Anxiety, Confidence, and a Little Bit of Mindfulness

By

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- ✓ Exit Requirement has been approved

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED

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and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment of the requirements of this master's degree.

Committee Chair:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

In this action research project, I investigate the root cause of my anxiety during freelance interpreting assignments. To explore this, I made audio recordings after each assignment, noting the setting details, demands that impacted my work, and reflecting on my emotional state and overall performance. These recordings were then transcribed and analyzed for common themes, revealing that when teaming with seasoned interpreters, working in unfamiliar environments, or in high-visibility settings, my anxiety heightened and affected my performance. Existing literature suggests that this anxiety may stem from factors like perceived low self-efficacy, imposter syndrome, or a lack of psychological safety. To address this, I examined the effectiveness of mindfulness practices, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, journaling, and meditation, in reducing my anxiety and boosting self-confidence. I created a self-assessment to evaluate these practices after each freelance assignment, answering both open- and closed-ended questions about the setting, the mindfulness technique used, my anxiety level during the interpretation, and my confidence in my performance. The findings uncovered three key insights: journaling was most effective in reducing anxiety and improving confidence; my anxiety and confidence levels had a negative correlation; and environmental factors played a significant role in my emotional response during and after assignments. These results suggest that interpreter education should emphasize emotional readiness alongside technical skills, with greater support for confidence-building and coping strategies. Future research could benefit from longer data collection periods, more consistent testing environments, and broader participant samples to better assess the long-term impact of mindfulness and interpreting-related anxiety.

Keywords: Anxiety, confidence, mindfulness, interpreting, performance

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores my personal journey with anxiety, self-confidence, and mindfulness in interpreting. It begins by reflecting on the early stages of my interpreting career, during which heightened anxiety had a negative impact on both my professional and personal life. While seeking to address this, I focused on two key goals: identifying the root cause of my anxiety in my interpreting performance and exploring the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in managing anxiety and boosting confidence. To explore the relationship between these components, I applied Bandura's (1993) theory of self-efficacy and the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). Additionally, this chapter outlines the study's limitations and provides any significant definitions of terms that are essential for understanding the research.

Background

As I began navigating my professional journey as a K-12 interpreter, I noticed moments where I felt immense anxiety that directly impacted my work performance. During these times, I experienced a range of mental, emotional, and physical effects. My lag time shortened due to a feeling of urgency, which caused my interpretations to lack conceptual accuracy. I frequently dealt with self-doubt and negative thinking, constantly comparing myself to other interpreters and minimizing my own skills. My processing suffered, leading to issues in my production, including a lack of cohesion, signing errors, omissions, and skews of the source message. These moments felt overwhelming and left me disconnected from the task at hand. Initially, I believed these challenges occurred when I was working in unfamiliar environments due to a lack of experience, which made it harder to perform to the best of my ability. However, once I entered

the freelance world and was constantly immersed in changing and new environments, I realized that this was not the true issue. I felt my anxiety, and the effects of it, intensify even in settings I had worked in before. I could not identify the cause of these feelings, nor how to manage them so they would not affect my work. My interpreting was inconsistent and my self-confidence was plummeting.

Statement of the Problem

In these moments of intense anxiety and self-doubt, I was unable to interpret to my fullest potential. I experienced a range of physical, mental, and emotional impacts including shaky and stiff hands, increased heart rate, processing and production issues, negative self-talk, and dissociation. As a result, my interpreting was not consistent. One day I would successfully perform and feel confident about my work, while the next day, the opposite was true. I could not identify the root cause or how to improve the situation, I simply knew that it was negatively affecting my performance. I felt a loss of control and insecurity.

Purpose of the Study

My study has two key purposes: (1) to identify the root cause of my anxiety in my interpreting performance and (2) to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness practices, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, meditation, and journaling, in managing my anxiety and boosting my self-confidence, so they do not continue to negatively influence my interpreting ability. While my study speaks solely to my journey as an interpreter, I hope it will be beneficial to other interpreters who find themselves in similar situations. The intrapersonal side of the interpreting field is often not discussed enough, though it plays a significant role in the work we do. Whether novice or expert, we are all humans navigating complex demands and the personal complexities should not be overlooked. Throughout this journey, I have gained a deeper

understanding of the roots of my anxiety within interpreting, the importance of self-confidence and coping strategies in navigating the complexities of the work, and how to grow into a more effective interpreter as a result.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework draws on Albert Bandura's (1993) theory of self-efficacy and the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) to explore the relationship between self-efficacy, anxiety, and performance. The goal of my research is to identify the root cause of my anxiety and assess mindfulness strategies in reducing it while boosting my confidence in interpreting work. First, it is important to distinguish self-efficacy from confidence as Banudra's (1993) theory emphasizes self-efficacy, whereas my research focuses on confidence. Although these terms are often used interchangeably and both refer to a person's perception of their abilities, they have distinct meanings. According to the National Research Council (1994), Bandura (1986 & 1990) notes that "self-confidence refers to firmness or strength of belief but does specific its direction; self-efficacy implies that a goal has been set" (p. 174). For clarity and consistency in this paper, I use the term *confidence,* as it is more familiar to the general audience, including myself.

Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy

Bandura's (1993) theory of self-efficacy highlights the importance of believing in one's abilities and how this belief impacts one's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors. He identifies four major processes influenced by self-efficacy: cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. For this study, the cognitive and affective processes are particularly relevant.

In cognitive processes, Bandura emphasizes that individuals with low self-efficacy tend to doubt their abilities, "they visualize failure scenarios and dwell on the many things that can go

wrong. It is difficult to achieve much while fighting self-doubt" (p. 118). Socially, these cognitive difficulties are amplified when individuals have low self-efficacy. He states, "It requires a strong sense of efficacy to remain task oriented in the fact of pressing situational demands and failures that have social repercussions" (p. 120). Moreover, observing others succeed can make individuals with low self-efficacy feel even more insecure, as they become focused on protecting their self-image rather than performing well.

Regarding affective processes, Bandura explains how self-efficacy influences stress, anxiety, and motivation in difficult situations. He notes:

> Those who believe they cannot manage threats experience high anxiety arousal. They dwell on their coping deficiencies. They view many aspects of their environment as fraught with danger. They magnify the severity of possible threats and worry about things that rarely happen. Through such inefficacious thinking, they distress themselves and impair their level of functioning. (pp. 132-133).

This is especially true, Bandura states, for people who experience achievement-related anxiety and do not believe they can manage academic or performance-based demands.

Bandura outlines ways to strengthen both cognitive and affective processes by building a strong sense of self-efficacy. For cognitive development, he explains that individuals should not rely solely on past performance, but develop a stronger belief in their abilities as they gain more experience. For affective processes, he states that anxiety and stress can be reduced "by building a strong self efficacy through developing cognitive abilities and self regulation skills for managing academic task demands and self debilitating thought patterns" (p. 134). Together, these ideas suggest that with further experience and effective tools, one's self-efficacy can improve alongside performance.

Yerkes-Dodson Law & Hebb's Curve

Additionally, the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908), first introduced in 1908 through experiments involving dancing mice and electric shocks, describes the relationship between "stimulus strength and habit formulation for tasks varying in discrimination difficultness" (Teigen, 1994, p. 525). The researchers found that both weak and strong stimuli led to slow habit-formation, and that the most favorable stimulus strength depends on the complexity of the task (Teigen, 1994). Since then, the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) has undergone multiple reinterpretations, shifting in focus from learning and discrimination to areas such as motivation, stress, anxiety, punishment, and reward (e.g., Dodson, 1917; Young, 1936; Thorndike, 1932; Skinner, 1938; Broadhurst, 1957; Hebb, 1955; Levitt, 1967; Eysenck, 1989; Nieuwenhuis, 2024). Specifically, Hebb (1955) introduced the concept of arousal and the inverted U-curve (see Figure 1 below) to describe the relationship between arousal and performance. He defines arousal as, "arousal in this sense is synonymous with a general drive state, and the conception of drive therefore assumes anatomical and physiological identity" (Hebb, 1955, p. 249).

Figure 1

Hebbian Version of the Yerkes-Dodson Law
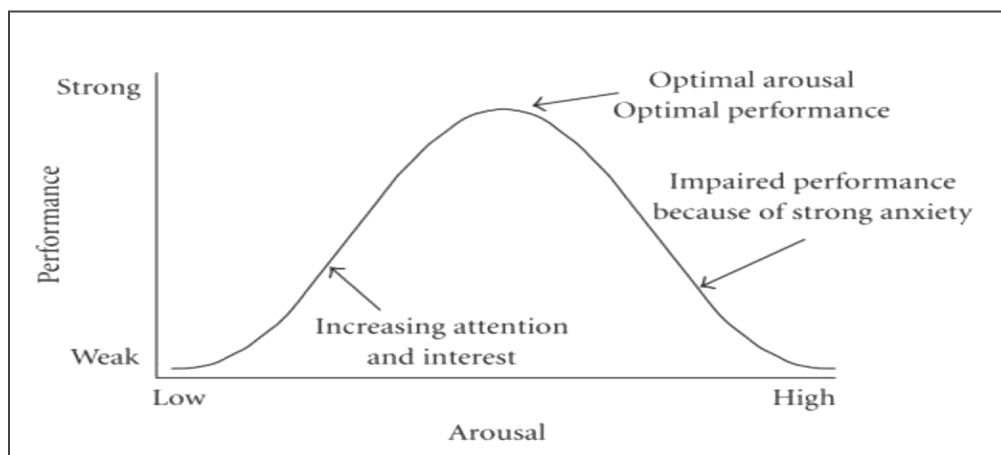
Note. Adapted from *The Temporal Dynamics Model of Emotional Memory Processing* (Diamond et al., 2007).

This conceptual shift redirected attention from the body to the brain, emphasizing the role of the nervous system in behavior regulation. Although the researcher did not mention the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) in his paper, the findings were almost identical and the two concepts became used interchangeably in later studies. Hebb and other researchers extended this model to explain how humans respond to tasks based on varying arousal levels. As Dang and Tapus (2013) explain:

> When arousal level is still under boredom threshold, humans can be considered as being bored by the task. When the arousal level surpasses the boredom threshold and stays under the Stress/Anxiety threshold, humans can be considered as motivated in performing the task. When task performance is optimal, the arousal level is called baseline threshold, which is recommended for the best task performance. When the arousal level exceeds the Stress/Anxiety threshold, human is stressed and his/her task performance would decrease drastically (pp. 237-238).

This is echoed in another interpretation of the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) by Eysenck (1989), who essentially states that higher levels of arousal, motivation, or anxiety lead to improved performance only up to a certain point, after which further arousal impairs performance. While there are many renditions of the original theory, the central idea remains true: when arousal, stress, or anxiety becomes too high, performance is negatively affected. This perspective is beneficial in my study, as I have discovered that in moments of heightened anxiety during my interpreting performance, I have experienced various mental, cognitive, and physical effects which cause my processing, production, and interpretation to suffer. In implementing this theory into my research, it is my hope to make sense of where this anxiety comes from and how to address it head-on.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that I am the sole participant, and all of the data was drawn from my individual work as an interpreter. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader interpreting community. However, the results may still provide valuable insights into the causes of anxiety in interpreters and the potential effectiveness of mindfulness practices for managing these emotions. This information could be particularly useful for other interpreters who face similar challenges or are interested in exploring these techniques to support their well-being and performance.

Another limitation involves the potential for bias during data analysis, as I analyzed the data I collected with prior knowledge about my own personal experiences. To mitigate this, I made a conscious effort to remain as objective as possible when reviewing the data and maintained a consistent methodology in both Part 1 and 2 throughout the data collection period. Additionally, both data collection tools were used after completing freelance assignments, which introduces the possibility of recall bias. To reduce this risk, I ensured that I recorded my audio reflections and completed my survey immediately after each assignment, in order to capture the most accurate responses.

Lastly, the interpreting assignments where data collection occurred for Part 2 of my study took place in varying environments. These differences may have influenced my anxiety and confidence levels, making it more difficult to isolate the effectiveness of the mindfulness technique used. While details about each setting were noted in the data, future research would benefit from conducting similar studies in a more consistent environment to reduce the impact on the results. In addition, the time frame for Part 2 of my study was relatively short, while limiting the ability to observe the long-term effects of the mindfulness practices in reducing anxiety and

boosting confidence. Extending the duration of future studies could provide deeper insight into the impact of these techniques over time.

Definition of Terms

To ensure a clear understanding of all the concepts discussed, the following terms are defined as they are used within the scope of this research.

Anxiety: "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure" (American Psychological Association, 2025, para. 1).

Burnout: "a psychological syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy, which is experienced in response to chronic job stressors" (Maslach & Leiter, 2007, p. 368).

Confidence: "a feeling or belief that you can do something well or succeed at something" (Britannica, 2025).

Consecutive Interpretation: "is defined as the process of interpreting after the speaker or signer has completed one or more ideas in the source language and pauses while the interpreter transmits that information" (Russell, 2005, p. 136).

Demands: "any factor in the assignment that rises to a level of significance where it impacts interpreting work" (Dean & Pollard, 2011, p. 162).

*Dissociation: "*a mental process of disconnecting from one's thoughts, feelings, memories or sense of identity" (Better Health Channel, 2023).

Environmental Demands: "interpreting challenges or success requirements that pertain to the assignment setting" (Dean & Pollard, n.d., para. 2).

Interpersonal Demands: "interpreting challenges or success requirements that pertain to the interaction of the consumers" (Dean & Pollard, n.d., para. 2).

Intrapersonal Demands: "interpreting challenges or success requirements that pertain to the internal physiological or psychological state of the interpreter" (Dean & Pollard, n.d., para. 2).

Maladaptive Perfectionism: "is the relentless striving for extremely high standards and critical self-evaluation of performance" (Sheppard & Hicks, 2017, p. 65).

Mindfulness: "The practice of being fully present and aware of your current experience—without overreacting or getting lost in thoughts" (Mindful Staff, 2020).

Meditation: "a practice that involves focusing or clearing your mind using a combination of mental and physical techniques" (Cleveland Clinic, 2022, para. 2).

Paralinguistic Demands: "interpreting challenges or success requirements that pertain to overt aspects of the expressive communication of deaf and hearing consumers" (Dean & Pollard, n.d., para. 2).

Perfectionism: "the tendency to demand of others or of oneself an extremely high or even flawless level of performance, in excess of what is required by the situation" (American Psychological Association, 2018).

Positive Affirmations: "positively loaded phrases, or statements that are used to challenge unhelpful or negative thoughts" (Moore, 2019).

Processing Issues: difficulty understanding the meaning of the source while interpreting, often due to cognitive overload, external distractions, internal factors, etc. These challenges may prohibit an interpreter's ability to accurately comprehend and convey the intended message.

Production Issues: difficulty producing an interpretation into the target language effectively. These issues may show up as choppy delivery, lack of cohesion, omissions, or other disruptions that affect the overall quality of the interpretation.

Self-efficacy: "an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments" (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997, as cited in American Psychological Association, 2025, para. 1).

Vicarious Trauma: "is exposure to someone else's trauma. It can have a significant mental health impact and, if not mitigated against or treated effectively, can be a pathway to post-traumatic stress disorder" (Storm, Crowley, & Berrie, n.d., p. 3).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review existing research on anxiety, self-confidence, and mindfulness within the interpreting profession, as well as other related disciplines that are relevant to this study. My study aims to identify the root causes of the anxiety I experience in my interpreting work and to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness strategies in reducing this anxiety while enhancing self-confidence. The chapter is organized into four thematic sections: (1) Interpreting Demands and Occupational Stress, (2) Anxiety and Performance, (3) Self-Confidence, Imposter Syndrome, and Perfectionism, and (4) Coping Strategies and the Role of Mindfulness. Each section presents key findings from existing research, highlights relevant gaps and correlations, and lays the foundation for my study. This chapter concludes with a summary of the literature analyzed and a discussion of how my research contributes to and builds upon the existing body of work.

Existing Literature

There are numerous resources that illustrate the challenging demands interpreters must navigate in their careers and the negative consequences on their personal and professional lives, including increased stress, emotional strain, and anxiety (e.g., Zenzio, 2013; Heller et al., 1986; Malcolm, 2012; Dean & Pollard, 2001). In particular, the literature highlights the prevalence of anxiety among interpreting students and how it adversely affects their performance (e.g., Ferdowsi & Razmi, 2024; Horwitz et al., 1986; Chiang, 2010). In this context, anxiety can be closely linked to a lack of confidence, with many novice professionals struggling with perfectionism and imposter syndrome as a result (e.g., Moore, 2020; Woods, 2019; Brown, 2018; Sherman, 2013; Schwenke et al., 2014). Researchers emphasize the importance of building

self-confidence in interpreting and offer strategies for developing it, including positive self-talk, goal setting, and visual mapping (e.g., Cabrera, 2023; Woods, 2019; Moore, 2020; Vascimini-Protheroe, 2024; Bates, 2016). A few resources touch on the benefits of mindfulness practices in the interpreting field, finding that regular practice can improve cognitive load, self-compassion, and emotional regulation (e.g., Johnson, 2016; Ivars & Calatayud, 2013; Chambers, 2020). In this study, I have taken a more personal and in-depth approach to exploring the root causes of my own interpreting anxiety and assess the impact of a distinct set of mindfulness strategies, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, meditation, and journaling, that have not been extensively examined specifically in relation to anxiety and self-confidence.

Interpreting Demands and Occupational Stress

As interpreters, we work in complex environments filled with numerous demands that we must navigate simultaneously. In Zenizo's (2013) thesis project on the prevalence of self-care in the interpreting field, she outlines several taxing demands interpreters face daily and the resulting toll on their physical and psychological health. She explains that:

> Often interpreters work for multiple hours in each day for multiple consumers on a wide range of topics and throughout this time the mental strain, emotional variation of content as well as physical demands, could put a strain on the emotional psyche. (p. 5).

Zenizo's description highlights the layered challenges interpreters must manage, underscoring the necessity of self-care in the profession. Similarly, Heller et al. (1986) identified several sources of stress experienced by ASL and English interpreters in their study on occupational stress and burnout. These included role-related pressures, challenging working conditions, and skill-related concerns, highlighting a combination of internal and external workplace stressors.

Expanding on this, Bontempo and Malcolm's (2012) examined the risk of vicarious trauma in healthcare settings, detailing the challenges interpreters face in these high-stakes situations. They wrote:

> Interpreters often lack the contextual information to make sense of an interaction; they have limited control over the workload and the pace of information delivery. Assignments that conflict with personal goals, values, or beliefs can cause intense stress, and the management of complex message transfer among parties can often be challenging (p. 107).

While these studies focus on different aspects of the profession (such as self-care, role expectations, medical settings) they collectively emphasize the emotional, cognitive, and physical strain interpreters must endure. Reflecting on this reality within the profession, Bower's (2015) study of over 300 Video Relay Service (VRS) interpreters found that 76% had experienced burnout at some point due to the demands of the job. Some of the top factors related to high stress included: managing calls in which a caller is angry, concern about the length of time between calls, and receiving a 911 call (Bower, 2015).

Building on findings like these, Dean and Pollard (2001) applied Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control Theory to the interpreting field, identifying non-linguistic demands that contribute to interpreter stress ultimately impacting their primary duty: translation. These included environmental (e.g., setting, lighting), interpersonal (e.g., interactions between participants), paralinguistic (e.g., pace, volume) and intrapersonal (e.g., interpreter reactions, physical fatigue) demands. This framework deepened the understanding of the diverse challenges interpreters must navigate and offered a tool to help interpreters, especially novices, manage occupational stress and reduce the risk of burnout, vicarious trauma, and interpreter shortages.

These resources (e.g., Zenzio, 2013; Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012; Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001) highlight that interpreting requires far more than linguistic skill; it demands emotional regulation, cognitive ability, and physical stamina to manage the complexities of the job. As a newer interpreter, I have experienced how these demands, compounded by the challenges of entering a new profession, can contribute to heightened stress, anxiety, and issues with self-confidence, all of which have directly impacted my performance.

Anxiety and Performance

While the external demands of the interpreting profession are complex and challenging, internal factors, such as anxiety, can further impair interpreter performance. Ferdowsi and Razmi's (2024) study on anxiety-provoking factors in Iranian student interpreters identified six significant stressors driving anxiety in trainees: individual-related factors, input-related factors, note-taking-related factors, environmental-related factors, out-put related factors, and teacher-related factors. Among these, individual-related factors, including low concentration, perfectionism, and introversion, were found to be the most significant triggers of anxiety in consecutive interpreting. These findings resemble those of Horwitz et al., (1986), who found that the anxiety experienced in foreign language classrooms is highly specific and cannot be measured using general anxiety scales. They noted that the unique anxiety experienced in these situations includes components of performance anxiety, such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Similarly, Chiang (2010) reported that foreign language anxiety had a much greater negative impact on student interpreters' performance than their overall trait anxiety. Although trait anxiety had a negative relationship with mid-term exam scores, this effect diminished over time, whereas higher foreign language anxiety consistently predicted lower midterm exam scores. This pattern of anxiety impacting performance aligns with

the findings of Fitzmaurice and Faulkner (2023), who observed similar trends among professional interpreters. In their study of over 100 ASL/English interpreters, they found that anxiety resulted in "negative thinking, hindered interpreting quality, distractions, physical effects, self-doubt, and avoiding assignments" (p. 6). Interpreters reported several reasons for declining assignments due to anxiety, including a desire to avoid triggers, specific or unfamiliar settings, and past negative experiences.

In contrast to these studies, Ivars and Calatayud (2001) found that anxiety was not consistently related to performance in spoken language interpreter trainees, showing no clear impact, positive or negative. This highlights the complexity of the relationship between anxiety and performance, suggesting that other factors, like self-confidence, may be more influential. Notably, they discovered a significant relationship between confidence in public speaking and anxiety: lower confidence was associated with higher levels of situational anxiety. This aligns with Chapman et al. 's (1997) exploration of a similar dynamic in a different context, competitive TaeKwonDo. They found that winners reported lower cognitive anxiety (e.g., negative self-talk and images of failure) and somatic anxiety (e.g., muscle tensions and rapid heartbeat) and higher self confidence than those who lost. They noted, "Self confidence was facilitative and cognitive anxiety was debilitative of performance" (Chapman et al., 1997, p. 1276). This idea of self-confidence facilitating performance is also reflected in the interpreting profession. Bontempo and Napier (2011) emphasized the importance of emotional stability on perceived competence in sign language interpreters. Their study on interpreter personality traits and job performance showed that individuals who experienced high levels of negative affectivity (characterized as anxiety and neuroticism) were more likely to perceive themselves as less competent interpreters. Although my study does not explicitly differentiate between trait anxiety

and interpreting-specific anxiety, it shows how anxiety affects my work, including issues with negative self-talk, difficulties with processing and production, and lack of self-confidence. It also highlights the situations that trigger this anxiety, such as high visibility settings, teaming with seasoned interpreters, and working in unfamiliar environments, which are common in the interpreting field.

Self-Confidence, Imposter Syndrome, and Perfectionism

The concept of self-confidence in the interpreting field is not a new one, particularly in relation to novice interpreters. In her thesis on the significance of self-esteem and self-efficacy in the success of emerging professionals, Moore (2020) writes, "Speaking to interpreters…lack of confidence is an issue shared by many in the profession. I found this problem especially crippling for interpreting students near graduation or for graduates preparing to sit for their certification exam" (p. 3). This observation highlights the widespread challenge of low self-confidence among newer interpreters. Woods (2019) expanded on this challenge in her study examining the impact of confidence on interpreting skills, particularly when novice interpreters are paired with more experienced colleagues. She explained:

> New interpreters may feel they have to be a perfect interpreter who produces a perfect
> interpretation without any guidance from other experienced interpreters, which in turn
> makes me feel lost and isolated. When I have to interpret in front of an expert interpreter,
> I feel intimidated to the point I do not want to interpret. (p. 11).

This description captures the internal struggles many novice interpreters experience, especially in situations where they perceive high expectations or potential evaluation. This experience aligns with the concept of "psychological safety," originally introduced by Amy Edmondson and discussed by Brené Brown's *Dare to Lead* (2018):

In psychologically safe environments, people believe that if they make a mistake others will not penalize or think less of them for it… This belief comes about when people both trust and respect each other, and it produces a sense of confidence that the group won't embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up… Most people feel a need to "manage" interpersonal risk to retain a good image, especially at work, and especially in the presence of those who formally evaluate them. (pp. 36-37).

This concept ties in with the findings of Ivars and Calatayud (2001), who observed that interpreter trainees often experience heightened anxiety when tasks like public speaking or performing in front of others are perceived as threatening. Their work supports the idea that when psychological safety is low and perceived threat is high, anxiety increases. This connection is particularly relevant for newer interpreters or professionals who may struggle with self-confidence, leading to feelings of imposter syndrome. Sherman (2013) characterizes this experience as having a sense that one cannot live up to other expectations. She explains, "... people with imposter syndrome feel a level of self-doubt that can lead to overwork and a paralyzing fear of failure. The fear of being unmasked causes incredible stress" (p. 57). According to Sherman, this fear of not meeting perceived expectations can lead to performance anxiety, perfectionism, burnout, and even depression. Schwenke et al. (2014) support this claim in their study on sign language interpreters and burnout, finding that maladaptive perfectionism (i.e., overly self-critical, fear of failure, and unrealistic expectations) in interpreters was strongly associated with increased psychological distress, including burnout, perceived stress, and ineffective coping resources. Similarly, Vascimini-Protheroe's (2024) research on imposter syndrome, confidence, and self-talk echoes these findings. She reflects on her own experience during her first year as a professional interpreter, describing how overwhelming stress and

anxiety made it difficult to accept jobs and led her to question whether she truly belonged in the profession. I can relate to this experience, especially within the freelance world, where constant change and unfamiliarity, such as working with seasoned interpreters and various clients, can make it difficult to feel fully prepared and capable of meeting all of the demands of the profession. As a result, it is easy to fall into a place of low self-confidence, imposter syndrome, and perfectionism.

Coping Strategies and the Role of Mindfulness

Given this reality, it is crucial that interpreters, especially novices, develop self-confidence in order to succeed both professionally and personally. Methods for improving confidence vary, however, within the interpreting field specifically, several researchers have tested the effectiveness of targeted strategies (e.g., Cabrera, 2023; Woods, 2019; Moore, 2020; Vascimini-Protheroe, 2024; Bates, 2016). In Cabrera's (2023) study on cognitive distortions, commonly referred to as negative self-talk, she found that reframing techniques rooted in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) helped challenge her internal dialogue. These techniques significantly alleviated her anxiety and self-doubt, improving both her mood and interpreting performance. She identified that both looking at the bigger picture and confronting the distortions head-on were the most effective tools. Woods (2019) also explored strategies for building self-confidence, but instead used collected data from her own work and that of other interpreters. She discovered that visual mapping before and during the interpretation helped her feel the most confident in her work. Additionally, she discovered that combining multiple strategies, such as visual mapping, breathing, and positive self-talk further enhanced her sense of confidence and overall performance. Similarly, Moore (2020) gathered data from novice interpreters through surveys and interviews in an attempt to assess the effectiveness of

high-power poses in enhancing self-confidence. She found that practicing these stances before assignments, on top of using positive self-talk, and reflecting on positive past interpreting experiences were all powerful tools for building confidence. Moreover, Vascimini-Protheroe (2024) utilized pre-, during, and post- journaling and a self-survey to evaluate the impact of positive self-talk in her self-confidence in interpreting. She found that using affirmative language led to increased confidence in her performance, reduced feelings of imposter syndrome, and lessened fear of taking on new opportunities. Throughout her data collection period, she also discovered that saying recurring phrases, such as "I will do my best," had a strong positive impact on her mindset and overall performance. Bates' (2016) study on anxiety and self-efficacy within the interpreting profession took a different approach, finding that setting Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals and writing mastery rehearsal scripts (i.e., detailed scripts of ideal interpreting events that are visualized repeatedly) were effective strategies for increasing self-efficacy, boosting confidence, and reducing anxiety.

While these strategies for boosting self-confidence were proven effective by the researchers, a growing body of literature highlights the benefits of mindfulness practices in reducing anxiety and promoting emotional regulation (e.g., Hofmann et al., 2010; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Johnson, 2016; Ivars & Calatayud, 2013; Chambers 2020). Hofmann et al. (2010) detailed the basic premise of mindfulness, writing, "experiencing the present moment nonjudgmentally and openly can effectively counter the effects of stressors, because excessive orientation toward the past or future when dealing with stressors can be related to feelings of depression and anxiety" (para. 2). A review of psychotherapy-related research emphasized the many positive effects of mindfulness techniques for psychotherapists (Davis & Hayes, 2011). They found that these practices led to greater emotional regulation, reduced reactivity, increased

response flexibility, enhanced self-compassion, and lower levels of stress and anxiety (Davis & Hayes, 2011). Specifically, Johnson (2016) found that spoken language interpreting trainees who regularly practiced attention and redirection practice of their mind and body scored higher on the final interpreting exam than those who did not. These students also exhibited greater self-compassion, acceptance, and self-regulation. Ivars and Calatayud (2013) study on spoken language conference interpreting students supported these findings and showed that focused attention meditation significantly improved interpreter trainees performance, unlike relaxation techniques which had no positive impact on their anxiety levels or performance. Similarly, Chambers (2020) action research project, which examined her own experiences as a sign language interpreter, echoed these results and revealed that by participating in a mindfulness course that involved weekly meditation and daily practice, breathing exercises, and journaling, she experienced reduced cognitive load, improved focus while interpreting, fewer negative thoughts, increased confidence, and greater compassion. Although these studies examined different populations and contexts, they consistently found that mindfulness enhances self-compassion, emotional regulation, and reduces anxiety. My study differs from these by incorporating positive affirmations, along with breathing exercises, journaling, and meditation, all of which I practiced before my freelance interpreting assignments.

Summary

The interpreting profession is filled with mentally and emotionally demanding challenges, ranging from navigating multiple contexts daily to enduring physical strain on the body. Evidence has shown the significant impact these demands have on interpreters' well-being and mental health, including heightened stress, anxiety, burnout, and vicarious trauma (e.g., Dean & Pollard, 2001; Bower, 2015; Fitzmaurice & Faulkner, 2023; etc.). These challenges can

be especially difficult for novice interpreters, who often struggle with low self-confidence, leading to perfectionism and imposter syndrome. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of strategies such as positive self-talk in building confidence within the field (e.g., Vascimini-Protheroe, 2024; Moore, 2020; Woods, 2019; etc.). While research on mindfulness practices in interpreting is limited, a few studies do highlight potential benefits, especially in focused attention meditation (e.g., Johnson, 2016; Ivars and Calatayud, 2013; Chambers, 2020). In this study, I will explore the root causes of my own anxiety and test a personalized set of strategies, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, journaling, and meditation, some of which have been explored in existing research, though not extensively within the context of interpreting. Additionally, my methodology offers a unique, introspective approach that builds upon but differs from previous research in the field.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study to explore the root cause of my anxiety in my interpreting performance and the effectiveness of mindfulness practices, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, meditation, and journaling, in reducing anxiety and boosting my confidence. The following sections include a description of the participant, the design and procedures for Parts 1 and 2 of data collection, and the methods used for data analysis.

Participant

This study utilized a self-study approach in which I was the sole participant, and the data was drawn directly from my work as a professional interpreter. I am currently in my second year of practice. At the time of this study, I was transitioning from K-12 educational interpreting to freelance work. This shift provided a unique opportunity to collect data across a variety of settings, including both in-person and virtual environments, and in sectors such as education, business, and government.

Design and Analysis: Part 1

In the first phase of my data collection, I made audio recordings using the Voice Memos app (Apple, 2024) after each freelance assignment, noting the setting, and any additional demands that impacted my experience, and reflected on my emotional state and interpreting performance. I utilized this format for my methodology to allow for flexibility and authenticity in my responses. The data collection period for this phase occurred throughout Fall 2024. Once the recordings were completed, I transcribed them using Otter.ai (Otter.ai, 2024) and uploaded the scripts to Google Docs where I then analyzed the data by breaking it down into key factors,

such as whether the setting was in-person or virtual, whether I worked independently or with a team interpreter, and whether the environment was one I had worked in previously. I examined the common themes in my reflections, including the intrapersonal demands during each assignment and how I perceived the outcomes of my work. By identifying these patterns, I was able to draw conclusions about the sources of my anxiety in my interpreting performance.

Design and Analysis: Part 2

Based on the results from Part 1 of my study, I wanted to explore the effectiveness of mindfulness strategies, including breathing exercises, positive affirmations, journaling, and meditation, in reducing anxiety and improving confidence during my freelance interpreting assignments. I created a self-administered survey on Google Forms that included both open and closed-ended questions pertaining to the assignment setting, the mindfulness technique used, my anxiety levels, my confidence in my performance, and any additional notes. The questions relating to my anxiety level during the assignment and confidence afterward were closed-ended, ranked from 1-5 (1-lowest, 5-highest). The question about the mindfulness technique was also closed-ended, presented as a multiple-choice list where I selected the one I used. The questions regarding the setting and additional notes were short-answer, allowing for further elaboration. I completed the survey after each of my freelance assignments throughout Winter 2025. I analyzed the data using thematic and content analysis to identify which mindfulness technique was most successful by looking for common themes in my anxiety and confidence levels.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of Parts 1 and 2 of my study, including an overview of the data collection settings such as assignment types, team dynamics, and familiarity with the client/setting. It features six tables that highlight key findings, including common anxiety-related patterns and the impact of mindfulness techniques on anxiety and self-confidence across different settings.

Results: Part 1

For Part 1 of my study, 18 recordings were made in total, with three occurring before the assignment and 15 after. For the sake of consistency, the three pre-assignment recordings were omitted from the analysis. Some recordings included reflections on more than one assignment. Table 1 shows the number of assignments reflected on in each recording.

Table 1

Number of Assignments in Each Recording

Number of Recordings	Assignments Detailed
11	1 assignment
3	2 assignments
1	4 assignments

Note. The left column represents the number of post-assignment recordings, while the right column indicates the number of assignments detailed within each recording.

In total, 21 freelance assignments were documented. These assignments were further categorized based on factors that could have influenced my anxiety levels (see Table 2), including the assignment type, team presence, and familiarity with the consumers and setting.

Table 2

Breakdown of Freelance Assignments

Category	Number of Assignments
In-person assignments	19
With team	17
Familiar setting + familiar consumers	14
Familiar team	10
Familiar setting + familiar team	8
Unfamiliar team	7
Without team	4
Unfamiliar setting + familiar consumers	4
Unfamiliar setting + unfamiliar team	4
Unfamiliar settings + unfamiliar consumers	3
Familiar setting + no team	3
Familiar setting + unfamiliar team	3
Virtual assignments	2
Unfamiliar setting + familiar team	2
Unfamiliar setting + no team	1

Note. The left side of the table shows the categories being analyzed. The right side shows the number of assignments that fall under each category in descending order.

Upon taking a closer look at the data, I identified several patterns and recurring phrases across my voice reflections. Table 3 illustrates these patterns by identifying the situation in which they occurred and whether my anxiety increased or decreased.

Table 3

Common Anxiety-Related Patterns in Voice Reflections

Patterns	
Situation	**Anxiety (↑↓)**
New team or unfamiliar environment	↑ Anxiety
In-person assignments + client watching me	↑ Anxiety
Compared myself to more seasoned interpreters	↑ Anxiety
Conversation with team interpreter before or after	↓ Anxiety
Team interpreter not looking at me	↓ Anxiety
No team interpreter present	↓ Anxiety
Virtual assignments + could not see client/team interpreter	↓ Anxiety

Note. The situations in which the patterns occurred are listed on the left, with corresponding anxiety levels on the right. The symbol (↑) represents increased anxiety, and (↓) represents decreased anxiety.

Table 4 displays the common words and phrases from my reflective audio recordings after each freelance interpreting assignment, categorized into the "Anxious" Assignments and "Non-Anxious" Assignments. Each category lists the specific terms associated with the respective type of assignment.

Table 4

Common Words and Phrases in Anxious vs Not-Anxious Assignments

"Anxious" Assignments	"Non-Anxious" Assignments
"Need to prove myself"	"I felt calm"
"Anxiety"	"I felt confident"
"Struggling"	"I was focused"
"I couldn't process"	"I felt more comfortable"
"Mistakes"	"Familiarity"
"I'm in my head"	"Comfort"
"Comparing myself to the more experienced interpreters"	"I felt in control"

Note. Common words and phrases from assignments where I experienced increased anxiety appear are listed under the "Anxious" Assignments column (left), while those from assignments where I did not feel notably anxious are listed under the "Non-Anxious" Assignments column (right).

Results: Part 2

For Part 2 of my study, which involved a separate set of freelance interpreting assignments conducted after Part 1, a total of eight survey responses were completed following these assignments. Each of the mindfulness techniques (i.e., breathing exercises, positive affirmations, meditation, and journaling) was utilized two times. Table 5 presents the results from the first use of each technique, including the assignment description, additional demands and notes, the mindfulness technique employed beforehand, my self-rated anxiety level during the assignment, and my confidence rating afterward.

Table 5

Mindfulness Technique Use and Self-Ratings for Setting 1

Assignment Description	Additional Demands/Notes	Mindfulness Technique Used	Anxiety Level	Confidence Level
Virtual, unfamiliar setting and team, open access, educational	Difficult terminology, fast pace, approx. 100 people, recorded	Breathing Exercises	3/5	2/5
Virtual, familiar team, unfamiliar setting and client (1), educational	Voicing, client visibility, client nodding	Positive Affirmations	2/5	4/5
Virtual, unfamiliar team and setting, educational, open access	Seasoned team interpreter	Meditation	5/5	1/5
In-person, educational, familiar setting and client (1), unfamiliar team	Novice team interpreter, minimal observation with team	Journaling	1/5	5/5

Note. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of clients in each assignment. Anxiety and confidence levels were rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

For the second round, the same four mindfulness techniques (breathing exercises, positive affirmations, meditation, and journaling) were each utilized prior to my freelance assignments. Table 6 shows the details for the second time these techniques were applied, including assignment descriptions, additional demands and notes, the mindfulness technique used, and my self-rated anxiety and confidence levels during and after the assignments.

Table 6

Mindfulness Technique Use and Self-Ratings for Setting 2

Assignment Description	Additional Demands/Notes	Mindfulness Technique Used	Anxiety Level	Confidence Level
Virtual, unfamiliar setting and team, open access, government	Difficult terminology, fast pace	Breathing Exercises	1/5	3/5
Virtual, educational, unfamiliar team, client (1), and setting	Voicing	Positive Affirmations	3/5	3/5
Virtual, familiar team, business, unfamiliar client (1) and setting	Seasoned team interpreter, voicing	Meditation	4/5	1/5
Virtual, unfamiliar team, clients (2), and setting, educational	Voicing, client nodding	Journaling	1/5	4/5

Note. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of clients in each assignment. Anxiety and confidence levels were rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of my study, focusing on two main objectives (1) identifying the root cause of my anxiety in my interpreting performance and (2) assessing the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in managing my anxiety and boosting my self-confidence. I explore how environmental and interpersonal factors influenced my anxiety and how different mindfulness strategies worked in various contexts. Additionally, I link these findings to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Yerkes-Dodson, 1908; Hebb, 1955; Sherman, 2013; Brown, 2018; Ivars & Calatayud, 2001; etc.) to provide a deeper understanding of the results.

Interpretation of Results

Based on the patterns emerging from data gathered in Parts 1 and 2 of my study, it appears that certain environmental (e.g., visibility between me and the client or team interpreter, unfamiliar settings) and interpersonal demands (e.g., being paired with an unfamiliar or seasoned team interpreter) consistently triggered heightened anxiety and lowered self-confidence in my interpreting performance. In analyzing the results of Part 1, I observed that when these demands were present, both my anxiety and the intensity of intrapersonal responses significantly increased. This was evident in my post-assignment reflections, where my thought-world frequently consisted of negative self-talk, overthinking, and comparisons to more experienced interpreters. In Part 2, journaling emerged as the most effective mindfulness technique for reducing anxiety and improving confidence; however, it was primarily used in familiar settings that lacked external stressors identified in Part 1 and consisted of positive reinforcement from the consumer. Conversely, meditation, ranked least effective overall, was used before assignments

involving seasoned interpreters and unfamiliar environments. These patterns suggest that certain environmental and interpersonal demands play a significant role in the anxiety I experience in my performance, and that the success of mindfulness techniques may rely less on the strategy itself and more on the specific context in which it is used. These findings strongly support Dean and Pollard's (2001) Demand-Control Schema, which asserts that interpreters navigate a range of demands, environmental, interpersonal, paralinguistic, and intrapersonal, that can affect performance and overall well-being.

When analyzing the influence of external demands on my anxiety, I noticed a recurring theme in both Parts 1 and 2: higher levels of anxiety were triggered in assignments involving high visibility, unfamiliar settings, and pairing with experienced interpreters. I began to notice that intrapersonal demands, such as fear of judgement, self-doubt, perfectionistic thinking, might have played a crucial role in amplifying the effects of those external pressures. For example, during assignments where I was visible to clients or paired with seasoned team interpreters, I frequently felt an intense internal pressure to "prove myself." This phrase was often repeated in my post-assignment reflections and aligns with Sherman's (2013) description of imposter syndrome, which she characterizes as a "fear of being unmasked" (p. 57). She explains that this feeling tends to show up in certain situations like taking on a new role, and is most common in, "women leaders who feel they don't deserve the success they've achieved despite external evidence of their competence. It's more likely in perfectionists who constantly compare themselves to others" (p. 57). Additionally, she notes that this fear can create performance anxiety and lead to perfectionism, particularly in situations where others are watching or the stakes feel greater. This helps explain why my anxiety tended to increase in settings where I felt particularly visible to the client or team interpreter, and why I often found myself comparing my

performance to that of more experienced interpreters. An added layer of anxiety may also stem from the fact that I am still relatively new to the profession.

With this in mind, it is helpful to consider the nature of the anxiety I experienced in these settings. Although my study did not explicitly differentiate between general anxiety and interpreting-specific anxiety, my findings align closely with existing research on the topic (e.g., Ferdowsi & Razmi, 2024; Horwitz et al., 1986; Chiang, 2010). While Ferdowsi and Razmi (2024) found that identified individual-related factors, such as general anxious feelings and perfectionism, were the most significant contributors to anxiety among Iranian interpreter trainees, Horwitz et al. (1986) argued that foreign language anxiety is distinct from general trait anxiety, encompassing the unique experiences specific to the setting such as communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The impact of foreign language anxiety also had a greater effect on student performance than trait anxiety, which tended to decrease over time Chiang (2010). Based on my findings, it is difficult to determine definitively whether the anxiety I experienced was general or interpreting-specific. However, since the patterns I observed were situational, triggered by specific interpreting demands such as visibility, team dynamics, and unfamiliar settings, they appear to align more closely with interpreting-specific anxiety. It is important to recognize that although these experiences are not unique to interpreting, they tend to be more common within the profession. Moreover, the presence of negative-self talk and overthinking suggests that general anxiety may have amplified my responses in those moments.

This interplay between external demands and internal stressors is also reflected in the Yerkes-Dodson Law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908) and Hebbian Curve (Hebb, 1955), which suggest that performance improves with arousal only up to an optimal point, after which it declines

significantly. In unfamiliar environments, where I had to manage new terminology, interact with unfamiliar stakeholders, or when working alongside more experienced interpreters, my intrapersonal demands (e.g., negative self-talk, anxiety) often intensified. These internal responses increased my arousal levels beyond the "optimal threshold," leading to heightened anxiety and noticeable decline in my performance. This could explain the results of Part 2 of my study and why the effectiveness of the mindfulness techniques appeared to depend on both environmental factors and my internal responses to them. Perhaps when I was working in a highly visible setting, paired with seasoned interpreters, or placed in an unfamiliar environment, my anxiety increased, diminishing the positive effects of the techniques, as my level of "arousal" continued to rise. In essence, the level of anxiety may have exceeded what the mindfulness techniques could effectively manage, thereby lessening their intended effects on my self-confidence. This outcome is unlike other studies that have implemented different techniques aimed at building interpreter confidence (e.g., Cabrera, 2023; Woods, 2016; Moore, 2020; Vascimini-Protheroe, 2024), as well as those that specifically used mindfulness strategies with interpreters (e.g., Johnson, 2016; Jiménez Ivars & Pinazo Calatayud, 2013; Chambers, 2020).

Bandura's (1993) theory of self-efficacy helps further explain these patterns. He notes that individuals with low perceived self-efficacy are more likely to doubt their abilities, focus on their mistakes, and experience increased insecurity when observing others perform successfully. They are also more likely to perceive aspects of the environment as threatening, particularly in social situations where there are potential repercussions (Bandura, 1993). I saw all of these tendencies reflected in my own patterns of anxiety, especially in situations involving high visibility, unfamiliar settings, or seasoned colleagues. In contrast, I felt noticeably less anxiety during virtual assignments, when no team interpreter was present, or after engaging in pre- or

post- assignment conversations with my interpreting team. These observations suggest that psychological safety, the sense that one can take interpersonal risks without fear of judgment or negative consequences (Edmondson, as cited in Brown, 2018), may have played a significant role in my anxiety levels and in the effectiveness of mindfulness strategies for alleviating anxiety and boosting self-confidence. When I felt psychologically safe, such as after having an initial conversation with a team interpreter or being in a familiar environment, I experienced increased confidence in my own work, because a sense of trust had been established. As a result, I was less preoccupied with potential judgment or making mistakes. This reduction in perceived threat may have allowed the mindfulness strategies to take greater effect. In contrast, situations involving greater exposure or perceived evaluation seemed to have the opposite effect: my sense of safety was compromised, my anxiety increased, confidence levels decreased, and the strategies became less impactful. This aligns with Ivars and Calatayud's (2001) findings that when a task involved in interpreting, such as public speaking, is perceived as threatening, anxiety is more likely to occur. They noted:

> Once a subject is exposed to public scrutiny the public demands quality – although they may not be able to define exactly what that quality is. There are no second chances, the first time is the last time, with little or no option to repeat anything. (p. 111).

This resonates with my own heightened anxiety when I felt exposed to judgment, particularly in high-visibility situations or with seasoned interpreters, where my performance was subject to evaluation. This suggests that my anxiety could be driven by low self-efficacy, which intensifies in environments where there is a perceived threat due to high exposure and fear of judgment, which leads to a lack of psychological safety.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key findings related to the root causes of my anxiety in interpreting performance and the impact of mindfulness techniques on reducing that anxiety and boosting self-confidence. The study revealed that intrapersonal demands, particularly those related to visibility, teaming, and unfamiliar environments, significantly influenced my anxiety. While journaling emerged as the most effective technique, its impact was shaped by external factors. These findings support the need for interventions in interpreter education aimed at confidence-building, coping, and field readiness, while also highlighting opportunities for further research on managing anxiety in the profession.

Summary

In conclusion, this study explored the underlying causes of my anxiety in my interpreting performance and the effectiveness of mindfulness techniques, such as breathing exercises, positive affirmations, journaling, and meditation, in alleviating anxiety and boosting self-confidence. Through both Parts 1 and 2 of my study, I identified recurring patterns that deepened my understanding of the factors contributing to my anxiety and the varying effectiveness of the techniques employed. I discovered that specific demands, including visibility between myself and the client or team interpreter, pairing with a seasoned interpreter, and working in unfamiliar environments, magnified my anxiety. These factors often led to emotional and physical effects that further impacted my performance like negative self-talk and issues with processing and production. According to Dean and Pollard (2001), these demands are typically categorized as environmental and interpersonal. However, upon closer examination of my data, I realized that these demands were primarily intrapersonal, affecting my internal and external states, including how I showed up in my work, perceived my work, and my reflections afterward.

Furthermore, I found that journaling was the most effective technique in mitigating my anxiety and improving my confidence. Interestingly, the settings where this technique was utilized beforehand were those I was either familiar with or did not include seasoned interpreters or high visibility. This interplay made it challenging to determine the true effectiveness of the mindfulness techniques, as the demands of the settings clearly played a significant role. Nonetheless, it was clear that my anxiety and confidence were closely linked, in that when I experienced higher anxiety levels during the assignment, I tended to feel less confident about my performance afterward, and vice versa. Based on this, one could assume that by improving one of these factors, the other may also improve.

All in all, I have gained many valuable insights from this study that I will carry with me on my professional journey as an interpreter. With a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to my heightened anxiety in my work performance, and how these factors affect the effectiveness of mindfulness techniques, I am better able to recognize the situations that may trigger these responses. This awareness allows me to implement strategies to manage their impact on both my anxiety and confidence, and well-being, ensuring they do not interfere with the quality of my work. Additionally, with what I now understand, especially through the lens of existing literature (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Sherman, 2013; Hebb, 1955; Horwitz et al., 1986; Brown, 2018; Ivars & Calatayud, 2001), I can begin addressing the root causes of this anxiety, which may include perceived low self-efficacy, imposter syndrome, and a lack of psychological safety. To do this, I can set realistic goals for myself, challenge negative self-talk, practice emotional regulation, foster open communication with team interpreters, and perhaps more importantly, learn to give myself grace in challenging moments.

The field of interpreting demands not only linguistic proficiency but also a comprehensive set of skills that encompass emotional, physical and mental well-being. As someone entering this field, it is a lot to adjust to and be equipped for. I hope that other interpreters, whether novice or seasoned, who are experiencing similar feelings, or those simply looking to improve their well-being and performance, can take something meaningful away from this. My research speaks to the importance of the individual inside the interpreters' clothing. It is very easy to pick ourselves apart in everything we do but that only pulls us deeper into self-doubt and anxiety. We cannot thrive in our careers if we do not believe in our own capabilities. Therefore, it is vital that we prioritize our mental-health and develop coping strategies, not just to perform better, but to feel better. Moving forward, I will be continuing my journey as a freelance interpreter while also stepping into the world of VRS. In this intimate and fast-paced environment, where there is little to no time to process emotions, prepare for calls, or decline them, and where every call brings new faces, settings, and challenges unlike those in freelance, I hope to face my anxiety head-on. This includes my anxiety around being watched by clients and team interpreters, working with seasoned interpreters, and navigating unfamiliar assignments. At the same time, I aim to continue growing in my craft and build lasting confidence.

Recommendations

It is no secret that interpreters, particularly those new to the field, face significant intrapersonal demands, including anxiety and a lack of self confidence in their work. This reality is not only evident in my individual study but is echoed across numerous others in the field (e.g., Fitzmaurice and Faulkner, 2023; Moore, 2020; Woods, 2019; Schwenke et al., 2014; Vascimini-Protheroe, 2024; Cabrera, 2023). Given how common these challenges are, interpreter education programs (IEPs) must incorporate targeted lessons aimed at fostering self-confidence.

These could include strength-based interventions, mindfulness techniques, or other self-care practices designed to improve students well-being. Additionally, to better prepare students for the realities of interpreting, IEPs could provide exposure to the work so that students gain a clearer understanding of the demands and can build a wider range of tools for navigating and regulating themselves in the process. This could include more practicum experiences, conversations with professional interpreters, observations, and mentoring opportunities. The goal is to equip emerging interpreters with the tools necessary to navigate the complex world of interpreting while building and sustaining a strong sense of self.

For future research, extending the data collection period could offer a better understanding of the long-term effects of practices such as breathing techniques, positive affirmations, meditation, and journaling. It could also provide insight into the nature of anxiety within an interpreters' experience, whether it is general anxiety or interpreting-specific (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986; Chiang, 2010), and how to address each effectively. Additionally, exploring the effects of practicing mindfulness techniques more regularly, rather than only immediately before interpreting assignments, could provide deeper insight into their potential benefits. Previous studies (e.g., Johnson, 2016; Jiménez Ivars & Pinazo Calatayud, 2013; Chambers, 2020) have found mindfulness to be effective in the context of interpreting, particularly when integrated as a consistent part of interpreters' routines. Maintaining consistent data collection settings would also help minimize the environmental variations, allowing researchers to better isolate key factors and assess the true effectiveness of these mindfulness techniques. Further research could also explore the impact of visibility and exposure by clients or team interpreters, especially for novice interpreters, but there seems to be limited research on this topic. Lastly, because mental-health and coping strategies are not one size fits all, expanding participant

groups to include recent IEP graduates who are now practicing professionals could provide

valuable insights into how they are managing anxiety, how it affects their work, and what coping

strategies they find most effective.

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Appendix

Lowering Anxiety and Developing Self-Esteem in My Work

(Google Forms Questionnaire)

This survey seeks to pinpoint the most effective strategy for lowering my anxiety and boosting my self-esteem so that they do not negatively affect my interpreting performance. I plan to complete this questionnaire after each one of my freelance assignments for 3-4 weeks.

What was the setting of the job assignment? (topic, team/no team, unfamiliar/familiar, new client, etc)

Which mindfulness technique did you use before the assignment?

- ☐ Breathing exercises

- ☐ Positive affirmations

- ☐ Meditation

- ☐ Journaling

- ☐ Other

How anxious were you during the assignment? (1-not at all, 5-extremely)

1   2   3   4   5

How did your anxiety impact your work if at all?

How confident do you feel about your performance? (1-not at all, 5 extremely)

1   2   3   4   5

How did your confidence level reveal itself in your work?

What other thoughts do you have about the assignment, mindfulness techniques, anxiety, and/or self-esteem?