

Pause length and location effects on Chinese-Portuguese simultaneous interpretation intelligibility

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Studies on speech pause production and perception have a long story, starting with Tosi in 1965 (*apud* Liu et al, 2022). Nowadays it is recognised that pause features vary among diverse type of speech and discourse objectives, and the duration and location of silent pauses may cause both stylistic and meaning discrepancies. These characteristics are of exceptional importance when related to simultaneous interpretation (SI), in which reliability to the speaker's original text is sought.

On this study the presented analyses are part of a *corpus* with hours of Chinese-Portuguese simultaneous interpretation. The examples were randomly selected from broadcast TV information programs dedicate to clarify citizens about Covid-19 proffered by the Government representatives of Special Administrative Region of Macau

Considering the importance and difficult job of interpreters and knowing that pausing location and duration have great influence on a foreign language fluency, this work objectives were to study the results of pause length and position in Chinese-Portuguese simultaneous interpretation by professional CH-PT interpreters, native speakers of Mandarin to whom Portuguese is already their third or fourth language.

The studied simultaneous interpretation oral texts concern to the time of Covid-19 pandemic and the main motivation comes from the vast situations of speech unintelligibility, situation that conducted to the adoption of consecutive interpretation instead. It is important to highlight that Portuguese (European variety) is as Chinese an official language in the territory.

First observations of the silent pauses marked and measured throughout Praat and audacity systems make possible to conjecture that besides long pauses with more than 0.650ms, the extremely recurrent unexpected pauses - within a word, in the middle of a phrase or unit of meaning, between subject and verb, etc. - had a strong influence on intelligibility since it seems that the listener loses the context and the sense of what is being explained or said.

References

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