

Gender-fair language in simultaneous interpreting: how EU interpreters cope with guidelines and innovations

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Abstract

Integrating gender-fair language in spoken multilingual settings presents communication challenges such as cross-linguistic constraints. In simultaneous interpreting, the fast-paced and cognitively demanding nature of the task may limit compliance with institutional toolkits for gender fairness and inclusivity. Additionally, when translating into grammatical gender languages, such as Italian and French, more recent non-binary language innovations may encounter resistance in both attitudes and usage. This paper discusses gender-fair translation strategies in conference interpreting through an experimental study on two language pairs (EN>IT; EN>FR) and in-depth retrospective interviews with EU interpreters. After conceptualising gender-fair interpreting as a task involving three overlapping challenges, the study explores key factors – cognitive load, strategic decision-making, ethical dilemmas – that contribute to the gap between interpreters’ positive attitudes and a moderate use of gender-fair language strategies in simultaneous interpreting in EU institutional settings.

1 Introduction

Gender-fair communication in grammatical gender languages with pervasive gender agreement requires distinct strategies compared to natural gender languages such as English (cf. Stahlberg et al. 2007). In addition to this, in grammatical gender languages such as Italian and French two main issues complicate the task of achieving gender fairness in language use. On the one hand, gender-fair language is hindered by the default use of generic or overextended masculine forms (cf. Hellinger/Bußmann 2001).¹ On the other, it is also complicated by the grammatical systems’ inability to express identities beyond the gender binary through standard forms, since more recent grammatical gender neutralisation strategies (cf. Safina 2025) are mostly deviations from linguistic norms (cf. Knisely 2020). To address asymmetries and discriminatory language uses, guidelines suggest two primary approaches: gender neutrality and gender visibility (cf. Rosola 2024). However, choosing the most suitable strategy becomes particularly testing in multilingual settings. This complexity is further heightened when considering the distinctive features of spoken language compared to written language. In a spoken multilingual communication scenario such as conference interpreting, several constraints arise when attempting to integrate gender-fair language guidelines. Notably, the “lack of semantic autonomy” (Kalina

¹ For a distinction between generic and overextended uses of grammatical gender, cf. González Vázquez/Klieber/Rosola (2024).

2000: 5) due to the imperative to uphold the speaker's authorship and intentions, the rapid pace at which speeches are normally delivered, and the high cognitive capacity needed for concurrent comprehension and production processes (cf. European Parliament 2018). In view of these externally determined constraints, the spoken transfer of gender-fair language may particularly be affected in conference interpreting. Interpreters could find toolkits for gender-fair communication impractical due to the high cognitive demands of real-time language processing and transfer. Moreover, institutional translation strategies for gender fairness may not mirror grassroots practices, due to non-binary innovations – such as neomorphemes and neopronouns – to be likely to encounter resistance in both attitudes and use in institutional communication.

To explore these issues, this paper focuses on gender-fair language in conference interpreting in EU institutional settings. To assess whether existing guidelines and innovations are applied in orality under the specific constraints of interpreting, this paper presents results from an experimental study with interpreters from the Directorate-General for Interpretation (DG SCIC) of the European Commission. The study consisted in a simultaneous interpreting task from English into Italian or French. The task was followed by an in-depth interview conducted in the form of a retrospective think-aloud protocol, to gain insights into the feasibility of applying gender-fair language recommendations in interpreting and their broader reception at an EU institutional level. For contextualisation purposes, chapter 2 will provide a theoretical framework for the present study, by introducing a conceptualisation of interpreting gender-fair language as a specific task. The research questions will then be detailed in chapter 3, followed by methodological aspects in chapter 4. Chapter 5 will present an overview of quantitative results from the interpreters' deliveries and attitudes, which will be discussed in chapter 6 by triangulating them with qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews.

2 Interpreting gender-fair language

Simultaneous interpreting imposes a high cognitive pressure, which is further intensified by additional factors, or problem triggers. According to Gile's (2015) "Tightrope Hypothesis", conference interpreters operate near the limits of their processing capacity, and any problem trigger – including linguistic differences in gender encoding (cf. Toledano Buendía 2022) – could lead to cognitive saturation and impair output quality. Interpreters working from English into grammatical gender languages must therefore deploy appropriate strategies to translate grammatical gender, while managing both comprehension and production simultaneously. This paper proposes to conceptualise interpreting gender-fair language as a task involving at least three distinct yet overlapping challenges: the linguistic representation of gender identities (1) in translation; (2) beyond the binary; and (3) in orality. These facets will be discussed separately in the following three subchapters.

2.1 Gender in translation

A key challenge in interpreting gender-fair language relates, more broadly, to the issue of grammatical gender in translation. Non-sexist or non-binary source texts risk being rendered sexist or binary due to the Male-As-Norm (MAN) principle in translation, with implications for linguistic accuracy (cf. Braun 1997). This risk holds true especially for certain language combinations, such as the passage from natural gender languages (e. g., English) to grammatical

gender languages (e. g., Romance languages). López-Medel (2023) highlights the repercussions of systematic grammatical gender neutralisation in English on target text production. First, gender-neutral terms in English may be misinterpreted as masculine, as revealed by psycholinguistics studies on stereotypes influencing gender inferences (cf. Lindqvist/Renström/Gustafsson Sendén 2019; Misersky et al. 2014; Sato et al. 2013). Second, these terms risk being mistranslated through masculine forms in grammatical gender languages (cf. Castro 2010; Di Sabato/Perri 2020; Nissen 2002). Although generically intended, extensive psycholinguistic evidence suggests that masculine forms reinforce a male bias in mental representations – whereas gender-fair alternatives can mitigate this effect (for a review, cf. Gygax et al. 2021; Stetie/Zunino 2022). Beyond linguistic inaccuracy, translating gender-neutral terms with masculine forms also carries risks of misgendering (cf. Facchini forthcoming; Lardelli/Gromann 2023; López 2022).

2.2 Gender beyond the binary

Regarding the misgendering potential of a mistranslation, a second key challenge for gender-fair language in interpreting lies in navigating language innovations aimed at increasing non-binary visibility. While more recent guidelines acknowledge non-binary identities, proposed solutions for Romance languages remain tentative and are rarely endorsed for institutional use. In Italian (cf. Comandini 2021), sub-standard alternatives include schwa (ə) and *-u* endings (e. g., *tuttə* or *tuttu*, ‘everyone’). In French (cf. Knisely 2020), strategies range from contracted double forms with middots (e. g., *tou·tes*, ‘everyone’) to neopronouns (*iel*, ‘they’; *toustes*, ‘everyone’) and other neomorphemes (e. g., *-aires* in *auditaires*, ‘listeners’, instead of masculine *auditeurs* or feminine *auditrices*). The reluctance to recommend these innovations generally stems from their experimental nature, lack of linguistic stability, and limited comprehensibility outside niche groups (cf. Cancelleria federale 2022). Accessibility concerns further complicate their adoption. Additionally, non-binary strategies in French and Italian primarily emerged and are employed in written and informal contexts (cf. Abbou et al. 2018; Comandini 2021). Moreover, they entail morphological and phonological changes to standard grammar that complicate gender agreement processes, potentially affecting syntax and textual coherence (cf. Elmiger 2017; Giusti 2022; Thornton 2022). Despite these linguistic challenges, non-binary language innovations promote inclusivity and help prevent misgendering and its negative social and psychological consequences. However, further research is needed to evaluate their feasibility and effectiveness in high-pressure oral settings such as conference interpreting (cf. Facchini/Torresi 2024).

2.3 Gender in orality

Conference interpreting presents also specific challenges related to grammatical gender in spoken versus written language. While comprehension processes remain similar across modalities – listeners and readers construct gendered representations in comparable ways (cf. Gygax et al. 2021; Stout/Dasgupta 2011) – spoken production introduces additional difficulties. Unlike writers, speakers must integrate gender-fair language in real-time, with limited opportunity for careful and thoughtful decision-making. The immediacy of orality, coupled with time constraints, makes gender fairness more demanding (cf. Reimóndez 2020; Susam-Saraeva et al. 2023). Despite these practical challenges, most Italian and French gender-fair language guidelines over-

look the complexities of orality. Strategies are typically proposed or discouraged without considering oral or fluency implications, except in discussions of non-binary strategies for grammatical gender neutralisation. While German has largely adopted a glottal stop before gender-specific endings, pronunciation of innovative strategies for other grammatical gender languages remains mostly undefined, often requiring creative adaptation (cf. Knisely 2020; Lardelli/Gromann 2023). Concerns about audience reception persist, yet empirical research on the impact of these innovations on comprehension remains scarce.

3 The present study

Research on the linguistic representation of gender identities in multilingual settings has so far primarily focused on literary and machine translation, while studies on the application of gender-fair language in conference interpreting remain scarce (cf. Yañez 2022). Despite the proliferation of guidelines recommending appropriate gender-fair language strategies, open questions persist regarding their oral feasibility, as well as the viability of linguistic tools beyond the gender binary, especially in institutional settings such as the EU institutions.

Against this background, the research questions (RQ) that will be addressed in this paper are:

RQ1: What translation strategies do EU conference interpreters put in place to comply with gender-fair language guidelines and innovations?

RQ2: What are the reasons behind their translation choices?

To this end, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which the EU institutions' stated commitment to using gender-fair language in their communication – including interpreting (European Parliament 2018) – is reflected in the interpreters' output, given the specific constraints of simultaneous interpreting.

4 Methodology

4.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 24 conference interpreters from the Italian (IT) and French (FR) units of the Directorate-General for Interpretation (DG SCIC) of the European Commission, who also work for other EU institutions and bodies, such as the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Participants were recruited through internal mailing lists and were selected by voluntary response sampling. The IT subsample (n=12, 8 women, 4 men) had a mean age of 41.8 years and was evenly split between staff and freelance interpreters. Their experience in conference interpreting averaged 15.5 years (13.9 at the EU). The FR subsample (n=12, 7 women, 5 men) had a mean age of 39.9 years, with the same staff/freelance ratio and an average of 15.1 years of experience (12.9 at the EU). By virtue of belonging to either the IT or FR unit of DG SCIC, every interpreter had respectively Italian or French as their A language.² Thus, every participant took part in the experiment under the same conditions, i. e. interpreting from English into their A language.

² As defined by the Interinstitutional Committee for Translation and Interpretation, which coordinates the language services of EU institutions and bodies, an A language is a native tongue or equivalent which is mastered perfectly by the interpreter, and into which they are capable of interpreting consecutively and simultaneously from all their other working languages.

4.2 Preparatory material

A two-page document was drafted based on analysis of literature on gender-fair language and existing toolkits (cf. Elmiger 2024), with main parameters shaped by the *Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication* of the EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality 2019) and the *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language* of the UN (United Nations 2019). Two versions (Italian, French) were created, with minor adjustments reflecting language-specific guidelines. Page one featured the EIGE language inclusivity scale and three key principles: avoid gender-discriminatory language (i. e., masculine forms as gender-neutral), consider carefully gender neutrality (e. g., collective terms, common gender and epicene nouns, gender-neutral periphrases), and favour gender visibility (e. g., feminisation, double forms, innovative strategies). Page two provided a table of examples (see Appendix), with language-specific adaptations (e. g., gender-neutral to the ear past participles in French). Differences mainly concerned innovative strategies: the Italian version included neomorphemes (schwa, *-u* endings), while the French featured contracted double forms, neopronouns, and other neomorphemes (*-eureuses*, *-aires*). Finally, the document featured guiding questions for choosing between gender neutrality and gender visibility, also expanding upon implications for non-binary representation. Following UN recommendations, the stated overarching criterion was: “mentioning gender when relevant [for communication] and not mentioning it when not relevant” (López-Medel 2023: 14).

4.3 Source text

An English source text was designed ad-hoc for this study to have highly controlled stimuli while preserving ecological validity, following Prandi’s (2023) experimental design for cognitive exploration in simultaneous interpreting. The text consisted of 24 sentence clusters, each containing one isolated stimulus, framed by two filler sentences comparable in length and syntax. All stimuli were gender-neutral English forms referring to humans and distinct from examples in the preparatory material. Specifically, they included: 12 plural forms designating a mixed-gender group (*colleagues, Europeans, adults, citizens, young people, activists, elected representatives, engineers, those who are less well-off, many workers, all Europeans, some experts*), and 12 singular forms subdivided into: 4 designating a referent with unspecified gender (*a climate ambassador, one student, someone in their 20s, any employee*), 4 designating a specific female referent (*the president, the prime minister, a lawyer, a female surgeon*), and 4 designating a specific non-binary referent (*a non-binary programmer, one in four respondents, everyone, a non-binary job candidate*). To replicate authentic working conditions, the text was video recorded by an Irish native speaker of English at 120 words per minute, aligning with Riccardi’s (2015) indications on optimal speech rate in simultaneous interpreting. The recording lasted 9 minutes and 24 seconds, matching the typical duration of the EU interinstitutional freelance accreditation test.

4.4 Procedure

Data collection took place in a DG SCIC conference room with interpreting booths. Participants completed the experiment individually. A week before the session, they received the preparatory material and written instructions. They were advised to follow the parameters of the document and apply gender-fair language as they saw fit, but with the clear aim of enhancing the

inclusivity of their simultaneous interpretation. Prior to data collection, participants signed an informed consent form. Subsequently, the same instructions were repeated verbally, and they received a verbal briefing on the speech topic – an Irish MEP’s opening address at a roundtable on the 2024 European Parliament elections – and then simultaneously interpreted the speech into Italian (EN>IT) or French (EN>FR). Their delivery was audio recorded. After interpreting, participants underwent an individual in-depth interview in Italian or French, in the form of a retrospective think-aloud protocol (cf. Russell/Winston 2014). They listened to their recorded performance, pausing as needed, and were asked to comment and explain their translation choices for highlighted stimuli in a written copy of the source text. If participants’ explanations were too limited, the interview was supplemented with semi-structured questions to gather additional information about the main challenges experienced during the task. The interviews were audio recorded. After the interview, participants completed a questionnaire to retrieve sociodemographic information on the sample, including their familiarity and use of gender-fair language. Finally, they answered a battery of questions taken from the eight-item scale developed by Tibblin et al. (2023) to gather data on their attitudes towards gender-fair language. Each session lasted approximately one hour.

5 Results

The interpreters’ deliveries were subjected to quantitative analysis to examine the prevailing translation strategy for each of the four sets of stimuli. Data analysis was carried out in Microsoft Excel. Translation strategies were categorised into three types according to the language inclusivity scale presented to participants in the preparatory material: masculine forms, gender neutrality, and gender visibility strategies. Results are presented in Figure 1, broken down by language combination.

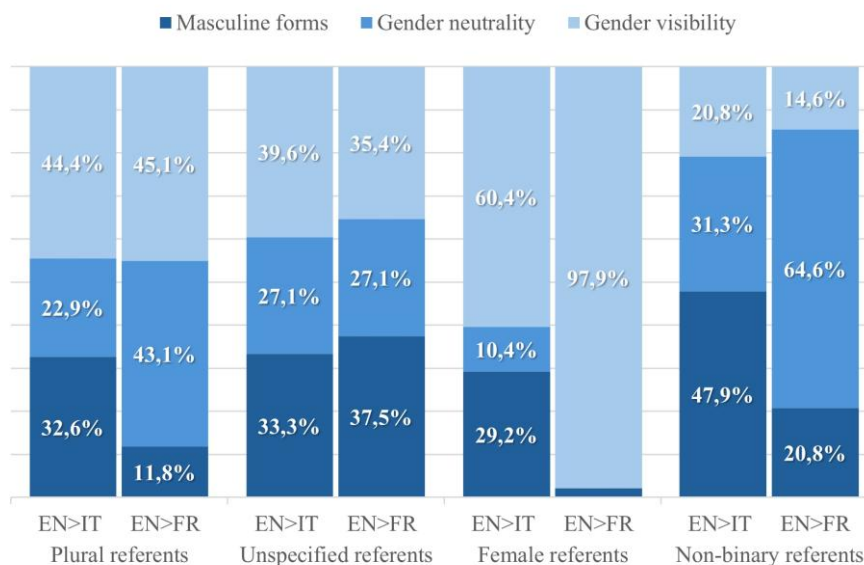


Figure 1: Stacked bar chart of translation strategies, grouped by set of stimuli (plural, unspecified, female, and non-binary referents), and divided into English into Italian (EN>IT) and English into French (EN>FR) translations

When translating stimuli referring to mixed-gender groups, participants predominantly employed strategies for gender visibility. In almost all cases, this was achieved through double

forms, that is by repeating the same term in both feminine and masculine forms (e. g., IT: *colleghe e colleghi* ‘colleagues (F) and colleagues (M)’; *molti lavoratori e molte lavoratrici* ‘many (M) workers (M) and many (F) workers (F)’; FR: *Européens et Européennes* ‘Europeans (M) and Europeans (F)’; *les militantes, les militants* ‘the (COM) activists (F), the (COM) activists (M)’).³ Regarding plural referents, the second most common approach among FR interpreters was gender neutrality (e. g., *les jeunes* ‘the (COM) youth (COM)’; omission of stimuli). In contrast, IT interpreters relied on masculine forms as the second most common approach for plural referents (e. g., *i giovani* ‘the (M) youth (M)’). For the first two types of singular referents, similar patterns emerge when analysing the prevailing strategies adopted by the IT and FR subsamples. When translating stimuli with unspecified gender, all three approaches – masculine forms, gender neutrality, and gender visibility – were used in relatively equal proportions (e. g., IT: *uno studente* ‘a (M) student (M)’; gender-neutral periphrases such as *un membro del corpo studentesco* ‘a (M) member (M) of the (M) student (M) body (M)’; *un ambasciatore o ambasciatrice* ‘an (M) ambassador (M) or ambassador (F)’; FR: *un ambassadeur* ‘an (M) ambassador (M)’; gender-neutral periphrases such as *les jeunes dans la vingtaine* ‘the (COM) youth (COM) in their twenties’; *un étudiant ou une étudiante* ‘a (M) student (M) or a (F) student (F)’). In contrast, for specific female referents, gender visibility was the overriding strategy. However, while FR interpreters overwhelmingly adopted feminisation strategies when designating a woman (e. g., *la première ministre* ‘the (F) prime (F) minister (COM)’; *une chirurgienne* ‘a (F) surgeon (F)’), IT interpreters applied them inconsistently, occasionally relapsing into masculine forms (e. g., *la primo ministro* ‘the (F) prime (M) minister (M)’; *una chirurgo donna* ‘a (F) woman (F) surgeon (M)’ or, to a lesser extent, gender-neutral strategies (e. g., *giurista* ‘jurist (COM)’). Finally, singular specific non-binary referents were primarily rendered using masculine forms in Italian (e. g., *un programmatore non binario* ‘a (M) non-binary (M) programmer (M)’; *tutti* ‘everyone (M)’ and gender neutrality in French (e. g., gender-neutral periphrases such as *une personne non binaire* ‘a (F) non-binary (COM) person (F)’; *tout le monde* ‘everyone (COM)’).

Regarding participants’ self-reported familiarity with gender-fair language, most of the IT and the FR subsamples indicated being moderately familiar with gender-fair language and encountering it occasionally in their daily lives. Regarding its frequency of use, most participants declared occasional use in writing and occasional to rare use in speech, with a higher frequency being reported for spoken use in the interpreting booth – versus outside it. Results are visually depicted in Figure 2.

³ Alongside M and F for grammatically masculine and feminine forms respectively, English glosses feature COM to indicate common gender forms (cf. Thornton 2022: 20) and EQUI for phonetically equivalent forms.

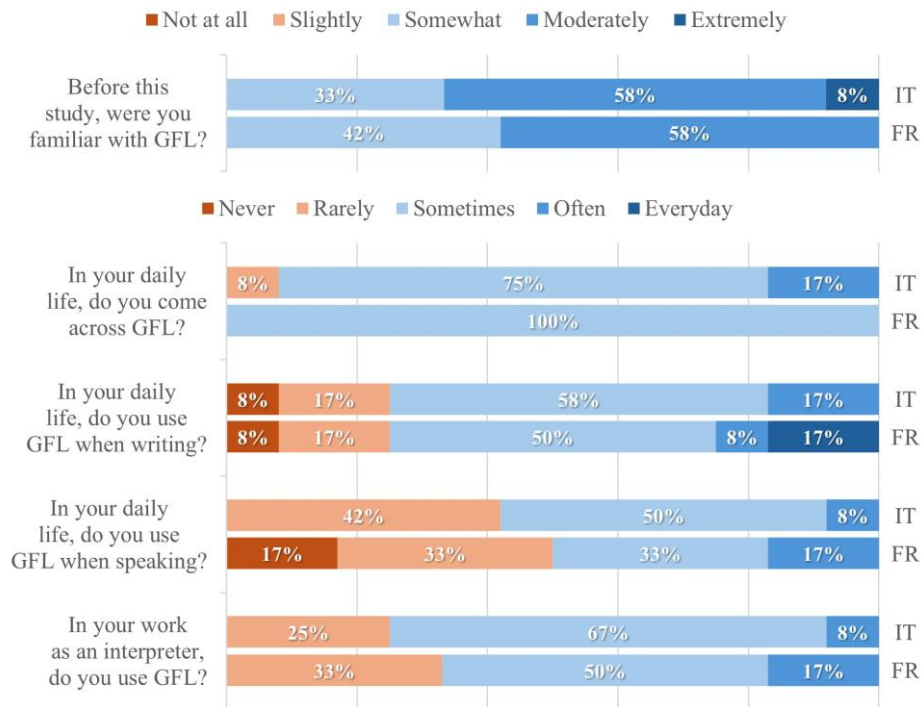


Figure 2: Stacked bar chart of self-reported familiarity and frequency of use of gender-fair language (GFL), separated by Italian (IT) and French (FR) subsamples

Finally, attitudes towards gender-fair language were generally positive. On a scale from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive), the mean attitude score was 4.18 in the IT subsample and 4.23 in the FR subsample. The qualitative findings from the in-depth interviews will be discussed in the next section.

6 Discussion

EU interpreters only partially complied with the preparatory material's two main parameters: the EIGE language inclusivity scale and the UN criterion on (not) mentioning gender. Gender visibility, advocated by the language inclusivity scale, was favoured only for plural referents designating mixed-gender groups and singular referents designating women. For singular referents with unspecified gender, interpreters failed to systematically resort to gender visibility or neutrality – the latter would have been in line with the criterion on omitting gender reference when not relevant for communication – and instead frequently defaulted to generic masculine forms as well. The use of gender-discriminatory language through masculine forms was also pronounced when translating stimuli designating non-binary referents. Alternatively, participants could have opted for gender-neutral language to be inclusive of non-binary gender through standard gender-fair language. When gender was made visible, conservative strategies (cf. Rosola 2024) dominated. Interpreters rarely employed innovative forms beyond the binary, thus in contrast with the preparatory material's guiding questions on how to mainstream non-binary gender representation. The reluctance to favour non-binary gender visibility likely stemmed from institutional resistance in EU settings to adopt sub-standard linguistic innovation.

FR interpreters showed a greater tendency towards gender-neutral strategies than their IT counterparts, both for mixed-gender groups and non-binary referents. Moreover, across stimuli, the IT subsample employed on average more masculine forms. These discrepancies between translation strategies in IT and FR deliveries could be attributed, in part, to morphological differences: French offers more common gender or phonetically equivalent forms than Italian (e. g., *chères collègues* ‘dear(EQUI) colleagues (COM)’; *les adultes* ‘the (COM) adults (COM)’), facilitating gender neutrality by default. However, FR interpreters also used gender-neutral strategies when equivalents were not common gender, e. g. *beaucoup de personnes* ‘many (COM) people (F)’ to translate *many workers*, instead of gendered *travailleurs* ‘workers (M)’ or *travailleuses* ‘workers (F)’; *une personne sur quatre* ‘a (F) person (F) in four (COM)’ to translate *one in four respondents*, instead of gendered *répondant* ‘respondent (M)’ or *répondante* ‘respondent (F)’.

If using gender-discriminatory language for mixed-gender groups and women can lead to male biased mental representations, and reinforce women’s invisibility and gender roles, it can also be particularly problematic – and potentially harmful – in two other cases. An interpreter who relies on masculine forms for singular referents with unspecified gender may incur infelicities, and when referring to non-binary individuals it can lead to misgendering. In the first scenario, gender neutrality would instead be both linguistically accurate and institutionally appropriate. In the second, gender visibility through innovation would be linguistically accurate, but not necessarily institutionally appropriate. A key challenge in institutional interpreting seems to be balancing linguistic accuracy with contextual appropriateness.

Despite gender-fair language being more complex in conference interpreting than in everyday speech, participants reported using it more frequently at work than in daily life, likely due to professional standards in EU settings. However, as full compliance with the preparatory material was not achieved, the following subchapters present a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, exploring three key factors influencing interpreters’ translation choices.

6.1 Effects of changing automatisms on cognitive load

Interpreters rely heavily on automatisms as essential coping tactics to allocate mental resources efficiently and manage the high cognitive demands of real-time language processing and transfer (cf. Bajo/Padilla 2015: 254). Nearly all participants admitted not being accustomed to systematically integrating gender-fair language into their interpretations, often perceiving their use of exclusive language as unintentional and rooted in ingrained linguistic habits rather than deliberate choices. Shifting away from masculine forms as default strategies requires time and dedicated practice. One participant described this task as a three-part process: (1) identifying relevant words during the comprehension phase, (2) selecting the most suitable approach to gender fairness, and (3) executing the chosen strategy during the production phase. Given that comprehension and production occur simultaneously, this added layer introduces a significant cognitive challenge. These findings suggest that the cognitive effort required to modify automatisms may be a key barrier to the adoption of gender-fair language in interpreting.

6.2 Priorities in decision-making during simultaneous interpreting

According to EU interpreters, time constraints are also a key factor shaping their choices. Participants highlighted the challenge of maintaining linguistic economy when translating gender

fairness from English – often a single linguistic form – into Italian or French – often requiring multiple forms, particularly for gender visibility. Lexical and syntactic condensation strategies, which reduce time lag and facilitate fluency, are crucial in professional interpreting. However, integrating gender-fair language can disrupt these strategies. As Kalina (2000: 19) notes, interpreters must make split-second decisions and may accept suboptimal solutions to avoid self-repairs and maintain fluency. Moreover, language combinations also influence gendered translation choices. Some participants reported the tendency to mirror only overt gender-fair language strategies from the source text, particularly when gender visibility is used, as the additional time in the original (e. g., double forms) allows for replication. Others, however, indicated actively incorporating gender-fair language even when not present in the original, relying on ingrained habits, especially in set phrases such as *bonjour à toutes et à tous* ‘good morning everyone (F) and everyone (M)’ as an automatised translation of *good morning everyone*. This suggests that interpreters must often prioritise strategic decision-making over strict linguistic equivalence.

6.3 Ethical considerations in institutional interpreting

Interpreters navigate complex ethical dilemmas as they balance fidelity to the speaker with audience expectations. As highlighted by Toledano Buendía (2022: 243), factors such as the speaker’s stance, the presumed intent behind their (non-)use of gender-fair language, and the estimated audience’s tolerance of it shape interpreters’ decisions. Participants mentioned how it may be difficult to determine whether a speaker’s inclusive or exclusive phrasing reflects intentionality. This holds especially true when explicit linguistic markers are lacking, which is often the case when gender-neutral language is used in English by default. Regarding audience’s tolerance, apprehension about non-binary language innovation was particularly pronounced among participants. While some participants acknowledged its potential pertinence in certain institutional settings due to the meeting’s topic, relying on non-binary language was mostly perceived as face-threatening for two reasons: fear of disrupting fluency with unfamiliar strategies and concerns about audience comprehension and professional scrutiny. To avoid these risks, interpreters may self-censor, a pattern also observed by Thomas (2023), opting for less explicit gender-fair language strategies to maintain impartiality and avoid potential criticism. Despite critiques of the interpreter’s role as a neutral conduit (cf. Susam-Saraeva et al. 2023), institutional norms continue to reinforce this perception. Participants also reported never having received explicit recommendations to guide their decision-making, but only informal discussion with colleagues, leaving choices to integrate gender-fair language to individual discretion. It could be argued that the absence of clear booth policies exacerbates tensions between professional ethics and personal convictions on language use and change.

7 Conclusion

The need for gender fairness and inclusivity challenges communicators such as conference interpreters to rethink linguistic structures that may not easily accommodate gender-fair language guidelines and innovations across languages. While institutions have established toolkits for gender fairness and inclusivity, their practical application in simultaneous interpreting remains complex. This study examined the viability of integrating gender-fair language strategies by EU interpreters, analysing both product- and process-related data. Quantitative analysis of

participants' translation strategies revealed three primary difficulties: (1) avoiding masculine forms to translate references to individuals whose gender is unspecified or non-binary, with lesser difficulty observed for mixed-gender group references; (2) relying exclusively on feminisation strategies when referring to women in EN>IT translations, in contrast with a more systematic adoption in EN>FR; and (3) employing innovative gender-fair language, which was almost completely avoided in both language combinations. Furthermore, notable differences emerged between the Italian and French subsamples in their translation strategies of the four sets of stimuli included in the experiment. Qualitative findings from in-depth retrospective interviews indicated that the application of gender-fair language in interpreting may not always align with the interpreter's attitude towards it. Several factors contributed to the mismatch between positive attitudes and a moderate usage, including a perceived higher cognitive load, the benefits of automatism, and the prioritisation of linguistic economy and contextual appropriateness. Participants also reflected ethically on their role as language mediators in institutional frameworks and underscored the need for targeted resources, by voicing their need for shared orientations in the interpreting booth to be better equipped when facing ethical dilemmas.

The variety of participants' deliveries, together with practical and ethical considerations, offered valuable insights into factors influencing decision-making processes and potentially making translation strategies inaccurate or problematic. However, a limitation of this study is the relative uniformity of the sample's positive attitudes towards gender-fair language. Future research should expand the sample to capture a wider range of attitudes and language combinations, which would ensure better representativity of the population of EU interpreters. Additionally, it would be worthwhile to examine the impact of inclusive strategies on speech fluency. For instance, analysing whether increased use of gender-fair language correlates with more disfluencies, such as repairs or hesitations, could yield valuable insights. A control group comparison would also be of great value to determine the effectiveness of guidelines as a practical tool. Finally, assessing the impact of tailor-made training – compared to self-preparation – could provide evidence for incorporating training as a complementary resource alongside existing guidelines, ultimately enhancing interpreters' ability to integrate gender-fair language seamlessly. If internalised, gender-fair language strategies can offer a dual advantage: fostering both linguistic inclusivity and functional coping tactics in simultaneous interpreting. By bridging the gap between policy and practice, targeted interventions can support interpreters in navigating the complexities of gender-fair communication within high-pressure multilingual settings.

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Appendix

PIÙ ESCLUDENTE	PIÙ INCLUSIVO
Gli organizzatori; i partecipanti (riferimento a gruppo misto)	Il comitato organizzativo; le persone partecipanti (nomi collettivi o epiceni)
Il parlamentare; il parlamentare donna (riferimento a una donna)	La parlamentare (articolo femminile davanti a nome ambigenere)
Un assessore; un giudice (riferimento generico singolare)	Un assessore o un’assessora; un o una giudice (sdoppiamento al singolare)
Tutti i consiglieri (riferimento a gruppo misto)	Tutti i consiglieri e tutte le consigliere (sdoppiamento al plurale)
Gli elettori sono convocati oppure Gli elettori e le elettrici sono convocati (accordo al maschile generico)	Gli elettori e le elettrici sono convocate oppure Le elettrici e gli elettori sono convocati (accordo di prossimità)
Buongiorno a tutti e a tutte (riferimento a gruppo misto)	Buongiorno a tutti, tutte e tuttə (tripla forma maschile + femminile + schwa)
Un volontario (riferimento generico singolare)	Unə volontariə oppure Chi fa volontariato (schwa oppure perifrasi neutra)
Il ministro... Lui... (riferimento a una persona non binaria)	Lu ministru... Ləi... (desinenza in -u e schwa)
I ricercatori (riferimento a gruppo misto)	Ə ricercatorə oppure Coloro che fanno ricerca (schwa oppure perifrasi neutra)

Table 1: Italian version of the table of examples featured in page two of the preparatory material

PLUS EXCLUANT	PLUS INCLUSIF
Les organisateurs ; les participants (référence à groupe mixte)	Le comité d'organisation ; les personnes participantes (termes collectifs ou épiciènes)
Le parlementaire ; la femme parlementaire (référence à une femme)	La parlementaire (article féminin devant un nom ambigène)
Un voisin ; un juge (référence générique au singulier)	Un voisin ou une voisine ; un ou une juge (doublet au singulier)
Tous les conseillers (référence à groupe mixte)	Tous les conseillers et toutes les conseillères (doublet au pluriel)
Les électeurs sont convoqués ou Les électeurs et les électrices sont convoqués (accord au masculin générique)	Les électeurs et les électrices sont convoqués ou Les électrices et les électeurs sont convoqués (accord de proximité/neutre à l'oreille)
Bonjour à tous et à toutes (référence à groupe mixte)	Bonjour à tous, toutes et toustes (triple forme masculin + féminin + néologisme)
Un bénévole (référence générique au singulier)	Un·e bénévole ou Ceux qui font du bénévolat (point médian ou néologisme)
Le ministre... il... (référence à une personne non binaire)	Lu ministre... iel... (néologisme)
Les chercheurs ; les collaborateurs (référence à groupe mixte)	Les chercheuses ; les collaboratrices ou Les partenaires (néologisme ou périphrase neutre avec nom épiciène au pluriel)

Table 2: French version of the table of examples featured in page two of the preparatory material