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The Prestige of Interpreters in Hungary – Second Part: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

In the field of Translation Studies it is often lamented that the translational professions (i.e. *translator* and *interpreter*) have a low level of occupational prestige. At the same time it is pointed out that interpreters, especially conference interpreters have a high level of prestige, as they are working at prestigious events and their job is very difficult. Prestige surveys are concluded on a regular basis in a number of countries, including Hungary. The latest occupational prestige survey of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) was performed in 2016, in the framework of the so-called *Microcensus* survey, where 10 per cent of the population of Hungary were asked to rank-order altogether 173 occupational titles. The results were published in 2018. Unfortunately, as the translational professions are still to a certain extent marginalised, neither *translator*, nor *interpreter* were included in the list of occupations to be evaluated by the respondents. The aim of my research was to find out that if the occupational title *interpreter* would have been included in the list of occupations surveyed by the HCSO, then what would be the prestige score and rank it would have achieved, and also where *interpreter* would stand on the list in relation to the other translational profession, that is *translator*. I sent out my questionnaire to interpreters working in Hungary. After calculating the level of correlation between the *Microcensus* prestige scores and the interpreters' evaluations of the same 20 occupations taken from the list of occupations surveyed by the HCSO, using the function linear regression I calculated an estimated prestige score for *interpreter* as well as *translator* in the ranking of the HCSO.

Keywords: *occupational prestige, interpreters, prestige score, questionnaire survey, linear regression*

Introduction

Occupational prestige was first measured in the so-called NORC study in 1947 (as reported by Duncan and Reiss 1961). Since then a number of occupational prestige surveys have been conducted worldwide (Nakao and Treas 1990, the Harris Polls, Csányi and Giczi 2016, 2018). In the field of Translation Studies various authors often point out that the prestige of the translational professions (i.e. translators and interpreters), especially that of translators, is very low. Simeoni (1998) writes that "*Translators […] have always occupied subservient positions among the dominant professions…*" and writes about a "*lower status*" of translators in general (ibid: 7), Katan (2011) also laments the "lower social status" of translators (ibid: 65), while Dam and Zethsen (2008: 73) also point to the much-lamented position of translation as a "*low-status profession*". This is in contrast with the fact that the ability to translate from one language to another (especially simultaneous interpreting) is looked up to as a special skill: "*one of the fairest and loftiest occupations*" (Herbert 1952: 3), "*supposed glamour of their international lifestyle*" (Dam and Zethsen 2013: 229).

However, so far there has been little empirical research actually measuring the occupational prestige of translators and interpreters with the exception of Dam and Zethsen's works (e.g. 2008, 2013) or Gentile's (2013) research. It also makes it very difficult to determine the level of occupational prestige of the translational professions, as *translator* and *interpreter* so far have not appeared in the lists of job titles involved in occupational prestige surveys. Therefore, it is still a question where the translational professions stand in comparison with other professions.

Therefore it is high time we devoted more attention to the occupational prestige of the translational professions (translators and interpreters alike), especially in the light of the recent "*sociological turn in translation and interpreting studies*" (Angelelli 2014: 1). Translation Studies still counts as a fairly young discipline. At its start Translation Studies mainly dealt with the linguistic aspects of translation and interpreting: equivalence (e.g. Catford 1965) and later the so-called skopos theory, focussing on the purpose of the translation to be fulfilled (Reiss and Vermeer 1984). However, with the "*sociological turn*" researchers started to focus more on the sociological aspects and the role of the translator and the interpreter in society (Angelelli 2014: 1).

In order to achieve a complete professionalisation[1] of the translational professions it would be very important to conduct more empirical research on the occupational prestige of translators and interpreters and find out about their occupational prestige in relation to other professions. This would be an important step towards achieving that translation and interpreting become a "*profession*" instead of being just an "*occupation*" (Katan 2011: 65).

The aim of my research was to find out about the occupational prestige of interpreters as compared to other professions in Hungary as well as in comparison to translators: I wanted to estimate that had the occupational title *interpreter* been on the list of jobs surveyed by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) in its 2016 occupational prestige survey, what would be the prestige score it would have achieved. In light of this my **research question** sounded as follows:

> If the occupational title *interpreter* had been included in the occupational prestige survey of HCSO conducted in 2016, what would be the prestige score it would have achieved?

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[1]"Professionalisation can be understood as the process whereby occupations seek to upgrade their status by adopting organisational and occupational attributes and traits (US National Center for Education Statistics 1997) (in Pym 2012: 80)."

In my research I have sent out an on-line questionnaire to a stratified purposive sample of interpreters working in Hungary: in the questionnaire they had to evaluate 20 occupations also surveyed by HCSO, on a Likert-scale, based on the level of prestige they attributed to them. Also, they had to evaluate *translator* and *interpreter* in the same manner. With this survey it was my aim to find out how interpreters evaluated their own occupational prestige in comparison with other professions as well as in comparison with translators. Also, I wanted to find out if there was any correlation between the evaluation provided by interpreters and the evaluation provided by the 10 per cent of the Hungarian population asked by HCSO. In case there was a correlation between the aforementioned two evaluations, using the tool of linear regression, from the evaluation given by interpreters I intended to calculate an estimated prestige score for the occupational titles *interpreter* and *translator* fitting into the prestige score system of HCSO.

After this brief introduction (*1 Introduction*) the second part of my paper (*2 Literature Review*) I discuss the concepts of *prestige*, *status* and *occupational prestige*, and also present a number of international and Hungarian occupational prestige surveys. In the next section (*3 Methodology*) I discuss the methodology I followed during my quantitative research: the underlying qualitative research used as a starting point for the compilation of the quesionnaire sent out to interpreters, the sampling method, my sample and its shortcomings, as well as the methodology used while drafting the questions. In the section titled *4 Findings* I present the results of my quantitative research, and also how I processed the data and how I achieved the results. In the part titled *5 Conclusions* I discuss the significance of my findings in relation to previous research and the possible directions of further reseach.

Literature Review

In this section I am going to introduce the concepts of *status* and *prestige*. After taking a look at how they are defined, I am going to introduce American and Hungarian studies dealing with setting up a hierarchy of different occupations based on their *occupational prestige*. In the last part of this section I am going to briefly summarise some empirical research studies concerned with the prestige of interpreters and translators in the field of Translation Studies.

The Concepts of Status and Prestige

The concept of *status* originates from Ralph Linton (1936), a cultural anthropologist, who defined *status* by the position of an individual within a society; according to Linton *role* denotes the rights and obligations of an individual, connected to their status within the society. According to Linton, *social status* is either achieved or ascribed to a person.

Definitions

In the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* one can read that *status* is originally a Latin word, and "*it denotes standing in society*" (ibid: 4757). Max Weber defined status as *"a quality of honor or a lack of it"'* (Weber 1974: 405 in Blackwell 4758). In the *Blackwell Encyclopedia* under the heading *occupational status and social stratification* one can read that

"in social sciences, it is viewed that in modern western societies the status of an individual derives primarily from one's occupation, as it is considered the main avenue of acquiring immunities, privileges, honor, and wealth, and is an indicator of authority and power. Its significance becomes evident in some studies that relate achieved status and occupation to levels of self esteem" (ibid: 4759).

American Prestige Research

In this section I am going to elaborate on some parts of the history of American prestige research.

The NORC Study

In their 1961 monograph Reiss and Duncan report the results of a 1947 survey conducted by North and Hatt (the NORC study). Among other goals, the study aimed at exploring the "*relative prestige*" of occupations (Reiss 1961: 4). Here it is very interesting to see that Reiss uses the terms *prestige* and *status* as one term, as a compound word: "*prestige status*" (Reiss 1961: 1). According to Reiss the *prestige status* is one of the criteria constituting the *social status of occupations* (ibid 1961: 1) and Reiss admits that in the monograph no attempt is made at establishing any connections between the concept of *prestige status* as used in the book and other concepts of social stratification (1961: 1), that is the concept is not defined.

During the survey conducted by North and Hatt in 1947 2920 respondents received the task of "*rank-ordering*" altogether 90 occupations chosen from the 1940 census data in the USA. The respondents had to evaluate each job title according the "*general standing*" of the occupation. There were altogether six options to choose from, which are the following: *1. Excellent standing, 2. Good standing, 3. Average standing, 4. Somewhat below average standing, 5. Poor standing, X. I don't know where to place that one* (Reiss 1961: 19).

In the same volume we can read two chapters in which Duncan (1961) translates the "*prestige scores*" derived from the results of the survey into a so-called *socioeconomic index* (SEI) which is constituted by the measures of income and education. It is stated that by using the SEI one is able to determine the *prestige score* of an occupation based on the income level and educational attainment of the incumbent, even if it was not included in the ninety occupational titles rated in the survey. Duncan explains this connection by pointing out that education and income can be said to be the "*cause*" and the "*effect*" of an occupation, respectively (ibid 1961: 116–117), and therefore "*It would not be surprising if an occupation's 'prestige' turned out to be closely related to one or both of these factors"* (ibid 1961: 117).

Treiman's International Prestige Scale

Treiman's goal was (1977) to measure the "*prestige*" of occupations on an international level. In spite of the fact that he does not provide a definition to the term *prestige*, he emphasizes that "*Although […] the prestige and socioeconomic status of occupations tend to be highly correlated, they are conceptually distinct*" (ibid 1977: 161). Furthermore, he points out that education and income cannot be considered equal to prestige.

In an attempt to construct an international prestige scale, from 53 countries (60 societies) Treiman collected altogether 85 prestige studies which were all similar in that a sample of

population were asked to rate occupations based on their "*prestige or social standing*", then the results were aggregated into mean scores indicating the "*relative prestige of the evaluated occupations*" (ibid 1977: 25). Occupational titles were first matched across countries based on their function in society and then the prestige scores were correlated for matching occupations. When discussing the meaning of *occupational prestige* Treiman enlists a number of terms, e.g. "*deference-entitlement*" (Shil 1968 in Treiman 1977: 26) or "*social standing*" (Treiman 1977: 27). He states that occupational differences are manifested by the fact that "*people clearly seek association with their occupational superiors and avoid association with their inferiors*" (Treiman 1977: 28).

Nakao and Treas

In the study of Nakao and Treas (1990) 1250 respondents were asked to rate 740 occupational titles according to their *social standing*. Respondents were asked to arrange the occupational titles on a nine-rung ladder of social standing, where 1 was the lowest and 9 was the highest possible social standing (ibid: 1–2). Using a special formula (ibid: 4) the raters' mean score was calculated for each of the occupations, which became the *prestige score* of the given occupation. (This study does not provide a definition for the measured concept, either.) Later these prestige scores were also converted into a socioeconomic index (Nakao and Treas, 1992), in the same manner as Duncan had done in 1961.

The Harris Polls

At this point it is very important to mention the Harris Polls. Since 1977 the Harris Poll has been surveying people's opinion in the USA about the prestige of occupations regularly. The question posed to the public in 2014 was the following: "*Below is a list of occupations. For each how, if at all, **prestigious** do you find the occupation?*" (as quoted in Griswold 2014, my emphasis). If one takes a closer look at the rankings of occupations, they seem to support the stance of Treiman (1977), namely, that educational attainment and income may be related to, but are not the same as occupational prestige. In 2015 for example, firefighters, nurses, and teachers ranked higher on the list than bankers, politicians or stockbrokers. This seems to be in harmony with the explanation of Gentile (2013) on the difference between the concepts of *status* and *prestige*: "*...status is determined by institutional and economic parameters, whereas prestige is influenced by social and symbolically functional codes [...] Teachers, for instance, may not have much economic power but enjoy a great deal of social prestige, whereas politicians may be very rich and powerful but are not always held in high moral esteem.*" (ibid: 65).

Hungarian Occupational Prestige Research

In Hungary Leopold was the first one who dealt with the concept of *prestige* (1912). According to Leopold for prestige to exist, certain criteria must be fulfilled: one is interested in something, has certain emotions towards it, but it is inaccessible for them, and it is considered inaccessible for everyone who are not associated with this prestige (Leopold 1912: 20).

In Hungary altogether three surveys have been conducted on occupational prestige, all of them by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. The first Hungarian prestige survey was conducted in 1978, with 94 participants (a non-representative sample). The respondents were

asked to rank altogether 41 cards with names of occupations on them, based on which occupations they considered "better" or "less good" (Hosszú 1980: 1204).

In 1983 the Hungarian Central Statistical Office conducted another survey, this time the roughly 7,700 respondents had to rank altogether 156 job titles. Each of the respondents had to rank 15 "fixed" job titles (which were the same for all of the respondents) and 15 other job titles chosen at random from the remaining 141. A similar prestige survey was conducted in 1988, with ca. 29,000 participants who also rated altogether 156 occupations (Kulcsár 1990).

In November 2016 the Central Statistical Office made a new occupational prestige survey, in the framework of which 10 per cent of the Hungarian population were asked to rank altogether 173 occupational titles based on their "*prestige, standing, rank*" (Csányi and Giczi 2016) and also one of the following criteria: *money*, *power*, *education*, *usefulness*, how *fashionable* the given occupation is. Unfortunately, in this prestige survey the occupational titles *interpreter* and *translator* were not included.

Empirical Research in the Field of Translation Studies on the Prestige or Status of the Translational Professions

The perceived marginalized role and low status and prestige of translators and interpreters is supported by empirical research, too (Sela-Sheffy 2005, Dam and Zethsen 2008, 2013, Katan 2011, Gentile 2013). In this section I intend to discuss some of these, without aiming at giving an exhaustive list.

Dam and Zethsen (2008) in their study of full-time Danish company translators found that on a 5-point scale where 5 was the highest score attributed to the highest level of prestige, and 1 meant the lowest level of prestige, the mean value based on the translators' answers was 2.57, whereas the mean value of the answers given by the core employees[2] working for the same company was 2.97, that is, translators as well as their non-translator colleagues perceived the prestige of translators to be "*quite low*" (ibid: 82).

Sela-Sheffy (2005) received a similar result from responses to a questionnaire on the prestige of Israeli translators as perceived by the public, in this case semi-educated Israelis such as graduate students of Tel Aviv University (ibid: 17). The author points out that the role of the translator is "*held secondary to that of authors*", furthermore, the majority of respondents considered the status of the translator's occupation as equal to that of teachers, teaching assistants, librarians, etc. (ibid: 10).

In a global survey (the questionnaire was sent out to altogether 56 conference interpreter associations in 53 countries) concluded by Gentile (2013) the respondents (conference interpreters) were asked to answer the following question, among others: "*In your opinion, which of the following professions has a status similar to that of a conference interpreter?*". The four occupational groups to which conference interpreters could compare themselves were as follows:"*1. CEO, finance manager, legislator; 2. Lawyer, medical doctor, university lecturer; 3. Secondary school teacher, architect, journalist; 4. Primary school teacher, nurse, social worker*" (ibid: 75). While one might intuitively (and rightly) feel that it is suggested by the question that the status of a CEO is higher than that of a nurse, it is still not clear where this grouping of occupational titles comes from. About this, the author writes the following: "*…so, interpreters had to specify in which professional group they believe society places them: four groups of professions were provided, divided into the categories issued by the Standard Classification of*

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[2]Core employees are the employees who perform the work defining the company, e.g. in a law firm the lawyers.

Occupations (ISCO, 2012), which are calculated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO)" (ibid: 74–75). However, having read the ISCO-classification thoroughly, to my knowledge it does not involve any classification of occupations' prestige hierarchy. Therefore I can only assume that the aforementioned groups were set up intuitively. In the survey the second option (*2. Lawyer, medical doctor, university lecturer*) was indicated by most (56.5 per cent) of the respondents.

Katan (2011) concluded an international survey among translators and interpreters in Austria, Spain and Italy. The questionnaire was sent out to academic colleagues, the mailing list of former students and national translation associations in Spain, Austria and Italy. Altogether 890 respondents completed the questionnaire. The results have shown that although translators and interpreters are "*aware of the lack of public recognition*" all too well, "*only a minority of the respondents feel the need to change the status quo, […] because they are more than satisfied with their job*" (ibid: 65). This seems to support the view held by Prunč (2007) who criticizes translators who willingly accept the so-called *pariah* habitus, looking at the customer as the king and accepting their low status and the cutting of prices (ibid: 49).

Dam and Zethsen have concluded numerous other surveys and studies on the prestige status of translators and interpreters (i.e. the translational profession). Here I would like to mention only one more of them, which is focussing on the occupational status of Danish conference interpreters and translators working in the EU (Dam and Zethsen 2013). Translators and interpreters participating in the survey had to fill in an online questionnaire covering various aspects of the status and professionalisation of their own profession (*job status and prestige in general, remuneration, education/expertise, visibility/fame, power/influence, importance/value to society*) (ibid: 241).The mean results of "*job status and prestige in general*" were 3.39 for interpreters and 2.56 for translators on a Likert-scale where 5 was the highest and 1 the lowest score. This means that interpreters ranked themselves higher and the difference between the two results was significant.

From the aforementioned surveys and studies it seems that the job prestige of translators and interpreters is relatively low, and what is more, in spite of the tendency among incumbents to identify themselves with the *pariah* habitus (Prunč 2007), they seem to be satisfied with their situation, or rather position among the prestige hierarchy of other professions, although this might also come from an attitude of selflessness and strong sense of responsibility inherent in the profession, which is also supported by Herbert in stressing the conference interpreter "*conscious of his mission*" and not being money-driven (ibid: 3).

In light of the foregoing, I decided to explore the prestige of interpreters in Hungary in order to be able to have an insight into, how they perceive their occupational prestige in comparison with other professions in Hungary.

Methodology

For measuring the occupational prestige of interpreters in Hungary I decided to ask interpreters working in Hungary, using a questionnaire. The questions of my survey were based on focus group discussions held earlier with the participation of interpreters,

The Questionnaire

I used an on-line questionnaire created with Google Forms, and the link to the questionnaire was sent to the respondents via e-mail. The questionnaire was available on-line from 4 February 2019 on and I downloaded the answers from the site on 15 April 2019. Besides basic demographic data (age and gender) the questionnaire contained different questions asking about various aspects connected to the issue of occupational prestige (e.g. education, monthly income, etc.). However, in this paper I only discuss one certain part of the survey concerned with the level of prestige of occupations in general.

In this part respondents had to indicate on a Likert-scale what level of prestige they attributed to interpreters (that is their own occupation), translators, as well as 20 other occupations taken from the list of occupations surveyed by the HCSO in its *Microcensus* survey. On the Likert-scale 10 indicated the highest level of prestige, while 1 the lowest level of prestige.

The 20 occupations interpreters had to evaluate besides *interpreter* and *translator* are shown in **Table 2** later in this paper. Based on the respondents' evaluation of each occupation I was able to make a comparison between the occupational prestige of *interpreter*, *translator* and the other 20 occupations.

Qualitative Focus Group Discussions SERVING as the basis of the Questionnaire Survey

Prior to the questionnaire survey between 27 March and 18 April 2017 I conducted four focus group discussions with altogether 14 interpreters working regularly on the Hungarian interpreting market (Pataky 2018). The aim of such focus group discussions was to answer a number of open-ended questions before being able to compile the questions of the survey to be sent out to the interpreters. In *Qualitative Research Practice* edited by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) Ritchie discusses in detail the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Ritchie 2003: 38). As Ritchie puts it, preceding statistical inquiry "*qualitative methods can help to define terminology concepts…*" and they "*can not only identify the appropriate dimensions to include but also generate the 'real life' language in which they should be framed*" (ibid: 40). In my case in connection with measuring the level of prestige interpreters attribute to their own occupation, I wanted to map two important areas: (1) the name of the translational professions to be measured, as well as (2) any professions which interpreters thought to have a similar prestige to that of interpreters.

The Name of an Occupation

The first area to be explored here was that in the questionnaire under what name I should refer to the translational professions researched in the survey:

> …were in the next prestige survey the translational professions to appear on the list, exactly what kind of occupational titles it would be sensible to include (translator, interpreter, conference interpreter, liaison interpreter, court interpreter, healthcare interpreter, etc.). In Hungary, the translational professions are not clearly separated, being rarely the case that conference interpreters only deal with conference interpreting, many undertaking liaison and translation jobs, too. Therefore, I […] wanted to establish where it would be useful to draw the lines;

what are those different occupational titles which should be mentioned separately from each other (Pataky 2018: 9).

Based on the opinions expressed by interpreters during the focus group discussions it turned out that the occupational titles *interpreter* and *translator* should appear separately, as the nature of translation and interpreting is inherently different, even if more often than not interpreters do both translation and interpreting (in contrast with translators who do not do any interpreting). As for *interpreter*, it should not be further segmented to *conference interpeter*, *healthcare interpreter*, etc., as in the Hungarian market interpreters are not so specialised (Pataky 2018: 16–17).

Occupations with a Similar Level of Prestige

The second issue I wanted to explore during the focus groups was whether participants could pinpoint some professions whose occupational prestige, in the participants' opinion, was on a similar level to that of interpreters, and if yes, what these occupations were. During the focus group discussions at one point the participants received a task in which they had to take a look at the the alphabetically ordered list of occupations surveyed by HCSO in 2016, where with underlining they had to mark any occupations they considered to have a similar level of prestige as interpreters. **Table 1** shows the occupations the interviewed interpreters underlined the most often.

Table 1. *Occupations having a Similar Level of Prestige to that of Interpreters (in the Opinion of Interpreters)*

Occupational title	Number of interpreters underlining the occupation (out of the 14 participants)
DIPLOMAT	9
LAWYER	9
TOUR GUIDE	8
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR	8
PERSONAL ASSISTANT	7
ARCHITECT	6
PRIVATE LANGUAGE TEACHER	6
ECONOMIST	5
SURGEON	5

Source: Éva Pataky

Taking this table as a starting point, I also included these jobs in the questionnaire survey for interpreters, where they had to evaluate the prestige level of these occupations, too. Besides the occupational titles listed in **Table 1**, I also included some more occupations from across the prestige scale resulting from the survey of HCSO in 2016 (Csányi and Giczi 2018: 8–10). Here the main criterion I took into account was that I tried to select widely known jobs. **Table 2** shows the list of all the 20 occupational titles from the list of HCSO which I included in my questionnaire to be evaluated by the respondents of my questionnaire survey:

Table 2. *Occupations included in the questionnaire to be evaluated by interpreters*

1	architect
2	ballet dancer
3	creche worker
4	diplomat
5	economist
6	general practitoner
7	judge
8	lawyer
9	miner
10	notary public
11	oenologist
12	paramedic
13	personal assistant
14	private language teacher
15	secretary
16	state secretary
17	surgeon
18	tour guide
19	university professor
20	waiter

Source: Éva Pataky

The Questions

Besides the occupations listed in **Table 2** I have also included *interpreter* and *translator* in the questionnaire. The respondents' task was to evaluate each profession based on the level of prestige they attributed to them. On a Likert-scale 10 meant the highest level of prestige, whereas 1 denoted the lowest level of prestige. The questions were drafted based on the questions of the HCSO in its *Microcensus* survey ("*Now we are going to list 15 occupations, please, rank the occupations based on that in your opinion which one has a higher prestige, authority, rank. Please, write number one next to the one which you think has the highest prestige, authority, rank.*") (HCSO Questionnaire 2016: 8, in Hungarian, my translation).

The question asked about the prestige of interpreters in my questionnaire sounded as follows: "*Please, on a scale of 10, evaluate the level of prestige, authority, rank an interpreter has (1 = very low; 10 = very high).*" The question targeted at the other 20 occupations also surveyed by HCSO and *translator* sounded as follows: "*Please, on a scale of 10, evaluate the level of prestige, authority, rank of the following occupations (1 = very low; 10 = very high).*"

It is important to point out here that wile the wording of my questions were similar to the wording of HCSO's questions ("*prestige, authority, rank*"[3] of a given occupation), the methodologies used in the questionnaire of the HCSO versus my questionnaire were different. While in the *Microcensus* survey of HCSO respondents had to set up an order among the occupations (i.e. rank the occupations) from 1 to 15 where the highest level was indicated by 1, and the lowest level of prestige was indicated by 15, in my questionnaire I used a Likert-scale of

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[3] Due to linguistic reasons I decided to use a word-for-word translation of the questions. This serves the aim of showing that (1) in the original questions used by HCSO next to the term "prestige" also two other synonymous words were listed, and (2) what exactly these terms were (prestige was likened to rank and authority).

10 to 1 where respondents evaluated occupations one by one (that is not compared to each other), and the highest level of prestige was indicated by 10, while the lowest level was indicated by 1. I used a Likert-scale of only 10 and not 15, because during the pilot phase of my survey it turned out that 10 is still nicely arranged on the screen of a smartphone in one line, however 15 points are appear already fragmented. This was a very important aspect, as interpreters are busy people, often not having the time to answer long questionnaires on PC-s. In the e-mail in which I sent out the link to the questionnaire I emphasised that the questionnaire was easily manageable also on a smartphone, therefore it could be filled out while waiting for the tram, during lunch or even in breaks during work. This helped a lot in getting interpreters to click on the link.

Another difference was that while in the *Microcensus* survey respondents had to rank occupations compared to each other, in my questionnaire interpreters were asked to evaluate occupations one by one, for the sake of simplicity of filling-in and in order to make the processing of data simpler. This is why the numbers were reversed and 10 meant the highest level of prestige; this is because usually, when evaluating one by one, one associates 10 with ten points meaning the highest level of something (as e.g. in beauty contests, talent shows, etc.).

When comparing the results of the two surveys and making the calculations the aforementioned differences had to be taken into consideration.

Sampling

In this section I am going to elaborate on how I selected the sample frame of the questionnaire and how the sample was drawn from this sample frame. In the second half of the section I am going to discuss a couple of problems in connection with my sample and the sampling method used.

The Target Population and the Sample Frame

As I have pointed out earlier, I decided to use an on-line questionnaire to measure the occupational prestige of interpreters in Hungary. As I was not in a position to reach the whole Hungarian population or even a percentage of it as it would have been the case in a census, I have decided to ask interpreters working in Hungary about the level of occupational prestige they attributed to their own occupation and other occupations (the target population).

Unfortunately, as there is no complete register of all the interpreters working in Hungary, I decided to use a stratified purposive sample consisting of altogether four strata targeting two educational institutions, one professional association as well as the official translation agency of the Hungarian state. This way I wished to make sure that I approach the target population from several angles and of course through several channels. The four strata of the sample were the following:

(1) the members on the mailing list of the alumni of the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Eötvös Loránd University Budapest ("ELTE")
(2) the members on the mailing list of the alumni of the Centre for Interpreter and Translator Training at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics ("BME")
(3) the mailing list of the Association of Hungarian Translators and Interpreters ("MFTE")
(4) the list of interpreters working for the Hungarian Office for Translation and Attestation, which is the official translation agency of the Hungarian state ("OFFI")

Table 3 shows the number of e-mail addresses in each of the strata in my sample to which the link to the questionnaire was sent out.

Table 3. *The Number of e-mail-addresses in the four Strata of the Sample Used*

Stratum	ELTE Budapest alumni	BME Budapest alumni	MFTE mailing list	OFFI list of interpreters
Number of units in the stratum	565	383	116	270

Source: Éva Pataky

The questionnaires were sent out on the following dates (**ELTE: 4 February 2019, 13 February 2019, BME: 21 February 2019, MFTE: 4 February 2019, 13 February 2019, OFFI: 1 March 2019**). In the case of MFTE and ELTE I sent out the questionnaire twice, after the first round I sent it out once more, to remind those who wanted to fill in but maybe forgot. In this case my situation was easy, as I myself was also on these two mailing lists. However, in the case of OFFI and BME the questionnaire was sent only once: here I sent the link not directly, but through a contact person. I downloaded the results of the questionnaire on **15 April 2019**. Until this date I have received altogether **93** answers.

Problems of Sampling

Unfortunately in the case of the mailing lists of the universities it was impossible to tell the exact number of units eligible to the sample, due to those alumni who leave the profession or do not even start working as interpreters after graduation. Another problem in the case of these mailing lists was that not only interpreters but also translators received the questionnaire.

In order to filter out false fill-ins from those who are not working regularly as interpreters in the Hungarian market, in the introductory text accompanying the link to the on-line questionnaire I included the following sentence: "*Please, only fill in the questionnaire if you work on the Hungarian market regularly as an interpreter.*" (in Hungarian, my translation). Of course this is not a guarantee that it is exclusively interpreters who filled in the questionnaire, but as the questionnaire was quite long, consisting of altogether 62 questions inquiring about various aspects of the interpreting profession, it is highly likely that only interpreters filled it in and translators and those not practising the profession actively did not take the effort to fill it in in vain.

As the survey was completely anonymous, I did not ask respondents to give their e-mail adresses. This way it was not possible to filter out any possible double fill-ins, but as my questionnaire also contained sensitive questions (e.g. the monthly income of the respondent), it is likely that this level of anonimity increased the fill-in ratio.

In the case of OFFI, prior to sending the questionnaire I have managed to correspond with the Managing Direcor of OFFI, dr. Gabriella Németh, with whom we agreed that I am going to send the questionnaire link to the head of OFFI's HR department (Andrea Kiss), who was going to send it only to those colleagues who are registered with the agency as interpreters. Therefore the fourth stratum of my sample was the most accurate.

As for MFTE, the questionnaire was also circulated on MFTE's mailing list, so this means that not only interpreters, but also translator colleagues received it. However, in this case, too, the accompanying letter asked colleagues to fill in the questionnaire only if they worked as interpreters in Hungary on a regular basis. At the time of sending out the questionnaire MFTE

had altogether 126 members, out of whom 116 indicated in their profile on the homepage of MFTE that they worked as interpreters.

<u>The Focus of the Sample Frame</u>

It might also be criticised that the questionnaire was only sent out to the alumni of universities in Budapest. In Hungary the following universities offer translator and interpreter training: ELTE Budapest, BME Budapest, Pázmány Péter Catholic University Budapest, Debrecen University (in Debrecen), Eszterházy Károly University (in Eger), Miskolc University (in Miskolc), Pannon University (in Veszprém), Szeged University (in Szeged), scattered across the country.

Another shortcoming of my sample is that out of the two professional associations operating in Hungary I reached only one. "*Currently there are two associations operating in Hungary: MFTE is the Association of Hungarian Translators and Interpreters, founded in 1989. Szoft is the Association of Freelance Translators and Interpreters, a relatively new association with a youthful profile, founded in 2016*" (Pataky 2018: 12). On the one hand this was due to time pressure during the sending-out phase and also, on the other hand *Szoft* is a fairly new organization, so at the planning stage of my survey they were still in the formulation phase, this is why I intentionally left them out of the sample. In the future surveys however, it would be useful to involve this new association, too.

All in all it can be said that the sample consisiting of alumni of universities has a focus on the capital of Hungary (Budapest), which might be problematic. On the other hand however, the sample approaches interpreters from three angles: (1) training institutions, (2) a professional organisation and (3) the translation agency of the state. This in my opinion ensures that the sample is still quite diverse. Also, as the Hungarian interpreting market is fairly small, it is highly likely, that these strata of the sample partially overlap each other. Here it is also important to mention that the Hungarian interpreting market is very much concentrated in the capital city of Budapest, therefore even if someone graduates from a university in the countryside, when they start their career, they will get into contact with professional associations (both based in Budapest) and professional networks of Budapest-based universities.

Findings

In this section I am going to elaborate on the results of the questionnaire. After discussing the age and gender distribution of the respondents I will go on to summarise the method I used for calculating the *Microcensus* prestige score of *interpreter* (and *translator*) using the evaluations given by interpreters in my questionnaire, as well as what the result of my calculations are.

Age and Gender of the Respondents

As for the demographic data of the respondents, the majority of my respondents were women, and the average age of the respondents was 47.6 years.

64.5 per cent of the respondents were female, and 35.5 per cent of the respondents were male. This reflects well the gender ratio of the translational professions and rhymes well with the

gender ratios in Dam and Zethsen's research (2013: 239) as well as the findings in Pym et al (2012: 85), for example.

Table 4 shows the distribution of ages. In the case of a round age (e.g. 40 or 50) I counted the respondent to the lower age group, that is if the person was 40 years old, they were counted in the age group 30–40. The youngest respondent was a 22 year old man, the oldest respondent was a 73 year old man.

Table 4. *The Age Distribution of my Respondents to the Questionnaire*

AGE GROUP	20–30	30–40	40–50	50–60	60–70	70–80
PERCENTAGE (NUMBER OR RESPONDENTS)	16.1% (15)	12.9% (12)	26.9% (25)	26.9% (25)	16.1% (15)	1.1% (1)

Source: Éva Pataky

From the table it is clear that the majority of the respondents filling in the questionnaire were between the ages of 40 and 60, while around a quarter of them were between 20 and 40. A decent number of respondents, that is around 16 per cent were between the ages of 60 and 70. This is a typical composition. Usually interpreters tend to work well into their sixties, even seventies, unlike other professions, e.g. military personnel.

Calculation of the Prestige Score of Occupations Missing from the Microcensus

As pointed out earlier, in its *Microcensus* survey the HCSO included altogether 173 occupational titles to be ranked by respondents on the basis of the level of prestige they attributed to them. In light of this I wanted to find out that if the job title *interpreter* had been included in this list of occupations, what would be the prestige score it would have achieved. I decided to calculate it using a function called *linear regression* in Microsoft Excel 2007. First I had to compare the *Microcensus* prestige scores of 20 occupations included in the prestige survey of HCSO with the evaluations of interpreters given to the same 20 occupations. In the case of a significant correlation between interpreters' evaluations in my survey and the *Microcensus* prestige scores, using my survey's prestige results for *interpreter* (and *translator*) I planned to calculate an estimated *Microcensus prestige score* for interpreters, too, using a function called linear regression in Microsoft Excel 2007. For the linear regression I decided to use an extension of Microsoft Excel called *XL Toolbox NG*, downloaded free of charge from https://www.xltoolbox.net/.

First of all I calculated the average of the evaluation given by the 93 interpreters to each of the occupational titles listed in my questionnaire. After that I looked up the *Microcensus prestige score* of the 20 occupations appearing in both my questionnaire as well as the *Microcensus* survey. **Table 5** shows the *Microcensus prestige scores* and the average of the evaluation given by interpreters to the 20 occupations in question.

Table 5. *Comparison between the Microcensus Prestige Scores and the Evaluation of Interpreters*

OCCUPATIONS	Microcensus prestige score	Average of evaluation by interpreters
SURGEON	3.21	9.24
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR	3.40	7.63
JUDGE	3.49	8.69
GENERAL PRACTITIONER	3.53	7.99

ARCHITECT	4.00	7.79
LAWYER	4.03	8.42
DIPLOMAT	4.11	8.98
ECONOMIST	4.20	7.13
NOTARY PUBLIC	4.40	7.61
STATE SECRETARY	4.51	8.77
PRIVATE LANGUAGE TEACHER	6.11	5.74
PARAMEDIC	6.21	6.47
OENOLOGIST	7.22	6.59
TOUR GUIDE	7.30	5.41
PERSONAL ASSISTANT	8.17	4.90
CRECHE WORKER	8.76	4.06
BALLET DANCER	8.93	6.86
SECRETARY	9.33	4.35
MINER	10.31	3.92
WAITER	10.50	3.75
INTERPRETER	[to be calculated with linear regression]	6.43
TRANSLATOR	[to be calculated with linear regression]	6.01

Source: Éva Pataky

It might be clear already at first sight that the numbers are inverse, that is while in the *Microcensus* ranking 15 meant the lowest level of prestige and 1 the highest, in the survey conducted among interpreters number 10 was the highest level of prestige and 1 the lowest. Therefore the correlation coefficient resulting from the correlation calculation between the two types of evaluations is a negative number: **-0.883111908**. However, as the absolute value of this number (0.883111908) is fairly close to the value of 1, this means that there is a correlation between the two values (the *Microcensus* prestige scores and the average of interpreters' evaluations). Based on the correlation coefficient and the number of elements (20, that is 20 occupations where the *Microcensus* score as well as the evaluation by interpreters was given) I was able to look up the probability value in a statistical chart of probability values (Falus and Ollé 2008: 327), from which it turned out that *p < 0.001*. This shows that the correlation between the two values was significant.

Linear Regression

The next step was to calculate an estimated *Microcensus* prestige score for the occupational titles *interpreter* and *translator*, too, based on the data already given. For this purpose I decided to use a function where the evaluation by interpreters was represented on axis *x* and the *Microcensus* prestige scores were shown on axis *y* of the coordinate system. Using Microsoft Excel I fitted a linear function on the point cloud of my data in the coordinate system. The slope of this function was m = -1.235344624 (negative value due to the inverse correlation between the data), while the interception of the function on axis *y* was b = 14.32226908. Using these data, with the help of the linear regression equation (**Figure 1.**) I was able to calculate the two missing pieces of information on axis *y* (i.e. the estimated *Microcensus* prestige score of the occupational titles *interpreter* and *translator*).

Figure 1. *Equation used to Calculate the Missing y values (i.e. the Microcensus prestige score)*

$$y = mx + b$$

Source: The Help function of Microsoft Excel 2007 on the linear regression function

Using the aforementioned formula I calculated the estimated *Microcensus* prestige scores for *interpreter* and *translator*. The value received for *interpreter* is **6.38**, while for *translator* the result was **6.89**. The value of the determination coefficient was R^2 = 0.779887, which theoretically means that the linear regression function used fits well onto the point cloud.

Discussion

In this section I am going to discuss the *Microcensus prestige score* of *interpreter* received as a result of my survey in relation to my previous research, as well as in relation to previous research comparing the occupational prestige of *translators* and *interpreters*.

The Occupational Prestige of Interpreters

Based on the results of the questionnaire interpreters came out somewhere in the upper half (calculated *Microcensus* prestige score of *interpreter*: 6.38, see **Table 6.**), towards the bottom of the upper third of the ranking of occupations, between *sales manager/politician* occupying the same place (54/55 with a prestige score of 6.37)[4], and *fireman* (on place 56 with a prestige score of 6.39).

Table 6. *The Estimated Prestige SCORE of Interpreter*

RANK	OCCUPATION	Prestige score with HCSO
1	HOSPITAL DIRECTOR	3.06
54/55	SALES MANAGER/POLITICIAN	6.37
	INTERPRETER	**6.38**
56	FIREMAN	6.39
173	STREET PROSTITUTE	13.82

Source: Éva Pataky

In light of such results it is very interesting to see how these results relate to the results of previous research. In my focus group discussions conducted earlier in 2017 there were some occupational titles which were referred to by the participants as ones having a similar level of prestige to that of interpreters (see **Table 1**). However, when comparing their *Microcensus* prestige scores to my calculated *Microcensus* prestige scores of *interpreter*, the differences are striking. **Table 7** shows the occupations indicated by the participants of the focus group

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[4]HCSO delegated ranks 54 and 55 to these two occupations (sales manager/politician), in stead of placing them on the same, 54th place. I believe that this is only for the sake of easy representation in the table, and has nothing to do with the prestige scores themselves. Besides, in Hungarian the names of these two occupations are in an alphabetical order, as the word *sales manager* starts with "e", while the word *politician* with "p".

discussions as occupations with a similar level of prestige to that of interpreters, together with the *Microcensus* prestige scores of these occupations.

Table 7. *The Microcensus Prestige Scores of Occupations Considered by Focus Group Participants to Have a Similar Level of Prestige as Interpreter*

OCCUPATION	MICROCENSUS PRESTIGE SCORE
DIPLOMAT	4.11
TOUR GUIDE	7.30
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR	3.40
PERSONAL ASSISTANT	8.17
ARCHITECT	4.00
PRIVATE LANGUAGE TEACHER	6.11
ECONOMIST	4.20
SURGEON	3.21
INTERPRETER	**6.38**
TRANSLATOR	6.89

Source: Éva Pataky

Whereas *diplomat*, *lawyer*, *university professor*, *architect*, *economist* and *surgeon* rank far higher on the list than *interpreter* – *tour guide* and *personal assistant* are located much lower on the ladder. The only occupatinal title ranking more or less close to *interpreter* was *private language teacher* with a prestige score of 6.11.

This is a very interesting result, as in light of the coefficient of determination (R^2) my estimations based on the linear regression function should be quite good. The answer might be that the participants of the focus group discussions conducted in 2017 did not give answers which were representative of the whole target population. Either (a) due to the fact that their opinion was very much different from the whole of the target population or (b) they answered not really based on the perceived prestige of interpreters but based on something else, e.g. the nature of professions. The latter might be presumed from the opinions expressed by some of the interpreters during the focus group discussions, e.g. "*...and other creative [professions] that is an oenologist ...no? Someone who creates something out of nothing and has maybe their signature on it, or a writer or a poet*" (Interpreter 7 at the focus group discussion held on 3 April 2017); "*pilot [...] if you realise that the aeroplane has a pilot then there is already a problem [meaning that pilots are invisible, like interpreters]*" (Interpreter 8 at the focus group discussion held on 3 April 2017).

From this it might be presumed that when participants evaluated interpreters in comparison with other jobs (and not using numbers), they concentrated on the nature of the job (e.g. creative, invisible) and not the level of prestige (although the question posed in the focus groups was about the prestige of occupations). However, in the questionnaire, when respondents had to evaluate the job titles separately, using numbers, this helped them more to really concentrate on the prestige of the occupation in question.

A Comparison between Interpreters and Translators

Table 8 shows the calculated *Microcensus* prestige score of *translator* in relation to the whole of the *Microcensus* ranking of occupations. The calculated prestige score of translators is

6.89, which places *translator* between *actor* (place 60 with a prestige score of 6.85) and *car dealer (owner)* (place 61 with a prestige score of 6.96).

Table 8. *The Estimated Prestige Score of Interpreter*

RANK	OCCUPATION	*Microcensus* prestige score
1	HOSPITAL DIRECTOR	3.06
60	ACTOR	6.85
	TRANSLATOR	**6.38**
61	CAR DEALER (OWNER)	6.96
173	STREET PROSTITUTE	13.82

Source: Éva Pataky

When looking at the prestige scores of *interpreter* and *translator* in comparison to each other, then what we see is that the occupational prestige of the two professions is similar, with *interpreter* ranking slightly higer on the ladder of occupational prestige (*interpreter*: **6.38**; *translator*: **6.89**).

This result is however not entirely in harmony with their results of Dam and Zethsen (2013: 241), in whose research on a scale of 5 (where 1 meant the lowest level and 5 the highest level for "*job status and prestige in general*") the mean score of interpreters was **3.39** (ibid: 241). Here it is important to point out that in this study interpreters and translators were given the task of evaluating their own occupation (i.e. interpreters evaluated the "*job status and prestige*" of interpreters and translators evaluated the "*job status and prestige*" of translators). In contrast in my research the target population consisted of only interpreters who evaluated the job title *translator*, too.

While in Dam and Zethsen's research (2013: 241) the difference between the scores of translators and interpreters was significant, in my study – although interpreters rank higher in comparison with translators, just like in Dam and Zethsen's study – the difference is not so big, especially in light of the fact that the scores 6.38 and 6.89 were calculated on a scale of 1 to 15 (in contrast to Dam and Zethsen's much less segmented scale of 5 to 1).

Conclusions

All in all it can be said that based on my research the occupational prestige of interpreters is not so high as one might assume based on theoretical literature without any empirical research. Also, it turned out that the occupational prestige of translators is not as low as one might presume. Although *translator* ranked slightly lower compared to *interpreter*, the difference was not so striking.

However, in this survey it is only interpreters who were asked about their own prestige compared to other occupations. Although the evaluation given by the respondents showed a high level of correlation with the evaluation given by the 10 per cent of the Hungarian population asked in the so-called *Microcensus* survey of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, in the future occupational surveys conducted by the HCSO it would be worth including two additional occupational titles in the survey, namely *interpreter* and *translator*.

If the translational professions were to make it into the group of occupations in prestige surveys, it would be a significant step forward in the process of their professionalisation.

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