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"Just having experience is not enough": development and evaluation of a training for interpreters working in community settings – a mixed-methods study

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Background: Across community settings, such as healthcare, interpreters play an important role in facilitating communication when service users and providers do not share a common language sufficiently. Because most countries lack legal standards in the field of Community Interpreting, Community Interpreters (CIPs) are often not adequately trained for this activity, and the need for formal training is increasingly emphasized. This study aims to evaluate a generic training for CIPs in Germany.

Methods: The training was developed for interpreters working in health and social care, education, and authorities in Germany. It consists of 500 units and a final examination. A mixed-methods design was applied to evaluate the training. Training participants' (TPs) satisfaction, knowledge, competence, and professional self-efficacy expectations were measured by self-developed questionnaires. A pre-post multiple-choice knowledge test was developed to objectively assess the trainings' impact on knowledge. Qualitative pre- and post-interviews were conducted for an in-depth evaluation of TPs' motives for participating in the training, their experiences, improvements in knowledge and skills as well as their attitude changes. Trainers' qualifications and satisfaction were assessed using self-developed questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, and qualitative data were analyzed using a content analysis approach.

Results: In total, $n = 21$ TPs and $n = 18$ trainers were included. Quantitative analysis revealed that trainers and TPs were overall satisfied with the training. TPs showed increased subjective and objective knowledge, competence, and professional self-efficacy expectations. Qualitative findings revealed changes in TPs' knowledge about their role and ethical principles; they reported increased skills and confidence on both professional and personal levels. Due to the training, their interpreting performance changed from being relatively intuitive and "natural" to being informed and skills-based. They recognized the complexity of interpreting, thereby acknowledging their professional status. Obtaining a certificate after completing the examination increased their feeling of professionalism. However, TPs expressed the need for further in-depth training, as the training was rather generic and broad.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that generic training can enhance CIPs' knowledge, skills, competence, professional and personal confidence, and perceived professionalism. It highlights the critical need for formalized training, certification, and overall qualification programs to ensure not only the quality of interpreting services but also to shape the profession of CIPs.

1 Introduction

While cultural and linguistic diversity has always existed in many parts of the world due to distinct indigenous populations (Bromham et al., 2021; Stroud, 2007), ongoing globalization and international and internal migration further increase the diversity of languages spoken within societies worldwide (Ginsburg et al., 2021; Liebau and Romiti, 2014; McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024; Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2023). In Germany, which is currently the nation with the largest foreign-born population in Europe (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021) and the geopolitical context of this study, over half of migrants use mainly (35.6%) or solely (18.4%) a foreign language at home (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2023). However, this linguistic diversity of populations is often not adequately reflected among service providers working in community settings, such as healthcare (Faruk and Rosenbaum, 2022; Groene et al., 2023; Khawaja, 2021; Mösko et al., 2013). For instance, a study among outpatient diabetic practices in Germany found that 6.3% of all service users had insufficient German language skills for the clinical situation, and 19.6% of doctors refused treatment in the last quarter of the year due to language barriers (Flores et al., 2012). To overcome linguistic disparities between service providers and users, language mediation through interpreting and translation services may be necessary (Borde, 2018; Kilian et al., 2015; Samkange-Zeeb et al., 2020; Whitaker et al., 2022).

Community Interpreters (CIPs) usually work in different community settings, such as healthcare, social care, education, and authorities (Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024). They play an important role in facilitating communication between service providers and users when there is no shared language or a sufficient proficiency level for the type of interaction (Gavioli and Wadensjö, 2023; Gentile et al., 1996; Hale, 2007; Mösko et al., 2013; Pöchhacker, 1999; Pöllabauer, 2013). In this study, the term CIP was chosen because it is used by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in its Guidelines for Community Interpreting (CI) (ISO 13611:2014) (International Standard, 2024). However, there is a terminological ambiguity, and terms such as public service or liaison interpreting are also commonly used (Gentile et al., 1996; Ozolins, 2014; Pöllabauer, 2002; Pöllabauer, 2013; Roberts, 1997).

While there is a growing demand for CIPs due to increased linguistic diversity, the absence of legally established standards in the field of CI remains a significant issue in many countries worldwide, including Germany, Denmark, as well as officially multilingual countries such as South Africa (Hale, 2007; Kilian et al., 2015; Mogensen, 2023; Ozolins, 2010; Pöchhacker, 1999; Pöllabauer, 2013). In Germany, this shortcoming becomes apparent through the absence of protection for the professional title of CIPs, the lack of professional admission restrictions, and limited legal entitlement to interpretation services, except in specific cases, such as sign language interpretation or criminal proceedings in court (Iannone, 2021). The latter, in particular, leads to a lack of statutory regulations concerning the organization, funding, utilization, and training of CIPs (Bahadır, 2010, 2020; Breitsprecher et al., 2020; Iannone, 2021). Currently, CIPs are not required to possess any specialized training or formal certification to work in most community settings in Germany. This raises concerns about the quality and ethical standards of the services provided, and often reduces the recognition and professional status of CIPs compared to other professions (Bahadır, 2010, 2020; Grbić, 2015; Hale, 2007; Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024; Mikkelson, 1996; Ozolins, 2010). It has been emphasized that each country's institutional policies influence the professionalization of CI (Bahadır, 2020; Ozolins, 2000; Ozolins, 2010). Similar to other countries, such as Switzerland or Austria, and compared to the often well-educated conference interpreters, training for CIPs in Germany is typically not offered by higher education institutions, but rather as short courses by non-governmental organizations (Hale and Ozolins, 2014; Hale, 2007; Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024; Iannone and Redl, 2017; Pöllabauer et al., 2024; Pöllabauer, 2020). This could be seen as a reflection of insufficient governmental recognition and commitment to this field (Bahadır, 2020; Pöllabauer, 2020; Wadensjö, 2001).

Although various training and qualification programs have emerged over the past decade, they vary significantly in scope, objectives, content, and examination format. In addition, their effectiveness is often not evaluated (Breitsprecher et al., 2020; Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024; Müller et al., 2023; Pöllabauer et al., 2024). Consequently, the qualification of CIPs covers a broad spectrum, ranging from no training at all to extensive formal education in interpreting, such as a university degree (Breitsprecher et al., 2020; Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024). A survey among $N = 873$ CIPs in Germany demonstrated that even though the majority (69%) of them had received some form of training, the median hours of training received was only 25 h, and just 29.4% of them had completed a training that concluded with a final examination and successfully passed it (Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024). Moreover, this study found that barriers to attending (further) training include a lack of available training, the belief

that training does not lead to financial benefits, or the fact that one already has sufficient interpreting experience (Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024). Moreover, CIPs often receive interpreting assignments regardless of their qualifications, primarily due to the absence of legal regulations or qualification standards and insufficient funding for formal interpreting services (Pöllabauer et al., 2024). The lack of structured professional development in the field of CI may demotivate CIPs from participating in training courses, perpetuating the cycle of unstandardized and unqualified practice.

CIPs often receive their assignments through service providers or service users. Some of them may not be aware of CIPs' training background. Appointing interpreters who lack formal training poses significant challenges (Bahadır, 2010; Borde, 2018; Flores et al., 2012; Hagan et al., 2013; Hagan et al., 2020; Hale et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2013). Individuals, such as service users' family members or friends or multilingual staff, may be deployed as lay interpreters despite lacking the necessary linguistic skills, interpreting competence, and adherence to professional ethical principles, such as accuracy, completeness, transparency, confidentiality, and impartiality. Without proper training, these individuals may struggle to manage complex interpreting scenarios, resolve ethical dilemmas, and maintain professional role boundaries. Insufficient linguistic abilities and specialized knowledge can lead to miscommunication and inaccurate interpretation, thereby compromising the service provider–user relationship and the effectiveness and outcomes of the communication (Flores et al., 2012; Hagan et al., 2013; Hagan et al., 2020; Hale et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2013).

Hale (2007) highlights the complexity and problematic nature of training, describing it across countries as one of the most challenging aspects in the field of CI. Interconnected factors, including a general lack of recognition of the need for training, the absence of compulsory pre-service training for CIPs, a lack of adequate training programs, and significant variations in the quality and effectiveness of existing training courses, pose significant challenges in this regard (Hale, 2007). Pöllabauer (2020) adds that CIP training "may be viewed as a Herculean and, some might say, frustrating project" (p. 37) (Pöllabauer, 2020). Nevertheless, formal training and certification are increasingly recognized as essential not only for ensuring the provision of high-quality interpreting services but also for shaping the profession by enhancing its recognition, status, and professional legitimacy (Ertl and Pöllabauer, 2014; Mikkelson, 2004; Ozolins, 2010; Roberts, 1997).

2 Aim of the study

To narrow the gap between the lack of adequate training programs and the importance of training CIPs, a training program for interpreters working in community settings in Germany was developed and its effectiveness evaluated. While the development of the training will be described in detail elsewhere (forthcoming), this study focused on the evaluation. We followed Kirkpatrick's Training Evaluation framework (Kirkpatrick, 1994), encompassing the three levels of reaction, learning, and behavior. We aimed to answer the following questions from the perspective of the training participants (TPs):

1. What motivates them to participate in the training?
2. How satisfied were they with the training?
3. Are there changes in (subjective and objective) knowledge due to the training?
4. Are there changes in subjective interpreting competence and skills (including subjective professional self-efficacy expectations)?
5. To what extent can what has been learned be applied in practice?
6. What other outcomes could be observed through the training?

Additionally, we collected the qualifications of the trainers and asked them to evaluate the organization and preparation of their teaching within the overall training. We also examined trainers' satisfaction with their teaching units and the TPs as a learning group.

3 Materials and methods

3.1 Training description

Based on the results of a previous research project on quality standards and minimum requirements for the qualification of CIPs in Germany (Breitsprecher et al., 2020), as well as a comprehensive literature review on training programs for CIPs internationally and in Germany, we developed a generic training program for CIPs.[1]

3.1.1 Target group and requirements for participation

The training was targeted to people with German and one (or more) relevant working language(s) who interpret in community settings, such as healthcare, social care, education, and authorities, or aspire to do so in the future. Eligibility criteria for enrollment in the training included that TPs had to be proficient in at least one relevant working language at a native speaker level. In addition, their other working language proficiency level had to be equivalent to at least B2.2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Desirable qualifications include prior interpreting experience, an intermediate level of general education (equivalent to a minimum of 8 years of formal schooling), and relevant professional qualifications. Participation in the training was made possible free of charge through funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union (AM19-HH5109). We promoted the training through various channels, including interpreting pools, social media, and organizations that frequently collaborate with interpreters. TPs had to apply with a letter of motivation and proof of participation requirements. Eligible individuals were invited to a selection interview. TPs were chosen based on their demonstrated motivation, fulfillment of the training's participation requirements, and performance during the selection interview.

3.1.2 Type, scope, and content

The in-person training was designed to be generic and not tailored to a specific setting. The aim was to enhance CIPs'

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1 http://zwischensprachen.de/en/interpreters/qualification

competencies for working across diverse community settings. It consists of 500 units, each 45 min in duration, comprising face-to-face teaching (224 units), self-study time (224 units), a practical component (20 units), and exam preparation (32 units). The training encompassed 22 modules covering 10 topics listed in Table 1. The compulsory practical part had to be completed during the training period. It included organizing and conducting three interpreting assignments in different community settings, as well as writing a reflection report for each assignment. The training was conducted by different trainers qualified for the respective course content modules. They were experts in Translation and Interpreting Studies or professionals in a specific community setting, such as lawyers or psychotherapists. The trainers were recruited through the researchers' personal and professional networks. Various training methods were employed, including group work, role-playing, and frontal teaching. All trainers designed their teaching units and materials in close collaboration with the head of the overall training course, a qualified conference interpreter with extensive experience in conducting CIP training. Although the training was initially planned in an in-person format, some theory sessions were conducted online due to COVID-19-related governmental restrictions. However, the majority, especially the practical interpreting exercises and exam preparation (e.g., role-plays), were conducted in person.

3.1.3 Final exam

The training concluded with a comprehensive final examination consisting of two parts. Based on Bahadır's interpreting staging method, the TPs interpreted a simulated conversation and then reflected on their interpreting performance (Bahadır, 2010). The simulated conversation was conducted with the assistance of external individuals who played the roles of

TABLE 1   Content and scope of the training.

Units (1 unit = 45 min)	Modules
224	Face-to-face teaching:
20	1. Basic knowledge of the profession
56	2. Interpreting modes, techniques, and strategies
20	3. Language competence
8	4. Cultural competence
12	5. Role(s) of interpreters
28	6. Professional ethical principles
12	7. Psychosocial stress and self-care
4	8. Legal framework
12	9. Interpreting as a self-employed activity
52	10. Insights into 11 different interpreting settings
224	Self-study time
20	Three interpreting assignments in different settings (including written reports)
32	Exam preparation (two 2-day workshops)
500 in total	

service providers (speaking German) and service users (speaking the working language of the exam candidate). The individuals who acted as service users were qualified interpreters themselves and also served as examiners of TPs' language skills, interpretation accuracy and completeness. The examination was conducted by two qualified examiners in the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies, in addition to the person who assessed the TPs' language competencies. All TPs received a certificate with their final grade, using a five-point grading system, ranging from 1 (very good) to 5 (failed).

3.1.4 Timeline and group sizes

Between 2020 and 2022, we had three training groups, comprising two part-time cohorts (7 months each) and one full-time cohort (3 months). The first cohort was used for pilot testing and was therefore excluded from this evaluation study. While we initially planned for group sizes of 20 TPs, governmental COVID-19 restrictions required us to reduce the maximum group size to 12 TPs in order to still be able to conduct as many parts of the training in person as possible.

3.2 Study design

The study was conducted within the Research Group on Migration and Psychosocial Health at the Department of Medical Psychology, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf. Our mixed-methods evaluation consisted of qualitative interviews conducted before and after the training, as well as quantitative questionnaires administered before, during, and after the training. We included all individuals participating in the second and third training cohorts. During the selection interviews, TPs were informed that participation in the training also entails participation in the evaluation study. Data collection took place from March 2021 to August 2022. We obtained written ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (LPEK-0211).

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 Qualitative interviews

S.H.-R. developed the pre- and post-training semi-structured interview guides based on a literature review and the research questions in close consultation with C.B., M.M. and the head of the training program. We followed Helfferich's (2009) SPSS approach of collecting, reviewing, sorting, and ultimately subsuming questions (Helfferich, 2009). The pre-training guide covered the following topics: reasons for participating in the training, expectations and concerns, understanding of the interpreter's role, and existing knowledge of the main professional ethical principles. In the post-training interview, TPs were invited to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of the training, changes in the comprehension of their role as CIPs, and their knowledge of professional ethical principles. They were also asked about improvements in their interpreting knowledge and skills, changes in their attitudes, and the practical applicability of what they had learned.

3.3.2 Quantitative questionnaires

Due to a lack of appropriate validated instruments, we self-developed the pre-, during, and post-training questionnaires for the TPs, as well as the post-teaching questionnaire for the trainers.

3.3.2.1 Pre-training questionnaire for TPs

This questionnaire captured TPs' sociodemographic variables and interpreting-related variables, which are displayed in Table 2. Moreover, subjective interpreting knowledge and competence were measured with one item each and on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = no knowledge" to "5 = extensive knowledge" and from "1 = not competent at all" to "5 = very competent."

In addition, we self-developed a multiple-choice test to objectively assess the impact of the training on TPs' interpreting-related knowledge. We developed the pre- and post-test in a multi-stage procedure in cooperation with CIPs and researchers from the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies, specializing in the field of CI. The CIPs involved in the test development did not participate as TPs in the training. We recruited them through interpreting pools and our professional contacts and provided feedback several times throughout the development process. The final test, designed specifically for CIPs in Germany, consists of 22 questions and is available in both German and English in Supplementary material. Correct answers receive 1 point, while incorrect answers or responses of "I don't know" earn 0 points. Finally, the sum score will be calculated, with higher scores indicating more interpreting knowledge.

To measure subjective professional self-efficacy expectations, a slightly adapted version of the "BSW-scale for assessing professional self-efficacy expectations" by Abele et al. (2000) was used. This is a reliable ($\alpha = 0.78$) and valid one-dimensional scale comprising six items, which measures a person's assumptions about whether their ability and motivation are sufficient to cope with their professional tasks. The items are rated on a five-point scale, ranging from "1 = not true" to "5 = exactly true." The overall mean value across all six items is calculated for the sum score, where a higher value indicates a higher self-efficacy expectation (Abele et al., 2000). In the adapted version, we replaced the word "job" with "interpreting." Cronbach's alpha reliability score for the present sample was 0.71 in the pre-training and 0.72 in the post-training assessment.

3.3.2.2 Questionnaire for TPs during the training

A self-developed questionnaire assessed TPs' satisfaction with each training module on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree." The content, methods, materials, trainers, and overall satisfaction were evaluated.

3.3.2.3 Post-training questionnaire for TPs

The post-questionnaire included items to assess TPs' overall satisfaction with the training, specifically with the organization, content, methods, and trainers. We also asked about the relevance of the training and the improvement in German language skills. Items could be answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree." Subjective interpreting knowledge, subjective interpreting competence, objective interpreting-related knowledge and professional self-efficacy expectations were

reassessed in the same manner as in the pre-questionnaire. Additionally, TPs were asked to assess their subjective interpreting knowledge and competence retrospectively, before the training began, using the same five-point Likert scale (see Table 3).

3.3.2.4 Post-questionnaire for trainers

The questionnaire covered various aspects of the trainers' expertise and experience. Firstly, we asked about their professional background, including their current profession, training related to the content they teach, and their professional experience in their teaching fields. Secondly, we assessed their overall training experiences, specifically focusing on their experiences with the teaching content and any past engagements with the target group of CIPs. Additionally, trainers evaluated their satisfaction with the organization and preparation of their teaching units, teaching practices, and the dynamics of the TPs as a learning group.

3.4 Data collection

We informed all study participants, including trainers and CIPs, both verbally and in writing, about the aim and procedure of the interviews and questionnaires, that study participation is voluntary, and that data collection is anonymous. We provided a detailed study and data protection information sheet in German. All study participants gave their verbal and written consent to participate.

3.4.1 Qualitative interviews with TPs pre- and post-training

The first author, S.H.-R., conducted the pre- and post-training interviews with all TPs in person and one-on-one at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf. S.H.-R. is a White female researcher and M.Sc. psychologist with extensive experience in qualitative research, including the development of interview guides, conducting interviews, and analyzing them using qualitative content analysis approaches. She conducted the pre-interviews 1–2 weeks before the training started and the post-interviews within 2 weeks after the training had ended, but before TPs had their final examination. S.H.-R. was not actively involved as a trainer in the training to avoid potential researcher bias. For all interviews, we used the self-developed semi-structured guides, which allowed the interviewer to deviate from the pre-formulated questions and to ask individualized questions to explore new or unexpected topics raised by the interviewee during the interview. S.H.-R. conducted all interviews in German and filled in a postscript to document the interview situation and any potentially disruptive factors that arose during the interview. With the TPs' permission, S.H.-R. audio recorded the interviews, which were transcribed verbatim by a professional agency. S.H.-R. proofread all the transcripts. She either deleted or altered any personal data that could lead to the identification of interviewees (e.g., participant names). All participants were given the option to review their transcripts. However, none opted to do so. The pre-training interviews lasted between 17.24 and 55.40 min ($M = 33.32$),

TABLE 2 Sociodemographic characteristics and interpreting-related variables of training participants (N = 21).

Variables	Categories	n	%	M (SD)	Min−max
Sociodemographic characteristics					
Gender	Male	3	14.3	–	–
	Female	18	85.7	–	–
	Divers	0	0	–	–
Age	–	–	–	43.62 (10.08)	24–61
Place of birth	Syria	4	19.0	–	–
	Iran	2	9.5	–	–
	Morocco	2	9.5	–	–
	Germany, Niger, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Serbia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Yugoslavia, Turkey	Each 1	Each 4.8	–	–
Residence in Germany (if born abroad; in years)	–	–	–	16.10 (11.08)	5–45
Number of spoken languages	–	–	–	3.33 (2.63)	1–14
Level of education according to ISCED	High	13	61.9	–	–
	Medium	8	38.1	–	–
	Low	0	0	–	–
Highest level of education received abroad	In Germany	9	42.9	–	–
	Abroad	12	57.1	–	–
Employment status (not as a CIP)	Full-time employed	2	9.5	–	–
	Part-time employed	2	9.5	–	–
	Minor employment (less than 15 h)	3	14.3	–	–
	Self-employed	3	14.3	–	–
	Unemployed, looking for work	6	28.6	–	–
	Unemployed, not looking for work	2	9.5	–	–
	Other	3	14.3	–	–
Interpreting-related characteristics					
Interpreting experience (in years)	–	–	–	5.81 (2.75)	0–10
Frequency of interpreting (in the last 12 months)	Not at all	3	15.0	–	–
	Less than once a month	4	20.0	–	–
	Once a month	3	15.0	–	–
	Several times per month	7	35.0	–	–
	Several times per week	2	10.0	–	–
	Daily	1	5.0	–	–
	Missing	*1*	–	–	–
Work settings[a]	–	–	–	3.35 (1.57)	1–6
	Healthcare	17	85.0	–	–
	Social services	15	75.0	–	–
	Authorities	15	75.0	–	–
	Education	12	60.0	–	–
	Police	5	25.0	–	–
	Court	3	15.0	–	–
	Missing	*1*	–	–	–

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Variables	Categories	*n*	%	*M* (SD)	Min–max
Number of assignments per interpreting setting (in the last 12 months)	Healthcare	–	–	24.07 (34.55)	1–130
	Social services	–	–	12.23 (13.94)	0–40
	Authorities	–	–	10.64 (14.56)	0–55
	Education	–	–	5.50 (4.21)	0–15
	Police	–	–	3.25 (3.30)	0–7
	Court	–	–	1	1
Less interpreting jobs due to COVID-19 pandemic	Yes	21	100.0	–	–
Prior interpreting training	Yes[a]	9	42.9	–	–
	University degree	1	4.8	–	–
	Hamburg Chamber of Commerce	1	4.8	–	–
	Sworn in (at court)	1	4.8	–	–
	Other	9	42.9	–	–
Status of interpreting	Full-time	6	30.0	–	–
	Part-time	6	30.0	–	–
	Unpaid for known persons	5	25.0	–	–
	Unpaid for unknown persons	3	15.0	–	–
	Missing	*1*	–	–	–
Number of working languages	–	–	–	3.48 (1.47)	2–8

[a]Multiple answers were possible.

and the post-training interviews ranged from 38.05 to 71.32 min ($M = 56.48$).

3.4.2 Quantitative questionnaire for TPs pre-, post-, and during the training

All questionnaires were in German. The TPs filled out the paper-pencil pre-questionnaire before the pre-interview was conducted. The questionnaires during the training were completed at the end of each module in the classroom. The paper-pencil post-questionnaire was completed after the last training unit in the classroom. The multiple-choice knowledge pre-test was completed at the beginning of the first training unit, and the post-test (along with the post-questionnaire) at the end of the last unit in the classroom under the supervision of S.H.-R.

3.4.3 Quantitative questionnaire for trainers post-teaching

All trainers completed their paper-pencil questionnaire within 1 week after their teaching unit.

3.5 Data analysis

We examined the quantitative data from the questionnaires using descriptive analyses. All analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28.0.1.1. We analyzed all interviews following the structuring qualitative content analysis method by Kuckartz (2014). The coding process was deductive and inductive. S.H.-R. analyzed all interviews. We critically reviewed

and discussed the final category system within an interdisciplinary research team to ensure intersubjective reproducibility and comprehensibility (Creswell, 2013). Study participants did not provide feedback on the results. We analyzed the qualitative data using MAXQDA 2020.

4 Results

The results are presented in two main parts. First, we report on the qualifications and satisfaction of the trainers involved. This is followed by a detailed evaluation of the TPs' experiences and outcomes, including both qualitative and quantitative data collected before, during, and after the training.

4.1 Trainers: qualification background

All trainers participated in the evaluation ($n = 18$), with $n = 12$ having taught more than one module. Most (95.2%) of the trainers were professionally trained in the content they taught, with an average of $M = 12.74$ years of experience in this capacity (SD = 8.03). In total, 72.2% had previously worked with the target group of CIP with an average of $M = 11.73$ years (SD = 15.8). Moreover, 83.3% of them possessed prior teaching experience, and most of the trainers (79.5%) had previously taught the content of their assigned modules.

TABLE 3   Training participants' quantitative post-training evaluation (*N* = 21).

Aspects of the training	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
Organization							
The overall duration (hours) of the training was appropriate.	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	10 (47.6%)	5 (23.8%)	3.76	1.09
The number of training participants in the course was appropriate.	1 (4.8%)	–	–	6 (28.6%)	14 (66.7%)	4.57	0.75
Overall, I am satisfied with the organization of the training.	1 (4.8%)	–	1 (4.8%)	8 (38.1%)	11 (52.4%)	4.38	0.81
Content							
The balance between the single topics/modules (amount of time) was appropriate.	2 (9.5%)	–	5 (23.8%)	9 (42.9%)	5 (23.8%)	3.81	0.93
I was missing important content on the subject of interpreting in community and public service settings.	12 (57.1%)	5 (23.8%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)	–	1.71	1.01
Overall, I am satisfied with the selection of topics in the training.	1 (4.8%)	–	–	7 (33.3%)	13 (61.9%)	4.52	0.75
Methods							
The practical interpreting exercises were helpful for me as an interpreter.	–	–	–	7 (33.3%)	14 (66.7%)	4.67	0.48
Overall, I am satisfied with the balance between theory, discussions and practical exercises.	1 (4.8%)	–	1 (4.8%)	10 (47.6%)	9 (42.9%)	4.24	0.94
Language skills							
The training has improved my German language skills.	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	5 (23.8%)	12 (57.1%)	4.14	1.32
General evaluation							
I learned new things during the training.	–	–	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)	17 (81.0%)	4.71	0.64
Overall, the training is helpful for my work as an interpreter.	–	–	–	2 (9.5%)	19 (90.5%)	4.90	0.30
I feel empowered by the training to do my job as an interpreter better in the future.	–	–	–	4 (19.0%)	17 (81.0%)	4.81	0.40
Overall, I am satisfied with the training.	–	1 (4.8%)	–	5 (23.8%)	15 (71.4%)	4.62	0.74
I would recommend the training to other interpreters.	–	1 (4.8%)	–	1 (4.8%)	19 (90.5%)	4.81	0.68
	Not at all competent	Rather not competent	Average competent	Rather competent	Very competent	Mean	SD
Subjective competence (pre-training)	–	3 (14.3%)	15 (71.4%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	2.95	0.67
Subjective competence (post-training)	–		6 (28.6%)	15 (71.4%)	–	4.10	0.44
Subjective competence (retrospectively, pre-training)	2 (9.5%)	9 (42.9%)	9 (42.9%)	1 (4.8%)	–	2.67	0.86
	No knowledge	Little knowledge	Moderate knowledge	Substantial knowledge	Extensive knowledge	Mean	SD
Subjective knowledge (pre-training)	–	5 (23.8%)	12 (57.1%)	4 (19.0%)	–	3.05	0.67
Subjective knowledge (post-training)	–	–	1 (4.8%)	17 (81.0%)	3 (14.3%)	3.71	0.46
Subjective knowledge (retrospectively, pre-training)	1 (4.8%)	9 (42.9%)	7 (33.3%)	4 (19.0%)	–	2.43	0.75
Multiple choice knowledge test (pre-training)	–	–	–	–	–	10.67	4.32
Multiple choice knowledge test (post-training)	–	–	–	–	–	16.38	3.26
Subjective professional self-efficacy expectations (BSW-Scale) (pre-training)	–	–	–	–	–	4.38	0.55
Subjective professional self-efficacy expectations (BSW-Scale) (post-training)	–	–	–	–	–	4.55	0.46

4.2 Trainers: outcome evaluation

On average, the trainers "(strongly) agreed" with being satisfied with the organization of their teaching within the training ($M = 4.83$, SD = 0.44) and their overall teaching performance ($M = 4.41$, SD = 0.59). They "strongly agreed" with feeling professionally confident in the content taught ($M = 4.78$, SD = 0.53). They "(strongly) agreed" that they were able to answer TPs' questions adequately ($M = 4.61$, SD = 0.49), adapt their teaching to the TPs' performance level ($M = 4.49$, SD = 0.55), achieve previously defined learning objectives ($M = 4.32$, SD = 0.61), ensure variability in their teaching methods ($M = 4.27$, SD = 0.81). On average, they "(strongly) agreed" with being satisfied with the TPs as a learning group ($M = 4.79$, SD = 0.42), that the TPs understood the topic in terms of content ($M = 4.33$, SD = 0.57) and language ($M = 4.24$, SD = 0.58), were interested ($M = 4.64$, SD = 0.58) and participated well ($M = 4.67$, SD = 0.61).

4.3 Training participants: sociodemographic and work-related characteristics

During the training, $n = 3$ TPs dropped out and were therefore excluded from this study. In total, $n = 21$ TPs were included in the training evaluation, of which $n = 10$ completed the full-time and $n = 11$ the part-time training. All sociodemographic and work-related characteristics are displayed in Table 2.

4.4 Training participants: qualitative pre-training analysis

The qualitative pre-training analysis explored TPs' motives for working as a CIP, reasons for participating in this training, expectations and concerns, understanding of the interpreter's role, and knowledge about professional ethical principles. The results are displayed in Table 4.

4.4.1 Motives for attending the training, expectations, and concerns

Many TPs reported that they began interpreting voluntarily to assist family members, friends, or acquaintances. Many have already done this as children. Additionally, most of them had previously found themselves in a situation where they were unable to communicate due to limited German language skills. They were now trying to help others in this regard. Furthermore, some reported bad experiences with interpreters and wanted to do it better. Although many already worked as interpreters, they reported needing more training. The primary motivation for attending the training was to enhance one's interpreting knowledge, skills, and self-esteem. Interpreting was described as a solitary activity, and exchanging experiences with other interpreters was another reason for participation.

Some TPs expressed interest in learning about interpreting in various settings, gaining a clearer understanding of the interpreter's role and how to maintain role boundaries, and expanding their

vocabulary and German language skills. They hoped to learn how to deal with interpreting-related challenges. In addition, they expressed a desire to learn more about the professional aspects of CI, including self-employment and tax considerations. At the time of pre-data collection, some TPs were unemployed and working only occasionally or completely voluntarily as CIPs. They expressed hopes of completing the final examination to obtain formal certification, which they believed could help to reach a more professional level, get more interpreting assignments, receive better payment, or even permanent employment: "*That's why it's better to be qualified, of course. And with a certificate in hand, of course, you have a better chance of getting a job somewhere.*" (IP19_Pre).

The main concerns expressed were about managing the training and other professional or family obligations, as well as the heterogeneous group composition leading to potential conflicts: "*I have nothing against Arabs, [...] but I'm a Black person. And I've heard from some Arabs that Black people, there is discrimination, so to speak, between Arabs and Black people. That's no secret. Everyone knows that. I hope that the Arabs who are in this course are not like the others, so in the negative sense I mean, that we get along well and so on.*" (IP13_Pre).

4.4.2 Understanding of the interpreter's role and knowledge about professional ethical principles

Most TPs clearly stated that they viewed their role as merely a mediator on a linguistic and cultural level, defined as translating what is said and helping with questions regarding the service users' cultural background. However, throughout the interview, the vast majority provided examples that extend beyond the task of mere interpretation, e.g., assisting the service user outside of the interpreting situation, self-descriptions such as "a brother" or an emotional supporter who aims to empower service users. While a few TPs were aware that they were overstepping their role in such cases, most were not: "*Then I say, please take a breath. Take a sip of water. I'm like a brother or something. Then after five, six minutes, everything was okay again, and we continued the conversation.*" (IP03_Pre).

Honesty, completeness, accuracy, confidentiality, empathy, understanding, and humanity were the most frequently mentioned aspects regarding known ethical principles. The question about principles was generally answered based on personal opinions, experiences, and intuition rather than existing knowledge. "*What principles? Simply humanity. And respect. Not being arrogant. So that's what's important to me, for example.*" (IP18_Pre).

4.5 Training participants: quantitative outcome evaluation

4.5.1 During the training

On average and across all modules, TPs "strongly agreed" with being satisfied with the content ($M = 4.68$, SD = 0.36), the organization ($M = 4.7$, SD = 0.33), and the trainers ($M = 4.83$, SD = 0.27). They "strongly agreed" with perceiving the used materials ($M = 4.64$, SD = 0.35) and the exchange with others ($M = 4.56$, SD = 0.47) as helpful and the general atmosphere as positive ($M = 4.71$, SD = 0.35). Moreover, they "strongly agreed" with having learned something new ($M = 4.5$, SD = 0.48), perceiving the modules as helpful ($M = 4.66$, SD = 0.35) and feeling

TABLE 4   Results from qualitative pre- and post-training interviews with training participants.

Main categories	Sub-categories
Pre-training	
Motives for attending the training, expectations and concerns	Motives: • Starting interpreting by helping out family members, friends, or acquaintances voluntarily • Previously been in a similar situation, where TPs were unable to communicate due to limited language skills; now trying to help others in this regard • Previously bad experiences with interpreters and wanting to do it better • Perceived lack of interpreting-specific training • Enhancing interpreting knowledge, competence, and self-esteem • Exchanging of experiences with other interpreters Expectations: • Learning about working in different settings and self-employment • Reaching a more professional level • Getting more interpreting assignments, • Receiving better payment and permanent employment • Getting employment through training completion and certification • Learning about interpreting in different settings • Clearer understanding of the interpreter's role and how to maintain role boundaries • Increasing vocabulary and German language skills • Learning how to deal with interpreting related challenges Concerns: • Managing the training and other professional or family obligations • Heterogeneous group composition
Understanding of the interpreter's role and knowledge about professional ethical principles	Interpreter's role: • Being a mediator on a linguistic and cultural level • Providing examples that go beyond the role of mere interpretation Professional ethical principles: • Honesty, completeness, accuracy, confidentiality, empathy, understanding, and humanity • Based on personal opinions, experiences, and intuition
Post-training	
Content, methods, organization, and trainers	Positive: • Overall satisfaction with the training's content, format, methods, and trainers • In-person format and interpreting exercises allowing direct and personal feedback on interpreting performances • Generic orientation of the training • Introduction to different interpreting settings allowing informed decisions about future work settings • Trainers perceived as role models • Heterogeneous group composition Negative: • Training too long or too short (possibly associated with TPs' German language competences) • Basics covered, however, need for further training • Trainers' boring teaching style • Trainer using stereotypes and prejudices Suggestion for improvement: • At least two candidates who speak a common language for interpreting exercises • More practical interpreting exercises
Exchange with other interpreters	• Working as an interpreter is predominantly solitary and isolating • Gaining insights into different cultures, contexts, and languages • Developing personal friendships • Learning about job opportunities and working conditions • Professional networking • Sharing experiences and challenges related to interpreting
Perceived increase in knowledge and skills	• Role and tasks of interpreters • Professional ethical principles • Interpreting strategies and techniques • Rights and duties of an interpreter • Navigating various cultural contexts • Dealing with emotional distress and self-care • Effective note-taking • Effective preparation for interpreting assignments (e.g., glossary) • Improved German language skills and vocabulary • Actively arranging the communicative situation (e.g., appropriate seating position, introduction of interpreter's role, and working methods to interlocutors)
Realizing the complexity of the interpreting task	• Initial approach to interpreting was predominantly spontaneous and intuitive ("natural" interpreting)

(Continued)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Main categories	Sub-categories

Professional ethical principles and role understanding	• Lack of knowledge about professional ethical principles and interpreter's role before training
	• Main role perception retrospectively before training:
	  • Advocates of the service users
	  • Supporters of the service providers
	  • Taking responsibility for the process and outcome of the entire communication
	• Main role perception after training: "Just" conveying the spoken word from one party to the other (realizing the complexity of this)
	• Retrospectively recognizing inadequate actions
	• Learning about strategies on how to maintain role boundaries

Perceived increase in (personal and professional) confidence	• Strategies for managing conflicts and addressing challenging situations • Before training: concerns to be perceived as incompetent led to hiding experienced difficulties/problems • After training: sign of competence to be completely transparent (including mistakes made) • Increased knowledge leads to more confidence • Increased knowledge leads to higher pressure to perform adequately and to insecurities • Overall personal growth and higher self-esteem
Recognizing and promoting the value and professionalization of CI	• Increased awareness about interpreter's roles and responsibilities • Recognizing CI as a profession, which requires specialized competencies • Pre-training perception: interpreter as social and voluntary (i.e., unpaid) support • Competition of training and acquisition of a certificate leads to justification in demanding remuneration for interpreting services instead of volunteering • Considering interpreting as a full-time profession
Implementation into practice	Challenges: • Keeping role boundaries • Dealing with emotionally stressful situations • Lack of knowledge or recognition on the part of the service providers and users • Recommendation to also train service providers for interpreter-mediated communication

empowered in their future work as a CIP ($M = 4.59$, SD = 0.43). They "strongly agreed" with being generally satisfied with the modules ($M = 4.72$, SD = 0.35).

4.5.2 Post-training

The results from the post-training questionnaire are presented in Table 3. The vast majority were satisfied with the training (95.2%) and would recommend it to other CIPs (95.3%). The TPs perceived the training as helpful for their work as interpreters ($M = 4.90$, SD = 0.3), stated that they had learned something new ($M = 4.71$, SD = 0.64), and felt empowered to do the job as interpreters better in the future ($M = 4.81$, SD = 0.4).

Regarding subjective interpreting knowledge, the average pre-training score was $M = 3.05$ (SD = 0.67), and the post-training score was $M = 3.71$ (SD = 0.46). In retrospect, at the end of the training, TPs rated their interpreting knowledge before training as slightly lower than they had at the beginning of the training ($M = 2.43$, SD = 0.75). The average score of the multiple-choice pre-training knowledge test was $M = 10.67$ (SD = 4.32), while the average post-training knowledge score test was $M = 16.38$ (SD = 3.26). This indicates an increase in both subjective and objective knowledge.

Regarding subjective interpreting competence, the average pre-training score was $M = 2.95$ (SD = 0.67), and the post-training score was $M = 4.10$ (SD = 0.44), indicating a slight increase in perceived competence. In retrospect, at the end of the training, the TPs rated their interpreting competence before the training lower than they did at the beginning of the training ($M = 2.67$, SD = 0.86). Similarly, a slight increase was observed in subjective professional self-efficacy expectations, with a mean score of $M = 4.38$ (SD = 0.55) before the training and a mean score of $M = 4.55$ (SD = 0.46) after the training.

4.6 Training participants: qualitative post-training analysis

4.6.1 Content, methods, organization, and trainers

Training participants reported overall satisfaction with the training's content, format, methods, and trainers. They highlighted the in-person format and interpreting exercises as beneficial components, as they allowed for direct and personal feedback on TPs' interpreting performances, which helped to increase knowledge and skills: *"So, as an interpreter, I don't realize what I've done well or wrong. But when I get this kind of external reflection, feedback from another person, it helps me. That's also important."* (IP20_Post). Most wished for more practical exercises. Some TPs complained that some theoretical sessions were conducted online and would have preferred them to be in person.

The duration of the training led to mixed reactions; some TPs wished it to be longer, while others felt it was too lengthy, regardless of whether they participated in the full-time or part-time course. It was noticeable that people who were native German speakers or had very good German language skills would find the training somewhat lengthy, suggesting a possible association with TPs' German language proficiency. Some highlighted that the generic training only covered the basics of CI and expressed the need for further in-depth training opportunities. All TPs valued the generic orientation of the training and, in particular, the introduction of different interpreting settings, which was perceived as beneficial for making informed decisions about TPs' future work-setting preferences.

While the 18 trainers were generally well-received and even perceived as role models in some cases, some criticism was expressed toward boring teaching styles or occasional reliance on stereotypes and prejudices: *"So, the person can't do that [the teaching] well – in my opinion, they can't present it well and explain the differences because they are full of prejudices."* (IP06_Post).

The heterogeneous group composition, in terms of country of birth, languages, religion, interpreting experience, and interpreting status, was generally appreciated. However, it was emphasized that there should be at least two TPs per working language, particularly for the interpreting exercises. Some TPs had to conduct the practical exercise in a language that was not their (primary) working language.

4.6.2 Exchange with other CIPs

The work as a CIP was described as predominantly solitary. Consequently, interactions with other interpreters within the training were highly appreciated. TPs valued these exchanges for several reasons, including gaining insights into different contexts, cultural backgrounds, and languages; developing personal friendships; learning about job opportunities and working conditions, such as the differences in the amount of remuneration and or self-employment options; professional networking; and sharing experiences and challenges related to interpreting: *"And through this course I learned, there are kind service providers everywhere and also those who are unfriendly. One colleague said: 'I also had the same problem with some service providers.' And I'm like, okay, I didn't know that before."* (IP05_Post).

4.6.3 Perceived increase in knowledge and skills

All TPs reported a significant increase in their perceived knowledge and skills following the training, encompassing aspects such as understanding the role and tasks of an interpreter, ethical principles, interpreting strategies and techniques, the rights and duties of an interpreter, navigating various cultural contexts; dealing with emotional distress and self-care; and effective note-taking. They also learned how to prepare for interpreting assignments properly, e.g., by creating a glossary for specific vocabulary. Additionally, the training enhanced TPs' German language skills and vocabulary for working in various settings. Moreover, they learned how to arrange the communicative situation in such a way that they can perform their task well, e.g., through an appropriate seating arrangement and the introduction of their role and working methods, such as transparency or impartiality: *"And then I make it clear in those five minutes. [...] I'll introduce myself. And tell you how I work to avoid misunderstandings. And I didn't do that before either, because I didn't know that. I only knew that nobody in Germany was interested in my name. Who am I, and where do I come from? Nobody."* (IP04_Post).

4.6.4 Realizing the complexity of the interpreting task

Many TPs reported that they only learned about and experienced the complexity of interpreting through the training. Most acknowledged that their initial approach to interpreting before the training was predominantly spontaneous and intuitive rather than grounded in actual knowledge and trained skills: *"I'm not an interpreter by profession, as I said, I only got into it by chance,* *and I just did it by gut feeling and never attended a seminar or further training in that direction."* (IP14_Post).

4.6.5 Professional ethical principles and role understanding

All reported limited knowledge of professional ethical principles prior to the training. However, through the course of the training, they gained a deeper understanding of these principles and their significance in professional practice. In addition, all TPs reported a clearer understanding of the interpreters' role and tasks, and described "just" conveying the spoken word from one party to the other as their primary task, whose complexity was previously not recognized. In retrospect, many TPs acknowledged previous misconceptions and behaviors: They perceived themselves as advocates of service users' interests or supporters of the service provider and often took responsibility for the process and outcome of the entire communication; they intervened in the middle of a conversation; advised service users; and did not adhere to professional ethical principles, such as accuracy, completeness, transparency, confidentiality, and impartiality: *"I thought that an interpreter must do everything, an interpreter must help. I was sometimes with mothers with a baby and bags, I say, give me the bag; I have to help. The children are screaming, and I calm them down. For example, if the woman is sad, I have to comfort the woman all the time, even before the conversation. I don't know; I have no idea. I've done a lot of things wrong."* (IP17_Post).

Moreover, TPs learned about strategies on how to maintain professional role boundaries, including explaining their role in the communication process and their adherence to professional ethics to the service provider and user and not giving their phone numbers to service users: *"It changed, that I am then clearer in it – so I can see clearly, that is my role. When I do my job now, I'm an interpreter, not a social worker. And that I can then really set boundaries very well. I can say: 'No, I'm only here for this conversation, but nothing more.'"* (IP02_Post). Learning about their role and how to explain it to other interlocutors was considered particularly important because many service providers and users lack knowledge about how CIPs work.

4.6.6 Perceived increase in (personal and professional) confidence

All TPs expressed a perceived increase in professional confidence. TPs learned strategies for managing conflicts and addressing challenging situations that arise during interpreting, which increased their confidence in handling them effectively. For example, they have learned to interrupt when they realize that they can no longer do their work correctly, e.g., because people are speaking too quickly, more than two people are talking at the same time or in a non-logical manner. Most TPs described, in retrospect, that they were often afraid of being perceived as incompetent and therefore tried to hide their experienced difficulties, e.g., if they did not understand an expression correctly. During the training, however, they learned that it is, in fact, a sign of competence to make challenges and mistakes transparent to all parties: *"Yes, you don't have to be afraid if you don't know a word. That's the best thing. Before, you were like, oh God. Help, I don't know that word and now? What am I going to do? No, you can ask if you don't understand something acoustically."* (IP11_Post).

While most CIPs felt empowered and more confident in their work as a CIP due to the knowledge and skills they had gained, one candidate mentioned that the increase in knowledge also came with an increase in perceived pressure to perform adequately, making them feel more insecure at times: *"So before, of course, I expected interpreting everything correctly, so that both people understand, that it is correct, yes. But my expectations have increased because of the knowledge, and I know myself. I have quite high expectations. And if I fail, if I don't do it the way I imagined, that annoys me and simultaneously slows me down; the pressure just slows me down."* (IP18_Post).

In addition to the increased confidence regarding working as an interpreter, the majority expressed overall personal growth and higher self-esteem: *"Well, my self-esteem isn't that good; in other words, it's not there. Yes, that means that maybe a bit of this self-esteem is somehow coming through the earth again. Yes, the earth breaks open, and like a plant when it's freshly emerged from the plant bulb."* (IP12_Post).

4.6.7 Recognizing and promoting the value and professionalization of CI

Most TPs reported that the training heightened their awareness of their roles and responsibilities as CIPs. They recognized interpreting as a profession that requires specialized competencies. Mere experience is not enough, but qualification is needed: *"They [other interpreters] say, 'No, we're doing it right. We already have experience.' I say, 'No, experience is not enough. Really, that's not enough at all. The right thing is a qualification that helps you incredibly.' [. . .] Yes, experience, you gain experience through several situations, you experience many situations, you see several people, several professionals, several clients, but that doesn't mean that you're doing it right, that you're qualified. [. . .] I have experience, but I'm doing it wrong. I interpret wrong, I don't have confidentiality, I do everything my way."* (IP17_Post).

While most TPs previously perceived interpreting as an act of social and voluntary (unpaid) support, the training contributed to the perceived value of interpreters' work. Following the completion of the training and, in particular, the acquisition of a certificate, some TPs would now feel justified in demanding compensation for their services instead of volunteering: *"Now I know what, well, I'm competent, I'm qualified, it's worth working like this and earning money for it. I also want to do it as a profession."* (IP17_Post). This empowerment also motivated some to consider interpreting as a full-time profession. Learning about self-employment, including tax and legal issues, as well as client acquisition, was perceived as beneficial for pursuing interpreting as a profession.

4.6.8 Implementation into practice

Since most TPs worked as interpreters in parallel to their training participation, the post-interview also inquired about implementing the learning outcomes into practice. The challenges mentioned are primarily related to maintaining role boundaries, navigating emotionally stressful situations, and the need for knowledge, respect, and consideration from service providers and users. It was noted that service providers often do not know or do not care what is needed for interpreters to do their job effectively, such as seating position or speaking in short segments. Thus, some recommended training for service providers on conducting

interpreter-mediated conversations: *"Yes, that's difficult. I have to constantly interrupt the specialist and then continue interpreting. That makes the work difficult. Unfortunately, that's the case, even though we say, please speak in short sections, they carry on. That means, well, perhaps it would be better if the specialists also did some training so that they could work well with the interpreter. That could make things easier for the interpreters."* (IP20_Post).

5 Discussion

5.1 The training participants and their motives for attending the training

Most studies on training for interpreters do not examine the motives for participation, yet in the field of CI, where no formal training requirements exist, understanding these motives may be crucial to increasing CIPs' qualifications. TPs' primary motives for partaking in this training were to become more professional by improving their knowledge, skills, and self-esteem. This intrinsic commitment to enhancing one's interpreting performance echoes findings from Pöllabauer's (2020) study on public service interpreter training in Austria. In addition, TPs were hoping for personal and professional exchange with colleagues, which could also be seen as a sign of the lack of professional organization in the CI community in Germany or a lack of knowledge about existing structures and network opportunities. TPs believed obtaining a formal certificate would lead to more interpreting jobs, higher pay, or permanent employment as a CIP. At the time of pre-training data collection, almost one-third of TPs were unemployed and seeking paid work, possibly indicating that enrollment in the training course might be seen as an opportunity for work and earning money in the short term. This complements previous research, which identified perceived financial and time costs as the main barriers to attending training, as these expenses are not always justified by the expected (financial) returns for CIPs (Bancroft, 2015; Hale, 2007; Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024; Pöchhacker, 2004; Pöllabauer et al., 2024; Pöllabauer, 2020). Interpreter training must be financially rewarding, which could be achieved by establishing legal standards for the remuneration and funding of qualified interpreters working in community settings (Hale, 2007; Iannone, 2021).

5.2 The trainers

The effectiveness of training programs relies on the expertise of trainers, making their qualifications crucial when evaluating training courses. In the field of CI, this is even more significant due to the lack of standards for the qualifications of both CIPs and trainers. However, information about trainers is often not available (Pöllabauer, 2020). In the literature, the following fundamental competencies of trainers, regardless of the subject in the field of CI, are described: field competence, interpersonal, organizational, instructional, and assessment competence (Kadrić and Pöllabauer, 2023; Pokorn and Mikolič, 2020). Moreover, socio-communicative and individual competencies, such as emotional skills, empathy, and ethical decision-making, are also required (Kadrić and

Pöllabauer, 2023). In this study, all trainers were experts in interpreting or in a specific setting. Most had experience with the target group, felt confident in their teaching, and were satisfied with their performance. Also, TPs generally expressed satisfaction with the trainers, even viewing some as role models. However, problematic behavior, such as using inappropriate stereotypes and prejudices, which can be hurtful to those affected, was also reported about one trainer. Such behavior from trainers could impact the overall training experience of TPs and training outcomes. Although this issue was mentioned only briefly in the present study, it warrants further attention in future research. It highlights the importance of selecting highly qualified trainers, providing them with thorough preparation, and ensuring their ongoing professional development to maintain high training standards in CI. It is recommended that trainers' qualifications and backgrounds be included as a key component in evaluating training programs. In CI, a lack of suitable trainers is frequently reported (Valero-Garcés, 2019), which is why "train-the-trainer" approaches are gaining prominence and could be promising methods to increase trainers' competencies (Kadrić and Pöllabauer, 2023; Pöllabauer, 2015; Pöllabauer, 2020).

5.3 Design of the training course

5.3.1 Generic orientation

Training programs for community interpreters often focus on a specific setting, such as mental health, medical, law enforcement, or educational settings (Ertl and Pöllabauer, 2014; Fitzmaurice, 2020; Hale et al., 2019; Krystallidou et al., 2018; Müller et al., 2023). However, previous studies have reported that CIPs typically work in several community settings and recommend rather generic than setting-specific training (Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024; Iannone, 2020). In line with this, TPs in this study reported working on average in three different settings, which justifies the generic approach of the current training. The introduction to diverse potential community and interpreting settings by experts from the field was positively received, enabling TPs to decide which settings they preferred to work in or not.

5.3.2 Heterogeneous and linguistically diverse group

Despite initial concerns regarding the heterogeneous group composition, such as potential conflicts, TPs described the exposure to different cultures, contexts, languages, and interpreting experiences as enriching. Specifically, the varying levels of interpreting experience were primarily viewed positively, as they enabled peer learning and mutual support. For example, participants with more experience could offer guidance for less experienced interpreters. However, it also became clear that interpreting experience is not equivalent to competence and qualification. For example, some experienced interpreters learned about professional ethical principles only through this training. In terms of linguistic diversity, it was recommended that at least two persons per working language should be included in the training to enhance the effectiveness of practical interpreting exercises. It might also be essential to consider the courses' language(s) proficiency level. While those with lower language skills can learn

from others and improve, it can quickly become tedious for advanced or native speakers of the German language.

5.3.3 In-person training format

Given the often solitary nature of the interpreting job in community settings, the in-person training format, as well as interpreting exercises and providing personal feedback, were described as particularly beneficial. Some TPs criticized the fact that some theoretical sessions were conducted online. Although online training and blended-learning approaches are becoming increasingly prominent, it is essential to consider that interpreting is an activity that requires practice, experience, and reflection, which can only be achieved in person (Bahadır, 2010).

5.3.4 Final examination and certification

Due to the lack of established legal standards, various training courses for interpreters working in community settings are available. Not every training is concluded by a final examination, and not all of them assess TPs' actual interpreting competence as part of the training. For instance, among CIPs in Germany who attended any training, only 29.4% participated in a training with a final examination and successfully passed it (Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024). A final exam and certification can serve as formal verification and quality assurance, differentiating trained interpreters from those who are not. Moreover, it can increase their recognition by others, their status, as well as their professionalization (Hlavac, 2013). It can also be a helpful tool for service providers in assessing interpreters' competence when choosing with whom to work. As uniform regulations regarding CIP training in Germany are not expected anytime soon, the introduction of a certificate of completion, which states the hours and content of the training, can also help provide an overview of the often confusing landscape of existing training programs.

5.4 Effectiveness of the training

5.4.1 Satisfaction

The quantitative and qualitative results showed that TPs were highly satisfied with the training, perceived the training as beneficial for their work, and would recommend it to other CIPs.

5.4.2 Interpreting specific knowledge, skills, and competence

The TPs reported in the post-questionnaire that they learned new skills and felt more empowered to interpret effectively. This aligns with an observed increase in self-assessed knowledge and competence, as well as a rise in the average multiple-choice test score by almost 6 out of 22 points. Additionally, during the post-interviews, TPs listed a range of aspects and skills they had learned, including interpreting strategies and techniques, as well as dealing with challenges. In addition, a slight increase in subjective professional self-efficacy expectations was measured, indicating an increased ability and motivation to cope with upcoming professional tasks, such as pursuing interpreting as a full-time profession, as mentioned in the qualitative interviews. TPs retrospectively

assessed their pre-training knowledge and competence as slightly lower, which could be explained by increased awareness during the training. This aligns with Fitzmaurice's (2020) research on educational interpreters in public schools, which revealed that less skilled interpreters often overestimate their abilities, while more skilled interpreters tend to underestimate their competence.

5.4.3 Complexity and responsibility of working as a CIP

In the qualitative interviews, TPs explained that they primarily interpreted intuitively rather than based on knowledge and trained skills prior to attending the training. Only through this training did they gain insight into the complexity and responsibility of working as an interpreter. This is also described by other authors, such as Hale (2007). She explains that bilingual volunteers often act as "natural interpreters" (Flores et al., 2012); they do not realize the complexity of the task and perceive interpreting as merely summarizing, rather than accurately conveying, what has been said (Hale, 2007).

5.4.4 Shift in CIPs' role understanding and ethical principles

Commonly mentioned ethical principles prior to the training included honesty, empathy, and humanity, highlighting the more natural and intuitive approach to interpreting (Hale, 2007). One TP stated he merely followed his gut feeling while interpreting. In retrospect, all TPs acknowledged their lack of awareness and knowledge of the principles. Gaining this knowledge provided a valuable foundation they could rely on in their professional practice, resulting in increased confidence and reduced distress.

In the pre-interviews, TPs perceived their role as being a linguistic and cultural mediator. Yet, many shared actions did not align with this role, such as acting as emotional supporters for service users or providing them with advice. Post-interviews revealed that TPs recognized these previous role oversteps and better understood their professional role boundaries. They learned to establish an appropriate work environment, which included clearly defining their methods and roles to service providers and users. As demonstrated in previous research, this was emphasized as important because service providers often lack knowledge or appreciation of interpreters' work (Hale, 2007; Hanft-Robert et al., 2023). Additionally, the TPs were introduced to various community settings, which enabled them to make informed and professional decisions about their preferred work settings. TPs initially felt accountable for all aspects of the communication and the parties involved; however, training redirected their sense of responsibility toward themselves and their interpreting performance, revealing its previously unrecognized importance and responsibility. In addition, a more precise role understanding helped TPs feel more confident and reduced the perceived interpreting-related distress. Future studies should investigate the impact of training on CIPs' role understanding in more detail. Conducting pre and post-training observational studies could provide valuable insights into these dynamic shifts.

5.4.5 Impact on professional and personal confidence

After completing the training, all TPs in the course felt more confident professionally due to the increased knowledge and skills they acquired. However, it was also mentioned that the newly acquired knowledge, recognized complexity, and responsibility of the interpreting task could also lead to more pressure and make TPs even less confident. Additionally, almost all TPs stated that the training provided just the basics of interpreting and that further, in-depth training is desired. Moreover, the training appears to have a positive impact on TPs' confidence beyond their role as interpreters, which should be investigated in-depth in future (qualitative) studies.

5.4.6 Training and certification leads to perceived professionalism

Numerous authors have noted that the field of CI still lags behind other professions in terms of professionalism (Bahadır, 2020; Grbić, 2015; Hale, 2007; Mikkelson, 1996; Ozolins, 2010). It is often viewed as a welfare activity or a charitable act (Bahadır, 2021; Gentile et al., 1996; Mikkelson, 1996; Pöllabauer, 2013). This perception can undermine the professional status of interpreters and contribute to the undervaluation of their work. For example, Bahadır (2021) elaborates that when migrants, in particular, take on the role of interpreters in countries like Germany, the interpreting task may be considered a voluntary duty for well-integrated bilingual individuals ("Bringschuld"). Bahadır (2021) argues that if this perception becomes a social and moral norm among both the broader society of residence and the migrants themselves, it may make the professionalization of interpreting in community settings either unnecessary or unattainable. The reported increase in knowledge, skills, competence, and confidence of TPs in this study led to or reinforced the attitude that interpreting is not just an act of charity but a profession that deserves to be recognized and paid accordingly. In line, Urdal (2024) showed that interpreters in Norway perceived themselves as professionals and felt they belonged to a professional group after attending a 1-year training course. Some TPs in this study expressed that after completing the training and (hopefully) receiving the certificate, they felt justified and encouraged to demand (higher) payment for the service they provided. The study findings highlight the link between training participation, formal certification, perceived competence, and professional status. Moreover, our study supports previous findings that emphasize formal training as essential for enhancing the quality of interpreting services, promoting professional recognition, and ultimately shaping the CI profession (Ertl and Pöllabauer, 2014; Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024; Mikkelson, 2004; Ozolins, 2010; Roberts, 1997).

5.4.7 Apply what has been learned in practice and the need for further training

Although TPs reported that their interpreting practice changed from natural and intuitive to informed and skill-based, they wished for additional and more in-depth training. They also revealed that implementing what they have learned in practice can be challenging and requires further practice. This indicated a need for ongoing educational opportunities to fully address the complexities of CI and reflect and change interpreting practices accordingly. It would

be helpful to conduct follow-up assessments in future studies, such as 3 months post-training, to identify challenges and determine the long-term effects of interpreting training. A lack of respect, consideration, or knowledge on the part of service providers was reported as one of the primary reasons why applying what has been learned into practice can be challenging. Research has shown that training service providers alone or together with CIPs can be effective (Hanft-Robert et al., 2023; Krystallidou et al., 2018; Leanza et al., 2020).

5.5 Strengths and limitations

The main strength of this study is the mixed-methods design, which allowed evaluation of the training on different levels. Pre- and post-questionnaires provided quantitative evidence of TPs' satisfaction and improvement in knowledge, skills, competence, and professional self-efficacy expectations. In particular, the self-developed multiple-choice knowledge test proved valuable for assessing interpreters' knowledge. It may be particularly useful in light of the lack of standardized measurements for training evaluation in CI research (Pöchhacker, 2010). However, it should be noted that the knowledge test was specifically designed for CI in Germany and has to be adapted if used in other country contexts. By conducting qualitative interviews, more profound insights into the TPs' experiences and perceptions could be explored.

Several limitations should be noted, including a small sample size, which limited the analysis to descriptive statistics and may affect the generalizability of the findings. This study could be considered a pilot study that should be replicated with a larger number of TPs, which would also enable inferential statistical analysis. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data could introduce bias, as participants might have provided socially desirable responses. The absence of a control group makes it difficult to attribute improvements solely to the training, as external factors could have influenced the outcomes. Moreover, the psychometric properties of the self-developed quantitative instruments require further evaluation. However, this study offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of training for CIPs in Germany. The findings can be utilized by other practitioners or researchers who wish to conduct and evaluate similar training programs.

6 Conclusion

As linguistic diversity is a global reality in many countries, resulting in a high demand for CIP, the absence of standardized training and certification in CI becomes more problematic. In a previous study, it was shown that 31% of CIPs in Germany had not attended any training. Among those who have participated in training, the median was only 25 training hours (Hanft-Robert and Mösko, 2024). While it was previously highlighted that formal training is necessary to recognize the professional status of CI from the outside, such as service providers or political stakeholders, this study suggests that training is also necessary to enhance perceived professionalism within the CIP community.

The evaluated training "Between Languages"[2] AS]² was found to be a valuable generic qualification program that enables CIPs to work in various community settings. It distinguishes itself from other trainings through its comprehensive structure (500 units), broad thematic scope, diverse and highly qualified trainers, hands-on practical components (e.g., role plays and practical interpreting assignments), and a final oral examination to assess CIPs' competence with qualified examiners. The developed training not only enhanced CIPs' skills, knowledge, and confidence but also provided a clearer understanding of their role, the importance of professional ethics, and the value of the services they provide. CIPs recognized the responsibility and complexity of CI, understood that this task requires knowledge and skills acquired through formal training and certified through examination. Thus, this generic training proved effective in preparing CIPs to work in various settings, including mental health and social care, education, and government authorities.

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2 www.zwischensprachen.de/en/

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants in this study, the qualitative data are not available. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to s.hanft-robert@uke.de.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Ethics Committee of the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf. 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

SH-R: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CB: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. MM: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could potentially create a conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The author(s) declare that no Generative AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

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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.2025.1494454/full#supplementary-material

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