Stress and emotion in community and conference interpreting

Paweł Korpal

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Fulbright Visiting Scholar

at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Outline

- **Theoretical background**:

  Community and conference interpreting
  Stress and emotion: Concepts and measures

- **Previous research**: Stress and emotion in conference interpreting

- The **Fulbright project** on stress in community interpreting

How it all started

https://www.mentorpolska.pl/pracownie_do_nauki_tlumaczy,audytor_lab_realizacja,4#audytor_lab_4-2

Conference interpreting

- two main interpreting modes: simultaneous and consecutive
- conferences, congresses and international events
- multiple language pairs
- interpreter as a 'ghost' in simultaneous interpreting (?)
- some stress factors: remote interpreting (Kurz 2002), prolonged turns (Moser-Mercer et al. 1998), fast speakers (Korpal 2017)

Conference interpreting

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/39/Garry_Kasparov_-_Klaus_Bednarz_at_lit_Cologne_2007_-_%286757%29.jpg

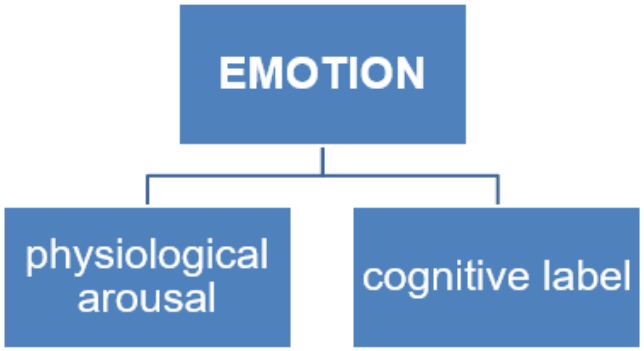
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/60/Brussels_-_Interpretation_booth_%28cropped%29.jpg

Community interpreting

- some community interpreting settings: court, medical, educational
- the interpreter is an active part of a communicative act
- negative vs. positive aspects of stress; distress vs. eustress
- **community interpreters**:
  - experience **secondary traumatic stress** (Mehus and Becher 2015)
  - are **emotionally affected** by their work (Doherty et al. 2010)
  - experience **exhaustion** (Holmgren et al. 2003)

Measuring stress and emotion

- Schachter and Singer's two-factor theory of emotion
- the organism's basic sensations from the body are categorized and cognitively labelled by the brain (Barrett 2017)



- **physiological arousal**
- **self-reported stress/emotion**

Measuring stress and emotion

Physiological measures:
e.g. heart rate; blood pressure; heart rate variability; salivary and blood cortisol concentration; respiration; skin conductance

Self-report measures:
e.g. State-Trait Anxiety Inventory X-1 (STAI X-1, Spielberger et al. 1970); Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS, Watson et al. 1988)

Acoustic indicators:
fundamental frequency (F0), hesitations, speaking intensity and speaking tempo

Previous research

Study 1: Delivery rate and stress in simultaneous interpreting

Korpal, Paweł. 2017. *Linguistic and psychological indicators of stress in simultaneous interpreting*. Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press.

Main results

- rate of delivery as a problem trigger (high delivery rate → compromised interpreting accuracy)
- rate of delivery as a **stress trigger** (high delivery rate → stress)
- stress **negatively** correlated with interpreting accuracy
- no statistically significant difference between professionals and trainees with regard to stress levels
- professional interpreters providing more accurate interpretations

Study 2: Emotional responses in simultaneous interpreting

Korpal, Paweł and Aleksandra Jasielska. 2019. “Investigating interpreters’ empathy: Are emotions in simultaneous interpreting contagious?”, *Target* 31(1), 2-24.

Concepts

- **emotional contagion** : “the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures, and movements with those of another person's and, consequently, to converge emotionally” (Hatfield et al. 1994: 47)

- **the role of emotional contagion:**
  (1) interpersonal communication
  (2) bonds (Wróbel 2008)

- **EMPATHY**: emotional and cognitive processes (Davis 1983)

Main results

- emotional responding observed in simultaneous interpreting, reflected both in physiological responses (SC) and a self-report measure scores (SUPIN)
- interpreters tend to converge emotionally with the speaker
- benefits and challenges?

Fulbright: Study 1

Method

- **Aim**: to test the impact of the speaker's accent on stress in community interpreting

- **Rationale**: accent as a well-known problem trigger in interpreting (Gile 2009)

- **Participants**:
  - interpreting trainees
  - professional community interpreters

- **Materials and procedure:**
  - two job interviews to be interpreted;
  - liaison English <> Spanish interpreting.

Method and hypothesis

Measures:

- **Self-report measure of stress:**
  Short Stress State Questionnaire (SSSQ; Helton 2004)

- **Physiological measure of stress** *[to be used post-COVID]*
  heart rate

Hypothesis:
Accent as a stressor in community interpreting (?)

Fulbright: Study 2

Method

- **Aim**: to investigate most salient stress factors and stress coping strategies among professional community interpreters and interpreting trainees
- **Rationale**:
  more empirically-driven data on the most salient stress factors in community interpreting is needed;
  community interpreters at risk of chronic stress and occupational burnout
- **Participants**:
  - interpreting trainees
  - professional community interpreters
- **Method**: semi-structured interviews

Why this research?

- interpreting as language mediation
- psycho-affective aspects of community interpreting are still under-investigated
- basic vs. applied research
- didactic considerations
- human factors and ergonomics
- recommendations to community interpreters experiencing stress
- chronic stress potentially influencing interpreting quality and interpreters' well-being

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Paweł Korpal
pkorpal@amu.edu.pl

Adam Mickiewicz University,
Poznań

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