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Exploring essential personality traits for professional interpreters: a Delphi method study

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Introduction: With the increasing demand of global communication and rapid advancements in technology, the role of professional interpreters has evolved beyond linguistic competence to include a range of essential personality traits. Despite their critical role in interpreter performance, these traits are underrepresented in empirical research. This study aims to identify and prioritize the key personality traits that contribute to professional interpreter effectiveness using the Delphi method.

Methods: A two-round Delphi study was conducted with a purposively selected panel of 20 experts, including interpreter trainers, professionals, and corporate clients. In the first round, open-ended responses were collected to identify essential personality traits, followed by a structured ranking exercise in the second round. Thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data, and Kendall's W coefficient was applied to measure consensus in the second round using SPSS 26.0.

Results: Twenty experts participated in both rounds. Thematic analysis from round one identified 24 traits, grouped into eight dimensions: Emotional Stability and Resilience (D1), Cognitive Flexibility and Adaptability (D2), Empathy and Cultural Sensitivity (D3), Confidence and Assertiveness (D4), Integrity and Ethical Standards (D5), Self-Motivation and Discipline (D6), Meticulousness (D7), and Patience (D8). In the second round, D2 emerged as the most important trait, followed by D1, D4, D3, D5, D7, D6, D8. Kendall's $W = 0.371$ ($p < 0.001$) indicated a significant level of expert consensus.

Conclusion: The findings highlight a clear expert consensus on the most essential personality traits required of professional interpreters. These results provide important implications for interpreter training programs, suggesting the need to integrate personality development alongside linguistic and technical skills. Future research should explore trait relevance across specific interpreting modes and settings to refine interpreter competence frameworks further.

KEYWORDS

confidence and assertiveness, cognitive flexibility and adaptability, Delphi method, emotional stability and resilience, interpreter trainer, interpreter trainee, interpreter training

1 Introduction

With increasingly fast-changing technologies and deepened globalization, the status and responsibilities of industrial interpreters is being radically transformed. Technological developments in artificial intelligence (AI), speech recognition (SR), and machine translation (MT) are transforming language services delivery, bringing to opportunities as well as to challenges for human professionals (Liu et al., 2024; Jiang and Lu, 2021). With increasingly complex and demanding in interpreting tasks and technology use, the interpreter profession is being redefined (Li and Zhang, 2023). Interpreters now bear not only great role functions but also carry their unique psychological and interpersonal qualities. These changes necessitate the growing role personality traits that play a significant role in keeping interpreters professionally viable, resilient, and adaptable (Moser-Mercer, 1994). Therefore, interpreter training must move beyond language and cognitive skill acquisition to include the formation of essential personality traits to prepare future interpreters for the psychological and ethical demands of the current interpreting profession.

Emotional resilience is now a requisite trait for interpreters working in high-stress environments. For example, Bontempo and Napier (2011) have confirmed emotional stability as a strong predictor of interpreters' self-assessed competence since lower neuroticism and anxiety are associated with better professional functioning. What's more, Perdikaki and Georgiou (2022) revealed how subtitlers, just like interpreters, work continuously with emotionally charged content and develop personal coping strategies to maintain mental health. Similarly, Martínez-Mart and Ruch (2016) introduced emotional strengths, for instance self-regulation and emotional awareness as more significant predictors of resilience than often-studied predictors such as optimism and social support. These studies collectively highlight that interpreters' ability to stay calm and emotionally balanced under stress is critical to guaranteeing accuracy and ethical commitment in interpreting assignments.

Apart from emotional resilience, emotional intelligence (EI) is also frequently studied personality trait in interpreting training. It includes self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal sensitivity, which carry a significant influence on an interpreter's performance. For example, Çoban and Telci (2016) claimed that although EI has an influence on emotional handling and effective communication, it is still underestimated by interpreter trainees. Extremely emotionally intelligent interpreters are capable of recognizing implicit communication signals, responding with empathy, and negotiating trust in high-stakes communication. Ayan (2020) have confirmed this by analyzing emotional labor in conference interpreting, illustrating how interpreters must regulate emotions to present a professional image, satisfy institutional requirements, and navigate cultural differences. These findings suggest that EI is a desirable personality trait and also an essential competence for interpreters who operate in emotionally complex settings.

Moreover, interpreting requires remarkable attentional control, multitasking ability, and cognitive flexibility (Gile, 1995,

2021). For example, Wang (2021) and Seeber (2015) stressed on the cognitive load inherent in simultaneous interpreting, underlining the need for interpreters to sustain high cognitive loads without sacrificing output quality. Rosiers et al. (2020) also related working memory and personality as measures of success on interpreting training. Dong and Li (2020) further proposed a dual-control model—language control and processing control—to explain how interpreters multitask under pressure of time. It is found that continuous attention, mental flexibility, and working memory are significant during interpreting. By contrast, Togato and Macizo (2023) characterized cognitive flexibility as key to switching between tasks and adapting to contingent discourse, and consequently as the foundation of interpreter aptitude.

Interpreting is a social activity, providing language services. However, it also requires more than linguistic competence. Wadensjo (2014) have once suggested interpreting as interaction and emphasizes the interpreter's task in coordinating conversation and establishing mutual understanding. Therefore, skills such as empathy, social initiative, and flexibility in relation to cultures are essential for interpreters. Rosiers and Eyckmans (2017) have proven that industrial interpreters have greater emotional stability and social initiative compared to student interpreters. Moreover, Lan and Leung (2021) examined empathy in medical interpreting, demonstrating its impact on turn-taking and rapport-building in sensitive interactions. Cahya and Semnani (2024) also extended this to business interactions, where cultural intelligence and adaptability directly impact negotiation success. Such research collectively confirms the importance of interpersonal sensitivity and relational engagement in interpreting.

Furthermore, sensitivity to ethics and ability to manage moral dilemmas are also significant part of an interpreter's personality (Moorkens and Rocchi, 2020). For instance, Hubscher-Davidson (2020) and Horváth and Tryuk (2021) highlighted the ethical dilemma involved in how interpreters manage conflicting values, institutional rules, and clients' expectations. Neutrality, confidentiality, and impartiality are not only based on a familiarity with ethical codes but on integrity, conscientiousness, and moral courage as part of a personality of an interpreter. These traits help interpreters make correct decisions under stress while maintaining professional accountability. Therefore, with a growing number of ethical dilemmas in practice nowadays, interpreter training must include ethical awareness as well as personality development to help interpreters develop the skill to make high-stakes decisions.

Notably, goal orientation and self-directed learning are key abilities for interpreters to cope with rapid technological and professional changes. Albl-Mikasa (2013) have emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development and “learning by doing” in enhancing expert interpreter competence. Similarly, Lejeune et al. (2018) demonstrated that individual development models and self-directed learning impact job performance, suggesting that skills such as self-discipline, autonomy, and internal motivation are at the core of long-term competence. Thus, interpreter trainers should guide students to take proactive attitudes, remain curiosity, and commit to lifelong learning so that they can be better adapted to new tools in the evolving language service industry.

Lastly, hardiness, as explained by [Xing and Zeng \(2022\)](#), is an important personality trait for interpreter to cope with interpreting anxiety. They proposed the concept of personality hardiness—a personality characteristic linked with commitment, control, and challenge—as a buffer against interpreting anxiety. The study indicated that interpreters who score high on hardiness are likely to keep stress under control and attain improved performance. This finding suggests hardiness as a predictor of interpreter success, particularly in high-stress settings where rapid judgments and sustained focus are essential. It also brings into focus the personality dimension that affects interpreters' behavioral responses to uncertainty and the stress.

1.1 The present study

As a reaction to the evolving demands of the profession of interpreting, this study seeks to analyze the essential personality traits that are collectively valued by professional interpreters. With the interpreting context increasingly impacted by technological advancements, high-stakes multilingual communication, and emotionally demanding working contexts, it is increasingly understood that interpreter proficiency must go beyond linguistic as well as cognitive skills. Non-cognitive attributes such as emotional resilience, flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and ethical integrity have become inherent aspects of professional interpreting. Nevertheless, these personality traits are not collectively discussed in interpreter training.

While there are a number of studies (e.g., [Bontempo and Napier, 2011](#); [Martínez-Mart and Ruch, 2016](#); [Rosiers and Eyckmans, 2017](#); [Xing and Zeng, 2022](#)) that have provided valuable insights into specific psychological traits—such as emotional stability, personality hardiness, or social initiative—the research remains fragmented and lacks a unified framework. Some studies have focused on the importance of emotional intelligence ([Çoban and Telci, 2016](#)), while others have examined the influence of personality on coping with interpreting stress ([Perdikaki and Georgiou, 2022](#); [Ayan, 2020](#)), but few have attempted to systematically identify and prioritize the core personality traits required for interpreter success across diverse contexts. Additionally, much of the existing literature relies on general psychological theory or self-reported measures rather than drawing from expert consensus within the interpreting profession.

To address these gaps, the present study uses the Delphi method to gather expert opinions from experienced interpreter trainers, educators, and practitioners. The objective is to achieve systematic consensus on what personality factors are considered most essential for professional interpreters in today's fast-evolving changing work environment. This method allows for an iterative process of refinement and feedback toward the more reliable and profession-specific responses. Therefore, the research questions of present study are:

- What personality traits are considered essential for professional interpreters by experts in the interpreting field?
- To what extent do experts agree on the importance and prioritization of these traits?

2 Methods

2.1 Research design

The Delphi method is a qualitative research method wherein elicitation of expert opinions is sought through successive questionnaires with feedback after each round to develop responses that are increasingly refined ([Avella, 2016](#)). It works through the first round of individual expert opinions regarding an issue, followed by iterative rounds of work by the experts, who, after receiving summarized results from a previous round, reassess and refine their answers based on the collective feedback provided. This process continues until consensus has been reached or no significant change has occurred. The Delphi method emerges as a novel technique for interpreting study, whereby it would be appropriate to effectively explore expert opinion on the question of what personality traits a professional interpreter should possess, where empirical data might be limited. Iterative in nature, it assists in deepening an understanding of complex issues, promotes a variety of perspectives, and helps to ensure that the final findings have represented a well-rounded consensus from the experienced professionals within that field ([Skulmoski et al., 2007](#)).

2.2 Sampling design and data collection

In the present study, the researchers identified a panel of 40 experts through a purposive sample, which consisted of university teachers (interpreter trainers), professional interpreters, and industry clients in the field of interpreting training and interpreting practice. The purposive sampling method was adopted in this research for the strategic sampling of key individuals with extensive expertise related to interpreting and interpreter training ([Andrade, 2021](#)). Thus, the broadest possible range of perspectives concerning both the academic and practical standpoints can be ensured. This technique proved useful in soliciting information across the wide span of professionals, from freelance interpreters up to senior trainers and corporate clients.

Data collection was done through a two-round Delphi method. Round one consisted of one open-ended question sent by email in an attempt to gather the first opinions from experts on the essential personality traits of professional interpreters. Experts could always bring up those personality traits which they thought were necessary to be a professional interpreter. In the second round, the experts were provided with a structured questionnaire, which included all the anonymized responses, to rank-order each personality trait identified according to the perceived importance ([Hasson et al., 2000](#); [Jiang et al., 2024](#)). This was a quantitative step that served further refinement of the results and also consensus on what constitutes the most critical traits of qualification for interpreters.

Iterative process of the Delphi method allowed the continuous feedback by experts, thus allowing the in-depth study of the topic with minimal bias ([Ng et al., 2024](#)). It provided a structured and multi-round avenue for a collective agreement on what essential personality traits a professional interpreter should have, reflecting a broad range of expertise and practical insights.

2.3 Ethics

Informed consent was obtained from all experts before their participation, in which the purpose of this study, as well as confidentiality about their responses, was duly explained to them. All ethical considerations have been strictly followed to ensure that all data gathered in this study would be anonymized, confidential, and used exclusively for the purposes of this research.

2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis first involved a detailed thematic analysis of expert responses from the first round. Experts' responses were listed in an Excel file and thematically analyzed to identify any patterns in recurring themes (Loo et al., 2024). This led to the categorization of personality traits that were fine-tuned into the second-round questionnaire.

The Kendall's *W* coefficient was then applied in the second phase of the present study using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26, to find out the degree of consensus among the experts about the traits identified. It counted the degree of unification of the given rankings by the expert panel. A high Kendall's *W* showed that the identified traits were in strong consensus with the experts, hence reflecting their opinion (Von Der Gracht, 2012). Conversely, a small value of *W* or high *p*-value would indicate disagreement, and perhaps the Delphi would need to be iterated again to get a more emphatic consensus.

3 Results

3.1 First round of Delphi study

As part of the initial phase of research in Delphi, an open-ended questionnaire was distributed to 90 experts on July 15, 2024. Among the 90 experts invited to participate, 20 responded to the first round of the questionnaire, while 70 did not. In adherence to the research guideline, no further attempts were made to solicit responses from the non-respondents. Detailed information on the experts who participated in the first round of the Delphi process is presented in Table 1. The experts participated in the present study demonstrate a rich demographic characteristics. The experts who responded to the questionnaire come from a diverse range of backgrounds and possess extensive experience in the interpreting field. This group includes 8 university teachers (interpreter trainers) who specialize in academic training and professional development and possess at least associate professor academic title, 6 interpreting professionals from China Translation Corporation, offering insights from a corporate perspective, and 2 clients from Jin Jiang International Holdings Co., Ltd. and ANTA Sports Products Limited, representing industries that rely heavily on interpreting services for international communication. Additionally, 4 freelance interpreters with 7–10 years of experience in various interpreting settings provide a practical, real-world perspective. Together, these experts bring a broad and multifaceted understanding of interpreting from academic, corporate, and freelance viewpoints.

The feedback provided by these experts underwent a comprehensive thematic analysis. Each response was carefully examined to identify underlying themes, which were then systematically organized into broader dimensions. In total, 24 distinct themes emerged, which were grouped into seven eight dimensions. The dimensions identified in round 1 of the Delphi study included Emotional Stability and Resilience, Cognitive Flexibility and Adaptability, Empathy and Cultural Sensitivity, Confidence and Assertiveness, Integrity and Ethical Standards, Self-Motivation and Discipline, Meticulousness, and Patience. Table 2 lists the dimensions and their respective themes.

3.2 Second round of Delphi study

Following the identification of the dimensions and themes demonstrating the essential personality traits of professional interpreters, a second-round Delphi questionnaire was prepared. This round exclusively involved experts who had participated in the initial round. The primary goal of the second round was to establish consensus among these experts regarding the dimensions identified as significant personality traits of professional interpreters.

The second round of the Delphi method commenced on October 14th, 2024, with 20 invitations sent to experts who had participated in the first round. In keeping with the Delphi protocol, only experts from the initial round were invited to participate in the subsequent round. During this phase, the seven dimensions identified in the first round were presented to experts. They were asked to rank these dimensions using an eight-point scale, with one indicating the most important personality trait and eight indicating the least important personality trait for being a professional interpreter. In the second round, all 20 experts responded to the second round of this Delphi study. Table 3 displays the group rankings of the dimensions based on the collected feedback.

Based on feedback from the 20 experts in the second round, the dimensions were ranked, with CFA recording the lowest mean at 2.60. This was followed by ESR at 2.80, CA at 3.65, ECS at 4.40, IES at 4.75, Met at 4.95, SMD at 5.85, and Pat at 7.00. These rankings were then subjected to the Kendall Coefficient test, which is a robust method used to ascertain the consensus among experts. Using the rankings provided by the experts in the second round, the Kendall's *W* value was determined to be 0.371, with a *p*-value of 0.000. These results indicate a significant level of consistency in ranking among experts. Given the strong consensus, the third round of the survey was deemed unnecessary. Therefore, the confirmed consensus highlights the most significant dimension of personality traits is cognitive flexibility and adaptability, followed by emotional stability and resilience, confidence and assertiveness, empathy and cultural sensitivity, integrity and ethical standards, meticulousness, self-motivation and discipline, and patience.

4 Discussions

4.1 Emotional stability and resilience

Emotional stability and resilience are identified as the second most crucial traits for professional interpreters, highlighting their

TABLE 1 List of experts who participated in round 1 Delphi study.

No.	Education background	Teaching experience (years)	Interpreting experience (years)	Academic title	Affiliation
E1	Doctor's degree	21	18	Associate professor	Dalian University of Foreign Languages
E2	Master's degree	22	25	Professor	
E3	Doctor's degree	5	12	Lecturer	
E4	Doctor's degree	21	15	Associate professor	
E5	Doctor's degree	15	20	Associate professor	
E6	Doctor's degree	25	25	Associate professor	
E7	Master's degree	7	12	Professor	Xian International Studies University
E8	Doctor's degree	6	9	Professor	Sun Yat-sen University
E9	Doctor's degree	/	8	/	China Translation Corporation
E10	Master's degree	/	6	/	
E11	Master's degree	/	6	/	
E12	Master's degree	/	5	/	
E13	Master's degree	/	7	/	
E14	Master's degree	/	9	/	
E15	Master's degree	/	9	/	
E16	Master's degree	/	9	/	Jin Jiang International Holdings Co., Ltd.
E17	Master's degree	/	10	/	ANTA Sports Products Limited
E18	Master's degree	/	11	/	
E19	Master's degree	/	10	/	
E20	Master's degree	/	7	/	

pivotal role in interpreting effectiveness. Expert 1 elucidates, “*Interpreting often involves working in high-stakes, high-pressure situations where emotions run high—like in courtrooms, hospitals, or diplomatic meetings. Emotional stability allows an interpreter to remain calm, composed, and focused even when faced with tense or emotional content*”. This trait ensures that interpreters can perform under significant emotional and mental stress without compromising the quality of their work. Such stability is essential not only for accuracy but also for maintaining professionalism in volatile situations. Supporting this, research by [Perdikaki and Georgiou \(2022\)](#) underscored the importance of emotional resilience in interpreters, particularly those working in adversarial or emotionally charged environments, as it directly impacts their capacity to manage stress and continue delivering high-quality interpretations. Furthermore, [Martínez-Mart and Ruch \(2016\)](#) posited that emotional resilience could be a more significant predictor of job satisfaction and longevity in the profession than other traits, indicating its fundamental role in the occupational wellbeing of interpreters. This convergence of expert opinion and scholarly research underscores the critical nature of emotional

stability and resilience in shaping the efficacy and durability of professional interpreters in their respective fields.

4.2 Cognitive flexibility and adaptability

Cognitive flexibility and adaptability are unanimously deemed the paramount traits for professional interpreters, evidenced by their top ranking by the expert panel. Expert 2 poignantly articulates this, stating, “*An interpreter constantly switches between languages, contexts, and cultures. Cognitive flexibility is vital because it allows me to adapt quickly to new information, adjust to different speaking styles, and manage unexpected changes in the conversation flow.*” This ability is essential not only for navigating the complex, multifaceted tasks interpreters face but also for ensuring precise communication across cultural and linguistic barriers. [Tiselius and Hild \(2017\)](#) supported this by highlighting that the necessity for interpreters to manage simultaneous cognitive tasks efficiently underpins the demand for high adaptability and flexibility. Furthermore, [Dong and Li \(2020\)](#) reinforced that

TABLE 2 Dimension and theme identified in round 1 Delphi study.

Dimensions	Themes
D1_ESR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress management • Emotional resilience • Recovery from mistakes
D2_CFA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting to changing information and environment • Multitasking • Adjusting to different speech patterns
D3_ECS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding emotional change • Cultural awareness • Building rapport
D4_CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence in decision making • Credibility and authority • Handling unfamiliar topics
D5_IES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutrality • Confidentiality • Faithfulness to the source
D6_SMD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous learning • Freelance independence • Proactive improvement
D7_Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy in language • Precision in interpretation • Focus on non-verbal cues
D8_Pat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endurance during long sessions • Dealing with difficult clients • Handling repetitive or monotonous content

ESR, Emotional Stability and Resilience; CFA, Cognitive Flexibility and Adaptability; ECS, Empathy and Cultural Sensitivity; CA, Confidence and Assertiveness; IES, Integrity and Ethical Standards; SMD, Self-Motivation and Discipline; Met, Meticulousness; Pat, Patience.

cognitive flexibility contributes significantly to performance in dynamic interpreting environments by enabling rapid adjustment to the speakers' flow and content unpredictability. This emphasis on cognitive flexibility aligns with the broader academic consensus that successful interpreters must exhibit robust adaptability to meet the varied and often sudden demands of their work, thereby validating the findings from the expert panel with prevailing scholarly discourse.

4.3 Empathy and cultural sensitivity

Empathy and cultural sensitivity, ranked fourth by the expert panel, are essential for professional interpreters who must navigate complex emotional and cultural landscapes. Expert 3 emphasizes, "While maintaining neutrality, empathy is important for understanding the speaker's tone, intent, and emotional change. It enables me to accurately convey not just the words, but the spirit of the message, which is particularly important in sensitive settings like healthcare or social services where the emotional context is just as significant as the content itself." This ability to grasp and reflect subtle emotional cues and cultural differences is crucial in ensuring effective communication, particularly in diverse and multicultural settings. Research supports this viewpoint, as study by [Ayan \(2020\)](#) highlighted the necessity for interpreters to possess a deep understanding of cultural and emotional intelligence to accurately

interpret messages without distortion. These skills are particularly critical in settings where interpreters act as cultural mediators, not just language translators. The consistency across literature and expert opinions underscores the significant role of empathy and cultural sensitivity in enhancing the quality of interpreting services, facilitating better understanding and cooperation across different cultural contexts. This alignment between expert insights and academic research reinforces the importance of these traits in professional interpreting, particularly as global interaction increases and cultural dynamics become more complex.

4.4 Confidence and assertiveness

Confidence and assertiveness, ranked as the third most important trait by the expert panel, are crucial for professional interpreters who must convey complex messages clearly and decisively. Expert 5 encapsulates this sentiment: "Confidence in my abilities allows me to speak clearly and assertively without hesitation, even when I'm uncertain or facing difficult subject matter." This attribute is essential for maintaining credibility with clients and speakers, ensuring that interpretations are delivered with authority and are trusted by all parties involved. The scholarly literature supports this assertion; for instance, [Wadensjo \(2014\)](#) discussed how interpreting as interaction that requires interpreters with confidence. Confidence enables interpreters to manage dynamic and sometimes adversarial interactions, particularly in legal or diplomatic settings, where assertiveness can determine the outcome of a discussion. Furthermore, research by [Cahya and Semnani \(2024\)](#) suggested that assertive interpreters are more effective in negotiating meanings and ensuring that all parties understand the subtleties of translated messages. This alignment between expert opinion and academic research highlights the integral role of confidence and assertiveness in professional interpreting, impacting both the process and the efficacy of intercultural communication.

4.5 Integrity and ethical standard

Integrity and ethical standards, ranked as the fifth most important trait by the experts, are foundational for professional interpreters, ensuring they uphold the principles of impartiality and confidentiality essential to their role. Expert 10 emphasizes, "Integrity is key to ensuring that interpreters remain neutral, do not introduce personal biases, and adhere to confidentiality rules. Interpreters must resist the temptation to influence the message and must provide faithful interpretations that are true to the original speaker's intent." This sentiment is crucial in maintaining the trust that clients and service users place in interpreters, particularly in sensitive settings such as legal proceedings or medical consultations where the accuracy and confidentiality of the information can have significant consequences. The literature supports this viewpoint, with study by [Hubscher-Davidson \(2020\)](#) discussing how ethical behavior influences the perception of professionalism and reliability in interpreters. Additionally, research by [Horváth and Tryuk \(2021\)](#) highlighted how ethical

TABLE 3 Second round Delphi feedback.

Experts	D1_ESR	D2_CFA	D3_ECS	D4_CA	D5_IES	D6_SMD	D7_Met	D8_Pat
E1	1	2	4	5	3	7	6	8
E2	1	2	5	6	3	7	4	8
E3	2	3	5	4	1	7	6	8
E4	2	1	6	4	3	5	7	8
E5	4	3	8	2	6	7	1	5
E6	5	3	7	6	2	1	8	4
E7	2	4	1	7	3	8	6	5
E8	5	2	4	1	7	6	3	8
E9	4	1	5	2	7	8	3	6
E10	1	2	5	3	8	6	4	7
E11	2	3	1	4	6	7	5	8
E12	6	5	8	7	2	1	3	4
E13	3	1	5	4	6	2	7	8
E14	1	4	3	2	7	6	5	8
E15	2	6	4	1	5	7	3	8
E16	5	2	3	4	1	8	7	6
E17	2	3	4	1	5	6	7	8
E18	1	2	4	3	5	7	6	8
E19	4	1	5	3	7	6	2	8
E20	3	2	1	4	8	5	6	7
Mean	2.80	2.60	4.40	3.65	4.75	5.85	4.95	7.00
Group rank	2	1	4	3	5	7	6	8

ESR, Emotional Stability and Resilience; CFA, Cognitive Flexibility and Adaptability; ECS, Empathy and Cultural Sensitivity; CA, Confidence and Assertiveness; IES, Integrity and Ethical Standards; SMD, Self-Motivation and Discipline; Met, Meticulousness; Pat, Patience.

dilemmas are frequent in complex interpreting scenarios, requiring a strong moral compass to navigate successfully. The consistency of these insights with empirical research underscores the critical role of integrity and ethical standards in the interpreting profession, reinforcing that these traits are not merely preferable but essential for ensuring effective and trustworthy communication across different languages and cultures.

4.6 Self-motivation and discipline

Self-motivation and discipline, ranked as the seventh most important trait by the experts, are crucial for professional interpreters, particularly those in freelance or dynamic environments. Expert 8 articulates this well: *“As an interpreter, especially in freelance or independent settings, staying motivated to continuously improve my skills, learn new vocabulary, and stay updated on industry trends is essential. A high level of self-motivation ensures that I stay sharp, prepared, and eager to tackle any assignment that comes my way.”* This trait is vital in the interpreting profession, where ongoing learning and adaptation to new linguistic and cultural differences are necessary to maintain high standards of accuracy and professionalism. Supporting this, scholarly research by [Lejeune et al. \(2018\)](#) demonstrated that

self-directed learning and professional development are linked to better job performance and greater job satisfaction. Furthermore, study by [Çoban and Telci \(2016\)](#) have highlighted the importance of discipline in managing the demands of interpreting assignments and the necessity for continuous skill enhancement to cope with evolving job requirements. The consensus in both expert opinions and academic literature underscores the significance of self-motivation and discipline not only for career advancement but also for maintaining the quality and reliability of interpreting services in various professional contexts.

4.7 Meticulousness

Meticulousness, identified as the sixth most crucial trait by experts, is fundamental for interpreters who must capture every change of the original message accurately. Expert 17 specifically notes, *“Interpreters must be highly attuned to differences in language, tone, and non-verbal cues. Attention to detail ensures that even subtle variations in meaning or intent are captured, preserving the integrity of the message.”* This trait is pivotal in maintaining the fidelity of the translated content, ensuring that nothing is lost or misrepresented during the interpreting process. The importance of meticulousness is supported by scholarly research; for instance, study by [Chai](#)

et al. (2024) have highlighted the critical role of detail-oriented practices in reducing errors in interpretation, especially in complex and high-stakes environments such as legal and medical settings. Additionally, Bontempo and Napier (2011) pointed out that meticulousness not only affects the quality of interpretation but also the trust and reliability perceived by the clients and other stakeholders involved. The emphasis on meticulousness by both experts and academic literature underscores its significance in professional interpreting, reflecting a consensus on the need for interpreters to engage deeply with both the content and context of their work to ensure effective communication. This trait's importance is particularly pronounced in settings where precision in language can significantly impact outcomes, further validating its ranking and relevance in the field.

4.8 Patience

Patience, while ranked as the eighth most important trait by the expert panel, remains essential for professional interpreters who often face long, complex assignments. Expert 9 highlights this, noting, “*Interpreters often need patience, both with the process and the people they are interpreting for. Long, complex speeches, fast speakers, or challenging topics can test an interpreter’s patience. This trait helps in maintaining composure and performing consistently over long periods without feeling rushed.*” This requirement for patience is crucial in settings where delays, extended discussions, and slow decision-making processes are common, allowing interpreters to manage their duties without compromising the quality of their work. The literature supports the significance of this trait. For instance, Wang (2021) discussed how patience impacts an interpreter’s ability to effectively manage the cognitive load and emotional stress that come with simultaneous interpretation. These findings reinforce the importance of patience, not only as a virtue but as a professional necessity that enables interpreters to deliver accurate and thoughtful translations under varied and sometimes difficult circumstances.

4.9 Implications

Based on the findings, several key implications for interpreter trainers and trainees emerged. Each of these personality traits identified has a different level of significance, which can be used as critical insight for the improvement of quality interpreting training. Knowing which characteristics have been rated as most important—such as cognitive flexibility, emotional stability, and integrity, training programs should be able to focus more intensively on those traits. For instance, training scenarios could be designed to simulate high-pressure situations that require rapid adaptability and emotional stamina, thus preparing interpreters for professional practice (Martínez-Gómez, 2020). Moreover, facets of ethical decision-making may be inculcated into the curriculum to breed a high moral and cultural sense in interpreters, which in turn is important to keep interpreters professional and honest (Rudvin, 2019).

Moreover, the findings of this study also offer useful guidance for interpreter trainees in their understanding of which kind of personality traits will better help them. Greater awareness can

help their personal development by guiding and intentionally developing such traits in themselves. For example, patience and adaptability in trainees can be developed through specific exercises that would raise their threshold for handling complex, time-consuming tasks (Tivyaeva, 2021). Besides, if the importance of self-motivation and discipline is recognized, then it could well motivate the trainees to take up self-learning initiatives that improve their capabilities and adaptability (Çoban and Telci, 2016).

Therefore, this study places an implication on the need for interpreter training programs to continue with the development of linguistic competencies but with a very strong emphasis on the personality development of interpreters. Improvement in effectiveness is likely to result in improving training and the attuning of such training to field demands for better professional growth and employability for prospective interpreters. These findings, if applied, would enable the training programs to provide interpreters with better competencies for coping with the demands and difficulties of their job and allowing them to develop professional identities and perform effectively in increasingly complex and shifting professional contexts.

4.10 Conclusion, limitations and future research

The present study systematically explores the importance of personality traits that are required by professional interpreters, underlining the top three most essential traits such as cognitive flexibility, emotional stability, and ethical integrity. Even traits like confidence and assertiveness, integrity and ethical standard, self-motivation and discipline, meticulousness and patience were identified as less significant, yet they are still recognized as essential by interpreter experts. These findings support the fact that interpretation is a profession that requires much more than linguistic ability. Instead, it requires an all-encompassing set of personality traits that promote the interpreter’s performance in an expansive and often demanding environment. In relation to such identified traits, educational institutions and interpreter trainers can better prepare interpreters for the multidimensional nature of their work and, by extension, their proficiency and adaptability in the professional environment.

While comprehensive, the study has several limitations. Most notably, the dependence on an expert panel, even though relatively representative of different perspectives from the field of interpretation, may still present limited diversity in its scope. In addition, thematic analysis proved to be a fruitful methodology for the identification and categorization of personality traits. However, it relies on manual procedures that are therefore susceptible to researcher biases and may fail to capture less immediately salient traits that are nevertheless significant. Moreover, the results may be too general to apply to all interpreting settings, since different environments (legal, medical, or diplomatic) may demand different traits or bring forth different facets of one single trait. Similarly, the mode of interpreting (consecutive or simultaneous) may also influence which type of traits is most relevant. This, therefore, would signal that the relevance of personality traits may seriously depend upon the peculiar demands of form and setting of interpreting.

Given these limitations, a futures study should be contemplated with an extended expert panel comprising a wide range of professionals from different interpreting settings and possibly even including perspectives of those who frequently use the interpreting services. Quantitative methods used together with thematic analysis may also enable a more objective measure of the importance and impact of various personality traits. Further research might also take into account the ways in which specific interpreting settings (legal, medical, educational, etc.) and forms (consecutive vs. simultaneous) affect the need for and usefulness of particular characteristics. The results of such research would also fill in the provisional knowledge about key personality features and enhance the specificity and applicability of the training programs for different interpreting contexts.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Dalian University of Foreign Languages. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

CY: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript. During the preparation of this work the author used ChatGPT and QuillBot in order to enhance language clarity and grammar. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2025.1597064/full#supplementary-material>

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