Speech monitoring in language production: The effects of anxiety

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Conference Interpreting

• **A series of cognitive processes**
  – Comprehending the source language
  – Producing the target language
  – Perform “online”

• **A very stressful activity**
  – Performed in public
  – Multi-task
  – Time constraint
  – Requires stable psychological trait e.g. low anxiety.
Interpreting and anxiety

• Does anxiety affect interpreting? If yes, how?

  – The capacity to control anxiety has traditionally been considered one of the requisites for interpreting (Cooper et al., 1982; Gile, 1995; Klonowicz, 1994; Longley, 1989; Moser-Mercer, 1985; Moser-Mercer et al., 1998) and a predictor of interpreting competence (Alexieva, 1997).

  – Anxiety is intrinsic to interpreting, but its impact is not clearly defined (Brisau et al., 1994).

  – The capacity to control anxiety in interpreting is sometimes taken into account in interpreting entrance exams (Moser-Mercer, 1985).
Studies on anxiety

• According to the attentional control theory of anxiety (Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007), anxiety
• increases stimulus-driven attention (i.e., automatic attention to salient things, e.g., a loud sound)

• decreases goal-driven attention (i.e., attention needed to complete a goal, e.g., interpreting a speech).

• impairs executive functions such as inhibition, shifting, and updating (see also Miyake et al., 2000).
Studies on anxiety

• Anxiety
  • leads to poor achievement in a foreign language (Ganschow & Sparks, 1996).
  • hinders phonological and orthographic production in the native language (Ganschow & Sparks, 1996).
  • affects syntactic production in a foreign language (Kleinmann, 1977).
  • make people stutter in language production (Messenger et al., 2004)
Studies on foreign language anxiety

• Horwitz et al. (1986)
  – Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure FL anxiety with a focus on speaking. (5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”)
  – The internal consistency, and test-retest reliability (over 8 weeks) was quite good.
  – Aida (1994) validated FLCAS.

• Other situation-specific anxiety scale
  – English Use Anxiety Scale (Gardner, Smythe, & Brunet, 1977)
  – Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) (Saito et al., 1999)
  – Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) (Elkhafaifi, 2005)
  – Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS) (Woodrow, 2006)
Studies on interpreting anxiety

• Few empirical studies on the construct of interpreting anxiety
Implications
Interpreting teaching & training

- Create individual profiles for students: tailored instructions
- Classroom teaching strategies
  - Audio visual material.
  - Pre-task preparation
    - topics,
    - subject knowledge,
    - audience, speaker background,
    - terminologies,
    - Technologies.
  - Situated learning
    - mock conferences,
    - scenario based interpreting,
    - role play in pair-up practice.
- ...
Implications
Interpreting teaching & training

• Help students with high anxiety find their confidence in class
  – Use dubbing as an ice-breaker.
  – Encouraging oral and written feedback.
  – Find out what the student is confident in.
  – Break down the skills of interpreting to identify what exactly hinders a student’s confidence.
  – Using one-on-one tutorials to provide tailored training to help improve certain skills.
  – Video record and play back a well prepared task once a term.

• Self-training
  – Stand on a chair
  – Dress-up (feel good and recreate a professional atmosphere)
  – Talk from a corner (voice projection)
  – Do a task with a time limit
  – Written feedback from peers
Implications

Foreign language learning

- Poor FL performance could be caused by anxiety
  - Speaking.

- Anxiety hinders language comprehension

- Public speaking modules
  - Presentation,
  - Pacing and
  - Strategic use of disfluencies.


Thank you for your attention.

Questions are welcome.