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Inhalt

List of Abbreviations	5
List of Figures	6
List of Tables	7
Acknowledgements	8
Introduction	9
1 The Science of Habit	11
1.1 Revisiting the Habit Construct Through Its Evolution.....	11
1.2 Intervention Strategies for Unwanted Habits	14
1.3 The Evolution of Motivation.....	20
1.4 Fogg's <i>Behavior Model</i>	22
1.4.1 Establish a clear understanding of the aspiration/outcome	23
1.4.2 Brainstorm behaviour candidates	24
1.4.3 Identify the Golden Behaviors	24
1.4.4 Start Tiny	25
1.4.5 Find a good prompt	29
1.4.6 Celebrating Successes	31
1.4.7 Troubleshoot, Iterate and Expand.....	33
2 Redefining the Role of the Interpreter.....	34
2.1 History.....	34
2.2 Contradictions in the Meta-Discourse.....	37
2.2.1 Dictionaries	38
2.2.2 Encyclopaedias.....	39
2.2.3 Professional Organisations.....	39
2.2.4 Academia.....	40
2.2.5 The Paradigm Shift.....	40

3	Deliberate Practice	42
3.1	Explaining Expertise: Talent, Practice, or Both?.....	42
3.2	Deliberate Practice in Contrast to Other Domain-Related Activities.....	44
3.3	Acquisition of Exceptional Performance Through Deliberate Practice	45
3.4	Deliberate Practice in Conference Interpreting.....	47
3.4.1	From Violinists to Interpreters.....	47
3.4.2	Existing Evidence and Research Gaps	48
4	Towards a New Breed of Interpreters.....	50
4.1	To Grow or Not to Grow?	50
4.2	The Skill Set of the Modern Interpreter	51
4.2.1	The Interpreter as a Language Specialist	51
4.2.2	The Interpreter as a Businessperson.....	52
4.3	Actionable Advice	53
4.3.1	Tuning the Strings	53
4.3.2	Maintaining the Instrument	56
4.4	Positioning of the present study	58
5	Methodology and Methods.....	59
5.1	Interview.....	59
5.2	Sampling.....	60
5.3	Procedure.....	62
5.4	Transcription.....	62
5.5	Interview Guide.....	64
5.6	Data Analysis.....	65
6	Discussion	68
6.1	Introducing the Participants.....	68
6.2	Smart Habits.....	70

6.2.1	Maintaining A-Language Proficiency	70
6.2.2	Maintaining B- and C-Language Proficiency	73
6.2.3	Interpreting Skills and Strategies	76
6.2.4	Keeping Abreast of Current Affairs.....	77
6.2.5	Professional Self-Presentation and Client Acquisition.....	80
6.2.6	Health and Lifestyle	83
6.2.7	Essential Habits	87
6.3	Deliberate Practice Through the Lens of an Interpreter	88
6.4	Sources of Motivation	91
6.5	Interpreters' Habits from the Perspective of Fogg's <i>Behavior Design</i>	92
6.6	Interpreters' Understanding of Their Added Value.....	94
Conclusions		98
References		103
Appendix		112
Interview Guide.....		112
Abstract (EN)		115
Abstract (DE)		116

List of Abbreviations

AIIC	Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence
ATA	American Translators Association
ATPD	AIIC Training and Professional Development
CPD	continuous professional development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
LTP	Learning, Training, and Practice
MOOC	massive open online course
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
QCA	qualitative content analysis
SI	simultaneous interpreting
SCIC	Directorate-General for Interpretation
S-R	stimulus-response
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United States Department of State
VKD	Berufsverband für Konferenzdolmetscher in Deutschland
WMC	working memory capacity

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Swarm of Behaviors applied for the disruption of less desirable habits.....	17
Figure 2: Fogg's Focus Mapping Method.....	25
Figure 3: Fogg Behavior Model.....	26
Figure 4: A visual representation demonstrating how lowering the behaviour's difficulty positions it above the Action Line.....	26
Figure 5: The PAC Person Model as a Framework for Simplifying a Behaviour.....	27
Figure 6: Fogg's Tiny Habits Recipe.....	31
Figure 7: The Spectrum of Automaticity.....	32

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of the Leading Behavioural Models 23

Table 2: Additional Starter Steps and Scaled-Back Behaviours..... 28

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Introduction

Since the cradle of its professionalisation, conference interpreting has always placed exceptional performance at the very core of its identity. The development of expertise requires committing to the laborious process of deliberate practice for at least 10 years (Ericsson *et al.* 1993). While interpreting pedagogy closely follows the expertise theory and considers practice the bedrock of becoming a successful interpreter, graduates are not adequately equipped with practical guidance on how to incorporate deliberate practice into their everyday lives beyond formal training. Although Albl-Mikasa (2013: 33) suggests that experience may be sufficient to maintain and even enhance expert performance when accompanied by metacognitive regulation, it is worth exploring what habits highly experienced conference interpreters have developed over the course of their careers to help them stay on top of their game. The aim of the present thesis is to identify what these habitual behaviours are, the factors that motivate interpreters to sustain them, as well as to show how BJ Fogg's (2020) method can be used to design and integrate such habits into interpreters' both professional and personal lives.

Chapter 1 traces the evolution of the concept of habit across the major paradigm shifts and recalibrates the role of motivation in behavioural change. Since creating new, desirable habits often involves eliminating unwanted behaviours, a dedicated section offers a systematic strategy for this purpose. Particular attention is devoted to Fogg's *Behavior Design*¹ model and the *Tiny Habits Method*, laying the theoretical foundation for the study of this thesis.

To understand which skills interpreters need to develop throughout their careers, it is first necessary to clarify their professional role. Therefore, chapter 2 revisits the role of conference interpreters and provides an overview of the most important paradigms. Chapter 3 focuses on the concept of deliberate practice, both within and beyond interpreting studies and reviews gaps in the existing research. Chapter 4 explores the skills interpreters need to constantly refine and offers actionable advice and concrete examples of deliberate practice activities.

Chapter 5 marks the transition to the empirical part of the thesis, presenting the methodology employed in the study. It introduces the research design, explains why qualitative semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate data collection method for exploring the research question, and presents the sampling process and interview procedures.

¹ Throughout this thesis, the concepts coined by Fogg that form the core elements of his model appear with initial capitals to maintain consistency with Fogg's own usage. The purpose of setting them in emphasis is to signal their status as designated concept names.

Chapter 6 of this thesis discusses the study results using qualitative content analysis. The behaviours mentioned during the interviews were classified into best practices, identified smart habits, and potential smart habits. The habits were translated into *Tiny Habits Recipes* to illustrate how they can be incorporated into the routine of both seasoned and novice interpreters.

The present study represents a first attempt to analyse conference interpreters' daily routines through the lens of Fogg's (2020) framework and argues that the *Tiny Habits Method* may be what the interpreting world needs so that deliberate practice becomes the new norm and accompanies interpreters at every stage of their careers.²

² During the preparation of this thesis, AI-assisted writing tools, including ChatGPT (OpenAI), Microsoft Copilot, and Grammarly, were used to improve readability, language quality, and text structure, and to identify grammatical, stylistic, and typographical errors. The research design, QCA, and interpretation of the findings were carried out independently, and I assume full responsibility for the content of this thesis.

1 The Science of Habit

1.1 Revisiting the Habit Construct Through Its Evolution

The concept of habit has undergone numerous theoretical shifts over the past two centuries. Much of the contemporary understanding of habits can be traced back to William B. Carpenter, who presciently suggested, as early as 1875, that habitual actions operate in a self-perpetuating manner (Carpenter 1875: 42), “so that we find ourselves automatically prompted to think, feel, or do what we have before been accustomed to think, feel, or do, under like circumstances, without any consciously formed purpose or anticipation of results³” (Carpenter 1875: 344). While Carpenter viewed habitual responses as cued by context but independent of the conscious will, he notes that goals can catalyse habit formation and intervene when habits become counterproductive. Building on his framework, the American philosopher and psychologist William James argued that the greater the degree of behavioural automaticity in our daily routines, the more high-order cognitive capacities can be deployed to more complex tasks (James 1914: 54).

Over the following decades, researchers privileged either habits or conscious will as primary mediators of behaviour. Early behaviourists adopted the stance that habits are mechanically acquired stimulus–response (S–R) associations automatized through reinforcement (Skinner 1938; Hull 1943), thus extending the associative learning principles proposed by Thorndike (1898) and the environmental determinism advanced by Watson (1913). However, such expositions are oversimplified and therefore unsatisfactory, as they eschew cognitive and motivational variables (Wood & Neal 2007: 844), which is why they were soon challenged by Tolman’s (1948) purposive behaviourism. Influenced by Gestalt psychologists and their organised, holistic approach to perception and learning, Tolman rejected stimulus–response (S–R) reductionism and posited that behaviour is purposeful and guided by mental representations. Although Campbell (1963) adopted a position similar to Tolman’s, he further argued that human action is driven not by fixed inner motives but by behavioural variations and selective retentions, through which the environment reinforces and establishes the patterns that become experienced as motivation. Chomsky (1959) and Mowrer (1960) also took issue with

³ Although Wood *et al.* (2022) cite William James (1914) as the source of this quotation, the original formulation appears in Carpenter (1875: 344). The confusion likely results from James reproducing several pages of Carpenter’s text verbatim without indicating page numbers. The present work follows the correct attribution.

the radical behaviourist framework. They highlighted its inadequacy in reducing the complexity of human behaviour, in particular its linguistic side, to a chain of single S-R units.

In the wake of these criticisms, the cognitive revolution emerged, and with it, a new hypothesis. In contrast to his predecessors, who had explained human action exclusively in terms of environment-related variables, Neisser (1967) located the causality of behaviour in internal mental processes such as thinking, problem-solving, and memory. More specifically, he proposed a hypothesised central executive controller and argued that: “The basic reason for studying cognitive processes has become as clear as the reason for studying anything else: because they are there. [...] Cognitive processes surely exist, so it can hardly be unscientific to study them.” (Neisser 1967: 5) Neisser espoused the view that the thinking process or the flow of inner activities is continuously governed by the goal a person is trying to attain (Neisser 1967: 305). However, he acknowledged that the cognitive approach remains inevitably incomplete in its accounts of motives and expectations. Since what a person remembers depends to a great extent on what they want to achieve, “predictions become impossible and explanations ad hoc” (Neisser 1967: 305). With cognitive psychology and decision-making research focusing on mental representations and goal pursuit through information processing, habit research developed along a separate trajectory for the next few decades. After a period of divergence, the dialogue between the fields was reopened by integrative theoretical advances, such as the dual-process hypotheses (Wason & Evans 1975), the concept of automaticity (Shiffrin & Schneider 1977), and the attribution of habits to procedural memory (Squire & Zola-Morgan 1991). The surge in psychological research prompted scholarly attention to turn also to the physiological dimension of habitual actions. According to clinical and behavioural evidence, the basal ganglia play a pivotal role in procedural learning, which leads to habit formation, as well as in the execution of learned routine behaviours (Graybiel 1998, Yin & Knowlton 2006).

The seed of the contemporary prevailing theory of habit in psychology was sown by Ouellette & Wood (1998), who used Triandis’s argument as a starting point. According to Triandis (1977, 1980), past behavioural frequency serves both as a marker of habit strength and as the best predictor of its future enactment. In his opinion, the probability of a behaviour is determined by three factors: habit (the number of times the behaviour was performed in the past), intention to engage in the behaviour, and facilitating conditions. Triandis’s line of reasoning fails to highlight the importance of the link between the past and the future, and treats the act of habit as still cognitive and deliberative, rather than automatic, despite defining it as a repeated past behaviour. Ouellette & Wood reshaped the debate by proposing that past behaviour

influences future behaviour both directly and indirectly. Regarding the direct pathway, they posit that “[w]ell-practiced behaviors in constant contexts recur because the processing that initiates and controls their performance becomes automatic.” (Oulette & Wood 1998: 55) However, when the behaviour is not well-practiced, or there is a change in the context of performance, the process in place is indirect as “[r]esponses are likely to be guided by consciously formed intentions.” (Oulette & Wood 1998: 58). This dual-pathway model revived the concept of automaticity and viewed habit and intention as two separate systems, thus foreshadowing Wood’s later theoretical contributions.

Extending this earlier line of thought, the concept of habit was subsequently refined by suggesting that “[c]ontexts activate habitual responses directly, without the mediation of goal states.” (Wood & Neal 2007: 843) In comparison to Kruglanski *et al.* (2002), who argued that all actions are means to goals, Wood & Neal’s account does not preclude a habit-goal interface. According to their theory, goal pursuit acts as a driving force behind habit formation, but once a habit is automated through sufficient repetition, it can be performed without a mediating goal (Wood & Neal 2007: 844). This framework was the first to treat habit as a mechanistic cognitive system encoded in procedural memory rather than a behavioural tendency.

The authoritative modern definition of the construct of habit that prevails today was provided by Wood & R  nger (2016), stating that “[t]wo defining features of habit automaticity are (a) activation by recurring context cues and (b) insensitivity to short-term changes in goals.” (Wood & R  nger 2016: 292) What their dual-process model suggests is that habits are default responses stored in the procedural memory that dominate when the behaviour is well practiced, and the context stable. However, if these variables change or people are sufficiently motivated, habits are overridden by the slower, more deliberate goal-pursuit mechanism wired into working memory. Although neuroscientific evidence on habit learning predates Wood & R  nger (2016), their contribution was the first synthesis to bring findings from social psychology, animal learning, cognitive neuroscience, and computational modelling under the same umbrella.

The synthesis between these disciplines underwent further elaboration and eventually crystallised into a fully developed model that positions habits within a dual-system architecture that is universal across these fields (Wood *et al.* 2021: 4). This updated model came as a direct rebuttal to Kruglanski & Szumowska’s critique, who rejected the previous conceptualisation by distilling it into “straw-person caricatures of modern habit theory” (Wood *et al.* 2021: 2), such as “purposeless behavior,” “an empty class,” “void of sense,” (Kruglanski & Szumowska, 2020:

1256, 1257, 1258) and instead proposed that all behaviour operates within a goal-directed framework (Kruglanski & Szumowska 2020). In response, Wood *et al.* (2022: 590) treat habits and goals as two “separate but interacting systems” – one of them fast and automatic (habits), the other one effortful and deliberative. Habits are subject to direct context cuing (Wood & Neal 2007), made possible by cached representations encoded in memory as cue-response associations (Haith & Krakauer 2018), and are preponderantly independent of current goals (Wood *et al.* 2021). Although an agreement on the relationship between habitual and goal-driven behaviour has yet to be reached, the core theory of the dual-system model, formulated by Wood *et al.* in 2021, remains dominant in contemporary research on habits, and echoes Carpenter’s (1875) ideas first articulated over a hundred years ago (Wood *et al.* 2021).

1.2 Intervention Strategies for Unwanted Habits

In an era where we are bombarded through self-help books and social media platforms with an overwhelming amount of *how-tos* meant to improve every single aspect of our lives and help us become the best version of ourselves, there is a notable lack of science-based, concrete advice on how to override habits that do not align with our long-term goals. Although not central to the present thesis, I consider that a brief excursus of this kind may be useful here, since the process of disrupting unwanted habits is an essential and unavoidable step toward building the habits we desire.

Before proceeding, it is worth challenging our attitude towards less-than-ideal habits. Instead of using labels such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ habits, Clear (2018: 65) proposes that all habitual actions be viewed as ‘effective’ habits, since they all serve, in one way or another, as solutions to certain problems. Otherwise, they would not be repeated. However, some offer immediate relief (e.g. smoking a cigarette), while others have a long-term positive impact (e.g. going to the gym). According to Fogg (2020), the language we use plays a major role in how we estimate the investment needed to eliminate less desirable habits. Expressions such as ‘breaking a bad habit’ or ‘battling an addiction’ automatically mislead us into believing we need to put in a lot of effort in one moment, which, unfortunately, rarely works. Fogg suggests we replace this mental image of strenuous action with a tangled rope full of knots, a picture meant to reflect the multi-layered nature of habits. Much like habitual behaviours resist overnight change, the knots, too, cannot be loosened in a single attempt. Therefore, the right approach to combating maladaptive habits is to break them down into their components and unravel them one by one. The key to succeeding lies in starting with the easiest one (Fogg 2020: 200-201). Although

scholars frequently employ the term ‘bad habits’ (Jager 2003; Wood & Neal 2007; Quinn *et al.* 2010) to refer to less desirable habitual actions, the present thesis aligns with Clear’s argument that the adjective ‘bad’ is ill-suited and, therefore, refrains from using it.

Whether framed as ‘bad’, ‘unwanted’, ‘maladaptive’, or ‘dysfunctional’ in the literature, these terms all point to one fundamental aspect: the desire to change them. Nonetheless, it is well established that unwinding habits such as chronic overeating, unhealthy eating, excessive entertainment, or procrastination is an uphill process, and without understanding the forces at work, it can seem an insurmountable task. As mentioned in section 1.1 and in contrast to other forms of automaticity, habits are encoded in procedural memory, a slow-learning system that builds non-malleable S-R associations through repetition (Poldrack *et al.*, 2001; Daw *et al.*, 2005). The incremental nature of this process makes habits resistant to “short-term whims and transient shifts in people’s goals and plans” (Wood *et al.* 2021: 6).

In reviewing the literature on mechanisms to impede unwanted habit performance, several approaches emerge. Research widely supports the view that self-control, or in lay terms, willpower (Metcalf & Mischel 1999; Mischel & Ayduk 2004) has two features. On the one hand, it is called upon when an individual faces the choice between two mutually exclusive and asymmetric behaviours: one that offers immediate gratification and one that bears fruit in the long run. On the other hand, the purpose of self-control must be to prioritise a more meaningful objective over a less meaningful one (Duckworth *et al.* 2016: 36-37). Similar to other prepotent responses, habit control depends on a broad range of self-control processes, including recognising when self-regulation is necessary (Carver & Scheier, 2008) and having sufficient self-regulatory resources (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Regarding spontaneous inhibition of strong habits’ interference, Quinn *et al.* claim that the most successful strategy has been vigilant monitoring, a process that curbs responding through heightened cognitive control. Instead of decreasing habit strength, vigilant monitoring involves thinking ‘don’t do it!’ and attentively tracking any slipups or missteps (Quinn *et al.* 2010). Another effective strategy is anchoring inhibitory plans to cues that trigger problematic habits (e.g., “After dinner, I’ll skip dessert as usual and substitute fruit”, Adriaanse *et al.* 2010). However, as clarified by recent research, self-control should not be reduced to the concept of “brute-force suppression of impulses” (Duckworth *et al.* 2016: 38), as it includes all actions and thoughts that help individuals adjudicate between *desires* and *higher order goals*⁴ (terminology for Dual Motives proposed

⁴ The lack of hyphenation reflects the authors’ original spelling.

by Kotabe & Hofmann 2015). This is where choice architecture (Thaler *et al.* 2012) and environmental reengineering (Rozin *et al.* 2011) come into play. As previously explained, automaticity requires a stable performance context, ergo, constant cues. Animal learning research suggests that, unlike goal-driven behaviours, which transfer much more successfully across contexts, habits are deeply dependent on the performance context (Thrailkill & Bouton 2015: 69). In the absence of old cues, habitual responses weaken. One effective way to reshape habit cues is to control the exposure that activates them (Wansink & Sobal 2007). Drawing on a naturalistic observational study, Wansink & Payne (2012) showed that, in an all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet, regular clients with a lower body mass index selected smaller plates, used chopsticks, placed napkins on their laps, and positioned themselves with their sides or backs toward the buffet. At the macro level, habit performance can also be disrupted by life transitions (e.g. moving house or changing jobs). Such alterations not only affect habit cues but also enable new intentions to be enacted without interference from old habits (Wood & Rünger 2016).

As observed by Fogg (2020: 200), there are three categories of undesirable habits:

- *Uphill Habits* – habits whose maintenance requires constant attention, but which are easy to discontinue (e.g. leaving the bed at the sound of the alarm, going to the gym)
- *Downhill Habits* – habits that are low-maintenance but cannot be unwound easily (pressing the snooze button, uttering expletives, watching YouTube)
- *Freefall Habits* – habits such as substance abuse that are extremely difficult to forgo without professional help.

After over ten years of research and practice in his *Behavior⁵ Design Lab* at Stanford University, Fogg (2020: 202) developed a step-by-step plan and several exercises to provide actionable guidance to those interested in removing *Downhill Habits* from their routine. His *Behavior Change Masterplan* comprises three phases:

- Concentrate on building new habits.
- Concentrate on disrupting the old habit.
- Concentrate on replacing the old habit with a new one.

Although it may seem counterintuitive at first glance, the first step of the process focuses on creating new habits. However, this aligns with Fogg's (2020) central claim: sustainable change is driven by positive feelings rather than self-criticism. According to Fogg, by focusing on

⁵ This thesis follows British English conventions. However, American spelling is maintained in Fogg's terminology as well as in verbatim quotations.

building habits that are unrelated to the unwanted habit, individuals can practice the *Skills of Change* (for more, see Fogg 2020) without being emotionally distracted. The consistent repetition of new habits not only reinforces individuals' confidence by demonstrating their capacity for change but also gradually shifts them toward the person they aim to become. This subsequent identity shift supports the emergence of more beneficial habits while organically displacing counterproductive behaviours (Fogg 2020: 204).

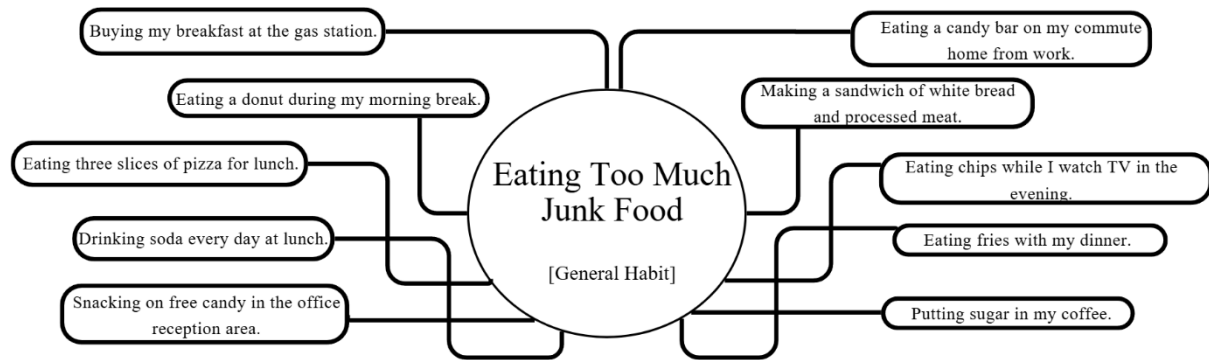


Figure 1: The *Swarm of Behaviors* applied for the disruption of less desirable habits.

The second phase is anchored in the previously illustrated image of the rope riddled with knots. Since ‘stop eating junk food’, ‘stop eating sugar’, ‘lose weight’, or ‘stop stressing out at work’ “are abstract labels for a tangle of habits”, behaviours of this kind are called *General Habits* (Fogg 2020). Without being translated into clearer, smaller steps, they can trigger avoidance and frustration, which in turn hinder progress: “*I don’t have time right now, or I’ll do it later.*” Consequently, Fogg suggests employing the *Swarm of Behaviors* (see section 1.4.2) to identify the specific underlying behaviours and design them out one by one, leaving the *General Habit* – the core knot – as the last to be addressed. It is possible to work on multiple habits simultaneously, provided the effort stays within a manageable scope (Fogg 2020: 205-207).

By reverse-engineering less desirable habits, Fogg (2020: 208-209) concluded that disrupting a specific habit requires eliminating the prompt, the ability, or the motivation. The sequence here is intentional. When it comes to prompts, he posits that they can be removed, avoided, or ignored, a point supported by empirical research (see Wansink & Sobal 2007; Privitera & Zuraikat 2014; Duckworth *et al.* 2014; Duckworth *et al.* 2016). Suppose an individual wants to stop checking his social media while at work. The removal of the prompt would imply either one-time behaviours (e.g. deleting the apps in question) or the daily performance of *Tiny Habits* (i.e. small but powerful actions such as turning off the notifications, turning off the smartphone, or putting it on airplane mode): “*After I sit down at work, I will turn off the notifications for social media.*” As with all habits (see section 1.4.6), celebrating is

crucial for ensuring the new habit becomes ingrained. According to Fogg, the simple removal of the prompt has the potential to eliminate a problematic habit on the spot.

In the event that the prompt cannot be designed out, the suggestion is to avoid it. This can be achieved by:

- not frequenting prompting environments
- not surrounding oneself with prompting individuals
- not allowing others to place prompts in one's environment
- avoiding prompt-rich media.

In order to avoid eating too much bread at restaurants, Fogg himself developed a solution by using his own recipe: “*After I hear the server offer bread, I will say ‘No bread, please.’*” (Fogg 2020: 115)

Nevertheless, as Fogg points out, someone who wants to stop eating sugary pastries but works in a coffee shop will not be able to either remove or avoid the prompt. In this case, the prompt is to be ignored. However, the drawback of this strategy is its reliance on willpower, a scarce resource whose fluctuations can imperil the intended outcome. As a consequence, ignoring the prompt is a temporary solution, rather than a long-term one (Fogg 2020: 209-210).

Although addressing the *guilty* prompt may be the simplest way to tackle self-defeating behaviours, it is not always feasible. When faced with such situations, the combat plan suggested and successfully tested by Fogg involves increasing the essential ingredients of habit performance: time, money, physical effort, mental effort, and conflict with important routines, with the last being the most difficult to implement. When it comes to the cost of a habit, raising it can be a viable tactic, albeit more effective at disrupting others' habits, such as family members, co-workers, and employees. Increasing difficulty pushes the habit toward the low-ability end of the spectrum, causing it to drop under the *Action Line*. The logic behind this becomes apparent in the following examples (Fogg 2020: 211-215):

- Unwanted habit: eating ice cream while watching TV in the evening. → Strategy: never have ice cream in the freezer (increase the time necessary to perform the habit). → Consequence: need to put on the shoes, go/drive to the store, buy the ice cream, and come home (time-consuming). → Outcome: stop eating ice cream while watching TV in the evening.
- Unwanted habit: watching too much TV. → Strategy: store the TV away (increase the physical effort necessary to perform the habit). → Consequence: need to retrieve the

television from storage, carry it into the living room, and connect the required cables (labour-intensive). → Outcome: watch less TV.

- Unwanted habit: doomscrolling on social media. → Strategy: change the password “1Lik3be1ng0uT51de (translation: *I like being outside*)” and not allow the system to enter it automatically (increase the mental effort to perform the habit). → Consequence: need to type in the password each time (mentally demanding). → Outcome: checking social media more rarely.
- Unwanted habit: having an unhealthy evening routine (i.e. having a late dinner, doomscrolling, and staying up late). → Strategy: go surfing at daybreak (increase conflict between the habits and other important routines). → Consequence: lack of alertness required when facing the waves (inability to perform a habit more important than the evening routine). → Outcome: redesigning the evening routine – having an earlier dinner, avoiding screens, and going to bed early.

As noted earlier, tackling motivation is advisable only after attempts to remove the prompts or the ability have proven ineffective. The underlying reason for this is that adjusting motivation levels can be taxing for *Downhill Habits* and nearly impossible for *Freefall Habits*. Nonetheless, this strategy is worth considering, as it has the potential to help disrupt a maladaptive habit entirely. When seeking to alter motivation, there are two avenues: reducing motivation or adding a demotivator. One intriguing example of reducing motivation to doomscroll, definitely worth exploring, was provided by Fogg’s former student, Tristan Harris. The former Google design ethicist and founder of the Humane Technology claims that by setting the phone to grayscale, viewers lose interest in mindless scrolling, as memes and social media posts stimulate the brain to a much lesser extent in the absence of vibrant colours. Despite being a popular technique, adding demotivators should be approached with caution. From Fogg’s perspective, a note on the refrigerator that says, “STOP! YOU’RE OVERWEIGHT” (Fogg 2020: 217, capital letters in original), is demotivating but also demoralising, initiating a cascade of guilt and self-criticism. This strategy not only fails to address the root question of the behaviour but also clashes with Fogg’s conviction that long-term behavioural change can occur only in the presence of a positive attitude toward oneself (Fogg 2020: 217). Therefore, Fogg makes a clear distinction between employing a demotivator and increasing the friction of a habit.

If the approaches mentioned above do not yield the intended outcome, rather than abandoning the pursuit, Fogg recommends scaling back the unwanted habit. The effectiveness

of this strategy stems from outmanoeuvring the inner conflict and the fear of potential discomfort that individuals experience when facing change. This fear is replaced by a sense of achievement, and people are emboldened to embrace more meaningful change when people realise they can:

- pause the habit for a pre-defined period of time (e.g. abstain from smoking for three days rather than permanently)
- limit the duration of the habit (e.g. watch TV for thirty minutes rather than four hours)
- reduce the frequency of habit enactment (e.g. check social media once instead of ten times a day)
- lower the intensity of the habit (e.g. pace the alcohol intake rather than gulping down shots)

Moreover, these techniques offer the opportunity to notice the futility of a habit, or to realise that its disruption was not as strenuous as anticipated. If an unwanted habit proves deeply entrenched and resistant to all the strategies outlined above, the *Behaviour Change Masterplan* recommends replacing it with a desirable one. For the replacement habit to be successful, it must be a Golden Behaviour (see section 2.4.3), meaning it must be easier to do and more motivating than the problematic habit. Being able to repurpose the old prompt to trigger the new response signals that the habit was well selected.

Fogg's extensive experience and notable success with the *Behaviour Change Masterplan* confirm Duckworth *et al.*'s hypothesis that situational self-control strategies (i.e. situation-selection strategies and situation-modification strategies) are more effective than intrapsychic strategies: "In self-control, the enemy is within. Nevertheless, the most effective way to do battle with our inner demons may be, in fact, by taking the battle outside of the mind." (Duckworth *et al.* 2016: 50)

1.3 The Evolution of Motivation

Prior to the extension of the concept of self-control, the research landscape was dominated for almost two decades by the ego-depletion model. According to Baumeister *et al.* (1998), acts of volition, such as making choices and decisions, inhibiting behaviours, and overriding responses, gradually exhaust the limited resource of intrapsychic strength that the individual possesses. The findings of the four experiments conducted in their study coalesced into the conclusion that exercising volition in one domain impairs performance on subsequent tasks. Thus, participants who chose radishes over the chocolates on display gave up on unsolvable puzzles much sooner

than those who indulged in chocolates (Baumeister *et al* 1998: 1261). Without questioning the importance of biological resources (i.e. glucose) in enabling effective self-control, Job *et al.* conducted a thought-provoking series of laboratory experiments whose results reshape the perspective of the phenomenon. Based on their empirical evidence, participants who were encouraged to adopt the nonlimited-resource theory outperformed those who adopted the limited-resource theory on both the post-depletion task and a third task (Job *et al.* 2010: 1692). In other words, the inner resources are as limited as individuals believe them to be. Moreover, Inzlicht & Schmeichel (2012: 460) argue that the increased probability of self-control failure between Time 1 and Time 2 is due to shifts in motivation, attention, and priorities rather than resource depletion. Another aspect worth considering is the timing of the behaviour, as “[w]illpower decreases from morning to evening. Complex decisions get harder by late in the day. Motivation for self-improvement can vanish on Friday nights” (Fogg 2020: 48). To further nuance this discussion, I propose that motivation wanes in the face of the frustration caused by too high expectations. Oftentimes, individuals expect substantial results after having pursued a desirable behaviour for a very short period of time. When the anticipated results fail to materialise immediately, as is usually the case, this casts doubts on the fruitfulness of the effort, and the entire endeavour starts to lose its appeal.

But what does the concept of motivation actually refer to? In Reeve’s formulation, motivation is to be understood as the “processes that give behavior its energy, direction, and persistence” (Reeve 2018: 8). Therefore, motivation is a dynamic, multifaceted process, which is not only initiated (*energy*), but also serves a particular goal (*direction*), and is sustained over time (*persistence*).

Since any discussion of motivation presupposes the underlying intention to alter behaviour, it is not the absence of motivation that causes friction, but rather the coexistence of two competing – “I want to rest, but I also want to work” – or two conflicting motivations – “I want to eliminate refined sugar from my diet, but, man, I want that chocolate cupcake” (Fogg 2020: 44), with one eventually prevailing. A different classificatory lens was provided by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan 1985). Despite it being the dominant framework at the moment, Fogg (2020: 43) takes issue with the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation a; Deci & Ryan 1985), arguing that it offers little practical value in real-world contexts. In his view, motivation has three potential sources and puts forward his own conceptual model – the *PAC Person*:

1. P – PERSON: the individual is already willing to do the behaviour (e.g. he/she wants to look attractive)
2. A – ACTION: an external incentive or punishment for doing the behaviour (e.g. there are penalties for failing to pay the taxes)
3. C – CONTEXT: motivation arising from the person's context (e.g. desire to belong to the tribe)

However, for a behaviour to occur, it needs not only motivation but also ability, and according to Fogg, these two components have a compensatory relationship, meaning that even if one of them is low, as long as the other is high, the behaviour can still happen: “Basically, the amount of one of them determines/dictates the amount you need of the other.” (Fogg 2020: 27) According to the Goldilocks Principle, on the other hand, when applied in this context, there is a *sweet spot* when it comes to the ratio of motivation to ability. Named after the character in Robert Southey's fairy tale and eventually adopted as a term by the psychological community (see Kidd *et al.* 2012), the principle posits that motivation peaks when the necessary effort is *just right* – neither too challenging nor too simple.

Whether limited or not, caused by depleted biological resources or self-induced through limited beliefs, intrinsic or otherwise, it is beyond doubt that the “Motivation Monkey” (Fogg 2020: 61) is not a reliable fellow in the pursuit of desirable behaviours. Fortunately, motivation is “overrated” (Clear 2018: 81) and, albeit complex, can be “outsmarted” (Fogg 2020: 50). The forthcoming section provides practical, methodical advice on how to create and maintain habits that can make a difference in our lives.

1.4 Fogg's *Behavior Model*

As already highlighted, Fogg's core belief is that individuals change best when they feel good, not when they feel bad. Nevertheless, when individuals rely on the *Motivation Monkey*, fill methodological gaps with assumption-based reasoning, turn to digital platforms for inspiration, or follow a strategy that has proven effective for a friend, the failure, and with it a cascade of counterproductive self-criticism, are not long in coming (Fogg 2020: 56-57). Therefore, the most viable solution is to employ an individualised system that is neither motivation- nor willpower-dependent.

Over time, researchers have advanced multiple behavioural models that, despite their terminological differences, share a triad of motivational, capability-related, and environmental components. The table below provides an overview of the most prominent frameworks:

Table 1: Overview of the Leading Behavioural Models

Model	Terminology	Author
<i>Health Belief Model (HBM)</i>	Perceived Threat/Benefits Perceived Barriers Cues to Action	Rosenstock 1974
<i>Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)</i>	Self-efficacy Outcome Expectations Environmental Influences	Bandura 1986
<i>Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)</i>	Intention Perceived Behavioral Control Subjective Norms	Ajzen 1991
<i>COM-B System</i>	Capability (physical & psychological) Opportunity (social & physical) Motivation (reflective & automatic)	Michie <i>et al.</i> 2011

However, the present thesis focuses on Fogg’s *Behavior Model* (Fogg 2020) due to a unique conceptual element that sets it apart from other frameworks. The model and the implications of its distinctive feature will be explicated within the broader structure of Fogg’s *Behavior Design*, which consists of seven steps:

- ✓ Step 1: Establish a clear understanding of the aspiration/outcome.
- ✓ Step 2: Brainstorm behaviour candidates.
- ✓ Step 3: Identify the *Golden Behaviors*
- ✓ Step 4: Start Tiny
- ✓ Step 5: Find a Good Prompt
- ✓ Step 6: Celebrate Successes
- ✓ Step 7: Troubleshoot, Iterate and Expand.

1.4.1 Establish a clear understanding of the aspiration/outcome

Based on Fogg’s observation, when asked about their objectives, individuals think in terms of aspirations – “*I want to reduce screen time*” – or outcomes – “*I want to lose 12% body fat*” – instead of behaviours (Fogg 2020: 50, emphasis I.K.). Behaviours can be executed at any given moment, whereas the attainment of aspirations and outcomes depends on the systematic enactment of the enabling behaviours over a longer period of time. Yet, aspirations and outcomes remain important, and gaining clarity about them is the first step in *Behavior Design*. Fogg prefers aspirations as a starting point, though, since they are more versatile and less intimidating than a particular outcome (Fogg 2020: 53).

1.4.2 Brainstorm behaviour candidates

Once the aspirations have been established, the *Behavior Design* sequence continues with brainstorming possible behaviours aligned with the attainment of those aspirations. Given that this step requires no commitment, individuals are encouraged to employ the *Magic Wandering* method and be “wildly optimistic” (Fogg 2020: 54) when searching for behaviour candidates. To ideate a *Swarm of Behaviors*⁶ as varied as possible, individuals can include one-time actions, new habits they would like to build, and habits they would like to disrupt. Another way to generate options is to ask one’s partner, children, or even social media friends: “*If you could get me to do any behaviour that would help me..., what would it be?*” Before proceeding to the next step, Fogg suggests revisiting the identified options and rephrasing them with maximal specificity (i.e. “*Play fetch with my dog each evening at home*” instead of just “*Play fetch with my dog*”) (Fogg 2020: 56, emphasis I.K.).

1.4.3 Identify the Golden Behaviors

The third and most important step of the *Behavior Design* focuses on determining which behaviour candidates in the *Swarm of Behaviors* are most likely to propel one forward. The best matches are called *Golden Behaviors*, and in order for a behaviour to qualify as such, it needs to satisfy the following three criteria even when daily life is at its most hectic (Fogg 2020: 62): the behaviour serves as an effective pathway toward the aspiration (impact), the individual is willing to perform the behaviour (motivation) and possesses the necessary capacity to do so (ability) (Fogg 2020: 58). Apart from consulting coaches, doctors or dieticians for advice, another way to find *Golden Behaviors* is the *Focus Mapping* method. Since Fogg holds the view that guesswork is the stumbling block to meaningful behavioural change, *Focus Mapping* offers a systematic approach that enables individuals to visualise which behaviours are most likely to translate their aspirations into progress. The version outlined below has been validated through over a decade of successful implementation and refinement:

⁶ Fogg’s template can be downloaded from TinyHabits.com/resources

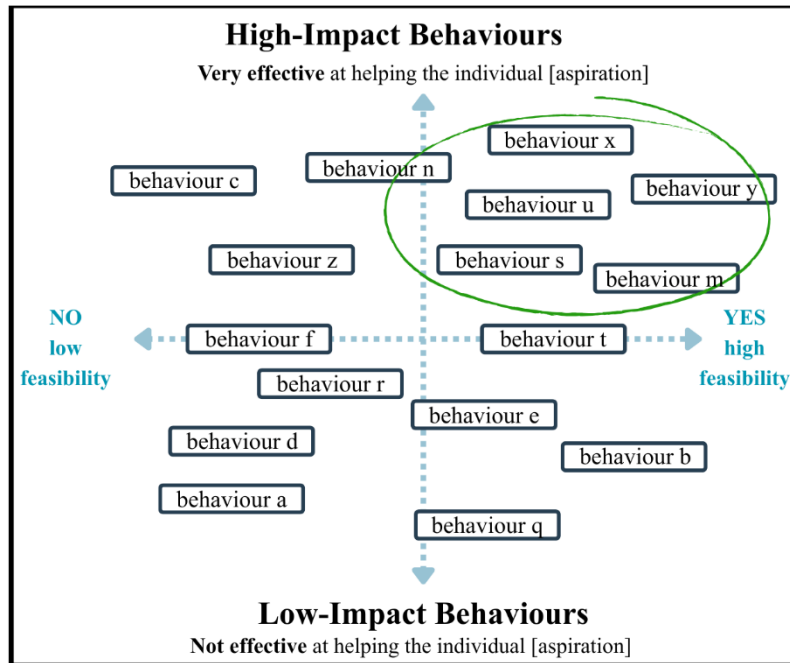


Figure 2: Fogg's *Focus Mapping* Method (Fogg 2020: 65)

The *Focus Mapping* process advances through two rounds. The first round concerns the vertical axis, positioning behaviours according to the degree to which they support the attainment of the aspiration. The second round proceeds by organising behaviours along the horizontal axis based on both motivation and ability. To place behaviours accurately on the feasibility dimension and turn them into sustainable habits, it is essential to frame the discussion in terms of wants rather than shoulds. By doing so, the *Motivation Wave* is rendered irrelevant, as motivation is already inherent in the new habits the individual wishes to establish. At the end of *Focus Mapping*, the best candidates for *Golden Behaviors* can be found in the upper-right quadrant of the map, where high impact aligns with high feasibility.

1.4.4 Start Tiny

The fourth step of the *Behavior Design* introduces Fogg's model. The *Behavior Model* posits that B (behaviour) = (happens when) M (motivation), A (ability), and P (prompt) converge at the same time, where motivation is the desire to perform the behaviour, ability is the capacity to actually perform the behaviour, and prompt is the cue to action.

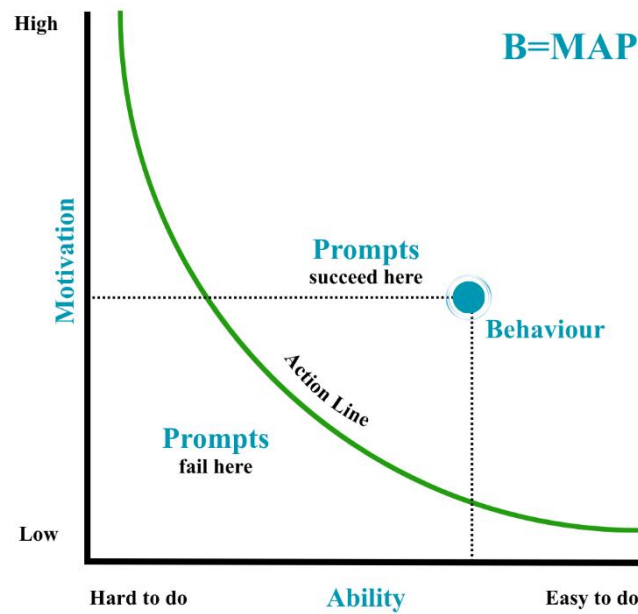


Figure 3: Fogg's Behavior Model (adapted by I.K.)

Although both motivation and ability are necessary for a behaviour to move above the *Action Line* (i.e. to be performed), Fogg (2020: 76) sees the strategy's strength in "starting tiny". Suppose an individual wants to do twenty push-ups every day. Since a behaviour of the sort requires more ability than most people can reliably bring to the moment, its performance would be motivation-dependent, and the behaviour would, therefore, fail to become a sustainable habit. Since the objective is to design habits that remain performable under all conditions, Fogg has designed a tool called the *Tiny Habit Method*. Applied to the earlier example, the method would translate into two push-ups against a wall instead of twenty regular push-ups.

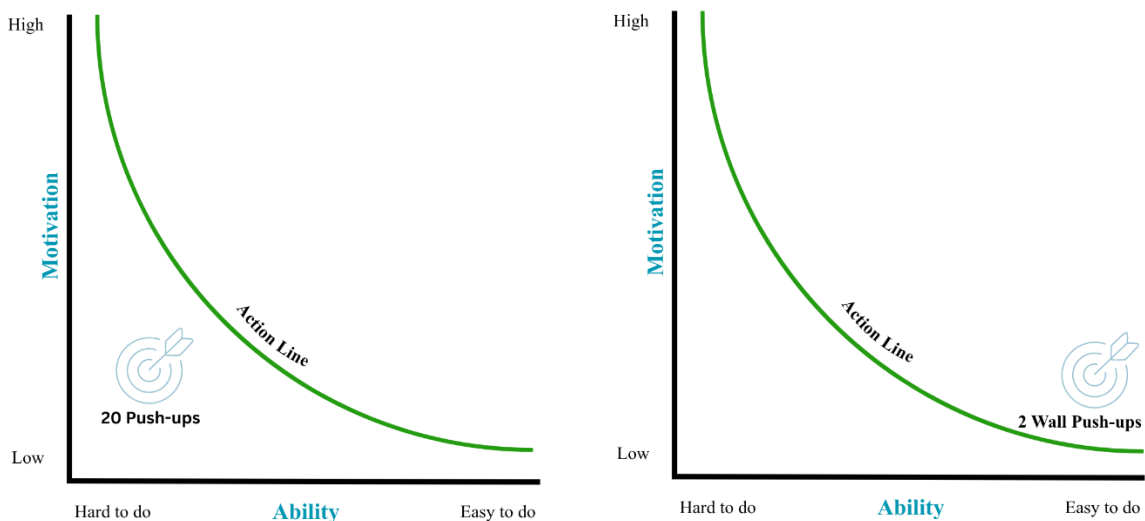


Figure 4: A visual representation demonstrating how lowering the behaviour's difficulty positions it above the Action Line (Fogg 2020: 76-77)

Unlike motivation, ability is a stable variable in the equation of behavioural change, and it determines the consistency with which a behaviour is performed. Through repetition, a behaviour also moves toward the right side of the spectrum, where execution requires minimal effort (Fogg 2020: 27).

But what happens when a desirable behaviour is located toward the left end of the feasibility axis? Counter to initial expectations, instead of immediately focusing on how to make the behaviour easier to perform, Fogg suggests answering the *Discovery Question* first – “*What is making this behavior hard to do?*” (Fogg 2020: 80). Based on his research and vast practical experience, when answering this question, individuals take into account five *Ability Factors*: time, money, physical effort, mental effort, and routine. Therefore, the key to increasing the feasibility of a behaviour is to identify the weak link(s) in the *Ability Chain* by asking oneself the following questions:

1. Do I have the temporal space to perform the behaviour?
2. Do I have the financial means necessary for the enactment of the behaviour?
3. Am I physically capable of executing the behaviour?
4. Does the behaviour require substantial creative or cognitive effort?
5. Does the behaviour align with my existing routine, or do I have to make adjustments?

The next question that naturally presents itself is “*How can I make this behavior easier to do?*” (Fogg 2020: 82), and since the answer to it provides the missing piece of the puzzle, Fogg calls it the *Breakthrough Question*. As the founder of the *Behavior Design Lab* notes, there are three methods to reduce the effort required to perform a behaviour, and they draw on the *PAC Person* model outlined in section 1.3

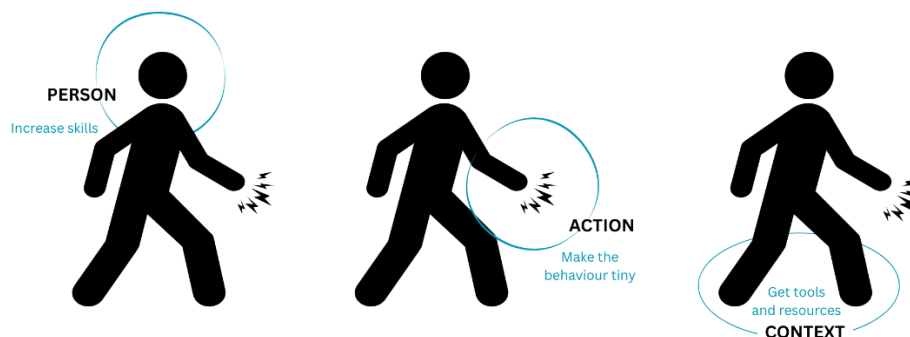


Figure 5: The *PAC Person* Model as a Framework for Simplifying a Behaviour (Fogg 2020: 82)

To demonstrate how the graphic applies in practice, consider Fogg’s personal example. Despite his best intentions, he had been struggling for a long time to enact the habit of flossing his teeth reliably. He decided to take his own advice, and after watching videos on flossing techniques

(P), scaling back to just one tooth (A), and finding the right floss for him (C), flossing became part of Fogg’s daily routine. As a researcher and for the sake of experimenting, he addressed the behaviour on all three fronts. Although each of the three methods would suffice on its own, there is a system for determining which approach is the most advantageous in a given moment: “Acquiring skills and tools are often one-time actions best done when your motivation is high. When our motivation is high, we can do more difficult things; but when it’s on the low side, we need to compensate by making the behaviour tiny.” (Fogg 2020: 89)

When it comes to reducing a habit to its smallest feasible unit, the *Tiny Habits* method offers two avenues for application: the *Starter Step* and the *Scaling Back*. The *Starter Step*, as the name suggests, is a small action toward the intended behaviour. By reducing the pressure of performing the entire behaviour, the *Starter Step* often initiates a chain reaction that helps the individual glide into the next step. However, it is essential to remember that stopping at the *Starter Step* is entirely permissible. Scaling a behaviour back refers to “shrinking” it to its smallest version, which then serves as the baseline behaviour (Fogg 2020: 88). To illustrate this point, Fogg uses the example of an individual whose desired behaviour is to walk three miles a day. The *Starter Step* would mean putting on one’s shoes each day, whereas the scaled-back version would be walking one mile. To complement this example, here are a few more:

Table 2: Additional *Starter Steps* and *Scaled-Back Behaviours* (Fogg 2020: 89, adapted by I.K.)

Desired behaviour	<i>Starter Step</i>	<i>Scale back</i>
Read every day	Open the book	Read one paragraph
Drink more water	Put the water bottle in the purse	Drink a sip of water
Clean the kitchen after every meal	Open the dishwasher	Clear the table after every meal
Take vitamins daily	Put vitamins in a small bowl	Take one vitamin
Eat blueberries for a snack	Pack blueberries in the work bag	Eat two or three blueberries

In Fogg’s view, the daily performance of such *tiny* behaviours resembles the act of planting seeds. Over time, they take root and help the established habit “grow to full size” (2020: 88). Yet, a cautionary note should be highlighted here: if a behaviour is expanded prematurely, it risks falling under the curve of the *Action Line* and derailing the habit. Fogg argues that companies such as Google, Instagram, Amazon, and Slack have achieved their resounding success by launching user-friendly products and waiting for them to become embedded in users’ daily lives before adding new features (Fogg 2020: 92). Consequently, a behaviour’s simplicity needs to be maintained until the habit is solid and hardwired into one’s routine. When the

moment in question arises, and motivation is high, the bar can be raised. The beauty of the *Tiny Habits* method is its experimentation feature: if a habit has been expanded prematurely or there comes a day when motivation is scarce, the individual can always return to the initial version of the habit without experiencing a sense of guilt or failure. Fogg is unwavering in the view that the real key to preserving a habit's continuity is feeling successful.

1.4.5 Find a good prompt

As indicated by Fogg's model, prompts are an indispensable ingredient. If prompts are not chosen carefully, the behaviour will collapse. Therefore, the fifth step of the *Behavior Design* provides the individual with a strategy for identifying what prompts are most likely to propel them forward. But what does a prompt actually refer to? According to Fogg, a prompt represents a cue that acts as an immediate invitation to perform a behaviour. There are natural prompts – feeling a few drops of rain leads to opening the umbrella – and designed prompts – the traffic light turning green cues stepping on the gas pedal. Among the hundreds of prompts that individuals are bombarded with on a daily basis, most remain under the radar (Fogg 2020: 97).

Much like motivation and ability, prompts too follow the *PAC Person* model. As a result, prompts are classified into three categories: *Person Prompts* (P), *Action Prompts* (A), and *Context Prompts* (C). For relevant reasons, *Action Prompts* will be presented last. The first category refers to cues grounded in the individual's inner capacity. This is exemplified perfectly by the body's basic urges. In other contexts, however, *Person Prompts* are the least reliable ones (Fogg 2020: 102).

Context Prompts, as the label implies, cover everything and everyone that reminds an individual to perform a behaviour. This may include: app notifications, sticky notes, the phone's alarm, or a colleague who reminds one to join a meeting. When asked what their most successful *Context Prompts* were, industry innovators suggested: putting one's ring on the wrong finger, sending oneself a text message, writing on one's bathroom mirror with a dry-erase marker, putting a reminder note in the refrigerator, relying on one's child to deliver a reminder, or placing a sticky note on one's phone (Fogg 2020: 103-105). Although prompts, as already indicated, tend to remain largely unnoticed, this does not imply they do not draw on one's time, energy, and attention. In fact, Fogg cautions that a poorly designed prompt landscape can be counterproductive, as too many prompts can overwhelm the individual and cause them to stop acting on those cues. Therefore, *Context Prompts* are most compatible with one-time behaviours, such as a doctor appointment. When it comes to behaviours that are supposed to

occur daily, cues of this kind should be kept to an absolute minimum. However, in an era marked by pervasive digitalisation, this poses a challenge. LinkedIn, for example, has invested a significant amount of time and money to be able to let its users know how many people have searched for them in the last week and who those people are. Removing prompts of this kind is even harder, as they awaken the individual's curiosity and flatter their ego (Fogg 2020: 105). As far as the author of the present thesis is concerned, based on Fogg's examples, there are two types of *Context Prompts*: the ones that are consciously chosen and propel the individual forward by being aligned with their desired trajectory, and the ones that are forced into the individual's life, disrupt attention and impair productivity, thus leading to a constant derailment of the desired behaviours. Consequently, it is of paramount importance to keep only the value-adding *Context Prompts*, minimise the prompts clutter as far as circumstances allow, and hold new prompts at bay.

Action Prompts are the core mechanism of the *Tiny Habits* method. Unlike the other two categories, *Action Prompts* are highly reliable since they refer to already existing routines. Moreover, the prospective memory research suggests that, unlike time cues, events afford external cuing for an intended action, and obviate the need for individuals to monitor the precise timing of action (McDaniel & Einstein 2000). Habits such as putting one's feet on the floor in the morning, brushing teeth, stepping under the shower, or boiling water for tea are so deeply rooted in the individual's everyday life that they can serve as *Anchors* for new habits. Given that *Anchors* are the epitome of stability and reliability, they are by far the most efficient cue to perform a habit (Fogg 2020: 107). Returning to Figure 4 and the example of scaling back, Fogg decided to link the two push-ups to using the restroom. Through repetition, his physical capacity grew, allowing him to scale the habit up quickly, so that not only has he maintained it for over seven years now, but on some days, he even does fifty push-ups. Based on his experience helping thousands of individuals find the right *Anchors*, Fogg has come to the conclusion that *Anchors* cannot succeed unless they share the same location, frequency and theme/purpose as the new habit (Fogg 2020: 112). Therefore, it is essential to choose an *Anchor* that occurs in close spatial proximity to the desired habit – e.g. “*After I start the dishwasher, I will tidy up at least one thing on the counter.*” (Fogg 2020: 291) – as frequently as the intended habit is supposed to – e.g. *After I flush the toilet, I will do two push-ups against the wall.* (Fogg 2020: 115) – and resonates well with the thematic focus. If the morning coffee is associated with relaxation and personal time, for example, it could serve as an *Anchor* for journaling – “*After I pour my coffee, I will open my journal.*” (Fogg 2020: 112) However, these three criteria are not

the only factors to consider when choosing an *Anchor*. According to Fogg (2020: 115), the way an *Action Prompt* is phrased is also of major relevance because an ambiguously formulated *Anchor* can compromise a habit. Therefore, to choose a recurring event that is as precise as possible, Fogg recommends using its *Trailing Edge* as a guiding reference. Although not immediately apparent, *Anchors* such as “After I eat breakfast...” or “After I get home from work...” represent a sequence of several specific behaviours, with the last one being the *Trailing Edge*. Thus, “After I take a shower...” becomes “After I hang my towel up after a shower...” and “After I arrive at work...” becomes “After I put down my backpack at work...” (Fogg 2020: 115-116). Fogg’s formula for implementing the *Tiny Habits* method is illustrated in the graphic below⁷:



Figure 6: Fogg’s *Tiny Habits Recipe* (Fogg 2020: 113, adapted by I.K.)

Apart from providing a visual representation of the *Tiny Habits Recipe*, Figure 5 introduces the sixth step in *Behavior Design*.

1.4.6 Celebrating Successes

As mentioned at the beginning of section 1.4, the present thesis focuses on Fogg’s model on account of a feature that sets it apart from other approaches in the field, namely the *Celebration* step. In fact, the *Anatomy* (Fogg 2020: 12) or the ABC of the *Tiny Habits Method* comprises three elements: the A *Anchor Moment*, the new *Tiny* B *Behavior*, and the *Instant* C *Celebration*. To explain why the third component is of utmost importance, it is first necessary to introduce an idea that reshapes the entire conceptual landscape. In contrast to the prevailing consensus in the literature, Fogg takes issue with the assumption that habit formation is driven by repeated or high-frequency performance (see Triandis 1977; Oulette & Wood 1998; Neal *et al.* 2006; Wood *et al.* 2021), calling it an “old myth”. Drawing on his extensive professional practice, Fogg

⁷Further examples of *Tiny Habits Recipes* are available by accessing the *Tiny Habits Recipe Maker* at tinyhabits.com/recipes.

firmly believes that emotions are what spark the development of habits (Fogg 2020: 137). To illustrate the implications of his hypothesis, he has developed the *Spectrum of Automacity*:

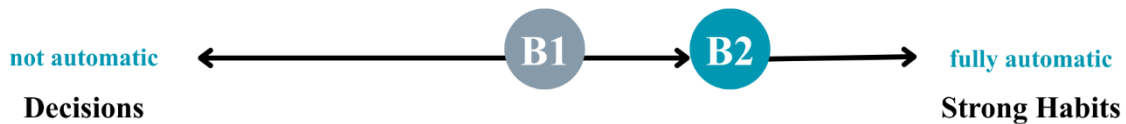


Figure 7: The *Spectrum of Automacity* (Fogg 2020: 138, adapted by I.K.)

As previously stated, the decision-making process is deliberative, whereas habits are automatic (Wood & Rünger 2016; Wood *et al.* 2021). From Fogg’s perspective, if the individual experiences a positive and sufficiently intense emotion while or immediately after performing a behaviour that involves some deliberation but is not fully automatic (*B1*), the behaviour is shifted toward the right of the spectrum (*B2*) (Fogg 2020: 138, 141). Conversely interpreted, the *Spectrum of Automacity* suggests that “[n]egative emotions seem to shrivel the roots of automacity” (Fogg 2020: 153), hence Fogg’s maxim: “Help people feel successful.” However, the author of the *Behavior Design* warns against confusing *Celebration* with rewarding, as presented by “[m]any so-called habit experts” (Fogg 2020: 139) who claim that treating oneself to a massage after going for a run every day for two weeks can strengthen habit formation. According to Fogg, assumptions of this kind fail to align with the empirical evidence (see Skinner 1938; Hull 1943) that demonstrates the importance of timing when rewarding a behaviour. For the brain’s reward circuitry to be activated and dopamine released, the reward must occur either during or within milliseconds after the behaviour is executed. Otherwise, the brain will not establish the causal link, which, in turn, impedes the formation of future expectations (Fogg 2020: 136). Therefore, the massage mentioned in the previous example represents an incentive, not a reward. (Fogg 2020: 140) Building on insights from his research and teaching practice, among the types of self-reinforcement, the founder of the *Tiny Habits* method considers creating a feeling of success the most effective. Moreover, *Instant Celebration* not only serves as “habit fertilizer” (Fogg 2020: 139-140) but also accelerates the process. By practising the *Anchor Moment* and the new *Tiny Behavior*, and then *Celebrating* seven to ten consecutive times, the individual can “supercharge the speed of habit formation” (Fogg 2020: 150). An alternative strategy that yields the same result is to celebrate at three different times: upon recalling the habit, during its performance, and immediately after completing it (Fogg 2020: 151). In this manner, the brain is enabled to establish the causal connection faster, and the motivation to repeat the behaviour in the future will increase. Once a habit is

At this point, the discussion naturally leads to questioning why *Tiny Behaviors*, such as doing two push-ups or flossing one tooth, are worth celebrating. A motivational illustration of Fogg's fundamental belief that "[t]iny is mighty" (2020: 1) is provided by Clear's claim that a 1% improvement every day compounds to a 37-fold improvement over a year: $1,01^{365} = 37,78$. Conversely, a daily decline of 1% sustained over a year reduces the outcome to virtually zero: $0,99^{365} = 00,03$ (Clear 2018: 15-16). Admittedly not supported by empirical evidence, Clear's proposal applies the compound interest formula to provide a numerical illustration of the fact that progress is incremental but exponential, rather than sudden and effortful. From his perspective, behavioural change has three layers: outcome (goals), process (habits and systems), and identity (beliefs), the last being the most profound and thus the most sustainable one: "Your habits shape your identity, your identity shapes your habits." (Clear 2018: 30, 40) Therefore, although not readily evident, with every iteration of the behaviour, a vote for the desired identity is cast (Clear 2018: 38), the necessary ability increases, the individual is one step closer to the objective, and the internal critical voice is attenuated. It is hard to see what would not invite celebration.

Since *Celebration* stands as a central element in the *Tiny Habits Method*, it is referred to as the feeling of *Shine*, and every individual experiences it differently. To discover one's organic way of celebrating, Fogg suggests imagining securing a dream job, tossing a piece of paper from across the room and having it land flawlessly in the bin, or one's favourite team scoring and winning the championship. The reactions may take the form of clapping one's hands, doing a little dance, looking up and making a V with one's arms, saying, "Yes!" or "Yay!", or thinking to oneself, "Good job!" (Fogg 2020: 144-145).

1.4.7 Troubleshoot, Iterate and Expand

The last component of the *Behavior Design* model highlights the importance of embarking on the odyssey of behaviour change "with an attitude of openness, flexibility, and curiosity" (Fogg 2020: 187) and treating one's life as one's "own personal 'change lab'" (Fogg 2020: 37). The *Tiny Habit* method gives individuals considerable latitude, by allowing them to go back to the *tiny* version of the habit if needed and expand the habit when they feel motivated as long as they celebrate accordingly and stay flexible. The only boundary that applies concerns negative feelings. As soon as individuals start feeling uncomfortable or frustrated, or begin to avoid the habit, it is a signal that they need to recalibrate certain aspects of the desirable behaviour (Fogg 2020: 181), so that its performance reinstates a favourable self-appraisal.

2 Redefining the Role of the Interpreter

2.1 History

In comparison to other professions, which were attributed a clearly defined set of traits and an ‘identity’ right from their cradle, interpreting’s protracted battle for professional recognition compelled interpreters to engage in a long-term search for their professional identity. This identity crisis was rendered all the more pronounced by the fact that the first interpreters to gain visibility on the international stage, starting with 1918, were not employed as “officials”, but as “independents”, who, alongside their interpreting assignments, were engaged in “intellectual pursuits such as advanced teaching, diplomacy or personal work” (Stelling-Michaud, preface to Herbert 1952: X). Among these figures were Paul Mantoux, historian and professor at London University, and later co-director of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva; Antoine Velleman, linguist and founder of the School of Interpreters at the University of Geneva; Gaston Bergery, French ambassador to Moscow and Turkey; Jean Herbert, specialist in Hindu and Oriental Philosophy. Furthermore, the interpreters who participated in the Nuremberg Trials came from a broad range of milieus, encompassing, among others, the affluent European bourgeoisie, the old Russian aristocracy, the emerging Soviet bureaucracy, and even impoverished refugees. Despite their heterogeneous backgrounds, they shared a common characteristic: they were “naturally” multilingual and multicultural either due to the political, social, or economic circumstances that marked the interwar years or by virtue of having completed their secondary or tertiary education in a variety of languages and places (Baigorri-Jalón *et al.* 2014: 240). The fact that the pioneers who witnessed and shaped the professionalisation and academisation process of conference interpreting were members of the (intellectual) aristocracy, “*bonafide* intellectuals” (Roland 1999: 157), i.e. teachers, journalists, (former) diplomats, or even individuals previously employed in intelligence services, is reflected in how interpreters have perceived their role, as well as in the expectations they have from members of the profession in general.

Diriker (2017: 71) contends that, since simultaneous conference interpreters operate within a bidirectional feedback loop, constantly recalibrating their professional identity in response to the perceptions of a variety of actors and institutions, both insiders and outsiders to the profession, the professional image of conference interpreters is predominantly (meta-) discursive in nature, and, therefore, not neutral. When describing the ideal professional, instead of presenting the core features of the profession, meta-discursive representations advance a

selected and hierarchically structured set of norms, which, from Toury's (1995: 55) perspective, makes them a

[...] translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension.

As a result, meta-discursive (re)presentations are a 'double-edged sword': on the one hand, they solidify professionals' expertise and social position, while, on the other hand, they curb professionals' agency by assigning hierarchical order and giving precedence to certain traits and behaviours over others (Diriker 2009: 72).

The practitioner-authored self-representations provided at the dawn of conference interpreting's academisation largely centre on defining the conference interpreter and their tasks, attempting to explain the interpreting process, and offering a glimpse behind the scenes of the profession through anecdotal accounts (Zwischenberger 2009: 240). Gile (1994: 149-152) distinguishes four separate phases in the evolution of conference interpreting research in the West: the early writing period (in the 1950s), the experimental psychological period (from the 1960s to the early 1970s), the practitioners' period (from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s), and the renewal period marked by the conference organised in November 1986 by the *Scuola Superiore per Interpreti e Traduttore* of the *Università degli Studi di Trieste*. Despite being derived from experiential knowledge and lacking empirical grounding, the texts produced in the early writing period exert a significant influence on how interpreting and the interpreter's role have come to be conceptualised (Angelelli 2004: 14-15). The present section provides an overview of the most influential perspectives on the interpreter's role.

When it comes to seminal meta-discourses, *The Interpreter's Handbook* (*Manuel de l'interprète*), published by Jean Herbert in 1952, stands as the earliest and arguably most influential vade mecum in the field. In the foreword, Stelling-Michaud prefigures the book's thesis by portraying the interpreter as a conduit for intellectual exchange: "By eliminating the language barrier that separates them, the interpreter directly ushers men into the thoughts of others, and thus performs the function of an intermediary, enabling their minds to achieve intellectual communion." (Stelling-Michaud, preface to Herbert 1952: VII) Herbert (1952: 25) himself holds that the interpreter serves primarily as a conduit that facilitates communication: "The interpreter should never forget that the immediate and essential object of his work is to enable his audience to know accurately what the speaker intended to convey, and to make on the audience the impression which the speaker wishes to be made." Apart from accuracy,

Herbert (1952:62) also highlights the importance of fidelity, which, in his view, must always be maintained towards the speaker's ideas and stylistic choices, a similar position being taken by Rozan (1956: 9). Diverging from this stance, Cary (1956:147) depicts the interpreter as a "porte-parole", thus redirecting the need for fidelity to the speaker's words instead of their ideas. Moreover, he advances the view that the interpreter's capacity to embody each speaker's standpoint with the same loyalty presupposes the ability to be an actor:

[...] [l'interprète] doit aussi être acteur. Qui donc, sinon un acteur, est capable de s'identifier totalement avec l'homme qui vient de parler et dont il doit transmettre fidèlement le propos? Quand une discussion véhémement oppose deux contradicteurs, l'interprète doit savoir avec une fougue égale se faire tour à tour le porte-parole de l'un comme de l'autre et se mettre instantanément dans la peau de chacun des adversaires⁸. (Cary (1956: 147)

In resonance with Stelling-Michaud and Herbert's idealistic portrayal of the interpreter's role, Ilg (1958: 12, 24) also views the interpreter as someone encyclopaedically knowledgeable, with a "curiosité universelle", capable of rendering even the subtlest nuances by virtue of possessing "le génie de la langue". Linking these two strands of reasoning, Seleskovitch (1968: 181) likens the interpreter to an actor who functions as an intermediary between the speaker and the audience, while refracting the message through their interpretative lens similar to an actor: "L'interprète est un intermédiaire comme le comédien qui ajoute son jeu au texte de l'auteur."⁹ Henri van Hoof contributes an additional angle, in that he posits that the interpreter's role is to build bridges between individuals, groups, and nations by facilitating the interpersonal exchange: "Cette mission [...] est une mission de rapprochement entre individus, entre groupes, entre nations. L'interprète est un jeteur de ponts, le pontifex comme on l'a nommé, le servant d'un humanisme pratique [...]."¹⁰ (van Hoof 1962: 55)

As the field matures in the late 1960s, the meta-discourse moves onto a new trajectory. Therefore, metaphorical characterisations such as *bridge*, *actor*, *intermediary*, *assistant*, or *communication facilitator* are replaced with more technical definitions. Although Seleskovitch

⁸ [...] [the interpreter] must also be an actor. Who, if not an actor, is capable of identifying totally with the person who has just spoken and whose message they must convey faithfully? When a vehement discussion pits two opponents against each other, the interpreter must know how to serve as the spokesperson for each in turn, with equal fervour, and to inhabit the persona of either adversary instantaneously (translation I.K.).

⁹ The interpreter is an intermediary, much like an actor who adds their own interpretation to the author's text. (translation I.K.)

¹⁰ This mission [...] is one of bringing people, groups and nations closer together. The interpreter is a bridge-builder, the 'pontifex' as he has been called, a servant of practical humanism. (translation I.K.)

briefly compares the interpreter to an actor, her *théorie du sens* frames the interpreter as an “extractor of sense”:

Interpretation is not a direct conversion of the linguistic meaning of the source language to the target language, but a conversion from source language to sense, the intermediate link being nonverbal thought, which, once consciously grasped, can then be expressed in any language regardless of the words used in the original language (Seleskovitch 1977: 28).

Seleskovitch maintains that the interpreter is supposed to deverbilise the conveyed message by ignoring the words and focusing on the meaning, thereby reiterating Herbert’s position on the necessity of being loyal to the meaning intended by the speaker. In her conceptual framework, it is the complete command of languages, paired with comprehensive situational and background knowledge, that allows the interpreter to navigate ambiguity and the various meanings of words, extract their sense, and then render them in the target language (Seleskovitch 1977: 28).

Otto Kade, one of the most prominent representatives of the ‘Leipzig School’ and the most influential pioneer in the German-speaking area, distanced himself from the conduit model and the metaphorical definitions of the interpreter’s role formulated in the 1950s and 1960s, reframing them through imported terminology from the fields of cybernetics and telecommunications. For Kade, the interpreter represents a language mediator that operates as a *switch station* within the communication chain: “Der Sprachmittler fungiert als eine zwischen den Sender und den (endgültigen) Empfänger eingeschaltete Umschaltstation, die den in der Quellsprache kodierten Text dekodiert und als in der Zielsprache kodierten Text neu kodiert.“ (Kade 1968: 15)

As these definitions make evident, the interpreter’s role cannot be examined separately from the act of interpreting.

2.2 Contradictions in the Meta-Discourse

Despite the prevailing drive to purify and rationalise the meta-discourse, the potential for opposition and contradiction is never fully eradicated, firstly because the views and interests of the actors and institutions that are directly or indirectly involved in the (re)production of the discourse tend to follow different trajectories and, secondly, “because the internal dynamics and dynamism of language tend to engender multiple interpretations and thereby render a single monolithic and authoritative representation of an object impossible” (Diriker 2009: 72). In the case of conference interpreting, contradictions of the sort arise in the juxtaposition of insiders and outsiders to the profession, as well as within interpreters’ and non-interpreters’ own meta-

discursive reasoning. In addressing simultaneous interpreting (SI), Diriker (2017: 84) distinguishes between *contextualised discourse* (i.e. engaging with what SI is in real situations) and *de-contextualised discourse* (i.e. engaging with how SI is normatively imagined).

2.2.1 Dictionaries

True to their function, dictionaries offer the most standardised and de-contextualised definitions on any topic. Concisely formulated, these definitions are authored by language specialists (i.e. outsiders to the profession) rather than experts within the field (i.e. insiders to the profession) (Diriker 2009: 73). “A Student’s Dictionary of Language and Linguistics”, for example, differentiates between *interpretation* and *interpreting*:

interpretation: assigning a meaning to something you hear or read.

interpreting: the art of listening to a person speaking in one language and then immediately after (or even simultaneously) producing a spoken equivalent in a different language (Trask 1997: 116).

In other words, while *interpretation* organically implies active engagement on the part of the person who does the interpretation, *interpreting* is viewed as an objective transfer of “spoken equivalents” between languages.

Another example that examines the act of interlingual *interpreting* separately from any other form of *interpretation* can be found in “The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of English Language” under the entry for *interpret*:

1. if you interpret what someone says or does in a particular way, you decide that this is its meaning or significance.
2. if you interpret a novel, dream, result, etc., you give an explanation of what it means.
3. if you interpret a work of art such as a piece of music, a play, a dance, etc., you perform it in a particular way, especially a way that shows your feelings about it.
4. if you interpret what someone is saying, you translate it immediately into another language, so that speakers of that language can understand (Sinclair 1987: 763).

As in the first example, Sinclair likewise views the interpreter’s personal imprint as an inherent element to every interpretative act apart from interlingual mediation. While active involvement is implied in the interpretation of novels, dreams, results, pieces of music, plays, or meanings encoded in speech and actions, interlingual mediation is expected to occur objectively and without any personal engagement on the part of the interpreter. However, what ultimately underscores this contradiction is the entry provided by the same dictionary for the interpreter’s role. According to Sinclair (1987: 764, emphasis I.K.), an *interpreter* is:

1. a person who *repeats* what someone else is saying by translating it immediately into another language so that other people can understand it.
2. a person who explains the meaning or significance of something.
3. a person who performs a work of art in a particular way, especially a way that shows the performer's feelings about it.

As these definitions evince, all *interpreters* use their subjective lenses in the interpretative act, whereas the interlingual interpreter is viewed as a mechanical conduit that facilitates communication by rendering a person's *words* into another person's language without any personal engagement.

2.2.2 Encyclopaedias

Although encyclopaedia entries largely parallel the dictionaries previously mentioned, they define interpreting as an objective transfer of *meaning* rather than *words*. In "The Encyclopedia of Language and Literature", Roda Roberts (1994: 1732) argues that "fidelity to the author's stated text" represents the norm in the case of (written) translations, whereas (oral) interpretation mainly requires "fidelity to the speaker's communicative intent". In her entry, she defines *interpretation* as "a relatively smooth presentation of the cognitive content of the message, with the interpreter extracting the ideas from the oral discourse and reproducing them in an appropriate form and register in the target language." (Roberts 1994: 1732) The evident shift in emphasis between this encyclopaedia entry and the definitions provided by the dictionaries covered in this thesis may plausibly be ascribed to the fact that Roda Roberts is a professional interpreter, and, therefore, an insider to the profession she depicts in her entry.

2.2.3 Professional Organisations

Since the discourse of professional organisations reflects the position of their members (i.e. insiders), it is only natural that the perspectives of AIIC (the International Association of Conference Interpreters) or SCIC (the Directorate-General for Interpretation) align closely with those in encyclopaedias. In addition to the shared view that interpreters convey ideas, not words, the two largest professional organisations in the field of conference interpreting highlight two additional aspects, thus maintaining fidelity to pioneers such as Herbert (1952), Cary (1956), and Seleskovitch (1968). According to AIIC, "genuine interpreters *identify* closely with the speaker and while interpreting (...) adopt the speaker's point of view" (AIIC's website in Diriker 2009: 76), and the clearest manifestation of this identification lies in the interpreter's first-person delivery of the speaker's utterances: "Conference interpreting deals exclusively with oral communication: rendering a message from one language into another, naturally and fluently, adopting the delivery, tone and conviction of the speaker and speaking in the first

person.” (SCIC’s website in Diriker 2009: 77) By inhabiting the speaker’s persona and speaking in the first person, the interpreter temporarily *becomes* the speaker, which logically leads to the conclusion that the ultimate form of recognition for any interpreter is to see the audience behave “as though the speaker and the interpreter were one and the same person” (SCIC’s website in Diriker 2009: 77).

2.2.4 Academia

The academic community stresses the importance of intelligibility since the interpreter “must be aware that he is not paid to understand, or to speak, but to be understood” (Viaggio 1992: 311). Whether this is achieved or not can be measured in the effort required on the part of the audience for understanding the interpreter’s rendition: “the re-expression should be clear, unambiguous and immediately comprehensible, that is to say perfectly idiomatic, so that the listener does not have to mentally re-interpret what reaches him through the earphones” (Namy 1978: 26). In regard to the interpreter’s involvement, Jones allows *deviations* from the original utterance only when they serve the enhancement of communication. Interestingly, although he does not consider such *deviations* as active involvement, he admits that they can be “indispensable” in fostering cross-cultural understanding:

The conference interpreter must be able to provide an exact and faithful reproduction of the original speech. Deviation from the letter of the original is permissible only if it enhances the audience’s understanding of the speaker’s meaning. Additional information should be provided only if it is indispensable to bridge cultural gaps referred above: it should in no way involve the interpreter’s adding their own point of view to that of the speaker” (Jones 1998: 5, emphasis I.K.).

2.2.5 The Paradigm Shift

Prompted by developments in translation studies in the late 1980’, the discipline shifted to what Pöchhacker (2006: 216) describes as a “social turn”, increasingly challenging the conduit model by indicating that the interpreter’s role is socially constructed, norm-governed, and more interventionist than conventional professional discourse suggests. Zwischenberger (2015) posits that simultaneous conference interpreting is dominated by the expectation that interpreters should function as detached and neutral conduits who convey the speaker’s meaning faithfully while remaining invisible. This ‘supernorm’, while strongly promoted by AIIC and grounded in Seleskovich’s (1968) *théorie du sens*, is oversimplifying and fails to fully capture the complexity of the interpreter’s role (Zwischenberger 2015: 96, 107).

A key contribution in shifting the paradigm is Diriker’s argument that conference interpreters operate within a “professional identity” shaped by meta-discourse, that is, by the

ways institutions, professional associations, scholars, and interpreters themselves describe the profession and define what interpreters are expected to do (Diriker 2004: 25-26; Diriker 2009: 71) Though the meta-discursive accounts of these actors present, as previously mentioned, mutually conflicting positions. While outsiders to the profession, especially the media, consider the faithful rendition “of the *original word*” (Diriker 2008:88, emphasis in the original) to be the defining feature of CI, insiders, particularly interpreters and professional organisations, take issue with being viewed as language experts who merely reproduce the *words* of the original speech in another language, arguing that this is the role of translators. Diriker remarks that the phenomenon becomes even more complex when analysing how conference interpreters perceive their role. Based on her findings, when looking in a de-contextualised mirror, interpreters tend to view themselves as “competent professionals who can unproblematically *identify* with the speaker and access and transfer the meaning intended by them” while maintaining fidelity and objectivity (Diriker 2009: 88, emphasis in the original). When referring to specific interpreting contexts, on the other hand, interpreters’ anecdotes almost invariably portray them as decision-makers taking active control over shaping their delivery, determining both the content and manner of transfer, and altering the ‘packaging’ but never the meaning (Diriker 2009: 89): “Court interpreters change language registers, conference interpreters omit figures or rephrase ideas, medical interpreters explain pain scales, church interpreters attenuate offensive content”. (Downie 2016: 6)

According to Eraslan Gerçek (2008), clients’ expectations are no less contradictory. Based on the survey she conducted at a teacher training seminar in Turkey, there is a discrepancy between clients’ expectations and their actual needs. When asked *de-contextualised* questions, the participants favoured the conventional meta-discourse, associating qualitative interpreting with an objective, complete, and faithful to the original rendition. Surprisingly, when asked specific questions, though, such as whether the interpreter should explain cultural differences, correct the speaker or clear up misunderstandings, participants’ responses pointed to differing needs. Suddenly, clients expected the interpreter to intervene judiciously and apply appropriate communicative strategies to sustain the flow of communication (Eraslan Gerçek 2008: 24). More recently, Zhang & Gao (2023) revisit this issue and introduce the notion of interpreters being “invisibly present”, suggesting that conference interpreters may maintain their neutrality while recognising their active involvement in shaping communicative interactions.

From Downie’s perspective, Eraslan Gerçek’s (2008) contradictory findings suggest that clients “want interpreters to act as if they want the event to succeed”, to be committed partners.

If interpreters fail to meet clients' needs, then it may be time for the profession to adopt a new approach (Downie 2016: 3, 5). Consequently, instead of treating absolute accuracy and impartiality as inviolable principles, interpreters should aim to work alongside clients to ensure a successful outcome:

What if we made it our goal to help deliver medical consultations where people got superb treatment, PR events that sent people home happy and enthused, court hearings where justice was done, and conferences where people were informed, inspired, and felt at home? (Downie 2016: 5)

Downie argues that interpreters' ethics should be grounded in the acknowledgement that they are the most powerful person in the room/booth and they should wield that power wisely to help clients reach their goals. However, the leap from language service provider to "real interpreting" (Turner 2005) requires exercising greater responsibility and understanding not only the speaker's message but also the underlying intention behind it, as well as how the interpreter can add value: "The future of interpreting is in making sure that clients see professional interpreters as partners instead of language machines." (Downie 2016: 8)

3 Deliberate Practice

Genius is 1% talent and 99% hard work.
(Albert Einstein)

3.1 Explaining Expertise: Talent, Practice, or Both?

By claiming that interpreting is a profession "for which you may or may not be gifted", Herbert (1952: 5) was not the first to attribute exceptional performance to innate giftedness. In fact, this theory was originally formulated by Sir Francis Galton (1869/1979). Based on his observation that eminent individuals in the British Isles were more likely to have eminent relatives in one's close rather than distant family circle, Galton concluded that parents must transmit exceptional performance to their offspring. In his view, this "natural ability" implies the interplay of three components:

By natural ability, I mean those qualities of intellect and disposition, which urge and qualify a man to perform acts that lead to reputation. I do not mean capacity without zeal, nor zeal without capacity, nor even a combination of both of them, without an adequate power of doing a great deal of laborious work. [...] If a man is *gifted* with vast intellectual ability, eagerness to work, and power of working, I cannot comprehend how such a man should be repressed. (Galton 1869/1979: 37, 39 in Ericsson *et al.* 1993: 364)

This position is challenged by the expertise theory of cognitive psychology and its leading proponent, Karl-Anders Ericsson. According to Ericsson *et al.* (1993: 364), researchers'

attempts to find a correlation between structural differences in the nervous system and stable differences in exceptional performance (talent) were inspired by the widely accepted premise that shared features of human anatomy and nervous system structure, alongside individual variation in physical appearance, can be traced to common genetic factors. A hundred years later, Galton's framework still functions as the leading paradigm outside the field of genetics and behavioural genetics. Ericsson *et al.* (1993) take issue with the hypothesis that eminent performance presupposes innate aptitude and argue that this theory is oversimplified and scientifically incomplete.

In their study of violin students at the Music Academy of West Berlin, they contend that an exhaustive and more accurate scientific account of such ability would have to clarify the distinctions between exceptional performance and ordinary performance, and depict the evolution that has led to exceptional performance, as well as the “genetic *and* acquired characteristics that mediate” (Ericsson *et al.* 1993: 363, emphasis I.K.) this evolution. Moreover, they maintain that assertions of genetic differences must be substantiated by scientific evidence that these differences are indeed genetically heritable. Given the difficulty of providing such proof, their article proposes that researchers instead examine environmental factors that may “selectively promote and facilitate the achievement of such performance” (1993: 363). Based on their findings, violinists who started young and engaged in the most deliberate practice ultimately became the most elite players, which is why Ericsson *et al.* (1993) concluded that the amount of deliberate practice the violinists engage in on a daily basis over an extended period of time is the mediating factor that predicts the attained performance level.

However, the concept of deliberate practice remains controversial. While Detterman & Ruthsatz (1999) acknowledge the significance of sustained and prolonged practice and the instrumental role it plays in ultimately shaping elite performers, they maintain that “becoming a professional musician takes distinguished and extraordinary talent” (Detterman & Ruthsatz 1999: 150). Interestingly, the very study they challenge – Ericsson *et al.* (1993) – provides evidence consistent with their proposition. Upon a more fine-grained analysis of the dataset kindly provided by Ericsson and his colleagues, Detterman & Ruthsatz (1999: 151) show that the ultimate level of performance attained by the violinists is, in fact, predictable based on their early childhood competition records. Evidence shows that elite violinists consistently outperformed other groups in competitions starting at age eight. Their success rate reached 67% compared with 54% among good violinists and 18% among the participants who pursued music teaching. The significant statistical differences suggest that elite musicians exhibit distinct

characteristics prior to engaging in ten years of deliberate practice. Moreover, Detterman & Ruthsatz (1999: 151) contend that prodigies, meaning “individuals who perform at exceptional levels without much practice”, are also a major obstacle to Ericsson *et al.*’s argument that elite performance can be achieved simply by beginning early and committing to long-term deliberate practice. Consequently, Detterman & Ruthsatz distance themselves from the assumption that expertise and ultimate success are attributed solely to practice and turn to the LTP model. In this theoretical framework, Gagné advances the idea that most individuals’ performance is enhanced through *Learning, Training, and Practice* (LTP), and that their efficiency is contingent on individuals’ innate ability.

Detterman & Ruthsatz are not the only scholars who take issue with Ericsson *et al.*’s (1993) hypothesis (see also Keith & Ericsson 2007; Ericsson & Ward 2007). Studies such as those conducted by Meinz & Hambrick (2010) and Macnamara *et al.* (2014) also call into question the view that practice alone is sufficient to account for ultimate expertise. According to Meinz & Hambrick (2010: 917-918), while prolonged deliberate practice is likely to result in advanced sight-reading ability, working memory capacity (WMC) may limit the highest level of expertise that the pianists ultimately attained. Furthermore, they argue that WMC “is highly general, stable, and heritable”. Macnamara *et al.*’s (2014) meta-analysis indicates that deliberate practice explained 26% of the performance variance in games, 21% in music, 18% in sports, 4% in education, and below 1% in professions. Therefore, while they recognise the importance of deliberate practice, Macnamara and his colleagues hold that its impact may not be as substantial as is argued. Ericsson refutes studies of this kind by arguing that the structure of deliberate practice is so singular that it “cannot be extrapolated from the performance–ability relation observed in the general adult population” (Ericsson 2014: 81). Even though the author of the present thesis favours the alternative accounts presented above and acknowledges the limitations of Ericsson *et al.*’s (1993) model, his framework is retained here as its flaws are irrelevant to the focus of this thesis.

3.2 Deliberate Practice in Contrast to Other Domain-Related Activities

In the framework advanced by Ericsson *et al.* (1993: 368), activity falls into three categories: work, play, and deliberate practice, each characterised by different costs, goals, rewards, and performance frequency.

Work refers to activities undertaken in response to extrinsic incentives, including competitions, public performances, and services provided for compensation. In all of these

activities, individuals deliver their best performance at a given point in time. Play includes activities without an explicit goal, which are performed purely for enjoyment. Deliberate practice involves activities intentionally designed to improve current performance. In comparison to work settings, in which “individuals rely on previously well-entrenched methods rather than exploring alternative methods with unknown reliability”, deliberate practice provides the individual with the repeated opportunity to “attend to the critical aspects of the situation and incrementally improve her or his performance in response to knowledge of results, feedback, or both from a teacher. To illustrate this hypothesis, Ericsson *et al.* (1993) draw on the example discussed by T. Williams (1988), who argues that in a three-hour baseball game, a batter faces between 5 and 15 pitches, of which only one or two may target their weaknesses. By contrast, a training session (deliberate practice) of equal duration with a dedicated pitcher provides several hundred batting opportunities to systematically probe and refine their weaknesses.

While work relies on external reinforcement, including social recognition and, most importantly, money in the form of prizes or remuneration, in the case of play and deliberate practice, external rewards are almost non-existent. Play is pursued for its own sake and the intrinsic enjoyment it provides. Deliberate practice, on the other hand, is a systematised activity designed with the explicit goal of overcoming specific weaknesses, and performance is continuously assessed to identify avenues for further improvement. The prospect of enhanced performance serves both as the intended outcome and the motivating force behind individuals’ engagement in practice. Nevertheless, the absence of intrinsic reward or enjoyment must be distinguished from the enjoyment of the outcome, a conclusion based on the observation that individuals rarely engage in practice spontaneously. Instead of immediate monetary rewards, it entails costs associated with accessing teachers and training settings, and, unlike play, demands effort and is not inherently pleasurable. Therefore, it is important to understand the long-term consequences of deliberate practice Ericsson *et al.* (1993: 368-369).

3.3 Acquisition of Exceptional Performance Through Deliberate Practice

The central proposition underpinning Ericsson *et al.*’s (1993) theoretical framework is that the level of excellence individuals attain in their performance is closely linked to the amount of deliberate practice they engage in. However, the successful implementation of deliberate practice is a long and arduous process and presupposes the strategic navigation of three constraints: resources, motivation, and effort (Ericsson *et al.*’s 1993: 370-372).

The resource constraint represents an impediment, particularly for young performers, whose complete dependence on their parents and guardians spans the entire trajectory from identifying their talent in a given domain to securing access to teachers, training facilities, and competitions. This can be problematic, as it is conditioned by the parents' availability and financial resources. In the case of adults, deliberate practice is limited by their own resources, including time and energy, as well as by access to teachers, training materials, and training environments.

As mentioned earlier, deliberate practice is not intrinsically motivating; nonetheless, performers believe that motivation plays a critical role in performance enhancement, hence the motivational constraint. As individuals become more engaged in a particular domain, competitions and public performances can serve as short-term objectives that encourage targeted improvement. At this stage, the motivation becomes so strongly intertwined with the pursuit of expertise and integrated into everyday life that motivation to practise itself can no longer be easily distinguished or assessed. According to Ericsson *et al.* (1993: 372), “[w]ithout the goal of improving performance, the motivation to engage in practice vanishes.” To illustrate their hypothesis, Ericsson and his colleagues mention the longitudinal study of visual artists conducted by Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi (1976). Based on their observations, some professional careers are halted not because of aspiring artists' inability to perform, but because of a lack of time and energy due to promoting their art to generate sufficient sales or being forced to take on a job unrelated to painting to secure a livelihood. Once resource constraints prevent them from dedicating enough time and energy to maintaining and improving their performance, some aspiring artists stop painting altogether, unwilling to produce art at a lower standard (motivational constraint). In other words, not the activity of painting itself is intrinsically motivating, “but rather the act of producing art that satisfies the artists' subjective criteria for quality” (Ericsson 1993: 372).

Deliberate practice is a long-term, laborious process that spans a long period of time and is constrained by the individual's ability to fully recover on a daily or weekly basis, hence the effort constraint. Since practice draws on limited physical and mental resources, it needs to be followed by a subsequent recovery phase. In other words, while additional practice generates overall improvement, it can deplete essential resources if overly long. Sustaining a level of practice that exceeds the individual's ability to recover between sessions leads not only to exhaustion and mental fatigue but also to motivational problems, such as a lack of enthusiasm or unwillingness to continue with a sport (Silva 1990 in Ericsson *et al.* 1993: 371), which is

why Ericsson and his colleagues underscore that disregarding the effort constraint can lead to injury and even failure.

For individuals to maximise their gains from deliberate practice and benefit from significant improvements in their performance, they need to be “1) given a task with a well-defined goal, 2) motivated to improve, 3) provided with feedback, and 4) provided with ample opportunities for repetition and gradual refinements of their performance” (Ericsson 2008: 191). Last but not least, Ericsson *et al.* (1993) emphasise the necessity of undivided concentration during deliberate practice, as well as the importance of problem-solving and the development of more effective methods of task execution.

3.4 Deliberate Practice in Conference Interpreting

3.4.1 From Violinists to Interpreters

Expertise theory was introduced to the interpreting research community by its foremost advocate himself in 1997, when Barbara Moser-Mercer established an intellectual bridge between interpreting studies and cognitive psychology – following a suggestion first advanced by G. B. Flores d’Arcais at the 1977 Venice Symposium (Moser-Mercer 1997: 1) – by inviting Ericsson to the Ascona workshops. This expertise approach demonstrated strong applicability to interpreting research, and the study of expertise has become a viable and well-established research strand in interpreting studies (Tiselius 2013: 19). While Moser-Mercer has focused on expertise from the learners’ perspective (see Moser-Mercer 2000; Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2000), several dissertations, such as Ivanova’s (1999) and Liu’s (2001), investigated problem-solving strategies and the impact of working memory.

To assess the significance of deliberate practice in interpreting, it is necessary to explore whether experienced interpreters develop their expertise through training methods comparable to those employed by violinists practising their scales or footballers refining their spin techniques. Moreover, it needs to be determined whether the concept of deliberate practice can be defined in similar terms in both interpreting and football.

From Tiselius’s (2013) standpoint, there are notable differences between musical or athletic professions and interpreting, teaching or medical professions. First of all, the professional life of musicians and athletes naturally comprises two complementary components: public performance on stage or on the field and private daily training, whereas interpreters and teachers perform in the booth or in the classroom, but dedicate their private

work sessions to things that are not related to the main skill, such as preparing background materials or deepening subject-matter knowledge. Secondly, since most musicians internalise the routine of deliberate practice at a young age, it becomes second nature to them. Interpreters, on the other hand, begin both their professional activity and training considerably later, and even though practice is incorporated into interpreters' curriculum, it remains unclear whether deliberate practice develops into an equally habitual and deeply internalised process. Thirdly, extrinsic rewards associated with excellence differ substantially across professions. Exceptional musicians may achieve public recognition, prizes, and financial incentives, whereas interpreters generally receive far fewer extrinsic rewards. Although interpreters who perform well may secure additional assignments and professional trust, such rewards are not comparable to the prestige and financial gains granted to elite musicians and athletes. As a result, deliberate practice may manifest differently for interpreters, teachers, or surgeons than for musicians, athletes, or chess grandmasters (Tiselius 2018: 133-134), and its impact "on interpreting and translation expertise has yet to be fully investigated" (Tiselius & Hild 2017: 431).

3.4.2 Existing Evidence and Research Gaps

Beyond the need to reconceptualise deliberate practice and its manifestations in interpreting, the research community faces an additional challenge. According to Tiselius (2018: 132), the few studies (Tiselius 2013; Albl-Mikasa 2013) conducted in this field have failed to demonstrate not only the impact of deliberate practice in interpreting but even its mere existence.

The majority of research on expertise in interpreting relies on comparisons between the performance of experienced interpreters and that of students or novices in the field, a well-established methodological approach in interpreting studies. Tiselius's (2013) dissertation, however, analysed both cross-sectional and longitudinal data through four studies. In her research, she focused on interpreting quality, problem-solving skills, interpreting strategies, and self-monitoring. The longitudinal data were based on recordings made at two distinct moments in time and in-depth interviews with highly experienced interpreters. Based on the collected data, Tiselius concluded that participants' grasp of the notion of deliberate practice and practising the interpreting skill was even less clear than anticipated. Although all interviewees consistently expressed their commitment to professional excellence and described constant self-monitoring, they had difficulty formulating concrete routines for practising their interpreting skill or defining clear goals for enhancing it. Interestingly, even though they mentioned many activities associated with deliberate practice, such as seeking feedback from their peers,

analysing interpreting performances, expanding their subject matter, and adding a new working language, following Ericsson's (2000) framework, interviewees did not regard them as practice. As a result, instead of deliberate practice, Tiselius used the term *skill enhancing activities*. Participants in the cross-sectional study were divided into three groups based on their experience level. Thus, long-experienced and short-experienced interpreters, as well as individuals with no experience, were asked to interpret simultaneously the same source speech into Swedish, their A language, and then immediately perform retrospection. The cross-sectional analysis showed variation in performance among interpreters with different levels of experience, whereas the longitudinal analysis did not, suggesting that the superior performance associated with more experienced interpreters may stem from individual characteristics rather than accumulated experience. Furthermore, this may also imply that the criteria used by interpreting scholars to define expertise, and identify potential experts to study, such as years of experience, peer recognition, or career accomplishments) do not necessarily provide an accurate measure of expertise.

These conclusions align with Albl-Mikasa's (2013) findings. Based on the semi-structured, in-depth interviews she conducted with ten seasoned conference interpreters from the German market, she concluded that participants were practising on the job and "did relatively little to further develop and cultivate their competence(s)". Although respondents reported having attended professional development courses shortly after graduating from an interpreting program, Albl-Mikasa (2013: 23) point out that "in the later stages, the interpreters seemed to be too busy for such courses". Moreover, with increasing professional experience, interpreters tend to prioritise targeted preparation and to find it "uneconomical" and even "counterproductive" to expand their subject-matter and terminological knowledge, unless it is for a particular assignment. This approach stems from the unpredictability of assignments, the diversity of topics encountered as a freelancer, and the temporary nature of highly specific knowledge (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 26). When discussing the enhancement of interpreter competence, respondents mentioned language(s) competence, interpreting competence proper, and business competence. However, when asked directly what they do to improve their interpreting skill, respondents answered: "Cultivating my interpreter skills is not something I do particularly consciously or systematically, but as part of my assignments, [...] As far as interpreting proper is concerned, [...] I simply focus on not repeating the same mistakes". (Albl-Mikasa, 2013: 26) In participants' opinion, "much of it can be learned by those who have the drive for it", and motivation takes precedence over natural talent (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 31).

According to Tiselius (2018: 138-139), this suggests that interpreters develop adaptive expertise rather than routine expertise. A key distinction between the two of them may lie in how deliberate practice is applied. While routine expertise is acquired through repeated exposure to familiar, predictable tasks, adaptive routine involves transferring prior skills and accumulated knowledge to new situations. In interpreting, routine expertise would emerge from repeatedly working in the same contexts, with the same topics and speakers, implementing the same interpreting techniques, and facing the same challenges. Adaptive expertise, on the other hand, enables interpreters to handle varying assignments, topics, speakers, and challenges while implementing different techniques. Therefore, given the unpredictability of the market, it can be assumed that freelance interpreters tend to develop adaptive rather than routine expertise.

In Tiselius's (2013: 132) opinion, one reason researchers are unable to find an effect of deliberate practice is that they have been operating with a flawed definition of the phenomenon. Alternatively, deliberate practice in interpreting may be an idealised concept rather than an empirically established reality, a "unicorn: a noble creature with the power to redeem novice interpreters, be they only pure, which unfortunately exist only in fairy tales." Since the field offers only a limited number of empirical contributions on the construct of deliberate practice in interpreting, there is not enough evidence to establish whether this is "an unproven fact or only fiction", which indicates the need for further inquiry.

4 Towards a New Breed of Interpreters

4.1 To Grow or Not to Grow?

As Downie (2016: 3-4) points out, the interpreting world is facing a "rather disturbing trend": some clients actively seek ways to avoid hiring professionals, governments lower the requirements for working in courts and hospitals, large companies are testing how far they can rely on their own staff instead of trained interpreters, and TV stations prefer presenters over professional interpreters who would readily seize the opportunity. In many developed countries, interpreting continues to be viewed as a 'cost item'. Combined with the widespread assumption that interpreting merely requires language proficiency or the right technology tools, such misconceptions inevitably lead to interpreting being an undervalued profession. However, the responsibility for correcting this negative trajectory rests, to a significant extent, with interpreters themselves:

If interpreting is to go from a cost item to a value-added service, we need to address our fear of growth (or the lack thereof) in a deliberate manner. If interpreting is to be seen as a value-added service, interpreters need to make skill development and growth a normal, even expected, part of professional life. (Downie 2016: 26)

The alternative to professional growth is stagnation, and Tiselius (2013) vividly illustrates what stagnation can look like in practice in her doctoral research. As previously mentioned in section 3.4.2, three staff interpreters from international organisations were asked to reinterpret a speech they had originally interpreted 15 years earlier, and the comparison was sobering. Not only had the participants not improved over time, but one interpreter's performance proved even weaker than the one he had delivered as a student. which can take many different guises. According to Downie (2016: 27-28), stagnation makes it hard to keep one's head above water amid market shifts and budget cuts, fails to adopt new technologies, even when they offer clear improvements, and refuses to add value because "that's not my job". He warns that it is only through sustained efforts to develop their skills and prevent stagnation that interpreters are insulated from remote interpreting, shifts in payment structures, offshoring, population ageing, globalisation, and increasing virtualisation.

While the notion of interpreters' skills has featured prominently so far, what exactly do these skills encompass? The following section seeks to briefly answer this question by identifying the skills required in today's profession.

4.2 The Skill Set of the Modern Interpreter

4.2.1 The Interpreter as a Language Specialist

For to-day it is no more possible than it was in the Middle Ages, or at the dawn of modern times, to improvise an interpreter. Ever-increasing accomplishments are required of those who choose this profession, by reason of the growing complexity of the problems dealt with at international conferences, and of the tasks devolving on the interpreter. A knowledge of languages, however perfect, is not sufficient to make an interpreter. (Stelling-Michaud, preface to Herbert 1952: IX)

Stelling-Michaud's statement is as relevant today as in 1952. Contrary to the widespread opinion among outsiders to the profession, language proficiency does not suffice. While it is a prerequisite, the interpreter's toolbox, as suggested by the definitions of the interpreter's role provided in chapter 2, contains many other skills that need to be acquired, maintained, and refined.

According to Albl-Mikasa's (2013) research, when asked about CPD (continuous professional development), interpreters think of the following skills:

- Language competence – maintaining and constantly enhancing proficiency in one's A, B, and C languages through continuous exposure, reading, listening, and interaction, with particular attention paid to the B and C languages. (Albl-Mikasa, 2013: 24)
- Interpreting strategies – refining interpreting-specific techniques and coping strategies, including simultaneous and consecutive interpreting skills, anticipation, reformulation, and learning through professional experience (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 21).
- Subject-related knowledge – “It is no exaggeration to say that the value of an interpreter depends to a great extent on the degree of his culture.” (Stelling-Michaud, preface to Herbert 1952: IX)
- Preparation skills – developing effective strategies to prepare for a highly specialised assignment (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 21).
- Entrepreneurial skills – negotiation competence and client acquisition (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 21).
- Lifelong learning – committing to professional development throughout one's career and engaging in both formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Curiosity – cultivating an intrinsic interest in languages, cultures, and the world
- Meta-reflective awareness – engaging in ongoing self-reflection by critically evaluating one's performance, identifying areas for improvement, personal strengths and limitations, and adapting one's performance accordingly (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 29).

Many of these skills were examined in the present study, and the findings are largely consistent with Albl-Mikasa's (2013) research.

4.2.2 The Interpreter as a Businessperson

Although conference interpreting training programs cover numerous competencies, including note-taking strategies, ethics, assignment preparation, technology, information management, and text analysis, their ultimate goal is to prepare students for professional life. Without solid business skills, interpreters are unlikely to secure fair payment for their services, while strong interpreting skills are essential for ensuring repeat assignments from clients (Downie 2016: 25). For graduates to “survive as interpreters”, they need two other elements: business acumen and familiarity with the culture and values of the professional interpreting community, and Downie assigns equal importance to all these competencies. Unless they are staffers, interpreters should expect a large portion of their work to extend beyond interpreting itself and to involve

administrative and business-related activities such as accounting, filing tax returns, and marketing (Downie 2016: 16).

4.3 Actionable Advice

4.3.1 Tuning the Strings

The expertise theory draws largely on studies involving athletes and musicians, who learn early on, from both their coaches and teachers and from firsthand experience, that they will not be able to pursue their careers unless they commit to sustained, goal-oriented practice. In an interview conducted by Downie (2016: 30), Tiselius remarks that interpreters, on the other hand, are told to practise but not taught how to practise and calls for the inclusion of lifelong learning in the curriculum. Moreover, she points out that, unlike interpreters, experts in other fields follow a clearly defined trajectory in their practice, set by another fellow professional, who helps them define their goals, monitors their progress, and assesses their performance (Tiselius in Downie 2016: 25). In contrast, interpreters often rely on minimal preparation prior to an assignment: they watch a few YouTube videos, compile a term list, and consider the preparation complete. (Downie 2016: 25) Growth, however, is a laborious process:

Growth is difficult and often slow. It involves admitting areas in which you need help and seeking to find that help. It means putting some time aside for yourself and your goals, even on your busiest days. Growth means accountability.” (Downie 2016: 27)

Unfortunately, webinars and conferences fail to provide this kind of accountability (Downie 2016: 26). From Downie’s perspective, growth does not equal participating in CPD courses, taking MOOCs (*massive open online courses*), or adding a new language. While such actions can certainly be beneficial, they rarely generate substantial change unless aligned with a broader plan. In the absence of a defined trajectory in the form of a growth plan, the impact of any isolated activity remains inevitably limited.

Although the body of literature advocating the importance of deliberate practice in interpreting is growing, the field lacks practical guidance on translating professional growth into concrete, actionable steps. Therefore, to narrow the gap, what follows is an example of Downie’s own growth plan, as published in his book *Being a Successful Interpreter*. In setting his professional resolutions, Downie (2016: 27) identifies three areas that he intends to improve: business, French presentation skills, and language repertoire.

First, he recognises the need to enhance his business skills, particularly in relation to marketing and client acquisition. Therefore, he decides to devote a large portion of his CPD

efforts for the year to networking, updating his marketing strategies, and improving his online presence. Specifically, he aims to attend at least one networking event per month, apply the principles outlined in Judy and Dagmar Jenner's book – *The Entrepreneurial Linguist* – by revamping his website (including a dedicated URL, updated visuals, and revised content), and redesigning his business cards.

His second growth area targets his French presentation skills. To this end, he will adopt several more passive yet sustained methods, such as listening to and watching more French speakers, while taking notes on their delivery techniques, engaging more with resources that enhance his French, and deliberately immersing himself in French prose. This means temporarily replacing the BBC with *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, and *L'Express*.

The third area of focus is his language repertoire. His goal is to add – or at least begin to add – a new language. Given an upcoming project involving extensive travel to Germany, he has chosen German. He already has a foundation from two years of university-level courses, but his progress has since stagnated. Therefore, he has decided to spend 15-20 minutes each day improving his German skills.

While Downie's proposed growth plan represents a valuable starting point, an analysis through the lens of Fogg's (2020) *Tiny Habits Method* reveals several areas for improvement. From the perspective of Fogg's (2020) model, Downie has completed the first step – clarifying the aspirations/outcomes. His growth plan relies heavily on motivation and self-discipline, suggesting that setting goals is sufficient to bring about behavioural change. Unfortunately, as shown in section 1.4, this approach is rarely successful and extremely hard to sustain. As a result, Downie's growth plan could be strengthened by brainstorming behaviour candidates and identifying the *Golden Behaviors* that are most likely to propel him forward, and finding the right *Prompts/Anchors*, as well as his own way to *Celebrate* each time he performs his desired habits.

Another example of deliberate practice activities is provided by Tiselius. Although she has decided to focus on teaching and research and does not have a growth plan for interpreting, she wishes she had approached deliberate practice differently while she was a full-time interpreter, and she offers noteworthy insights. Instead of engaging in voice training, recording herself and listening to it, and interpreting home from TV or radio, she wishes she had kept a working diary, sought mentorship from a fellow professional and practised with the sole purpose of enhancing her interpreting skills (e.g. simultaneous with text, dealing with read

speeches or managing stress in the voice), and started a community of practice (Tiselius in Downie 2026: 32). Put differently, Tiselius wishes she had not embarked on the odyssey of deliberate practice alone but accompanied by other peers and guided by a mentor:

You may not agree with me, but I don't think interpreters are very good at mentorship or coaching. And most feedback is based on you missed this word or that argument. But good mentors or good coaches can do so much more. Obviously, you don't have to work with a coach every day or week, but on a regular basis would probably be beneficial. Again, think of actors or musicians. (Tiselius in Downie 2016: 31)

When asked what growth areas both novice and established interpreters should target in their deliberate practice, Tiselius's suggestions align closely with Downie's growth plan. Apart from business skills, such as marketing and negotiation, which she deems indispensable, she also highlights the importance of interpreters developing their presentation skills. In her view, this area requires continuous refinement, as stronger presentation skills enable interpreters to follow the speaker more effectively. To enhance these competencies, interpreters should familiarise themselves with a wide range of presentation formats and delivery styles. *Pecha Kucha* is one example of a presentation format through which these skills can be cultivated. A further aspect that is commonly neglected yet deserves interpreters' attention is voice training. Much like acting or singing, interpreting too belongs to the 'voice professions'. However, interpreters do not work with voice coaches or participate in voice classes. After completing voice training during their interpreting programs, they seem to be under the misapprehension that this is a "one-off phenomenon" and that there is nothing new to learn about it. (Tiselius in Downie¹¹ 2016: 30-31).

As in Downie's case, Tiselius's suggestions would also benefit greatly from Fogg's (2020) model, especially when they target skills that have been overlooked since interpreters' initial training. Fogg's (2020) *Behavior Design* allows individuals to adopt the smallest possible version of the desired behaviour and raise the bar gradually and systematically without being conditioned by the *Motivation Wave* or feeling overwhelmed. Following this discussion, the interpreting world needs more practical guidance on how to engage in deliberate practice and learn how to formulate sustainable growth plans by implementing Fogg's (2020) model, while being mentored and supported by the community. As far as the author of this thesis is concerned, this is the only and most effective way so far.

¹¹ In his book *Being a Successful Interpreter* (2016), Jonathan Downie concludes each chapter with an interview with a leading interpreting expert. The present thesis draws on the interviews with Elisabet Tiselius and Kamil Celoch.

4.3.2 Maintaining the Instrument

It goes without saying that interpreters use their bodies way less than athletes, or even musicians, for that matter, if we think of rock/pop drummers, whose energy expenditure is around 623 kcal/h and heart rate reaches almost 186 beats/min in an average concert (De la Rue *et al.* 2013). The interpreter's body supports the act, but it is the mind that carries the performance. An amusing account of this aspect is offered by Downie:

Interpreters aren't normally associated with fitness. No teenager pins up pictures of SCIC staff (Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission) on their bedroom walls. Your local court interpreter is not likely to be signing a deal with *Vogue* any time soon. To put it scientifically, we have 'sedentary occupations'. (Downie 2016: 74)

But can body and mind really be separated? Can a physically unfit body and a depleted brain provide high cognition? From the perspective of Downie (2016) and Kamil Celoch, his interviewee, interpreters cannot expect peak performance unless they maintain a healthy diet and exercise regimen: "We need to learn as much about our diets and bodies as we know about the languages we speak." However, while there is a plethora of research suggesting that physical activity (e.g. Chang *et al.* 2012, Chen & Nagakawa 2023) and adequate nutrition (e.g. Ekstrand *et al.* 2021, Kim *et al.* 2024, Barbey 2025) improve cognitive functions, as well as cognitive flexibility across multiple mental processes, most interpreters keep stretching only their minds and fuelling themselves with sugar-laden food and caffeine (Downie 2016: 75-76).

Apart from the justifiable need to cope with demanding schedules and the stress of the profession, interpreters' diet and exercise habits, though intriguing topics, remain largely unaddressed in CPD offerings and have yet to receive systematic scholarly attention. As a first step towards bridging this knowledge gap, the present section provides a list of practical, scientifically grounded guidance on strategies that interpreters can employ to sustain and improve their cognitive performance. Alongside his career as a conference interpreter, Kamil Celoch devoted much of his time outside the booth to investigating the use of nutrition, dietary supplements, and exercise as tools to optimise interpreters' cognitive performance. Despite being an award-winning researcher in conference interpreting, having received the Best Dissertation Award from Manchester Metropolitan University, Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care, and Combined Honors for his research on stress management in conference interpreting, Celoch has ultimately shifted his focus. In 2024, he was affiliated with Dr. Bigliassi's Psychophysiology Lab at Florida International University, investigating topics related to exercise psychophysiology and human performance. Based on his research, given the

complexity of the physiological process that underpin superior cognitive performance, interpreters must adopt a holistic approach that targets all of the following areas:

- ✓ DIET: adopting a diet rich in micronutrients and omega-3 fatty acids to improve insulin sensitivity, reduce inflammation, and accommodate food allergies and intolerances
- ✓ HORMONES: identifying and correcting deficiencies while managing overall stress levels
- ✓ NEUROTRANSMITTER BALANCE: ensuring adequate intake of protein, fruit, and vegetables to provide essential amino acids and support a healthy enzymatic conversion.
- ✓ MITOCHONDRIA: engaging in high-intensity interval training (e.g. sprinting, rowing) and minimising toxin exposure and free-radical production
- ✓ EXERCISE: engaging daily in both aerobic and anaerobic physical activity for at least 20 minutes
- ✓ REST: recovering through sleep, naps, meditation, and screen-free relaxation (Celoch in Downie 2016: 78).

Nutritional requirements and deficiencies vary considerably across individuals, making it difficult to generalise about the dietary needs of a specific person or a professional group. However, he assumes that interpreters could benefit from increasing their intake of zinc, vitamin D3 and K2, as the Western diet is notoriously deficient in these micronutrients. Additionally, Celoch recommends a list of supplements tailored to interpreters' needs:

- FATIGUE: *rhodiola rosea*
- FOCUS AND ATTENTION: combination of caffeine, theanine, tyrosine, and nicotine
- CHRONIC STRESS: *bacopa monnieri*, *rhodiola rosea*
- ENERGY PRODUCTION: a combination of mitochondrial supplements: Acetyl-L-Carnitine, Alpha-Lipoic Acid, Creatine, Coenzyme Q10, Magnesium, and Resveratrol.

Moreover, for those interpreters who thrive on stimulants, nicotine (not to be confused with tobacco or cigarettes, though) has also been shown to have cognitive-enhancing properties.

Tyrosine is a naturally occurring amino acid that serves as a precursor to dopamine and its metabolites and has shown promising results in military research for enhancing vigilance, stress regulation, and overall well-being in sleep-deprived individuals. Since every brain's chemistry is unique, it cannot be assumed that such results could be automatically replicated. (Celoch in Downie 2016: 78-79) However, Celoch considers tyrosine a substance worth exploring in the context of interpreting, especially when "The AIIC Workload Study"

(Mackintosh 2003: 198) suggests that burnout levels among interpreters, particularly staff interpreters, are higher than those reported by Israeli army officers.

For better interpreting performance, Celoch recommends consuming small amounts of coconut oil, which, unlike sugary snacks, does not cause sharp insulin spikes and helps maintain steady energy levels while still supplying the brain with fuel. Caffeine, “often seen as the interpreter’s best friend” (Downie 2016: 77), can be beneficial, provided intake remains moderate. Another strategy to reduce stress levels and enhance performance is to increase oxygen delivery to the brain through deep breathing. When asked how interpreters who travel extensively could maintain better nutrition, Celoch recommends a variety of healthy snacks, ranging from cocktail prawns, beef jerky, and boiled eggs to protein powder, hummus, nuts, nut butters, seeds, rice cakes, and even leftovers from last night’s dinner. If interpreters have a healthy, more substantial meal every four to five hours, they can skip the snacks. Otherwise, each snack must contain a moderate amount of protein. To stay hydrated, he recommends drinking plenty of water between assignments (Celoch in Downie 2016: 69-70). Lastly, Celoch argues that the key to improving cognitive performance through diet is planning meals in advance in order to avoid turning to sugar-laden snacks for an immediate energy boost (in Downie 2016: 77-80).

When it comes to the adoption of healthier dietary habits and regular exercise routines, Dr. BJ Fogg and his team have witnessed, throughout their research, countless successful stories of individuals designing sustainable healthy behaviours in their lives by implementing Fogg’s (2020) model.

4.4 Positioning of the present study

Ericsson *et al.* (1993) posit that to attain expert performance, an individual needs to engage in deliberate practice for at least 10 years. Another possible explanation for the fact that the research conducted so far has not been able to find conclusive proof of deliberate practice in interpreters’ routines is that the participants in those studies had already acquired their expertise, and “experience without deliberate practice may suffice to uphold, stabilize, and even strengthen expert performance, because it is topped up with metacognitive regulation” (Albl-Mikasa 2013: 33).

However, even if highly experienced interpreters may not engage in deliberate practice (anymore), considering the intense practice during their studies, their inherent curiosity, and the nature of the job itself, it can be assumed that they may have built some habits over the course

of their career that have helped them sustain or even enhance their performance. This assumption is supported by one of the participants in Albl-Mikasa's interviews, who stated that:

[...] integrating it into everyday life. Just like others take to playing an instrument, I practice languages. I keep reading books, rotating between languages 1, 2, and 3; I have a satellite dish installed and have TV on all morning while doing my housework; I look up idiomatic expressions when I come across them in newspapers, and I do a page of vocabulary work every day, a whole lot of *little things like that all the time*. Albl-Mikasa's (2013: 24, emphasis I.K.)

Instead of searching for deliberate practice as understood in Ericsson et al.'s (1993) framework, the present study aims to explore the routine of professional conference interpreters from the perspective of Fogg's (2020) *Tiny Habits Method*. To my knowledge, this study constitutes the first attempt to explore the *Tiny Habits* (as defined in section 1.2) of seasoned interpreters. Nevertheless, rather than adopting Fogg's terminology to define these routinised activities, I use the term *smart habits*. As shown by Vik-Tuovinen (2006), experienced interpreters need less time than novice interpreters to prepare for an assignment due to their prior knowledge and skill. In Tiselius's (2013: 139) view, this may also indicate that the acquired expertise enables interpreters to prepare more efficiently, since they already know what they need. By the same principle, it can be assumed that if highly experienced interpreters have indeed built certain habits, they would be targeted, efficient, and adapted to interpreters' needs, hence the term *smart habits*.

This research emerges at the intersection of a gap in the literature and my keen interest not only in discovering the smart habits that enable interpreters to sustain and improve their expertise, but also in understanding what drives and sustains these habits.

5 Methodology and Methods

5.1 Interview

The present study investigates the habits that professional conference interpreters with extensive experience in high-level settings have developed over the course of their careers to continually enhance the interpreting skills relevant to their profiles. To capture their routine, the present study was guided by a qualitative content analysis framework and drew on semi-structured interviews. This methodological choice was motivated by the fact that qualitative research interviews are "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific

explanations” (Kvale 1996: 1), which allows participants to elaborate, explain, and contextualise their experiences, thereby providing depth and richness to the data.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate for this study because by being “organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006: 315), they offer a balance of structure and flexibility, which allowed me to ask follow-up, probing, specifying, and interpreting questions, and thus gain a better understanding of the research topic. According to DeJonckheere & Vaughn (2019: 3), the design and execution of semi-structured interviews consist of the following steps:

1. Clarifying the purpose and scope of the study
2. Sampling
3. Considering ethical implications
4. Planning logistical aspects
5. Developing the interview guide
6. Establishing trust and rapport
7. Conducting the interview
8. Memoing and reflection
9. Analysing the data
10. Demonstrating the trustworthiness of the research
11. Presenting findings in a paper or report

The next sections elaborate on how each step of the process was designed in the context of the present study.

5.2 Sampling

Considering that “[i]t is necessary to locate excellent participants to obtain excellent data” (Janice Morse 2007: 231), the recruitment in the present study relied on purposeful sampling. As the term suggests, *purposeful* or *purposive* (Patton 1980) sampling refers to “strategically selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated” (Patton 2023: 265). Given the study’s objective to capture the routines of interpreters representing the profession’s highest standards, this was deemed the most appropriate approach. Interviewees were primarily recruited based on key informants, key knowledgeable, and reputational sampling (Patton 2023: 272) and consistent with Tremblay’s (1957: 692) criteria for ideal informants, including recognised expertise, long-

standing involvement in the conference interpreting field, a comprehensive overview of relevant practices, and willingness to communicate their knowledge. Since the term ‘informant’ can carry a negative connotation, Patton (2023: 284) prefers to call this prized group ‘key knowledgeable’, a terminological choice I agree with and adopt throughout this study.

The only deviation from this recruitment method was the addition of a participant through snowball sampling at the recommendation of another interviewee. Although *snowball* or *chain sampling* (Patton 2023: 272) is understood as a strategy to enlarge the group by asking already recruited interviewees for referrals that align with the research objective (Misoch 2019: 207), this recommendation was offered entirely at the initiative of another member of the sample. While snowball sampling provides significant advantages for the researcher, including facilitating access to and rapport with information-rich cases that are already interested in sharing their knowledge (Misoch 2019: 207), this sampling choice comes with several caveats, two of them being the lack of control over the sample’s composition (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Saunders et al. 2023) and the risk of biased data (Atkinson and Flint 2001). However, these methodological drawbacks were irrelevant in the empirical context of this study and did not affect data quality, as the recommended interpreter’s profile aligned with Tremblay’s criteria.

To create a transparent basis and enhance the coherence of the sample (n=5), I established two disjunctive inclusion criteria, allowing candidates to enter the sample via either eligibility route. Thus, the key knowledgeable selected in this study were either EU-accredited interpreters (I-1) or AIIC members (I-3 and I-5). Not unexpectedly, there were two cases (I-2 and I-4) in which both inclusion criteria were fulfilled.

Prospective participants were approached via email invitations, and, given the high professional status of the targeted interpreters, some degree of unavailability was anticipated. One invitee declined to participate, explaining that, due to the high volume of research requests they receive, they had been maintaining a policy of refusing all of them for fairness reasons. Another potential participant cancelled two arranged interviews, and subsequent rescheduling attempts went unanswered. Nevertheless, communication with (prospective) participants proved to be smoother than initially expected. The overall response pattern was notably positive, with interpreters engaging promptly and expressing clear interest in contributing. Participation was voluntary.

5.3 Procedure

The data collected in this study relies on five semi-structured interviews conducted via *Teams* or *Zoom* between the 1st and 18th of February 2026. While, as summarised by Tómas & Bidet (2023: 275), online interviewing offers three advantages, namely cost efficiency, greater scheduling flexibility, and broader geographical reach, research also indicates that data quality remains comparable across interviewing modes (Guest *et al.* 2020). Therefore, remote interviewing was deemed the most practical approach not only because of the participants' geographical dispersion across three countries (Austria, Belgium, and Romania), but also to increase convenience and, consequently, the willingness to participate among (prospective) interviewees. Furthermore, in retrospect, this methodological choice proved to have an additional advantage. Though perhaps not immediately apparent, this study aimed to explore “the interpreter’s hidden, almost intimate side”, as one of the participants described it in their reply to the invitation email. According to Miller & Sinanan (2014), since mediated communication plays a formative role in structuring everyday interaction, participants are likely to disclose more details of their lives when in front of a webcam, an idea that reconfirms the rationale behind the chosen approach.

Interviewees were given access to the available slots and could select those that suited their schedules. The planned duration for each interview was 60 minutes, with actual lengths ranging from 34 to 92 minutes. Except for one meeting that was interrupted and resumed on another day due to time constraints on the part of one participant, all other interviews were carried out in a single session.

The interviews were audio- and video-recorded using the built-in recording features of *Teams* and *Zoom*, and GDPR-compliant consent forms were distributed in advance. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed that all data would be fully anonymised and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason.

5.4 Transcription

Rigorous qualitative analysis presupposes deliberate and meticulous transcription (Vanover 2022: 73). The following discussion is anchored in Kvale’s (2007: 93) conceptual framework. In his opinion, although transcripts tend to be viewed as the bedrock empirical data of an interview-based inquiry, from a linguistic perspective, transcriptions are translations from one narrative mode (i.e. oral discourse) into another (i.e. written discourse). Since this conversion requires a wide range of decisions, thereby being an initial analysis in itself (see Rapley 2007),

the reliability of a transcript depends on the person who generated it, which is why the claims made by the hermeneutical tradition about translators, namely *traduire trahit*, apply also to transcribers. Therefore, while any transcription is an interpretive act and there is no objective conversion of oral speech into a written text, a transcription is regarded as valid as long as it serves the research purpose. However, due to the loss of several elements, including body language, posture, gestures, tone of voice, intonations, and breathing, as a result of the transformation from oral language into written language, Rapley (2018: 63) emphasises that the researcher should base their research on the recording and field notes rather than the transcripts because they can be misleading. The data analysis in this study was built on this recommendation.

To minimise time expenditure, the recordings were initially automatically transcribed using the automated transcription software *Transcript Land* and subsequently revised manually. The choice of this micro was motivated not only by its high accuracy but also by its guaranteed confidentiality, since all data processing is performed on the company's own servers and does not involve any artificial intelligence platforms or cloud providers. Given that this study employed thematic analysis, a clean verbatim transcription was deemed best for enhancing the readability while preserving interviewees' wording and intended meaning. Thus, pauses, false starts, repetitions, and tone of voice were omitted. Interruptions, overlapping, garbled speech, emphases, and emotional expressions were transcribed in accordance with Poland's (2002: 302) instructions for transcribers.

As recommended by Stam & Diaz (2023: 4), direct identifiers (names), strong indirect identifiers (web addresses, brand names), weak indirect identifiers (gender, area of residence), as well as identifiers relating to family, friends, or colleagues were anonymised during the transcription stage, and, therefore, before data analysis. Nevertheless, since "[f]ull anonymisation of qualitative data is impossible" and the risk of re-identification has become increasingly high due to information technology (Stam & Diaz 2023: 5-7), the transcripts are not included in the appendix. To ensure precise referencing throughout the analysis, each participant was assigned an alphanumeric code ranging from I-01 to I-05, where the letter 'I' stands for *interviewee*. The numerical component of each code was allocated randomly and bears no relation to the chronological order in which the participants were interviewed.

5.5 Interview Guide

In line with Misoch's (2019) framework, the interview guide used in this study followed a four-phase structure: introduction, warm-up, core section, and closing. In the introductory segment, I focused on reiterating the purpose of the study, explaining the interview format, informing participants about the GDPR-compliant processing of their data, answering questions (e.g. about the anonymisation process), and obtaining their signed consent. The interview guide underpinning the data collection is provided in the appendix.

The warm-up phase, as the name suggests, was designed to help participants ease into the conversation. Although Misoch (2019: 68) proposes that the interviewer ask an open-ended question as broad as possible in this stage, I decided to elicit demographic and background information as a way to build rapport and help participants overcome initial shyness. As recommended by Patton (2023: 446), I ensured this section covered only necessary and relevant aspects to the rest of the interview. Through this set of questions, I aimed to highlight participants' professionalism and to gain a better understanding of their lifestyles, so I could later determine how relatable and realistic their routines are. In line with this objective, the aspects covered were the following:

- ✓ years of experience in the field of conference interpreting
- ✓ being accredited by professional organisations or institutions (other than EU or AIIC)
- ✓ subject matter expertise
- ✓ major (former) employers
- ✓ working languages and directionality
- ✓ language of the country of residence
- ✓ previous careers
- ✓ interpreting as a proportion of overall earnings
- ✓ family context
- ✓ staff interpreter or freelancer
- ✓ hobbies.

Even when certain demographic or background details were known in advance, I posed the full set of questions to each participant to maintain consistency and comparability across the dataset.

The core section of the interview was structured into three distinct thematic blocks (A, B, and C), each aimed to elicit a different layer of the participants and their potential habits. In terms of question types, I used direct, follow-up, probing, specifying, structuring, and

interpreting questions (Kvale 2007: 60-61). Block A represents the section designed to address the research question, by targeting participants' concrete habits in relation to A language maintenance, maintenance and enhancement of working languages, interpreting skills and strategies, keeping abreast of current affairs, professional self-presentation and client acquisition, health and lifestyle. As the study was conducted within the framework of Fogg's *Tiny Habits Method*, participants were required to depict the *Tiny Behavior* and report any use of *Anchors*, *Prompts*, or *Celebration* strategies to support the continuity of the respective habit.

Block B was dedicated to exploring factors that can derail a habit, such as fluctuations in motivation and the onset of boredom, as well as participants' potential strategies to outsmart them. Thus, Block B aimed to shed light on what helps participants maintain the habit mentioned in Block A, the extent to which these habits are easy to maintain, alongside the strategies employed on days when participants' drive fluctuates, whether there is a sense of boredom setting in over time and how they manage it.

Block C focused on participants' self-perception. Aiming to establish whether there is a connection between the way they perceive their role and their habits, in the last section of the interview, participants were asked how they would define the role of a conference interpreter to a client unfamiliar with the profession

The interview concluded with room for any remaining remarks from the participants.

5.6 Data Analysis

The interview material was analysed using Kuckartz & Rädiker's (2023) framework for structuring qualitative content analysis (QCA). QCA is organised around categories that guide the coding of all data relevant to the research question(s). Category development can be deductive, inductive, or deductive-inductive. The present study employed a deductive approach.

Given the fact that 'deductive' implies a logical derivation of the particular from the general, suggesting that category development follows a reproducible path, leading to the same results, Kuckartz & Rädiker take issue with this term, and argue that "a priori category development" would be a more appropriate alternative. However, since 'deductive category development' is well established within qualitative research methodology, Kuckartz & Rädiker (2023), as well as the present thesis, retain this terminology. Unlike inductively constructed categories, deductive ones are formulated prior to data analysis and are based on an existing conceptual system rather than on empirical data (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023: 50-51). Since the

interviews in this study were conducted using an interview guide as a structuring instrument, the thematic blocks of the guide served as the basis for the development of both categories and sub-categories at the beginning of QCA. The resulting category system, therefore, reflected the structure and sequence of the interview guide.

Yet, the first step involved text work and writing memos. Following Kuckartz & Rädiker's (2023) approach, I thoroughly read the transcripts and electronically highlighted text passages that could clearly be assigned to any categories, as well as passages that did not fall into any category but were noteworthy in the context of the thesis. I added comments to facilitate comparisons across interviews and to note connections to the existing literature. Since the interview guide already contained the main categories and subcategories, the corresponding analytical step did not require a separate implementation. The QCA subsequently proceeded to the next phase, in which the relevant text passages were coded in a spreadsheet. The main categories and subcategories were as follows:

HABITS:

- maintaining A-language proficiency
- maintaining B- and C-language proficiency
- interpreting skills and strategies
- staying abreast of current affairs
- professional self-presentation and client acquisition
- health and lifestyle
- essential habits

SOURCES OF MOTIVATION

PERCEIVED ADDED VALUE

Consistent with Kuckartz & Rädiker's (2023: 54) observation that the greatest challenge in deductive category development lies in delineating categories precisely to avoid overlap, I encountered the same issue, as many of the participants' habits related to maintaining their working languages overlapped or intertwined with those concerning staying abreast of global events. To minimise this overlap, the type of media mentioned served as the distinguishing criterion. Newsletters valued for the quality of their language were assigned to the category of language proficiency, whereas news outlets appreciated for their journalistic quality were classified under keeping up with current events and critical thinking. The names of the categories and sub-categories were chosen in close alignment with the research question. They

were neither too broad nor overly detailed, while remaining sufficiently precise (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2023: 104). After completing the first coding cycle, since no inductively developed categories were necessary, I added one participant's remarks to the spreadsheet. Although deliberate practice was not explicitly mentioned during the interviews, one interpreter, who was familiar with Ericsson's framework, offered valuable insights that were discussed in a separate section (see section 7.8). Since interpreting proper had already been established as a sub-category in the interview guide, no modification of the analysis structure was necessary. The sixth phase of the QCA entailed a category-based analysis of the main categories. In the first main category, I also investigated the relationship between the different habits, searching for recurring patterns across participants, as well as similarities, discrepancies, and contradictions not only in the habits themselves but also in the media outlets and newsletter subscriptions recommended during the interviews. As noted previously, one participant's contribution was selected for in-depth interpretation (Schmidt 2010) due to its content-related characteristics (Rädiker & Kuckartz 2020: 98–99).

Each habit was analysed in terms of the components of Fogg's (2020) *Tiny Habit Recipe*, namely the *Anchor Moment*, the *Behavior*, and the *Celebration*. During the interviews, participants reported a range of behaviours that varied in frequency, structure, and developmental potential. Drawing on their accounts, I identified three useful categories:

- ❖ behaviours that occur irregularly or are context-dependent but are noteworthy – referred to as *best practices*
- ❖ behaviours that already have at least two components of Fogg's *Tiny Habits Recipe* (*Anchor Moment*, *Tiny Behaviour*, and *Celebration*), though few in numbers – referred to as *Identified smart habits*
- ❖ behaviours that are considered highly helpful but not performed consistently – referred to as *potential smart habits*

I refined the smart habits by adding *Anchor Moments*, either inferred from the participants' narratives, considered highly relatable, or from Fogg's online *Recipe Maker*, or *Celebrations* primarily selected from Fogg's (2020) suggested list, thereby illustrating how these behaviours can be hardwired into the routine of both seasoned and novice interpreters. Therefore, the behaviours reported during the interviews are organised into the three categories mentioned above at the end of each section.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introducing the Participants

As previously mentioned in section 3.2, the key knowledgeable interviewed had to be either EU-accredited or AIIC members. Therefore, one participant was EU-accredited, one participant was an AIIC member, and two participants were both. However, the accreditation landscape was broader than the initial organisations, extending to VKD (*der Verband der Konferenzdolmetscher* in Germany), ATA (*American Translators Association*), and NATO.

The average experience in high-level settings reported by the five participants was 32 years, with individual experience ranging from 22 to 40 years. Within these years, interviewees' careers had encompassed interpreting assignments for major institutions, including OSCE (*Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*), OECD (*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*), the UN (*United Nations*), the UN Geneva, the UN New York, UNESCO, the United States Department of State, FAO (*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States*), OPCW (*Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons*), World Bank, ICTY (*International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*), ICJ (*International Court of Justice*), ICC (*International Criminal Court*), and, self-evidently, the European Institutions (European Council, European Parliament, European Commission, European Court of Justice, Europol, Eurojust), and NATO. As interpreters for these institutions and organisations, and beyond, the participants reported expertise in nuclear weapons, demilitarisation, defence, geopolitics, EU-related topics, legal and financial affairs, business arbitration, the charitable sector, the life sciences, and the automotive sector. As two participants mentioned, EU-accredited interpreters do not typically specialise in specific fields unless they have a temporary contract or are fully employed, hence the term *EU-related topics*:

Parliamentary committees pretty much cover all possible legislative fields. So you talk about, you know, labelling one day and farming policies the next day, and then you have financial reporting and military procurement, and it's everything. [...] You don't specialise. You can't. (I-01, 00:01:52,996 - 00:03:07,229)

In terms of working languages, the group displayed notable variation. Two interviewees operated with two A languages, albeit unofficially. Four of the five participants reported having a B language, and, regarding C languages, two interviewees worked with two, two with one, and one with four. As for directionality, all five interviewees worked from their B- or C language(s) into their A language, and from their A language into their B language. To minimise the risk of identification, participants' A and B languages are reported individually, whereas

their C languages are presented collectively. Four of the five participants lived in the country of their A language, while one resided in the country of their C language.

Although two participants were former staff interpreters for NATO and the United States Department of State, at the time of data collection, all five were active as freelance interpreters, with one of them being a former NATO staff interpreter. For four of them, interpreting constituted their primary source of income, whereas for the fifth, it accounted for around 50% of total earnings. Only two interviewees had pursued other professional activities prior to becoming professional conference interpreters. However, these details are deliberately withheld, as their disclosure could compromise participant anonymity.

Given that the purpose of the present research was to gain insight into the professional routine of conference interpreters outside the booth, it was important to obtain a clearer understanding of their personal routine as well, since the two are most likely intertwined. By inquiring about their family situations, I aimed to explore their family responsibilities and, therefore, the amount of time and energy they can afford to invest in deliberate practice. However, participants' responses did not reveal a conclusive connection between their family context and the development of their habits. The questions concerning participants' hobbies were included to examine whether there are instances in which their hobbies and potential smart habits overlap.

Household constellations among the participants were diverse. Two participants lived with their spouses and had no children; one lived with a teenager; one lived with their spouse, with an adult daughter no longer residing in the house; and one participant lived with their spouse and two children.

Interestingly, when asked about their hobbies, no interviewee reported being unable to pursue them due to time scarcity. On the contrary. Since some combinations of hobbies are quite intriguing, I decided to present each participant's answers separately.

- According to I-01, being a freelance conference interpreter entails more travelling than actual work in the booth, which in turn provides him with “ridiculous amounts of time” for gaming, reading, and indulging his “incredibly vulgar taste” in television (I-01, 00:05:20,819 - 00:06:00,641).
- Apart from seasonal sports, such as swimming and skiing, I-02 likes running, Pilates, and reading.

- “I have many! [*laughing*]” was the reaction of I-03, who is fond of playing tennis and is a hobby rally driver, but also very passionate about charitable work.
- I-04 comes from a family with very strong musical traditions, which is why listening to music and singing have always played an important role in his life. He enjoys listening to music and singing, a passion he has cultivated over many years by performing in school and university choirs and, for the past 40 years, as a member of a private choir.
- One of I-05’s hobbies is learning Chinese, an activity she has taken up as part of her effort to keep her mind engaged. As a consequence of Russia’s diplomatic isolation following the invasion of Ukraine, there is no private market for Russian-speaking interpreters. Being affected by the geopolitical context herself, I-05 has not been able to interpret into her B language for the past 4 years. Therefore, in the search for a language that stimulates her brain to a similar degree retour interpreting into Russian used to, I-05 has started to learn Chinese by using an app and watching Chinese dramas, explaining her choice by saying, “I need a language that’s a puzzle, and I need to put it together” (I-05, 00:14:07,037 - 00:14:46,768). Asked whether she plans to add Chinese to her working languages, I-05 answer was, “Not at my age, no”. Although it was not mentioned at this stage of the interview, I-05 had taken up yoga, which was an important part of her routine at the time of the interview.

As reflected in the data, reading and sports were the most frequently mentioned hobbies, each referenced by three participants.

6.2 Smart Habits

6.2.1 Maintaining A-Language Proficiency

Drawing on participants’ responses, interpreters do not see the need to actively maintain and enhance their first language if they reside in the country where it is spoken, work a certain number of days a year, or have extensive experience. Therefore, I-02 explained that she did not make a conscious effort to maintain her German language skills, as German was part of her daily life through media consumption and regular communication. She feels sufficiently proficient in her first language and does not engage in targeted activities such as studying German idioms unless preparing for a specific assignment. I-04 maintains that working almost 80 days a year since 2006 has made it virtually impossible to “get out of shape” (I-04, PART I, 00:23:17,944 - 00:26:31,373). Along the same lines, I-03 stated that after more than 30 years of bi-activef interpreting, he no longer felt the need to actively pursue the enhancement of his

active languages.

As anticipated, reading was the answer to more than just one question during the interviews, including the one regarding the maintenance of the A language proficiency, and it emerged as by far the most frequently reported form of deliberate practice among the participants. However, based on participants' responses, the extensive reading that characterises their everyday life appears to be driven by a "curiosité universelle" Ilg (1958: 12, 24) more than anything else: "I'm interested in international affairs and what's going on in the world, and yeah, pretty much everything" (I-02, 00:18:18,208 - 00:19:07,669) or "I'm equally interested in, you know, weapons development as in research in terms of cold fusion. Or let's say there's lots of things I click on gleefully when I see the title pop up on my computer screen." (I-01, 00:43:07,715 - 00:44:32,076) Instead of seeing it "as a chore" (I-01, 00:10:14,479 - 00:10:26,411), they "pretty much read all the time" (I-03, 00:06:36,663 - 00:06:38,844). Judging by their phrasing – "*Obviously*, I read a lot" (I-03, 00:04:06,859 - 00:04:37,803, my emphasis) or "I'm *always* reading" (I-05, 00:20:41,589 - 00:21:08,578) – it can be assumed that reading is viewed as self-evident in interpreters' routine.

A recurring theme in the data was the growing difficulty of accessing high-quality reading material:

It looks like it's machine-translated nowadays, more than half of what the Romanian press is publishing. They take *Politico* and probably run it through a computer. Actually, those are good ones. When they don't use a computer, that's when you get a really bad translation into Romanian. So it's pretty difficult to keep Romanian alive. The language is deteriorating in society. It's surprisingly easier with English. (I-01, 00:06:24,868 - 00:07:58,356)

This view is echoed by I-04, who likewise finds it challenging to improve his Romanian skills by reading the press. When asked what news platforms they would recommend, the two Romanian-speaking participants mentioned *G4 Media*, *Hot News*, and *PressOne*. I-05 also expressed her dissatisfaction with the grammar and style of the English press:

The Guardian in the UK is the paper that I would most agree with. But the grammar and the sentence structure and the way they express themselves are so fuzzy and so badly written that I feel that my brain is turning into mush every time I read it. So I read *The Times*, which is far more conservative than my personal point of view. But at least the sentences are structured well, and the arguments are structured well, and I understand exactly what they're trying to say. Whereas with *The Guardian*, I'm just like, it's a rant.

Although following the press is indispensable for enhancing vocabulary, acquiring background knowledge, and staying informed, I-04 thinks interpreters should complement it with other forms of reading. Consequently, he committed to reading one poem every day (*Tiny Behavior*)

as a way of maintaining his vocabulary on feelings and keeping in touch with the rhythm of the language. To make this habit easier, he carries a pocketbook at all times from which he reads after finishing work or whenever he is trying to unwind (*Prompt*). Although he claimed he did not celebrate, his answer indicated otherwise: I am motivated to go on. Certainly. But I don't have a ritual, saying, 'Well done!' I just feel I've done a nice thing and that gives me joy. (I-04, PART 1, 00:35:11,756 - 00:35:29,144) While I-01 "never managed to develop a taste for Romanian literature", I-04 considers Mircea Eliade's writings to be the benchmark of high-quality Romanian language. Unlike I-01, who finds the quality of current translations into Romanian "appalling" (I-01, 00:06:24,868 - 00:07:58,356), I-04 takes great pleasure in reading translations of his former or retired colleagues, because it gives him the opportunity to consider alternative formulations and compare them to the translators' lexical and stylistic choices.

Nowadays, I-04 enhances his Romanian skills primarily by reading and listening to *Radio România Cultural (Tiny Behavior)* while driving (*Prompt*). For him, it is of paramount importance to live in the language environment (i.e. Romania), and he attributes much of his linguistic proficiency to his wife's "very high and cultivated Romanian" (I-04, PART I, 00:15:35,268 - 00:16:27,397). I-03 and I-05 also mentioned communicating with their spouse as a way to practice their first language. Though not anymore, during his training as an interpreter, I-04 actively worked to polish his Romanian. Apart from reading a lot, he:

- attended talks of leading intellectuals, whose contributions he admired
- exposed himself to a wide range of linguistic registers, including formal discourse, journalistic language, jargon, youth and subculture language.
- engaged in activities such as shadowing and dummy-booth practice
- purposefully sought out challenging interpreting settings that pushed him beyond his comfort zone, including church conferences, which posed difficulties not only because of their specialised terminology but also due to the cultural differences between the Catholic and the Orthodox traditions.

According to I-04, first-language maintenance is a relevant topic for interpreters who have been living abroad and working for the European Institutions for a longer period of time:

You can see in interpreters and colleagues who have Romanian A and our staff working in the European Institutions, that they, after 10, 15 years, themselves struggle to keep up, not the European-speak version of the Romanian language, but to keep a sound, complete, and palatable Romanian A. (I-04, PART I, 00:16:31,997 - 00:18:26,083)

Since prolonged exposure to a certain jargon can be detrimental to language proficiency, I-04 actively seeks to diversify his client portfolio and does not wish to work exclusively for the European Institutions.

Best practices:

- ✓ Attend talks of leading intellectuals.
- ✓ Read translations and reflect on translators' choices.
- ✓ Maintain a diversified client base to ensure exposure to various terminology and registers.

Identified smart habits:

- ✓ After I *pour myself a cup of coffee*, I will *read one newsletter*. To wire the habit into my brain, I will immediately “[t]hink, *Nicely done*” (Fogg 2020: 289).
- ✓ After I *get on the bus*, I will *read a poem*. To wire the habit into my brain, I will immediately *think*, “Yes, I’m good at creating habits.” (Fogg 2020: 289)
- ✓ After I *get the engine running*, I will *turn on the radio*. To wire the habit into my brain, I will immediately “[w]histle a happy song” (Fogg 2020: 289).

6.2.2 Maintaining B- and C-Language Proficiency

The strategies employed by participants to maintain proficiency in B and C languages largely overlap with those adopted for their A languages, with reading being mentioned by all of interviewees. In line with Albl-Mikasa’s (2013) findings, participants’ responses suggest a stronger focus on maintaining and improving their C language proficiency than on their A or B languages:

I certainly work on my C. I don’t work on my A language or my B language at all, because after all these years, I don’t really think I need to. But my C language does require work. [...] Yeah, well, obviously working with a C is something I’m not used to because I’ve never done it throughout my entire career. So knowing that there are perhaps words you won’t understand or idioms you won’t understand, it’s a new concept for me because in French and English, that simply doesn’t happen. (I-03, 00:09:11,844 - 00:09:53,736, 00:11:24,315 - 00:12:00,129)

I-03 suggested that interpreters make decisions about which working languages to prioritise based on considerations of cost-effectiveness, “because when you’re a professional interpreter, the language is not just a source of interest, it’s also a source of living” (I-03, 00:09:57,759 - 00:10:44,541) Since he had been interpreting bi-actively between his A and his B language for most of his career, he did not feel the need to work on his C proficiency until recently. He reported reading and listening to the news and podcasts in his C language, as well as communicating with native-speaker friends and colleagues (*Tiny Behaviors*). Although he

claims not to follow a fixed routine (no *Anchor Moment*) and to practise whenever time permits, he nevertheless manages to work on his C language two or three times a week. This, together with performing successfully when working with his C language, provides him with a sense of satisfaction (*Celebration*).

I-02 reads the news in all of her C languages, whereas she reads books only in two of them. She watches films and series and enjoys listening to podcasts while jogging. When asked whether she celebrates after listening to podcasts, I-02 was unaware of her *Celebration* habit: “I don’t really celebrate. I wouldn’t say I celebrate. No, I just think, ‘OK, yeah. Good that I know this now’. But I don’t say, ‘Well done, you’re so great!’ No, I don’t.”

I-01 described his home environment as predominantly English-speaking, with 90% of his media input and digital entertainment being in English. In addition, he has two C languages. Approximately 12 months prior to the interview, I-01 officially added one of them to his language combination: “[...] a lot of people do, and I was kind of feeling ashamed. That’s why I signed up for it, because I was the only one who was notoriously lazy and not adding languages.” (I-01, 00:13:04,162 - 00:13:16,070) To reach the necessary level of proficiency for the accreditation test, he began reading systematically and switching the language settings of his video games. I-01 maintains both of his C languages by reading the press in the morning and playing video games.

For I-04, reading serves as an important means of sustaining and further developing his B and C languages through extensive reading. He often carries pocket-sized editions of works by authors such as Rainer Maria Rilke. At the time of the interview, he was reading an old and elevated English translation of *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. When asked whether he celebrates remaining committed to this habit, I-04 said: “I don’t celebrate, but it encourages me to go on. If a habit is good, then I keep it, and I enforce it.” (I-04, PART 1, 00:34:49,268 - 00:34:58,592) For interpreters who have German in their combination, he considers mastering the variety of dialects of the German language is also “part of staying in shape”. As a result, he tries to interpret as much as possible on the German and Austrian market, but there are still dialects he needs to work on. He also reported enjoying watching *Akzente*, a German-language television programme broadcast by TVR, though he rarely has the opportunity to do so due to time constraints. I-04 cultivates his C languages through daily exposure to native speakers and listening to the radio.

The diplomatic isolation following the invasion of Ukraine has resulted in a significant

reduction in assignments for interpreters working with Russian, I-05 being one of them. Therefore, she is focusing less on cultivating her B language at the moment. Before the outbreak of the war, however, she not only consumed media and read books in Russian but also adopted a particularly interesting practice:

I would pull up the song, like the playlist of songs that I used to sing when I was learning Russian. [...] And that would like open a door in my brain to allow me to do bi-active work. So, I found that if I start working without having listened to the songs, it's very rocky. Whereas if I've listened to the songs, I start off like much smoother.[...] The songs are like a key to a door. And without that key to the door, I'm pounding on the door and getting bits and pieces, but I'm not getting the full experience of what I'm able to do. And when I listen to the music, and I sing along, then I can. Which I find is really interesting and really useful. And so I have a playlist on YouTube now. (I-05, 00:38:36,019 - 00:39:33,192, 00:39:36,214 - 00:44:51,425)

In contrast to the other participants, she finds podcasts somewhat frustrating because their pace feels too slow. She links this preference to the demands of interpreting, where she is accustomed to processing information while simultaneously listening and speaking. Consequently, she often increases the playback speed of classes or series to 1.5x.

As previously mentioned in section 5.6.1, I-05 was learning Chinese at the time of the interview. Although she does not intend to add Chinese to her working languages, she reported engaging with the language by spending time with her colleagues from the Chinese booth after work, using a language-learning app, and watching Chinese dramas before going to bed. When asked whether she celebrates the fact that she uses her Chinese app every day, I-05 was the only participant to acknowledge the benefits of celebrating the performance of a desired behaviour: "I should. I don't. I should, because that might keep me more disciplined to actually do the things that I'm trying to do. I can maintain discipline for a short time." (I-05, 00:35:06,924 - 00:37:18,629) While she does not celebrate learning Chinese on the app almost every day, she reported celebrating the progress: "I don't celebrate that I did the app, but when I watch the drama later, and I hear a new word, for the first time, that I had studied in the app, I'm like, 'Yes! Yes! Yes!'" (I-05, 00:35:06,924 - 00:37:18,629)

Best practices:

- ✓ Set the gaming consoles in the C language.
- ✓ Watch films and series.
- ✓ Maintain regular exposure to a wide range of dialects.
- ✓ Keep in regular contact with native speakers of the C language.
- ✓ Have a playlist with songs that help the brain immerse itself in the B/C language.

Identified smart habits:

- ✓ After I *shut down my computer for the day*, I will *read a page in my C language*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[c]lench [my] fists and say, *Yes!*” (Fogg 2020: 288)
- ✓ After I *put my running shoes on*, I will *listen to a podcast*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately *think, ‘Look at me, learning something new!’*
- ✓ After I *say good night to my kids*, I will *open my pocketbook*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[t]hink, *Nicely done!*” (Fogg 2020: 289).
- ✓ After I *put on my pyjama*, I will *watch an episode of a TV series in my C language*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately *think, ‘Look at me, learning something new!’*

Potential smart habits:

- ✓ After I *start the coffee maker/tea kettle*, I will *turn on the radio*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[s]ay, *Way to go!*” (Fogg 2020: 288)

6.2.3 Interpreting Skills and Strategies

Analysis of the data highlights three key observations regarding interpreters’ efforts to maintain and enhance their interpreting skills and strategies. First, the responses of three participants are consistent with earlier research. While one of the interviewees was very clear about not practising outside their booth work, the other two appeared to rely on the level they had reached over the course of their extensive experience. Having interpreted consecutively on a nearly daily basis during the early days of her career, I-05 perceives her competence as sufficiently established to perform without additional practice: “After 32-plus years of interpreting, I don’t actually practice anymore. I did consecutive interpreting for about 300 days straight for the first four years of my work. And so, I don’t practice consecutive anymore. I just do it.” (I-05, 00:46:50,534 - 00:50:21,097) I-05’s response aligns with the findings reported by Tiselius (2013) and Albl-Mikasa (2013), who observed that experienced interpreters engage in the deliberate practice of their interpreting skills only rarely, if at all. However, since I-05 has not exceeded 90 days of work a year over the last 25 years, she reported “my stamina is not the same as it was when I was just working all the time” (I-05, 00:46:50,534 - 00:50:21,097).

Second, it appears that conference interpreters participating in teaching activities are more likely to hone their interpreting skills. Since she does not work in consecutive mode in her professional practice, I-02 sometimes takes notes while her students are interpreting and then gives a short rendition based on those notes. She also practises her simultaneous

interpreting skills after the summer holidays or after extended breaks between assignments from a specific client. According to Tiselius (2018: 132), interpreting pedagogy follows closely Ericsson *et al.*'s (1993) framework, having practice of interpreting skill as its core: students spend much of their training time doing interpreting exercises, both in class and independently and are taught how to evaluate their performance, as well as provide feedback for their peers. It is thus conceivable that interpreters with teaching duties may be more inclined to engage in deliberate practice themselves, as they repeatedly underscore its importance to their students. I-04 described a similar situation, albeit without necessarily considering interpreting with his students as deliberate practice:

No, I don't really need to, because I teach almost every day. [...] And when I teach my [...] classes, which are often to prepare people for [organisation anonymised] or for [organisation anonymised], I interpret with my students. So even when I'm not interpreting with an official contract, I interpret every day. [...] I don't need to specifically train because I am training as I train other people, if you see what I mean (I-03, 00:12:49,984 - 00:13:24,709)

Since I-03 needs to provide feedback to his students, he was presumably referring to consecutive interpreting. Third, based on participants' responses, when asked about deliberately practising their main skill (i.e. their interpreting skill), whether they do it or not, interpreters usually tend to think first and sometimes only of consecutive interpreting, suggesting that seasoned interpreters do not consider it necessary to refine their simultaneous skills outside their work.

6.2.4 Keeping Abreast of Current Affairs

When it comes to staying abreast of global events, participants' responses indicate that interpreters are strongly committed to cultivating their critical thinking skills. I-01 claims that "you keep up with the events around the world if you want to be, you know, a critically thinking human being" (00:18:38,980 - 00:19:26,878), a view likewise supported by I-05. In her opinion, "one of the diseases of the planet right now" (I-05, 00:56:26,532 - 00:59:11,875) is that individuals tend to operate within information cocoons, restricting their awareness and consideration of other viewpoints. For interpreters who have English in their combination and want to maintain a balanced and informed perspective on global events, I-05 highly recommends *Tangle News*, a paid political newsletter subscription, since only very few publications "present more than one side of an argument". *Tangle News* explains major political issues from both left- and right-wing perspectives, while also incorporating expert analysis and the editor's own opinion. I-05 has also subscribed to various writers on Substack, including @kamilkazani and @aaronparnas, the latter of whom shares updates from the United States

also on TikTok and YouTube. I-03 is a subscriber to an independent US news platform called *The Contrarian*, created by former *New York Times* and *Washington Post* journalists, who are committed to free speech and objective journalism. Other sources mentioned during the interviews were: *Politico* and *The Economist* (for English), the *Défense et Sécurité Internationale* magazine (for French), *elDiario* (for Spanish), *PressOne* (for Romanian).

Regarding interpreting, I-04 holds that interpreters need to be critical thinkers to understand the speaker's point of view before beginning their rendition. However, given the current level of polarisation in public discourse, it has become increasingly difficult to discern what is happening. As a result, for widely discussed topics, I-04 makes a point of consulting several diverse sources when verifying the information. While it would be desirable to also find the ultimate truth in the process, the reason why he does this is that the same issue can be viewed very differently and must be interpreted accordingly, depending on the speaker. Therefore, after reading American mainstream news platforms, I-04 likes to gain another perspective from other sources, such as *The Epoch Times* – an alternative outlet viewed as subversive or conspiratorial by the mainstream. He primarily follows political and economic news outlets, but he is also very interested in health-related topics, which is reflected in the habits he reported in section 5.6.7. Moreover, interpreters working for the European Parliament need to keep abreast not only of major political developments but also of current events from the week before each plenary session, including the Olympics or major football matches. Many male politicians follow football closely and draw frequently on match results, national rivalries or sporting achievements in their speeches. Interpreters must also be familiar with buzzwords, nicknames, and jargon used on social media in relation to current affairs. Speakers often believe they code when they use them, but “[i]t’s not a big science.” (I-04, PART 1, 00:29:28,223 - 00:31:26,247)

Although the habit of consuming media is pervasive in their everyday life, interpreters usually engage in it as part of their morning routine. I-01 describes himself as a “creature of habit” (I-01, 00:09:43,084 - 00:09:43,524) and spends almost every morning staying in bed for two to three hours and reading the news (*Tiny Behavior*) while having coffee (*Anchor*). A second round of news consumption typically occurs in the evening before bedtime, though mornings appear to be the preferred time window, as evenings are less predictable. Similarly, I-03 reported starting and ending his day by listening to radio posts, such as *BBC World Service* or *France Culture*, while in bed. He prefers radio over television partly because it allows him to engage in other activities at the same time. However, as discussed, he also engages in extensive reading, although this activity is not anchored to any particular habit or routine: “It

could be three in the morning, it could be lunchtime, it could be anytime I have a moment free in between commitments.” (I-03, 00:07:09,454 - 00:07:35,440) The routine reported by I-04 is similar: after completing the “starting phase” of the morning, he reads the press (*Tiny Behavior*) while having coffee or tea. Since it is not clear which behaviour in the “starting phase” (I-04, PART II, 00:01:44,640 - 00:01:57,743) is followed by the habit of reading the press, it can be assumed that the activity is prompted by the habit of drinking coffee. Although I-02 also catches up on the news over coffee in the morning sometimes, this is not always the case, as her everyday life is very fluid. For I-05, following the news is not tied to a particular routine but is fitted into the day whenever time allows.

When asked whether they celebrate after reading the news, participants seemed to consider the idea almost ridiculous: “For reading the press?! Come on. No.” (I-01, 00:10:34,561 - 00:10:39,848) Moreover, interviewees’ responses suggest that keeping abreast of current affairs may come at a psychological cost, as constant exposure to negative news can be emotionally draining. Four of the five participants indicated that keeping up with global events leaves them stressed, depressed and overwhelmed due to the constant stream of bad news in the political and economic fields:

I stay in bed for hours, and I read the press and get really depressed and angry. [...] I’m not congratulating myself for reading the press. I curse myself for reading the press.” (I-01, 00:09:11,865 - 00:09:38,102, 00:10:55,846 - 00:11:18,659)

At the time of the interview, I-02 was considering protecting her mental health by doing “a total news detox” (I-02, 00:21:09,739 - 00:22:06,551). The potential effect of reducing news exposure is illustrated by I-01: I took, I think it was a 10-day break starting right before Christmas. It was the best 10 days of my life.” (I-01, 00:10:55,846 - 00:11:18,659) However, the habit of staying informed is so well entrenched that interpreters seem unable to refrain from keeping up with the news despite the emotional toll: “But then if you’re an addict, you go back, and you get angry again.” (00:10:55,846 - 00:11:18,659) He goes on by saying: It’s, you know, masochism. I need to punish myself basically. So yeah, I’m a glutton for that bad news every morning. So yeah, I go for it.” (I-01, 00:10:14,479 - 00:10:26,411) In fact, it was the psychological strain of reading the news that determined I-04 to create the habit of reading a poem on the days he does not work (see section 5.6.2), as a strategy to help him cope with the stress.

In the case of firmly rooted habits, Fogg (2020: 140) finds that the reward, though optional, remains highly beneficial. Yet, given the emotional distress reported by the

participants, I suggest that interpreters implement Fogg's *Pearl Habits*: "They use prompts that start out as irritants then turn into something beautiful". (Fogg 2020: 120) Given that staying informed is not a habit interpreters can omit from their routine if they wish to be successful, employing a *Pearl Habit* would help them protect their mental well-being while still keeping abreast of current affairs. Thus, instead of celebrating the fact that they keep track of global issues, they would use the stress that this habit causes them as an *Anchor* for performing a behaviour that counteracts the mental burden (*Tiny Behavior*). To encode this new sequence of behaviours, they would immediately celebrate. *Pearl Habits* recipes for interpreters can be found below.

Best practices:

- ✓ Develop critical thinking skills by exposing oneself to a diverse range of news sources and perspectives.
- ✓ If interpreting for the European Parliament, stay informed about sporting events, such as the Olympic Games or major football matches that have taken place a week prior to the assignment.

Potential *Pearl Habits*:

- ✓ After I *finish reading the news*, I will say, "It's going to be a great day" (*Tiny Habits Recipe Maker*). To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately "[s]mile big" (Fogg 2020: 288).
- ✓ After I *feel overwhelmed*, I will "turn on music that makes me feel calm and happy" (*Tiny Habits Recipe Maker*). To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately "[i]magine being on [my] favourite beach" (Fogg 2020: 290).
- ✓ After I *feel depressed*, I will "think of one thing I am grateful for" (*Tiny Habits Recipe Maker*). To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately "[w]hisper *Thank you, Lord!*" (Fogg 2020: 290)

6.2.5 Professional Self-Presentation and Client Acquisition

Regarding self-presentation and client acquisition, the findings indicate three distinct approaches within the sample. Although all participants were freelancers, it made a significant difference who their client was. Therefore, three of the four interpreters who were either EU- or NATO-accredited said that they did not engage in any efforts to expand their client base "actively or passively or in any way." (I-01, 00:20:17,682 - 00:20:43,019) Moreover, according

to I-03, seasoned interpreters – unlike students (or novices) – do not need to actively pursue clients, as their established reputation precedes them:

I tend to wait for clients to come to me. And I'm also lucky because I've been doing it a long time. People know me. I don't have to do what my students have to do, which is to continually put themselves forward and try to find work. (I-05, 00:19:05,859 - 00:20:01,685)

Despite being EU-accredited as well, I-04 reported keeping track, at least for the last 20 years, not only of his working days, but also of his clients. His Excel sheet provides a structured overview of his working days for both the EU and the free market, as well as a record of the fields in which he has been interpreting. I-04 has developed this habit not only for practical reasons, such as being able to provide clients with concrete data on assignments performed in specific domains, but also to maintain awareness of his dependence on certain employers:

[...] that helps me, for instance, realise, as I did in the last three years, how dependent I am on a specific employer. That's also marketing. [...] I realise, "Okay, this is the point where we need to diversify. Maybe you're too dependent on one or the other of institutional employers." And then it would be nice to return to the local market, not to be forgotten by it. So that sometimes gives me a heads up about what I should do next. (I-04, PART II, 00:10:25,137 - 00:14:27,838)

Downie endorses the same course of action, suggesting that to be successful entrepreneurs, interpreters need to ensure an adequately diversified client portfolio (Downie 2016: 16). I-04 also reported occasionally attending CPD courses organised by colleagues, ATPD (AIIC Training and Professional Development), and VKD. Moreover, he stays in touch with colleagues who work as consultant interpreters and exchanges insights with them regarding negotiation techniques. Since these behaviours, albeit noteworthy, occur irregularly, they do not qualify as smart habits, but as best practices.

However, one participant's account is particularly rich, yielding the largest set of smart habits on self-presentation and client acquisition. Apart from investing significant resources in CPD, I-05 has subscribed to Substack copywriters, such as Ash Ambirge, to learn how to improve her professional emails, and she enjoys reading marketing books and magazines. When talking about reading *SUCCESS Magazine* while travelling, she notes: "there's always one article in there that's got something that is of use to me, if not two or three, you know, and I just read them all and cover to cover". (I-05, 01:05:13,007 - 01:07:29,814) She works with a business coach and employs a highly proactive approach, treating every interaction as an opportunity to promote her services. Moreover, she is highly focused on maintaining and increasing her visibility by staying active on LinkedIn, her main marketing platform, a habit of

particular relevance for the present study. I-05 reported that she posts or comments on LinkedIn twice or thrice a day (*Tiny Behaviour*):

I don't tend to get through my feeds, I tend to go through notifications to see what other people in my community are looking at. And then sometimes I'll go through the feed and see something really interesting outside of interpreting and comment on it from an interpreting point of view. So my comments sometimes get more likes. (I-05, 01:02:35,589 - 01:05:07,723)

Although it is not a strict rule, two of these checks usually have an *Anchor*: one happens right after waking up, and the other before going to bed. The more thorough check, though, happens sometime in the afternoon and is not linked to any other specific activity. When asked whether she celebrates in any way after completing this habit, I-05 (01:09:52,886 - 01:12:31,434) answered: "I don't really celebrate. I just- I have a breath of relief because I like the commenting part, because I'm in a conversation with people." Interestingly, though, once she has posted content, she shares it with her spouse, whose keen interest in her work motivates her. According to Fogg (2020: 288), individuals can celebrate performing a *Tiny Behavior* by thinking of their best friend being happy for them or by imagining getting a big hug from someone they love. The list of ways to celebrate is open, allowing individuals to add new ways that are specifically tailored to their own needs. In other words, I-05 does, in fact, celebrate, even though she is not aware of it. Instead of imagining her spouse's reactions, she actually shows him her content and enjoys his positive reaction in real time. Furthermore, the dynamics of the LinkedIn algorithm represent an additional factor to consider. Like on many other social media platforms, LinkedIn users can see not only who has liked their posts but also who has viewed them. A substantial body of neuroscience and social-media research suggests that social feedback, such as likes, views, or positive engagement, activates neural reward systems associated with dopamine release (see, for instance, Sherman *et al.* 2016; Lindström *et al.* 2021). Therefore, the likes and views that I-05's posts and comments receive also qualify for ways to feel *Shine* (see section 1.4.6).

The pattern emerging from participants' answers to this question supports several conclusions. On the one hand, in the case of interpreters who work for the large international organisations, such as the EU or NATO, the former being the largest source of conference interpreting work, engaging in self-presentation or client acquisition activities is either rare or entirely absent, since income tends to be stable, client relationships are dependable, and marketing is typically handled by others (Downie 2016: 25). On the other hand, the high visibility of seasoned interpreters, built over the course of their careers, allows them to attract

assignments through reputation, established networks, referrals, and repeat clients, rather than proactively pursuing clients.

Best practices:

- ✓ Attend CPD courses designed to enhance business competence.
- ✓ Learn from new negotiation techniques from colleagues who are consultant interpreters.
- ✓ Maintain an overview of clients and assignments to avoid excessive reliance on particular clients.
- ✓ Consult a business coach for personalised advice.
- ✓ Approach each encounter as an opportunity to market your services.

Identified smart habits:

- ✓ After I *wake up / am ready to go to bed*, I will *share a post / leave a comment on LinkedIn*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately *show it to my spouse*.

Potential smart habits:

- ✓ After I *sit down with my coffee*, I will *read one page from a business book*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[i]magine the sound of a slot machine jackpot”. (Fogg 2020: 290)
- ✓ After I *get on the subway*, I will *read one Substack newsletter*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[s]ay to [myself]: *Yes, I am good at creating habits!*” (Fogg 2020: 289)

6.2.6 Health and Lifestyle

As indicated by their hobbies, all five respondents seek to lead physically active lifestyles, primarily through aerobic exercise. In addition to the activities mentioned in section 4.6.1, participants added walking, playing tennis, using the treadmill, cycling, hiking in the summer, and ice skating in the winter. I-02 and I-05 take regular Pilates and yoga classes or go for regular walks. However, for non-season-related activities, participants not enrolled in classes reported struggling to maintain consistency: “I walk. I try to walk every day. I don’t always manage. I could probably do with a reminder for walking, actually. That would be a good idea.” (I-03, 00:20:12,371 - 00:21:00,502) Some responses also suggest the interviewees have become more health-conscious and started trying to exercise more because of their age: “55! Yeah, I need to

get on a treadmill every day. I don't. It's maybe every other day." (I-01, 00:20:55,199 - 00:21:10,089)

When asked about any preparatory habits prior to assignments, only two interviewees reported engaging in such practices, while the others responded:

No, not really. And when you're a staff interpreter, [...] it's more, I'm not saying it's a routine job, but it's obviously more like a nine-to-five job. And so you get up, and you go to work, and you have habits like, for example, do you have breakfast? Do you have a glass of fruit juice? Do you have a cup of coffee? Do you have maybe a second cup of coffee when you arrive at work? That sort of thing. But it's more linked to your lifestyle than it is to the interpreting as such. So it's not really an interpreting thing. It's more because you're an international civil servant. You have a structure around your life. (I-03, 00:21:27,114 - 00:22:06,683)

One participant proved to be particularly attentive to maintaining peak performance readiness both before and during assignments, and many of his habits align with Celoch's suggestions (see section 4.3.2). Professional conference interpreting is often associated with substantial travel demands. To mitigate the physical strain of frequent air travel, I-04 regularly consults his physiotherapist:

As every seasoned interpreter, I have regular visits from or to my *kiné*, or to my physiotherapist, or to my annual therapist. And I'm lucky I can say I can afford them now. I wasn't always able to. But that's mostly to relieve the physical tension in my muscles and my joints from extensive travelling, which is a health concern. [...] It's lower pressure, then high pressure, then lower pressure, then high pressure. You don't hydrate enough. [...] You sit wrongly and, you know, you're squeezed in a small aeroplane, and you have to sit for two hours without moving, and it's a pain in the neck. (I-04, PART I, 00:41:50,000 - 00:42:24,237)

In terms of nutrition, I-04 makes a point of consuming greens and vegetables daily. On the morning of an assignment, I-04 makes sure he has a high-protein breakfast for longer-lasting satiety, especially prior to consecutive or liaison assignments with a new client, when break arrangements cannot be anticipated. Apart from significantly higher satiety, fullness, and satisfaction, a protein-rich breakfast has been shown to improve cognitive concentration by 3,5% compared to a high-carbohydrate breakfast (Dalgaard *et al.* 2024).

Sometimes I-04 does articulation and breathing exercises on his way to the assignment, and does a few exercises when alone in the booth to help him open his lungs:

We had a high-tension, high-pressure meeting. The fast speaker was delivering a very controversial speech on a topic that may not be my preferred one. Besides all the cognitive load of following the speaker, you also have psychological pressure on you. And in these cases, it's always nice to remember that breathing through your belly will keep the airflow open and keep you from getting stuck. [...] When I was in interpreting school, I was always told, "Take a deep breath, and relax, and, you know, just go on." And I learned to reverse that, and I said, "First exhale, then take a deep breath. [...] and then you're hyperventilating, you will have a

high frequency breathing, but it will be inefficient. You start breathing through your mouth, and that is why my preparations are rather mental to wind down, to have a clear mind, not to think too much just before I start, but maybe to relax. When I'm alone in the booth, I do the strangest workouts. (I-04, PART I, 00:38:06,762 - 00:40:09,306)

With increasing experience in the profession, he has come to view focus not as directing one's attention towards a specific point, but rather as remaining fully present. To remain present, I-04 often practises a breathing exercise called *Awakening the Soul*.

I-04 ensures he is adequately but not excessively hydrated. He tries to work as long as he can before drinking coffee, then has a *social* coffee to unwind and restore energy and concentration. However, he drinks coffee only once a day and never after lunch, since it creates a cycle of highs and lows and dehydrates the body. Instead of coffee or black tea, I-04 opts for chamomile tea, as it also helps maintain vocal cord health. In addition, he deliberately refrains from consuming sugary and between-meal snacks, arguing that they can impair concentration and mental alertness. A similar approach can be observed in I-05's account, who never eats dessert or drinks alcohol on the job to avoid drowsiness.

The topic of mental hygiene and stress management after assignments was also mentioned during the interviews. According to I-04, every interpreter handles the stress of the profession differently.

I just leave everybody behind and take my dog out. [...] Nature and the outdoors are my main stress relief. And there are also other means of stress relief, [...] because our work is stressful. Very stressful. And you need to wind down, and there are specific things that one can choose to do. After an assignment, some are zipping through TV channels. Some are just doing extreme sports. They go bouldering right after the conference. Some, admittedly or not, will try to, you know, soak their stress in alcohol or just get a very quick release of the tension. But that is a completely different chapter. We could talk for hours about that. (I-04, PART II, 00:16:28,623 - 00:18:17,757)

While discussing lifestyle habits, another intriguing aspect was addressed. Oftentimes, interpreters have been portrayed as more extroverted and translators as more introverted, reflecting the interactive and public nature of interpreting compared with the largely solitary work of translation. While this hypothesis has not been conclusively confirmed yet, research suggests that interpreters may be, in fact, ambiverts (Dóra 2023: 287), meaning they exhibit features of both introverts and extroverts, a theory supported also by I-05's statement:

I am a people person during a meeting, and then I desperately- I'm an introvert on how I recharge. [...] I absolutely have to have a few hours of recharge on my own. So that'll be just before bed. And so if I've been peopling through dinner, then I'll take a longer time reading or watching something de-peopling. And if I haven't been peopling during dinner, then I can hit the hay a bit earlier because I don't need to have the de-peopling time. But that's also why

I start my day so early too, is I de-people in the morning before I have to start. (I-05, 01:19:56,672 - 01:22:58,927)

Moreover, the respondents described a form of shared understanding of colleagues' routines in which interpreters accommodate each other's habits and needs:

[...] my best partners are the ones that know not to touch me before 10. Like the meeting may start at eight, but they know not to like be too perky or anything before 10, and preferably not before noon.

Even though participants were not asked whether they used any reminders or celebrated after performing their health- or lifestyle-related behaviours, I-03 confessed that he does try to walk every day but does not always manage, and that using a reminder to help him reach 10,000 steps a day would indeed be very helpful.

Participants' responses point to the conclusion that conference interpreters tend to be attentive to their physical health but often struggle to maintain consistency unless they make exercise part of a clearly defined routine. Since three of the four participants who were either EU- or NATO-accredited reported not engaging in any health- or lifestyle-related habits before assignments, it can be assumed that interpreters who work primarily for institutions or organisations rarely focus on such aspects. Based on I-04's statement, it can be inferred that not all interpreters know how to manage in a healthy way the stress they experience in their profession.

Given the small sample size, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory and cannot be assumed to be representative of the wider conference interpreting community. Consequently, caution is warranted when attempting to generalise the results of the present study.

Best practices

- ✓ Pay regular visits to the physiotherapist to release muscle and joint tension caused by extensive travel.
- ✓ Hydrate adequately but not excessively.
- ✓ Drink chamomile tea to maintain vocal cord health.
- ✓ Limit coffee intake to a single cup, preferably after settling into the interpreting task, but never after lunch.
- ✓ Have a high-protein breakfast prior to assignments.
- ✓ Consume greens and vegetables.

Potential smart habits:

- ✓ After I *turn on the TV*, I will *start the treadmill*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[s]trike a power pose” (Fogg 2020: 289).
- ✓ After I *leave the house*, I will *do one breathing exercise*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[i]nhale and think of energy entering [me]” (Fogg 2020: 289).
- ✓ After I *feel stressed*, I will *exhale gently*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[t]hink about the good feeling [I] get when [I am] with [my] dog” (Fogg 2020: 290).
- ✓ After I *close the door of the booth*, I will *stretch my body briefly*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[t]hink, *Yes, I got this!*” (Fogg 2020: 289)
- ✓ After I *sit in the booth*, I will *gently massage my jaw*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[i]magine the taste of chocolate” (Fogg 2020: 289).
- ✓ After I *crave a sugary snack*, I will *drink a glass of water*. To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[i]magine an audience applauding” (Fogg 2020: 289).
- ✓ After *the waiter asks me if I will have dessert/alcohol*, I will say, ‘No, thank you.’ To wire this habit into my brain, I will immediately “[v]isualize fireworks going off for [me]” (Fogg 2020: 288).

6.2.7 Essential Habits

When asked which habits they considered essential for maintaining peak performance, participants highlighted a range of behaviours reflecting different aspects of their professional lives. Due to time constraints, the interview concluded before I-05 could answer this question.

I-02 emphasised that regular exposure to all kinds of content in all working languages is paramount for maintaining and developing listening comprehension. To sustain this habit and derive maximum benefit, interpreters need to set aside dedicated time and space to engage in activities that improve their listening skills and minimise potential distractions. I-02 explained that listening to podcasts while jogging helps her maintain focus, as the *Activity Anchor* (jogging) reduces the need to consciously resist the distractions at home, allowing her to concentrate fully on the auditory input.

For seasoned interpreters who want to take their skills to the next level, I-03 considers it vital to cover all the components of the interpreting skill during their deliberate practice sessions, including their B language, simultaneous with text, shadowing, and even speed reading. Moreover, he recommends intensive training over a shorter period rather than less intensive training over a longer period.

In I-01's opinion and similar to the findings of Albl-Mikasa's (2013) research, the quality that interpreters cannot afford to lose is their curiosity, which enables interpreters to constantly refine their working languages and expand their general knowledge:

For working languages, you cannot afford to lose your genuine and almost pathological curiosity and interest in pretty much everything. [...] You have to keep that alive. You have to keep an interest alive. Pretty much everything needs to fascinate you from, I don't know, from urban development to farming policies. Because there is something interesting in each and everything, and it's all affecting this, but you can't just let life pass you by. [...] It's just the big events pass you by without you know, delving deep into them in all languages that you use. But that's, that's a different thing. So yeah, stay curious, stay interested. And spontaneously so, and genuinely so. That keeps you going. (I-01, 00:43:07,715 - 00:44:32,076)

Finally, I-04 highlighted the importance of adequate sleep before assignments, arguing that physical and mental fitness constitute essential prerequisites for high-quality interpreting performance.

6.3 Deliberate Practice Through the Lens of an Interpreter

Although the concept of deliberate practice was not explicitly mentioned to the interviewees, one participant, who had taught interpreting courses at the university for 24 years and was familiar with Ericsson's framework, contributed noteworthy reflections. According to I-01, improvements in interpreting performance are driven largely by activities that are not directly related to the interpreting skills themselves but rather to language proficiency, a view that reinforces the findings of Tiselius (2013) and Albl-Mikasa (2013).

I don't do deliberate practice, and I have, therefore, hit a plateau. What we do in terms of improving our interpreting skills is not really related to the interpreting skills per se. Very few interpreters, after graduation, do that. I know that. Most of them are my students. I mean, I hardly ever work without a former student next to me in the booth. There's three of us. One of them will be, at least one of them. Sometimes, both of them are my former students. We work on our languages, but languages and language proficiency is not really an interpreting skill, is it? It's language proficiency. To develop better coping strategies for dealing with read speeches, coping strategies for thick accents, you name it, we don't do that. We don't want that. Not deliberately, not in terms of what Ericsson described as deliberate practice. Set your objectives, pursue them, and get feedback from someone else. That never happens. That never happens. (I-01, 00:15:23,222 - 00:17:05,958)

In other words, practice plays a central role in interpreter training but rarely afterwards, an observation that aligns with Shreve (2006: 29), who posits that "informative feedback" is commonly confined to pedagogical settings. I-01 attributes the discontinuity of practice to the lack of feedback, which he considers "an essential ingredient" (00:23:03,329 - 00:23:47,577). In his opinion, it would be erroneous to claim engagement in deliberate practice in the absence of feedback, as this would diverge from Ericsson's framework, yet not all feedback is helpful.

In the booth, interpreters help each other with terminology, but simply telling a colleague they provided an incorrect rendition or missed a certain part may be helpful only occasionally; more often than not, such comments offer little professional benefit and are unlikely to strengthen collegial relations.

To my shame, I was asked for feedback. On at least one occasion. And I knew what Erickson recommended. I knew that this is the way to go. I admired the young colleague for his courage. But I said: 'I can't be the judge of your work'. I declined. I was a coward. It's not done. You never know how people are going to take it. It's just not done. We don't do deliberate practice. We don't take feedback from colleagues. Hardly ever. Hardly ever. (I-01, 00:15:23,222 - 00:17:05,958)

Instead of asking for general feedback, which I-01 considers to be hardly helpful, especially in later stages, interpreters should approach their colleagues with a specific request regarding the aspect that should be monitored during the assignment at hand:

"Okay, we're having this, there's going to be a lot of French, I have a problem with numbers in French, just pay attention, see how many of them I get, what maybe I should have done, maybe approximate that one, and then give me feedback on how I handled long numbers in this particular meeting". (I-01, 00:29:20,679 - 00:30:47,891)

However, in order to be able to formulate a request of this kind, interpreters would need to have a clearly defined growth plan – short-term, medium-term, and long-term, or at least a short-term one. As far as he is concerned, I-01 holds that unless the feedback provided during interpreting courses follows the same structure:

You're wasting ridiculously expensive classroom time on vague general feedback. You're not training your students properly if you don't do focused, objective-related feedback. And that means state your short-term objectives, pursue them actively by designing the exercises accordingly, and then request feedback on that thing and not on anything else. I-01, 00:31:10,251 - 00:31:46,905)

A similar perspective was expressed by I-04, who suggested that proper feedback is a luxury:

[...] even if you have worked 30 years, you know where your weak points are, and your strong points are, but you'd love some feedback and some honest, good feedback, not just, "Oh, I love your work." That doesn't mean anything to me. So, yeah, feedback is an art. To give proper feedback to an interpreter and not only to interpreters. (I-04, PART II, 00:09:06,586 - 00:10:04,513)

Interpreters who start working at the European Parliament are assigned a mentor for 3-4 years, during which they receive some feedback. However, as I-01 pointed out, the question is whether they are still growing after 10, 15, or 20 years in the profession. For interpreters who want to practise their interpreting skills, including their return, the European Parliament occasionally organises weekly practice sessions. Although such sessions take place at a particular time of the week when I-01 is otherwise professionally engaged, he assumes that regular attendees can set

their objectives and receive peer feedback. As helpful as practice sessions of this kind may be, they remain fairly limited, and, as I-01 (00:25:51,913 - 00:26:50,894) remarks, “deliberate practice should be systematic, should be daily”. To ask for feedback, interpreters would need to have a very good dynamic with a small group of colleagues, and while I-01 does not rule out that possibility, he is not aware of it happening. He attributes interpreters’ reluctance to ask their peers for feedback to the fact that it is not a common practice and simply not part of the culture of interpreters who work for the European Institutions, so much so that a request of this kind would provoke a strong reaction among colleagues: “It would be just really weird for me to say that, especially to a former student. They might recommend retirement for me, you know. ‘You’re getting senile. What kind of request is that? Go away, piss off.’ “ (I-01, 00:28:30,846 - 00:29:11,594) Whether aware or not, I-01 puts a finger on what seems to be a particularly delicate aspect in interpreters’ professional life: being vulnerable. While he could not explain exactly what prevents interpreters from seeking feedback and help from their peers, the literature suggests a plausible underlying mechanism. According to Downie (2016: 26), apart from the worried looks and puzzled reactions that such requests usually occasion, colleagues might wonder ““Doesn’t he already have the right skills? Should she really be working if there are skills she still has to hone?”” Therefore, the reason why interpreters, especially established interpreters, first need a very good dynamic with a small group of colleagues before asking for feedback is because, by doing so, they risk being vulnerable and being forced to admitting their imperfections in front of other members of the profession, we realise it because it requires building relationships and risking vulnerability (Downie 2016: 26). In an interview conducted by Jonathan Downie, Elisabet Tiselius attributes interpreters’ difficulty to admit their weaknesses and work on them to two factors. First of all, the professional landscape of interpreting is highly competitive and “not necessarily a warm, open, generous world”. Secondly, interpreters’ capacity to convince their listeners relies on an internalised belief in one’s excellence (Tiselius in Downie 2016: 31). When asked whether it might be possible that interpreters shy away from asking for feedback or the help of a mentor because they do not want anyone to find out about their weaknesses, I-01’s answer presented a conflicting picture. While he deems it quite possible, he reminds me that interpreters inevitably hear each other making mistakes in the booth but simply do not say anything to each other since it may come across as impolite.

From I-01’s standpoint, after passing the accreditation test, interpreters may adopt the misconception that no further professional growth is necessary and that the level they have

reached will suffice for the rest of their careers. He proceeds to argue that:

[...] once you start working, once you're comfortable, you get lazy, and you think you're the best in the world, because most of us think we are the best interpreters in the world. We're all *prima donnas*. It's a feature of our profession, I fear. (I-01, 00:17:47,506 - 00:18:24,447)

While Downie (2016: 26) confirms that the interpreting community has created a culture that encourages interpreters to present themselves as flawless and highly polished, he warns that this approach does not serve anyone. In fact, he maintains that it all comes down to interpreters' skill sets in the end, and that a *prima donna* who struggles with the speaker's jokes or has poor public-speaking skills should be pitied.

However, I-01 firmly believes that deliberate practice is an absolute necessity and that Ericsson's methodology deserves greater attention in postgraduate training programs in order to teach students how to engage in deliberate practice throughout their careers and avoid reaching a performance plateau. According to I-01, without deliberate practice, interpreters risk failing to achieve their full potential as professionals and may plateau in their development:

I'm not sure that unless we do it right, again, the way Ericsson described it, we can be successful. There's probably some incremental improvement. Clearly, an experienced interpreter will work better than a rookie, because your brain will do the work for you. The routine will simplify a lot of things. With automation, the burden, the cognitive burden, decreases, and you automatically allocate resources when problematic elements appear with more ease than a beginner. So yeah, there is progress, but it's not where it should be, in the absence of deliberate practice, again. (I-01, 00:24:04,102 - 00:25:07,949)

6.4 Sources of Motivation

When it comes to the factors that help interpreters maintain the habits mentioned in this thesis, participants' responses suggest that what drives conference interpreters is their fascination with their profession. Although they had been interpreting for decades, participants appeared to treat every single assignment with the same "pathological curiosity and interest" (I-01, 00:43:07,715 - 00:44:32,076) as at the beginning of their careers, constantly looking forward to learning something new:

I'm always amazed at how wonderful and diverse our profession is. And I'm always motivated to learn about all these microcosms that coexist. It's like parallel realities. I am so excited every time. And I've flown close to one and a half million kilometres in my life. [...] I'm always celebrating when I learn a new profession through interpreting. My most recent profession, in which I think I'm quite qualified – I just didn't have the hands-on experience because I was the interpreter – is exchanging windscreens of cars, including race cars. I mean, if you're an interpreter in such a course, you get to know a totally different world. And I've been, you know, I've been a logger before, and I've learned so much about wood. I never thought, you know, wood is wood is wood, you chop it, you burn it, or you make nice furniture of it. And so there's so many things you can learn, and I think this is not equal by any other profession. Pilots fly in the skies, always in the sun, over the clouds. It's very nice, but they're pilots, and

they do this every day, and we can be pilots one day, and, you know, painters the other day, and it's totally- I think it's unparalleled. That is my main motivation – to do something new. Yes. Do something new. Sometimes I really prefer and accept to work for a minor client, which comes with a totally different, totally new task for me than going for the better paid, you know, political work that I've been doing for the past two decades.

Moreover, I-04 described the satisfaction associated with ‘aha’ moments, such as identifying the perfect collocation or recalling previously acquired knowledge, as intrinsically rewarding. These small successes provide “not only serotonin and all those nice hormones we like to sometimes substitute with chocolate, but it's also- it confirms that I'm doing the right thing” (I-04, PART II, 00:09:06,586 - 00:10:04,513). Asked whether they ever experienced a sense of boredom, all participants agreed that this rarely occurred, as there was always something interesting to discover or learn.

I-03 acknowledged that while willpower may initially drive his habits, it is not always reliable, which is why he firmly believes that routines exist to help interpreters become better performers. Although he is proud of his profession and his interpreting skills, he argued that maintaining excellence in everyday practice requires willpower, concentration, and a conscious effort to avoid complacency. I-03 finds the process of interpreting highly fascinating in itself:

I'm lucky because I still find interpreting a big motivator after all these years. And I mean, I suppose there are some meetings you do which are really not particularly interesting. You don't get the impression that the speakers care about you, which they don't. And so that can be a little bit demotivating, I suppose. But I find the process of interpreting so fascinating. And even independently of whether people are listening, people are grateful, people are appreciative of what you're doing, the actual technical process of interpreting fascinates me and always has. And because I teach a lot, I'm continually thinking about what's going on in your head when you interpret. How can you do it better? (I-03, 00:24:29,217 - 00:25:38,110)

Participants’ responses suggest that interpreters are motivated by their insatiable curiosity and their high expectations of themselves and their performance.

6.5 Interpreters’ Habits from the Perspective of Fogg’s *Behavior Design*

Taken together, all five participants argued that interpreters’ lives are characterised by such fluidity that any routine must be “so incredibly flexible as to defy the very concept of routine” (I-01, 00:41:27,224 - 00:41:51,089). As freelancers, interpreters experience considerable fluctuations in workload, meaning that some periods of the year demand substantially more energy and time than others. Furthermore, based on I-01’s account, interpreters working for the European Institutions lead a double life:

I have two existences. There’s my life here. And there’s my professional life, which usually starts with a ride to the airport and ends with a ride back from the airport, two completely

separate lives, so... And completely different routines for the two of them. (I-01, 00:21:35,526 - 00:22:06,353)

As a result, interviewees found it difficult to report any routines:

- I can't really think of something that I could really call a habit. (I-02, 00:17:40,365 - 00:17:57,439)
- "I don't have a routine. I'm sure I'm a very bad subject for you because I don't have a routine for anything really." (I-03, 00:09:11,844 - 00:09:53,736)
- My language habits are quite unspecific. (I-04, PART I, 00:35:58,871 - 00:37:59,878)
- So I don't have any kind of stacking. It happens when I have time. (I-05, 00:45:36,736 - 00:46:37,879)

In terms of *Prompts* or *Anchors*, activities such as drinking coffee in the morning, jogging, and travelling (*Action Anchors*) were commonly associated with reading the press, listening to podcasts, and engaging in work-related tasks. Spare moments during the day appear to serve as situational *Prompts* for a number of professional development behaviours.

Regarding participants' *Celebration* of completed behaviours, three patterns emerged from the data. First, given that the participants are highly experienced interpreters who have maintained the reported habits for decades, they found Fogg's (2020) *Celebration* strategy somewhat unusual: "I'm too, I'm too old for that." (I-01, 00:10:34,561 - 00:10:39,848) Second, the data suggest that four participants do engage in some forms of *Celebration*, although they do not recognise them as such. When asked about *Celebration*, interviewees tended to associate the concept with patting themselves on the back or congratulating themselves. As a result, several participants initially reported that they did not celebrate their habits. However, a closer examination of their responses revealed that they reinforced their habits by experiencing positive emotions associated with successfully performing a behaviour, including satisfaction, enjoyment, a sense of accomplishment, and professional fulfilment. Third, except for I-03 and I-05, based on participants' responses, interpreters tend to celebrate the results of their habits rather than the performance of the habits:

But I'm not celebrating the app. I'm celebrating the results of the app. So it's a little different. I mean, I'm doing the app. Okay, great. I'm doing the app. [Speaker 1: So you celebrate the result, not the routine.] Yes. "I heard a sentence I understood." I am so excited!" Or I said something to a Chinese colleague, and they said, "Oh my God, that was the right thing to have said. How did you know that?" And I went, "Yes!" So I celebrate the wins of doing it, but not the doing of it in and of itself, which is what I'm thinking of now. You're making me think that I should start celebrating the doing of it as well. (I-05, 00:37:28,090 - 00:38:06,268)

6.6 Interpreters' Understanding of Their Added Value

As noted by Downie (2016: 16), conference interpreters often need to market their services to potential clients who might not even be familiar with the difference between translating and interpreting. Furthermore, due to the contradictions between the meta-discourse of insiders and outsiders to the profession (Diriker 2009) and the conflicting needs of clients (Eraslan Gerçek 2008), interpreters may need to adjust the definition of their role depending on whom they are talking to. Between the suspicion that any bilingual can interpret and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), clients are increasingly convinced that interpreters can be easily replaced, and it is interpreters' job to persuade them otherwise (Downie 2016: 4). In other words, it is interpreters' duty to start educating their clients.

With most available definitions formulated by insiders to the profession and in terms that clients are not familiar with, it is not uncommon for interpreters to rely on abstract definitions that, while theoretically accurate, do little to convey their added value to their (potential) clients. As an attempt to narrow this gap and identify practical definitions, I decided to ask participants how they would define their role to a client who may not fully comprehend the added value interpreters bring. According to Downie's (2016: 4) observation, most professional interpreters argue that they contribute a form of added value that untrained individuals cannot deliver. Yet the precise nature of this added value remains elusive, as many long-standing perspectives within the field do not offer a satisfactory explanation. In the present study, three of the participants provided definitions that closely followed scholarly interpreting models, while the other two framed the role of the interpreter in ways that reflected personal experience rather than established models.

Although accredited or staff interpreters do not need to secure their clients' interest, I-01 reported having frequent conversations with their clients during coffee breaks, prompted by "I had my secretary try to do that, and she couldn't, but she speaks perfect English." (I-01, 00:36:56,998 - 00:37:39,744) To help their clients understand that interpreting requires a completely different set of skills, I-01 and his colleague often tell them that equating language proficiency with interpreting competence is akin to assuming that knowledge of the human anatomy is enough to perform brain surgery. He then continued by depicting interpreting through the lens of Seleskovitch's (1968) *théorie du sens*:

Just like, you know, chemists don't think atoms, they think molecules. We don't operate with words, we operate with units of message. Clearly, it's words that create them, but the words in themselves are not important. If you try to look for linguistic equivalence at lexical level,

you're not interpreting, obviously, and you can't succeed.

In I-01's opinion, an improvised (Herbert 1952: IX) interpreter would only be capable of handling assignments that involve the mechanical reading of numbers. However, as soon as communication requires meaning processing, the abilities of an untrained interpreter will be exceeded, and communication will break down. Therefore, I-01 considers that the added value that interpreters bring to the table is "[o]bviously clarity, the very possibility of communication", while allowing the information to flow smoothly between the parties (I-01, 00:38:56,533 - 00:40:20,886). Regarding the interpreter's role, I-01's answer suggests that the conduit model remains the norm among conference interpreters:

If an interpreter properly does his or her work, like I said, he or she becomes invisible. The communication takes place like we're not there. And you can tell there's an exchange, there's a conversation. And there is a point where they clearly become unaware that they're using interpretation. They communicate as if they were communicating spontaneously and directly, even if they're speaking two different languages. That's the added value of good interpretation. They don't know you're there. They don't know you're there. (I-01, 00:38:56,533 - 00:40:20,886)

I-04's account corresponds to the early theoretical formulations of identifying with the speaker (Herbert (1952); Cary 1956; Seleskovitch 1968), arguing that the message intended by the speaker can be conveyed only if the interpreter acts as a reflection of the client and their mindset:

I like to say that, just one addition, this is also why it's stressful, because we're working like professional schizophrenics. We sometimes get under the skin of 20 people a day, but a good rendition and a good interpretation will come out only if you're not just, you know, conveying the words and the general context, but you are the person without being in the spotlight. Sorry, third question. (I-04, PART II, 00:27:18,081 - 00:27:56,456)

From I-02's perspective, the interpreter is not only a linguistic but also a cultural mediator (Kondo & Tebble 1997; Pöchhacker 2008) who renders the speaker's message from the source language into the target language, while retaining the communicative intention.

I-03 and I-05's insights echoed the views advanced by Diriker (2004, 2017), Eraslan Gerçek (2008) and Downie (2016). According to I-05, the way she defines her role depends on whether she is selling her services to her interlocutor, emphasising that interpreters should present themselves very differently to prospective clients than they would when discussing their profession in other contexts. She defined her role as follows:

I am not *just* the interpreter. No, I am possibly the client's touchpoint with the organiser, or with the ideas of the meeting. I'm not *just* an interpreter, I'm the person who's making sure that the client is not linguistically isolated or *idea-ly* isolated, you know, so that they can hear the ideas fully and in whatever language that they need to hear it in, and in a way that they can comprehend. (I-05, 01:23:20,152 - 01:25:52,519)

Referring to consecutive assignments, I-05 described interpreters as powerful decision-makers who assume responsibility for the communicative process and intervene when necessary to ensure successful communication between the parties.

When I'm hired by the OECD to do a bilateral, and it's just me and the two ministers, I will choose where I sit, right? And I will choose where they sit. And if I don't like where the OECD has chosen where I'm going to sit compared to where they're going to sit, I will move myself. But that's on me to make sure that I can hear both of them and I can work with both of them equally. (I-05, 01:28:44,776 - 01:29:40,262)

I-03 made the most noteworthy contribution by offering a practical step-by-step approach to interacting with a prospective client. Given that clients are not always persuaded of the necessity of hiring professional interpreters, interpreters must often make the case for the communicative clarity and reliability that only trained professionals can ensure, rather than allowing interactions to proceed in the poor English NATO interpreters wryly refer to as "Desesperanto" (I-03, 00:33:01,789 - 00:34:24,950). First, as a communication expert, it is the interpreter's responsibility to explain the different equipment options and costs to the client and help them choose the option that best suits their needs, using clear, accessible language, as the client may have no prior experience or knowledge. The second step aligns with Downie's (2016: 4) argument that interpreters should establish an honest and transparent relationship with their clients. Therefore, I-03 suggested that interpreters should proceed by explaining to their clients that:

[...] people will not necessarily admit they need interpreting because they're proud. They think they can get by with bad English. So you need people to speak frankly to you and say, "Yes, okay, I appreciate that for several hours in a conference. I'm not going to be able to use my own English because I can't keep up the concentration. So having an interpreter will be useful for me and comfortable." (I-03, 00:34:26,700 - 00:36:46,171)

Third, for interpreters to be able to add value to their clients, I-03 considers that it is their duty to ask the client these four questions:

1. What do you need?
2. What are you going to be doing?
3. What does your meeting consist of?
4. What is your goal?

In contrast to the other participants, I-03's account is most consistent with Downie's (2016) conceptualisation of the interpreter's role, suggesting that interpreters should function as partners to their clients, using their expertise and professional judgement to contribute to the success of the event.

Conclusions

As outlined at the beginning of this thesis, the present study set out to explore the habits that highly experienced conference interpreters have developed over the course of their careers to sustain professional excellence. Five seasoned interpreters, all of whom were AIIC members, EU-accredited, or both, were invited to reflect upon their routines in six aspects of their professional life. The analysis of the qualitative interviews yielded the following results:

- A language maintenance: reading newsletters, books (both fiction and non-fiction), and poems, following subscriptions, watching films and series, listening to podcasts and radio programmes, and consuming content on social media
- B and C language maintenance: reading newsletters, books (both fiction and non-fiction), watching films and series, listening to podcasts and radio programmes, consuming content on social media
- Interpreting skill: participants reported no regular practice undertaken outside professional assignments or teaching responsibilities
- Keeping abreast of current affairs: reading newsletters, following subscriptions, listening to the radio, and consuming content on social media
- Professional self-presentation and client acquisition: read business books and magazines, follow business subscriptions, post and comment on LinkedIn.
- Health and lifestyle: doing breathing and stretching exercises, running on the treadmill, skipping dessert, and avoiding alcohol.

A notable pattern emerging from the overview of participants' reported behaviours is that many of the interpreters' habits serve multiple purposes. Interpreters largely rely on similar practices to maintain their A, B, and C languages, and some of these activities – reading the press, listening to the radio, and consuming social media – also contribute to interpreters' awareness of current affairs. In line with the studies conducted by Tibelius (2013) and Albl-Mikasa (2013), interpreters' habitual behaviours appear to be driven by a “curiosité universelle” (Ilg 1958: 12, 24). Therefore, it can be assumed that their habits of constantly reading and staying abreast of current affairs are reinforced by the fact that they satisfy precisely these “genuine and almost pathological curiosity and interest in pretty much everything” (00:43:07,715 - 00:44:32,076). In contrast to musicians and athletes, seasoned interpreters do not set aside time for deliberate practice sessions; instead, they perform the behaviours mentioned above mostly whenever they have time, and, as Albl-Mikasa (2013: 31) indicates, they are always metacognitively alert, constantly developing their languages and knowledge.

With regard to first-language proficiency, most participants' responses suggest that interpreters rarely perceive it as requiring active maintenance, instead relying on everyday exposure through residence in a home-language environment, media consumption, drawing on extensive professional experience, and interaction with their spouse. However, in an effort to preserve linguistic diversity in his first language, one participant reported reading a poem daily to enrich his vocabulary. He further noted that he avoids working solely for the European Institutions, as he believes exclusive exposure to that environment may result in linguistic specialisation at the expense of lexical and register variation.

The data reveal a similar tendency with respect to the development of B-language competence, as participants reported engaging in many of the same habits: "With my main working languages [...] I take it for granted that I understand everything that's being said." (I-03, 00:11:24,315 - 00:12:00,129). Echoing the findings of Albl-Mikasa (2013), the interviewees in the present study tended to associate language development primarily with their C languages. Participants generally argued that, unlike their A and B languages, their C languages required more active maintenance and further enhancement. This perception appears to stem from the fact that many interpreters add or begin actively using their C languages later in their career, which is why they are not on the same level of proficiency as their A or B languages. As a result, participants reported devoting a greater share of their language-maintenance efforts to expanding vocabulary and interacting with native speakers in their C languages. However, one participant's account regarding the relationship between language use and language maintenance was somewhat contradictory. Although he argued that he does not need to actively develop his A and B languages after more than 30 years of bi-active work, he also suggested that, for cost-efficiency reasons, interpreters tend to focus on enhancing the languages they use most frequently, which in his case are his A and B languages.

When it comes to practising the main skill, the present findings corroborate previous research. In line with the studies of Albl-Mikasa (2013) and Tiselius (2013) study, once interpreters have passed the accreditation test or added a new language to their combination, and their language proficiency is at a high level, they adopt an interest-oriented approach and barely engage in formal learning outside targeted preparation for specific assignments; instead, interpreters tend to rely on their professional experience, practice by doing, and self-monitoring, while directing their efforts toward supporting vocabulary development and knowledge acquisition: "What we do in terms of improving our interpreting skills is not really related to the interpreting skills per se. Very few interpreters, after graduation, do that." Out of the five

participants, only the two with teaching duties reported engaging in the development of their interpreting competence alongside their students. Of the five participants, only the two with teaching duties reported engaging in activities to maintain their interpreting competence during their classes. Interestingly, participants appeared to regard practice exclusively as deliberate activities aimed at improving their interpreting skill, regardless of whether they themselves engaged in such activities, and thought automatically of consecutive rather than simultaneous interpreting. Therefore, none of the participants engages in enhancing component of the main skill, such as voice, intonation, transfer, and pace (Tiselius in Downie 2016: 30). Although Albl-Mikasa (2013: 33) states that “experience without deliberate practice may suffice to uphold, stabilize, and even strengthen expert performance, because it is topped up with metacognitive regulation”, one participant’s account suggests that experienced interpreters benefit from the automation that comes with experience and there is progress, but it’s not where it should be, in the absence of deliberate practice.” (I-01, 00:24:04,102 - 00:25:07,949) Participants’ accounts suggest that interpreters’ limited engagement in deliberate practice of their main skill is closely related to insufficient access to feedback. As a potential solution, participants proposed normalising practice groups, or communities of practice (Tiselius in Downie 2016: 31), to facilitate regular peer feedback and sustained professional development.

While following global events appears to be a deeply integrated part of interpreters’ lives, the present findings suggest that this habit, though driven by their innate curiosity and interest, may adversely affect their mental well-being.

Participants’ health- and lifestyle-related habits indicate that, while all of them sought to remain physically active, only two described behaviours deliberately aimed at optimising their physical and mental readiness for interpreting assignments. These findings point to the need for further investigation into the role of self-care and suggest that interpreter training and professional development programs could place greater emphasis on strategies for supporting physical and mental resilience throughout interpreters’ careers.

In contrast to previous research, which has so far analysed interpreters’ deliberate-practice activities through the lens of Ericsson *et al.*’s (1993) theory of expertise, the present study adopted Fogg’s (2020) *Tiny Habits Method* as its analytical framework. As this represents an initial exploration of experienced interpreters’ habits from a behavioural-design perspective, direct comparisons with existing research are limited. Nevertheless, despite the absence of directly comparable studies, several points of convergence with previous findings emerged. Similar to Albl-Mikasa’s (2013) research, the present findings also suggest that interpreters’

commitment to lifelong learning is driven less by willpower or discipline and more by intrinsic motivation, particularly their fascination with the interpreting process and their desire to provide the highest possible quality of service to their clients. As a result, interpreters appear not to need reminders or prompts for their habits. However, although not deliberately designed, the data revealed a few *Action Anchors*, including waking up, drinking coffee, jogging, and preparing for bed. With regard to Fogg's (2020) concept of *Celebration*, participants generally did not report consciously celebrating the performance of their habits. Since these behaviours are driven by genuine interest and curiosity and have become deeply embedded in their daily routines, the idea of explicitly celebrating them was perceived by most participants as somewhat unusual. Nevertheless, the data suggest that some participants may engage in forms of celebration without recognising them as such. Feelings of satisfaction, enjoyment, or professional fulfilment derived from performing the behaviour appeared to function as implicit rewards, even though participants did not explicitly identify them as *Celebrations*.

The behaviours mentioned by participants were divided into three categories: behaviours that occurred irregularly or were context-dependent – referred to as *best practices*, behaviours that already have at least two components of Fogg's *Tiny Habits Recipe* (*Anchor Moment*, *Tiny Behaviour*, and *Celebration*) – referred to as *Identified smart habits*, and behaviours that are considered highly helpful but not performed consistently – referred to as *potential smart habits*. I refined the behaviours by adding an *Anchor*, either inferred from the participants' narratives, considered highly relatable, or from Fogg's online *Recipe Maker*, as well as a *Celebration* primarily selected from Fogg's (2020) suggested list, thereby illustrating how these behaviours can be hardwired into the routine of both seasoned and novice interpreters.

Based on the findings of the present study, I suggest that Fogg's (2020) *Tiny Habit Method* could serve as a useful tool for interpreters seeking to establish new professional habits. One of the model's key strengths lies in its flexibility, which allows behaviours to be adapted to individual circumstances and incorporated into existing routines through small, manageable actions. Thus, the model may facilitate the (re)integration of regular interpreting practice into interpreters' daily lives, an area that participants reported engaging in only to a limited extent. Given that participants mentioned fluid schedules, competing professional demands, and the absence of structured opportunities for practice, the Tiny Habits approach may offer a practical way to embed skill-development activities into everyday routines without requiring substantial additional time or effort. Furthermore, integrating Fogg's (2020) model into interpreting

programs could help lay the foundation for lifelong learning by equipping students with practical, scientifically grounded strategies to develop and maintain professional learning habits beyond formal training.

Several limitations of the present study must be acknowledged. First, the data was based on a small sample of five professional conference interpreters. While this allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' habits and routines, the findings cannot be generalised to the wider interpreting population. Second, the study relied exclusively on self-reported data collected through qualitative interviews. Therefore, the findings reflect participants' perceptions and recollections of their behaviours rather than habit-tracking techniques. As with all self-reported methods, participants may have omitted behaviours or may have been unaware of certain habitual patterns. Furthermore, this study focuses exclusively on highly experienced conference interpreters. While this was a deliberately methodological choice, it means that the findings cannot be assumed to apply to novice or less experienced members of the profession, whose habits may differ substantially. Finally, as this represents an initial application of Fogg's (2020) framework to the investigation of interpreters' habits, no directly comparable research was available. While this highlights the originality of the study, the findings cannot be evaluated against previous studies using the same theoretical framework.

Future studies could address these limitations by examining the applicability of Fogg's (2020) framework across larger and more diverse samples, combining in-depth interviews with habit-tracking techniques such as diaries. However, a particularly interesting avenue worth exploring would be a longitudinal study investigating whether interpreters with varying levels of experience can successfully design new habits into their lives, especially those related to the pursuit of interpreting skill, by applying Fogg's (2020) model. A study of this kind could provide valuable insights into whether behavioural change approaches can support the development of sustainable professional habits among interpreters and turn deliberate practice from "unicorn" (Tiselius 2018) into the new norm of interpreting studies.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

BRIEF INTRODUCTION
<i>IK: As I mentioned in my e-mail, the objective of my thesis is to explore the habits, routines, and rituals that professional conference interpreters have formed over the course of their careers to maintain high performance.</i>
TOPIC 1: Background questions Purpose: Collection of Participants' Background Data
<i>A: The initial round of questions will primarily focus on your career as an interpreter, though we will also touch on a few aspects of your personal life. The goal of these questions is to gain a deeper understanding of your lifestyle and the context in which you may or may not have developed certain habits. Please note that all information you provide will be treated confidentially and fully anonymised. If you encounter a question that makes you feel uncomfortable, please let me know, and I will gladly move on to the next one.</i>
1. How many years of experience do you have in the field of conference interpreting?
2. Are you accredited by any professional organisation or institution?
3. What are the subject areas in which you most frequently provide interpretation?
4. Could you name a few important institutions that you have worked with so far?
5. What are your working languages, and in which directions do you interpret?
6. Is the primary language of your country of residence your first language?
7. Did you pursue another career before discovering the field of conference interpreting, or did you always want to become an interpreter?
8. Is conference interpreting your primary source of income?
9. Are you a freelancer?
10. If you are comfortable sharing, could you briefly describe your current household or family situation (e.g., partner, spouse, children)?
11. What are your hobbies?

Notes: By asking all these questions, I want to assess the subjects' professionalism and understand their lifestyles to determine how relatable and realistic their routines are.

TOPIC 2: Smart Habits

Purpose: Addressing the Research Question

A: Now, we will proceed to the second part, in which we will be discussing the actual habits and routines that you might have.

12. Do you have any ongoing habits when it comes to keeping your first language *alive*?

- Are these habits linked to any other habits in your daily routine (e.g., *After I start the coffee maker, I...* or *After I pour myself a cup of coffee, I...* or *After I empty my inbox, I...*? [Anchor]
- Do you use any reminder that helps you remember to do these habits (e.g., app notification, sticky notes, calendar)? [Prompt]
- Do you celebrate in any way after completing these tasks (e.g., clench your fists and say, "Yes!", smile big, say or think "Good job!")? [Celebration]

13. Are there any habits that you do to maintain and enhance the command of your other working languages?

- Are these habits linked to any other habits in your daily routine? [Anchor]
- Do you use any reminder that helps you remember to do these habits? [Prompt]
- Do you celebrate in any way after completing these tasks? [Celebration]

14. Have you established any habits that help you practice specific interpreting skills or strategies?

- Are these habits linked to any other habits in your daily routine? [Anchor]
- Do you use any reminder that helps you remember to do these habits? [Prompt]
- Do you celebrate in any way after completing these tasks? [Celebration]

15. Have you developed over the years habits that help you keep up with what is going on around the world in your expertise areas?

- Are these habits linked to any other habits in your daily routine? [Anchor]
- Do you use any reminder that helps you remember to do these habits? [Prompt]
- Do you celebrate in any way after completing these tasks? [Celebration]

16. Over the course of your career, have you developed any routines or practices related to professional self-presentation and client acquisition (e.g. use of social media, marketing activities, administrative organisation, bookkeeping, asking clients for reviews, and productivity)?

- Are these habits linked to any other habits in your daily routine? [Anchor]
- Do you use any reminder that helps you remember to do these habits? [Prompt]
- Do you celebrate in any way after completing these tasks? [Celebration]

17. Do you engage in any health- or lifestyle-related practices or routines?

18. Which habit do you consider essential for a conference interpreter's daily routine?

19. Are there any other smart habits you would like to share?
Notes: Ask about the frequency of the habits and use the examples only if the subjects need guidance.
TOPIC 3: Questions related to behaviour science Purpose: Facilitating Analysis Using Fogg's Model
20. What helps you stick to these habits?
21. Is it always easy to maintain these habits? What do you do on those days when you don't feel like sticking to these routines?
22. Is there a feeling of boredom that sets in over time through these routines and rituals? How do you overcome it?
TOPIC 4: Question related to the self-perception
23. How would you define the role of a conference interpreter to a client who doesn't quite comprehend it?
CONCLUSIONS

Abstract (EN)

Interpreting pedagogy is strongly rooted in Ericsson *et al.*'s (1993) framework on expert performance, regarding practice as a cornerstone of interpreter competence development. Students spend much of their training time doing interpreting exercises, both in class and independently, and are taught how to evaluate their performance and provide feedback to their peers (Tibelius 2018). However, despite the recognised importance of deliberate practice, lifelong learning appears to be missing from the curriculum of interpreting programs, and the existing literature offers little practical guidance on how deliberate practice can be incorporated into interpreters' everyday lives beyond formal training.

Instead of following Ericsson *et al.*'s (1993) expertise theory to explore how interpreting experts engage in deliberate practice after graduation, the present study aims to revisit the topic through the lens of Fogg's (2020) *Tiny Habits Method*. To this end, five highly experienced conference interpreters – AIIC members, EU-accredited, or both – were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews and share the habits they had built over the course of their careers to help them maintain and enhance their performance in regard to language proficiency, interpreting proper, staying abreast of current affairs, self-presentation and client acquisition, as well as health and lifestyle. The interview data were analysed using qualitative content analysis, examining the relationships among these habits and the factors supporting their maintenance. On the assumption that these habits would be targeted, efficient, and adapted to interpreters' needs, this study refers to them as *smart habits*. All identified behaviours were translated into *Tiny Habits Recipes*, thereby illustrating how these behaviours can be embedded into the routines of both seasoned and novice interpreters.

Consistent with the research of Tiselius (2013) and Albl-Mikasa (2013), the findings of this study indicate that once interpreters have passed the accreditation test or added a new working language to their combination, they tend to direct their efforts toward supporting vocabulary development and ongoing knowledge acquisition. Business competence receives comparatively little focus among accredited interpreters, and the importance of mental and physical fitness for performance enhancement is yet to be adequately addressed in CPD offerings. The present thesis offers a renewed angle on the phenomenon of deliberate practice in interpreting studies and contends that Fogg's (2020) method provides a viable mechanism for habit design, with the potential to improve interpreters' both professional and personal lives.

Abstract (DE)

Die Dolmetschdidaktik greift zunehmend auf Konzepte der Expertiseentwicklung von Ericsson *et al.* (1993) zurück und erachtet das systematische Üben als zentral für den Expertiseerwerb. Studierende verbringen einen erheblichen Teil ihrer Ausbildungszeit mit praktischen Übungen, sowohl im Unterricht als auch im Selbststudium. Dabei erwerben sie die Fähigkeit, sowohl ihre eigene Dolmetschleistung systematisch zu evaluieren als auch ihren Kolleg*innen konstruktives Feedback zu geben (Tiselius 2018). Trotz der anerkannten Bedeutung des gezielten Übens ist das lebenslange Lernen als Bestandteil der professionellen Entwicklung im Curriculum von Dolmetschstudiengängen bislang nur unzureichend verankert. Zudem bietet die vorhandene Literatur nur wenige praktische Ansätze dafür, wie gezieltes Üben über die formale Ausbildung hinaus in den Berufsalltag von Dolmetscher*innen integriert werden kann.

Anstatt dem Modell von Ericsson *et al.* (1993) zu folgen, um zu untersuchen, wie erfahrene Dolmetscher*innen nach ihrem Abschluss gezielt üben, zielt die vorliegende Studie darauf ab, das Thema aus der Perspektive von Foggs (2020) „*Tiny Habits Method*“ neu zu beleuchten. Zu diesem Zweck wurden fünf sehr erfahrene Konferenzdolmetscher*innen – AIIC-Mitglieder, EU-akkreditierte Dolmetscher*innen oder beides – eingeladen, an halbstrukturierten Interviews teilzunehmen und über die Gewohnheiten zu berichten, die sie im Laufe ihrer Karriere entwickelt haben, um ihre Leistung in Bezug auf Sprachkompetenz, Dolmetschkompetenz, die Auseinandersetzung mit aktuellen Themen, Selbstpräsentation und Kundenakquise sowie Gesundheit und Lebensstil aufrechtzuerhalten und zu verbessern. Die Interviewdaten wurden mittels qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse ausgewertet, wobei die Zusammenhänge zwischen diesen Gewohnheiten und die Faktoren, die deren Aufrechterhaltung unterstützen, untersucht wurden. Ausgehend von der Annahme, dass diese Gewohnheiten zielgerichtet, effizient und an die Bedürfnisse von Dolmetscher*innen angepasst sind, werden sie in dieser Studie als *Smart Habits* bezeichnet. Alle identifizierten Gewohnheiten wurden in „*Tiny Habits Recipes*“ umgesetzt, wodurch veranschaulicht wird, wie diese Verhaltensweisen in die Routinen sowohl erfahrener als auch unerfahrener Dolmetscher*innen integriert werden können.

In Übereinstimmung mit den Forschungsergebnissen von Tiselius (2013) und Albl-Mikasa (2013) zeigen die Ergebnisse dieser Studie, dass Dolmetscher*innen, sobald sie den Akkreditierungstest bestanden oder ihre Sprachkombination um eine neue Arbeitssprache erweitert haben, ihre Bemühungen in der Regel auf die Förderung des Wortschatzaufbaus und

den kontinuierlichen Wissenserwerb ausrichten. Die fachliche Kompetenz steht bei akkreditierten Dolmetscher*innen vergleichsweise wenig im Fokus, und die Bedeutung der mentalen und körperlichen Fitness für die Leistungssteigerung muss in den Weiterbildungsangeboten noch intensiver thematisiert werden. Die vorliegende Arbeit bietet einen neuen Blickwinkel auf das Phänomen des gezielten Übens in der Dolmetschforschung und vertritt die These, dass die Methode von Fogg (2020) einen praktikablen Mechanismus für die Gewohnheitsbildung darstellt, der das Potenzial hat, sowohl das berufliche als auch das private Leben von Dolmetscher*innen zu verbessern.