

Simultaneous Interpreting and Meditation: An Experimental Study on the Effects of Qigong Meditation on Simultaneous Interpreting Performance

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Abstract : Simultaneous interpreting (SI) is a demanding language task which includes the contemporary activation of different cognitive processes. This complex activity requires interpreters not only to be proficient in their working languages; but also to have a great ability in focusing attention and controlling anxiety during their performance. Effects of Qigong meditation techniques have a positive impact on several cognitive functions, including attention and anxiety control. This study aims at exploring the influence of Qigong meditation on the quality of simultaneous interpreting. 20 interpreting students, divided into two groups, were trained for 8 days in Qigong meditation practice. Before and after training, a brief simultaneous interpreting task was performed. Language combinations of group A and group B were respectively English-Italian and Chinese-Italian. Students' performances were recorded and rated by independent evaluators. Assessments were based on 12 different parameters, divided into 4 macro-categories: content, form, delivery and anxiety control. To determine if there was any significant variation between the pre-training and post-training SI performance, ANOVA analyses were conducted on the ratings provided by the independent evaluators. Main results indicate a significant improvement of the interpreting performance after the meditation training intervention for both groups. However, group A registered a higher improvement compared to Group B. Nonetheless, positive effects of meditation have been found in all the observed macro-categories. Meditation was not only beneficial for speech delivery and anxiety control but also for cognitive and attention abilities. From a cognitive and pedagogical point of view, present results open new paths of research on the practice of meditation as a tool to improve SI performances.

Keywords : cognitive science, interpreting studies, Qigong meditation, simultaneous interpreting, training

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