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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**
  - Audio anxiety and interpreting anxiety both affected interpreting performance (Kang, 2010, 291 Chinese learners of English).
  - Cassady & Johnson (2002) Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale.

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.

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Thank you for your attention.

Questions are welcome.