portuguez, 2016). This suggests that interpreter trainees may prioritize conveying the general sense of the source text over ensuring its complete transmission.

Interestingly, strategies that involve the use of the participants' L1 are reported to be the least used in both contexts. This aligns with previous studies on CSs, which indicate that advanced learners do not tend to rely on their L1 (Jourdain, 2000; Liskin-Gasparro, 1996) as less proficient learners do (Martínez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2015). This suggests that interpreter trainees are advanced learners, even if their actual proficiency levels may vary (Blasco Mayor, 2015; Tiselius, 2024).

The second research question explores potential differences in strategy use between EGP and EIP contexts to determine whether *overall* and individual strategies are significantly more used in one context than in the other. Our results reveal that interpreter trainees report a significantly higher use of strategies in general communication than in their interpreting practice. The *guessing*, *miming*, *morphological creativity*, and *borrowing* strategies were reported to be significantly more used in EGP than in EIP contexts, which resulted in the *overall* variable indicating that strategy use is significantly higher in EGP. One possible explanation for this could be the lack of explicit strategic instruction in interpreter training, particularly considering that the sample reported limited experience in interpreting courses, with most participants having completed only 6 ECTS credits. Another reason for this result could be that the study did not focus on a specific modality of interpreting, which might have led participants to recall their ISs from various modalities. This is relevant because, as noted in the literature review, different modalities, such as consecutive interpreting (Li, 2013), liaison interpreting in public services (Vargas-Urpi, 2016), or simultaneous interpreting (Bartłomiejczyk, 2006), may require different sets of strategies.

Miming was reported to be significantly more used in EGP than in EIP contexts. A possible explanation for this result is that interpreter trainees may consider that *miming* is not an acceptable strategy for their interpreting practice, something that may contrast with the findings of the study conducted by Vargas-Urpi (2016). In her study, non-verbal communication was found to be a strategy used to complement verbal communication. Another explanation for this result is that interpreter trainees might have taken for granted that they would not be visually available for their target audience because of interpreting in a booth or as part of remote interpreting, given that the questionnaire used did not specify the use of strategies in a specific modality. This lack of modality specification might also be the reason why participants considered *appeal for assistance* one of the most used strategies in interpreting practice, since it might be a strategy that interpreters can resort to in some interpreting modalities (Vargas-Urpi, 2015), while not available in other modalities (e.g., simultaneous interpreting).

Interestingly, *borrowing* emerged as an L1-based strategy that is more prevalent in EGP contexts than in EIP, while *calque* and *foreignizing* are reported to be equally used in both contexts. However, it should be noted that in the three cases, the strategies showed low reported usage, with mean scores lower than 3. *Morphological creativity* was also reported to be used significantly more in general communication in English than in interpreting practice, even though it showed low frequency of use in both contexts. Despite this result being in line with previous research indicating that *morphological creativity* tends to be the least used strategy (Martínez-Adrián et al., 2017; Poulisse et al., 1990), it comes as a surprise that interpreter trainees report using this strategy significantly more in EGP contexts. This could be the result of the cognitive demand required by this strategy, which may involve processes such as metaphors and metonyms, potentially incompatible with the high cognitive load of interpreting tasks, especially for interpreters in the early stages of their training.

These findings carry significant implications for interpreter training programs and the design of English for specific purposes courses within such programs. The observed overlap in the most and least used strategies between general communication and interpreting practice suggests that strategy use in interpreting practice may, to some extent, stem from pre-existing habits developed in broader L2 communication. While further research is required to clarify the nature and extent of this relationship, some degree of strategy transfer from general communication to interpreting practice seems plausible. Therefore, our results point to a valuable pedagogical opportunity to incorporate strategic instruction not only in interpreting courses, as suggested by some scholars (e.g., Li, 2015; Wu & Liao, 2018), but also in the early stages of English language education within interpreter training programs. However, it is important to clarify that we do not propose teaching all of the strategies included in this study. Instead, instruction should focus on those strategies that are most likely to benefit interpreter trainees and professional interpreters, as discussed in Vargas-Urpi (2016).

To this end, greater collaboration between English language lecturers and interpreting instructors could prove beneficial. Such efforts could help align the strategic development of interpreter trainees with the specific demands of interpreting practice, ultimately fostering more coherent and effective training pathways.

7. Conclusions

The present study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on strategy use in the fields of Second Language Acquisition and Interpreting Studies by comparing the use of strategies by interpreter trainees in general L2 communicative contexts and in interpreting practice. Our findings reveal similar patterns in strategy use between the two studied contexts (EGP and EIP), with *paraphrasing*, *avoidance*, *appeal for assistance* and *guessing* as the most frequent strategies for general communication in English and interpreting practice. L1-based strategies (namely *borrowing*, *calque* and *foreignizing*) are, in addition to *morphological creativity*, the least frequent strategies in both contexts. The differences in strategy patterns are mainly due to the *miming* and *predicting* strategies: *miming* is frequently reported in EGP but infrequently in EIP, while *predicting* is less commonly used in EGP and used with moderate frequency in EIP. These results seem to hint at a potential strategy use transfer from general communication in English into interpreting practice. However, further research is needed to determine whe-

ther interpreter trainees' strategic competence for interpreting tasks depends on their strategic background in more general communication situations.

In addition, our findings also reveal that interpreter trainees report using more strategies in general contexts than in their interpreting practice. This makes us advocate for more strategic instruction in Interpreting courses, as some other researchers and Interpreting instructors have pointed out before (Li, 2015; Vargas-Urpi, 2015, Wu & Liao, 2018). However, the empirical results reported in this study should be considered in the light of some limitations, such as the reliance on self-reported data, which may affect the accuracy of the results due to participants potentially overreporting or underreporting their use of the strategies analyzed in this study.

Furthermore, the instrument employed conceived general communication in English and Interpreting practice in the broadest sense, as it did not focus on a specific communication task for general contexts or on any specific interpreting modality. To address the limitations of self-reported data, future studies could also compile a corpus of actual interpreting performances by the same participants and analyze them to establish correlations between reported and observed strategy use. Future research should also aim to integrate additional methods such as classroom observation, retrospective interviews, or experimental tasks comparing strategy use across specific interpreting modalities. Moreover, expanding the sample to include interpreter trainees from a broader range of universities could help ensure more generalizable findings and capture a wider variety of educational backgrounds and training experiences.

Additionally, exploring how strategic instruction in L2 courses might enhance interpreters' metacognitive awareness and improve performance could provide a useful framework for curriculum development and determine whether strategy use is transferable from general contexts to interpreting practice. This would help identify the contents and competencies that English language courses should address to better prepare interpreter trainees (Cerezo Herrero, 2016) and contribute to multidisciplinary approaches in ESP and Interpreting Studies.

Despite its limitations, this study highlights the need to foster a more explicit focus on strategy use in interpreter training programs and sets the groundwork for more comprehensive and empirically grounded studies.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the participants of the study for their time and willingness to contribute to this research, Guillermo Rodríguez Pages for his support in participant recruitment, and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Strategy questionnaire

Strategy (Context)	Item (original version in Spanish)	Item (translated version into English)
Guessing (EGP)	Si no entiendo algo durante una conversación en inglés, intento adivinar lo que quiere decir.	If I don't understand something during a conversation in English, I try to guess what it means.
Miming (EGP)	Si no sé expresar algo durante una conversación en inglés, uso las manos o lenguaje corporal para expresar lo que quiero decir.	If I don't know how to express something during a conversation in English, I use my hands or body language to express what I want to say.
Morphological creativity (EGP)	Si no conozco una palabra durante una conversación en inglés me invento una nueva (por ejemplo, si no sé decir «balloon», invento la palabra «airball»).	If I don't know a word during a conversation in English, I make up a new one (e.g., if I don't know how to say "balloon", I make up the word "airball").
Predicting (EGP)	Cuando alguien me habla durante una conversación en inglés, intento adivinar lo que va a decir después.	When someone speaks to me during a conversation in English, I try to guess what they are going to say next.
Paraphrasing (EGP)	Si no conozco una palabra durante una conversación en inglés, digo algo que signifique lo mismo (por ejemplo, si no sé decir «viewpoint», digo «a place where you can look at landscapes»).	If I don't know a word during a conversation in English, I say something that means the same thing (e.g., if I don't know how to say "viewpoint", I say "a place where you can look at landscapes").
Borrowing (EGP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo durante una conversación en inglés, lo digo en otra lengua (por ejemplo, si no recuerdo una palabra en inglés, la digo en español).	When I don't know how to express something during a conversation in English, I say it in another language (e.g., if I don't remember a word in English, I say it in Spanish).
Calque (EGP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo durante una conversación en inglés, traduzco literalmente de mi lengua materna (por ejemplo, decir «heart finger» en vez de «middle finger»).	When I don't know how to express something during a conversation in English, I translate literally from my mother tongue (e.g., I say "heart finger" instead of "middle finger").
Foreignizing (EGP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo durante una conversación en inglés, adapto la palabra equivalente de mi lengua materna (por ejemplo, decir «deception» en vez de disappointment»).	When I don't know how to express something during a conversation in English, I adapt the equivalent word from my mother tongue (e.g., I say "deception" instead of "disappointment").
Avoidance (EGP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo durante una conversación en inglés, evito decirlo o referirme a ello.	When I don't know how to express something during a conversation in English, I avoid saying it or making reference to it.
Appeal for assistance (EGP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo durante una conversación en inglés, pido ayuda a otra persona (por ejemplo, «¿Puedes repetir?», al interlocutor o «¿cómo se dice esto?», a otra persona que esté cerca).	When I don't know how to express something during a conversation in English, I ask someone else for help (e.g., "Can you repeat?" to the speaker or "How do you say this?" to someone else nearby).
Guessing (EIP)	Si no entiendo algo de lo que dice el mensaje en inglés que tengo que interpretar, intento adivinar lo que quiere decir.	If I don't understand something in the English message I have to interpret, I try to guess what it means.
Miming (EIP)	Si no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, intento usar gestos o lenguaje corporal.	If I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I try to use gestures or body language.

Strategy (Context)	Item (original version in Spanish)	Item (translated version into English)
Morphological creativity (EIP)	Si no conozco una palabra en inglés durante mi interpretación, invento una nueva (por ejemplo, si no sé decir «balloon», invento la palabra «airball»).	If I don't know an English word when I am interpreting, I invent a new one (e.g., if I don't know how to say "balloon", I invent the word "airball") .
Predicting (EIP)	Mientras escucho el mensaje que debo interpretar, intento adivinar lo que se va a decir a continuación.	As I listen to the message I have to interpret, I try to guess what will be said next.
Paraphrasing (EIP)	Si no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, uso otras palabras que signifiquen lo mismo (por ejemplo, si no sé decir «viewpoint», digo «a place where you can look at landscapes»).	If I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I use other words that mean the same thing (e.g., if I don't know how to say "viewpoint", I say "a place where you can look at landscapes").
Borrowing (EIP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, lo digo en otra lengua (por ejemplo, si no recuerdo una palabra en inglés, la digo en español).	When I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I say it in another language (e.g., if I don't remember a word in English, I say it in Spanish).
Calque (EIP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, traduzco literalmente de la otra lengua (por ejemplo, decir «heart finger» en vez de «middle finger»).	When I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I translate literally from the other language (e.g., I say "heart finger" instead of "middle finger").
Foreignizing (EIP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, adapto la palabra de la otra lengua (por ejemplo, decir «deception» en vez de «disappointment»).	When I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I adapt the word from the other language (e.g., I say "deception" instead of "disappointment").
Avoidance (EIP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, evito decirlo o referirme a ello.	When I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I avoid saying it or making reference to it.
Appeal for assistance (EIP)	Cuando no sé expresar algo en inglés mientras interpreto, pido ayuda a mi interlocutor u otra persona (por ejemplo, «¿Puede repetir?», al interlocutor o «¿cómo se dice esto?», a un compañero de interpretación).	When I don't know how to express something in English while interpreting, I ask my interlocutor or another person for help (e.g., "Can you repeat?" to the interlocutor or "How do you say this?" to a fellow interpreter).

Notes

1. To enhance clarity, the strategies analyzed in our study are italicized, even when referenced by other authors.

2. One ECTS credit corresponds to 10 classroom hours.

3. The participants with 0 ECTS credits completed in interpreting courses were taking such courses for the first time at the time the questionnaire was administered.