



CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main goal of this study is to examine the current booth conditions in Taipei in comparison with standards set in ISO 2603, ascertain the importance given to various booth factors by interpreters, and determine whether interpreters' needs with regard to the booth environment are fulfilled. After conducting the POE methods of field studies, questionnaire, and interviews, the results of this study have been presented in the previous chapter. This chapter discusses some general trends and implications which can be observed from the findings. Section 5.2 will present an analysis of the findings, their implications, and recommendations as given by the interpreters interviewed, and a compilation of recommendations for improvement of existing booths is presented in Section 5.3.

5.2 Booth Factors

In Chapters 2 and 4, a number of factors were discussed, including booth size, access, doors, visibility, windows, ventilation, lighting, seating, and working surface.

This section will discuss the analysis of results presented in the previous chapter, as well as their implications and interpreters' recommendations for improvement.¹

5.2.1 Booth Size

Interpreters responded in the survey questionnaire that booth size was somewhere between important and very important, with a weighted average of 4.18.

The following figure presents how well interpreters feel various booths fulfill their needs in terms of booth size, as well as whether or not the booths in question conformed to the objective requirements of ISO 2603. Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

shows that the results for responses towards the booth size of various booths are statistically different. As seen in Figure 5.1, the conformance or non-conformance has some relation to how well interpreters' needs are fulfilled. However, it is interesting to

note that while the booths of the TICC, with the exception of VIP Room booths, do not conform to ISO 2603, they are more satisfactory than the two booths which do.

This may be explained by the fact that the TICC's nonconformance in terms of booth size is slight, being only approximately 20 centimeters short of ISO 2603's requirement for depth of booth, while the size of the other two conforming booths

may be deceptive. The NTUH International Convention Center's booths are indeed

¹ Please note that since the field studies include booths from the VIP Room, 401, and Plenary Hall in TICC, whereas the questionnaire only differentiates between VIP Room booths and non-VIP Room booths in TICC, the column "TICC (except for 4F VIP)" in the figures of this chapter shall refer to all booths in the TICC, including both the Plenary Hall and 401 booths, with the exception of VIP Room booths.

large; however, much of the space is not used by the interpreters, as one wall is covered in shelving, the working surface does not stretch across the full width of the booth, and interpreters may be forced to remain on one side of the room due to the small window. The booths of Howard International House Taipei’s Convention Hall, although large enough, are irregularly shaped, which may account for unused space and the lower response in relation to the TICC.

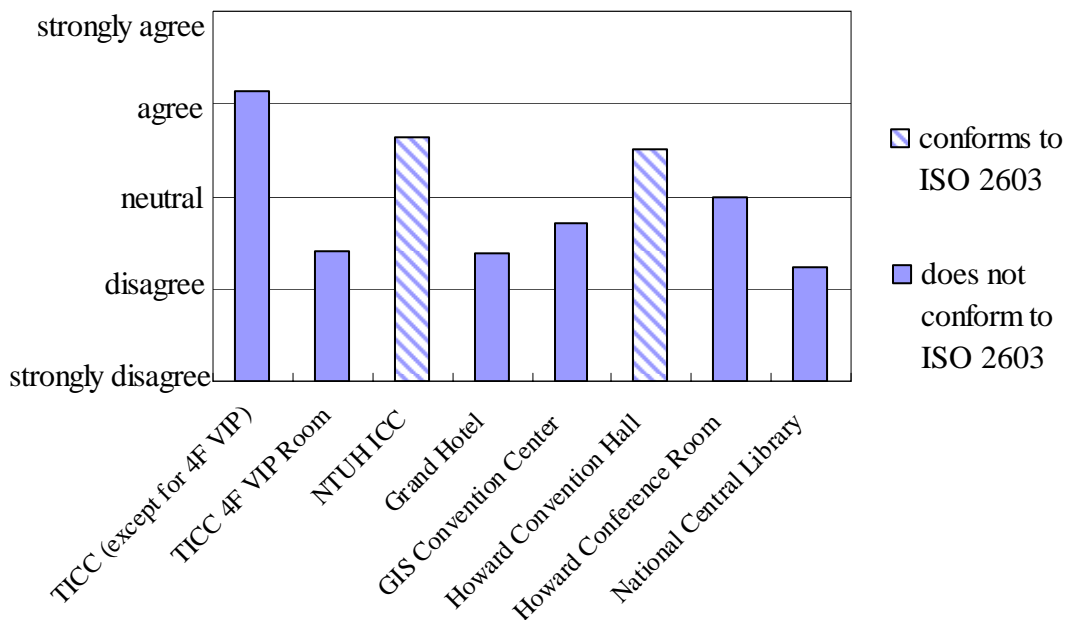


Figure 5.1. Questionnaire responses to “The size of the booth fulfills my needs” with differentiation between conformity and nonconformity with ISO 2603

ISO 2603 also stipulates that “for conference halls with up to six booths, one or more should be 3.2 meters wide” and “for conference halls with more than six booths, all booths shall be at least 3.2 meters wide”, in order to accommodate the continuous

presence of three interpreters. None of the booths surveyed, except for the NTUH International Convention Center booth, are at least 3.2 meters wide. This study speculates that this lack of adherence to ISO 2603 standards is due to Taiwanese interpretation practices, in which very few conferences employ three interpreters to a booth, as confirmed by Subjects F and G. Even fewer venues have more than six booths, since seldom do conferences in Taiwan need over six language channels.

Implications:

As mentioned in Chapter 2, insufficient booth size can cause problems with ventilation and a constant jostling of elbows, which can be a constant distraction to interpreters who need to maintain a high level of concentration on conference proceedings.

Insufficient booth size can be the result of designers' lack of understanding for interpreters' needs. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Subjects C and D believe that overly small booths may be due to designers' misconception that conference interpreters work alone in a booth, rather than in teams of two. However, this study cannot confirm whether or not designers have misconceptions regarding interpretation practices, since no interviews with architects were conducted. This lack of understanding not only affects booth size, but other factors as well, as will be described in later sections.

Interpreters themselves seem to be rather tolerant of small booths, as none of the booths surveyed reached the ISO 2603 requirements, except in cases where the nonconformance is severe, as can be seen in the booths of the TICC VIP Room, Grand Hotel, GIS, and NCL. On the other hand, it is possible that the requirements of ISO 2603 are too demanding, as interpreters seem quite satisfied with TICC booths (except for 4F VIP), with its slight nonconformance. Another possibility is that Taiwan interpreters are smaller in physique, hence the need for less space. However, even if the latter is true, booth size should still be designed to provide adequate room for interpreters with larger physiques.

The practice of conference interpretation in Taiwan also seems to support nonconformance to ISO 2603 in terms of booth size. The lack of conferences employing three interpreters to a booth and the predominance of conferences held solely in Mandarin-English or Mandarin-Japanese languages result in few booths large enough to support three interpreters. The Taiwan T&I Study (2004) shows that over 60% of freelance interpreters believe that the interpretation market will remain stable, and the need for various language combinations will remain the same. However, just because there is no practice of working three in a booth at the current time, doesn't mean that this practice will not develop later. It may be prudent for some of the larger and more popular venues to prepare for this need, especially since this

may attract large-scale conferences utilizing many languages.

Another possible cause of discrepancy between the standard ISO 2603 and current conditions is the opposing points of view from conference hall operators and interpreters. It is possible that conference hall operators and designers feel that small booths are adequate, given that they are not constantly in use. However, rare use does not excuse a lack of sufficient size. Restrooms for persons with disabilities, although also not constantly in use, are required to be of a certain size. In both the cases of interpreters' booths and restrooms for the disabled, it is the function for which the space is designed for and not the frequency of use which dictates its size. It is therefore in the conference hall operators' best interests to provide sufficient space for interpreters to work without discomfort or distraction, in order to produce "optimal quality" interpretation (Moser-Mercer, 1996).

Recommendations:

In the interview findings of Chapter 4, Subjects B and C recommend that booths which are too small should be enlarged by taking down the partition wall and combining two booths into one.

Since interpreters have very little contact with architects, they should make their needs known to PCOs, conference organizers, and conference hall operators, emphasizing the interpreters' role in a conference's communication process and the

need for sufficient booth size, rather than silently bearing with less than desirable working conditions. With the findings of this study and other relevant research, conference hall operators should reassess the working conditions provided for conference interpreters. Whether renovating existing booths or designing new ones, conference hall operators should convey the importance of interpreters' booths to the designers, who should then consult interpreters or ISO 2603 during the design process. It is far less costly to conform to requirements from the outset, than to enlarge and renovate the booths afterwards. Ergonomic requirements are consulted and adopted for office and other workstations, and ISO 2603 should be adopted here.

5.2.2 Access

In the questionnaire, interpreters responded that easy access to the booth was important with a weighted average of 4.00, and a separate entrance from the hall and distance between interpretation booth and sound control booth were statistically less so, with weighted averages of 3.39 and 3.68, respectively. Figure 5.2 presents interpreters' opinions as to the accessibility of various booths, which are statistically different from one another. The figure also seems to show no direct relation between the width of the access corridor and interpreters' perception of easy access, as two of the booths with narrow access corridors, GIS and Howard Conference Room, were rated as relatively highly accessible in the questionnaire.

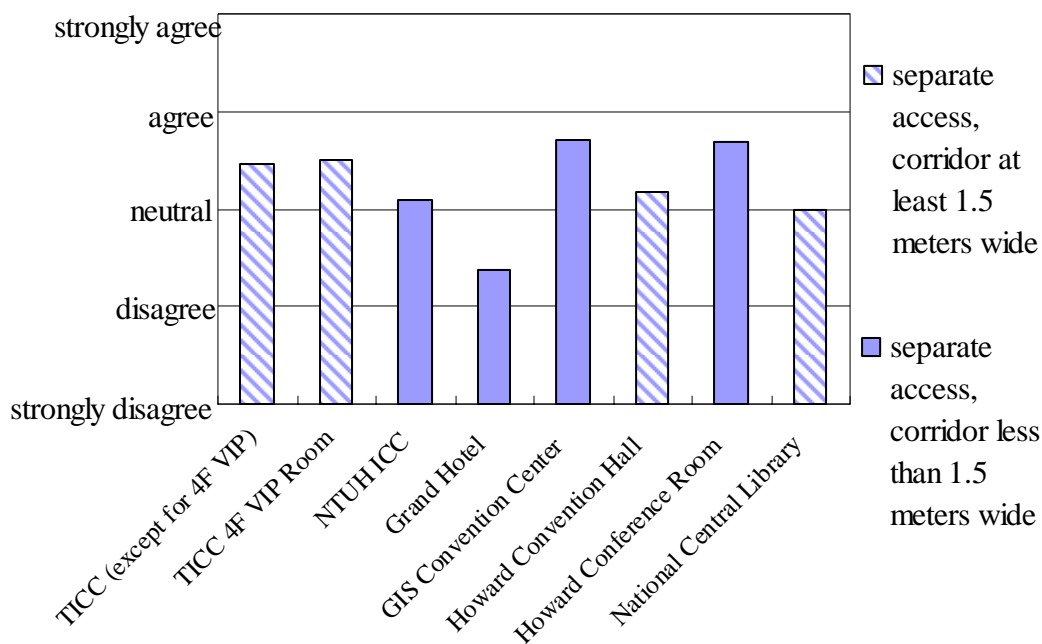


Figure 5.2. Questionnaire responses to “I can easily access the booth” with differentiation between widths of access corridor

However, other factors must be taken into account when discussing accessibility, one of which is the location of the sound control booth and its distance to the interpreters’ booth, which is shown in the Figure 5.3. The figure shows that booths which are located close to the sound control booth tend to have narrow access corridors. These booths share a corridor with the sound control booth, which is generally not accessible by the public, meaning that designers may feel that less than 1.5 meters is sufficient width for a corridor. Whereas booths located further from the sound control booth often open up to corridors accessible by the general public, which are much wider.

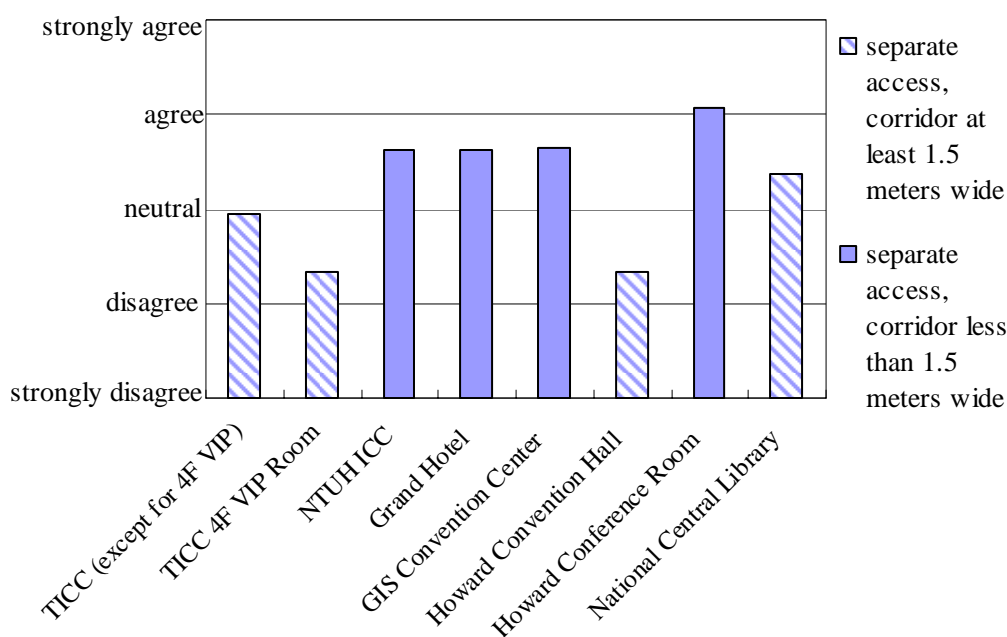


Figure 5.3. Questionnaire responses to “The sound control booth is not located too far from the interpreters’ booth” with differentiation between widths of access corridor

Implications:

Generally speaking, interpretation booths should not be located too far from the sound control booth, since interpreters and technicians need to communicate in the case that problems arise. However, according an interview with Subject H, interpreters are less than pleased to have to cross through the sound control booth to reach the interpretation booth, probably because access is more difficult possibly due to narrow corridors and the multitude of equipment and cables in the path.

Recommendations:

Since interpretation booths, sound control booths, restrooms, and other amenities are usually fixed, architectural structures, there is no feasible way to improve access

other than a complete renovation, which is costly and not likely to be undertaken by the conference hall operator. Therefore, it is imperative that designers be aware of the issue of access during the design process by consulting interpreters or ISO 2603 in order to avoid future repercussions.

5.2.3 Doors

Unsurprisingly, interpreters responded in this study’s survey questionnaire that it was important for booth doors to operate silently, with a weighted average of 4.39, which five of the nine booths surveyed complied with. They deemed it statistically less important that doors have observation portholes, a light outside indicating an active microphone, and indication of assigned languages and channels outside. The breakdown of interpreters’ responses is shown in the Figure 5.4.

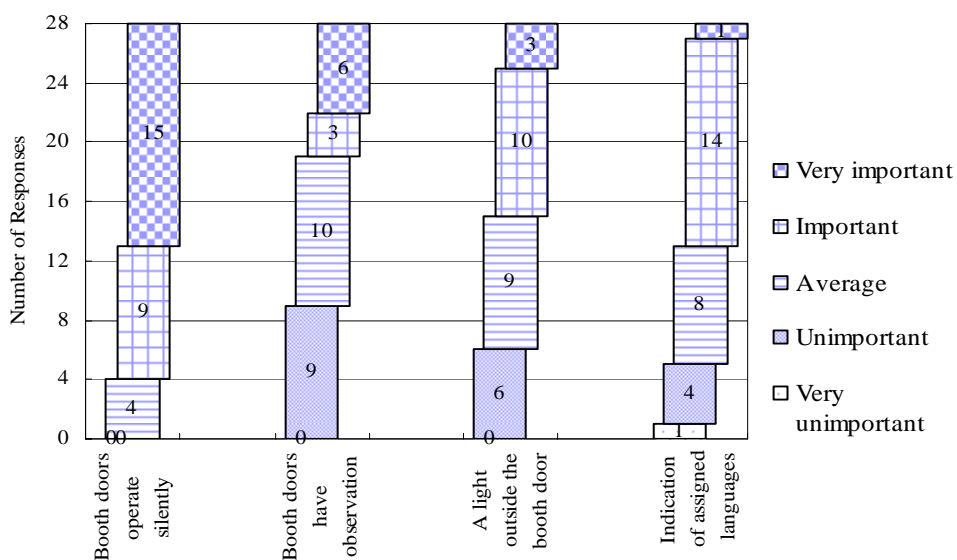


Figure 5.4. Distribution of questionnaire responses to the importance of door-related factors

It is interesting to note that while the importance of silently operating doors is clearly of importance to interpreters, the importance given to the other three factors is much less so. The existence of observation portholes may indeed allow outside individuals to enter the booth with more care, or indeed dissuade them from disturbing the interpreters at work, but the difference of opinion may also depend on the interpreters' differing regards for privacy. The responses towards indication of assigned languages and channels are also somewhat mixed; however, this study speculates that because many of the conference use only English/Mandarin channels (over 80% of the conferences, by one PCO's estimate), perhaps English/Mandarin interpreters are unaware of this need, whereas interpreters of other languages, such as Subject F, feel strongly about the need for indication.

Implications:

Interpreters need a working environment which is free from distraction, since interpretation requires intense concentration. Doors which produce sound can be one such distraction. During the course of a conference, materials may be passed into the booth for the interpreters' reference, and while one interpreter is working, the other may need to step out for a drink of water or to use the restroom. Hence, it is important that doors operate silently as not to disturb the interpreters working.

The need for a porthole in the door or light indicating an active microphone is

less clear in this study. Therefore, further studies may be needed to understand the interpreters' preference in this matter.

A lack of signage can be overlooked when only one booth is in use. However, in the case that more than one booth is in use, it is preferable to have indication of languages and channels outside booth doors to avoid confusion among interpreters, technicians, and conference operators, who may need to pass along information or materials to the interpreters.

Recommendations:

Doors should operate silently so as not to cause a disturbance to the working interpreters.

Signage or indication of languages and channels should be posted outside the booth door in the case that more than one booth is in use during a conference in order to avoid confusion. In addition, one interpreter added that signs should be posted outside booth doors to remind passer-bys to be quiet, as doors are often the weak point in the soundproofed environment of the booth.

5.2.4 Visibility

The importance of visibility has already been emphasized and reported in the previous chapters. To summarize the questionnaire results of Chapter 4, interpreters found the visibility of the speaker's facial expressions, the podium/rostrum, provision

of visual support, view of the entire conference room, and visibility of interaction among conference participants to be quite important, with the weighted averages of 4.57, 4.86, 4.75, 4.36, and 4.25, respectively.

However, as important as this factor is, it is apparent that interpreters generally feel that booths surveyed offer poor visibility. In the field studies, visibility received an overall compliance rate of 45%. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 presents the responses of interpreters, where they, for the most part, disagree or strongly disagree with the visibility of the speaker's facial expressions and the entire conference hall. Interpreters' responses with regard to the visibility of the speaker's facial expressions have been compiled along with the booths' provision of visual support, due to this study's initial speculation that the latter may have some influence on the former, into Figure 5.5, as seen below. However, as the figure shows, there is no apparent relation between the provision of visual support and the visibility of the speaker's facial expressions. The relatively higher rating of TICC booths (excepting VIP Room booths) is due to the fact that this study failed to take into account the different locations of the numerous booths in relation to various conference halls at this venue.

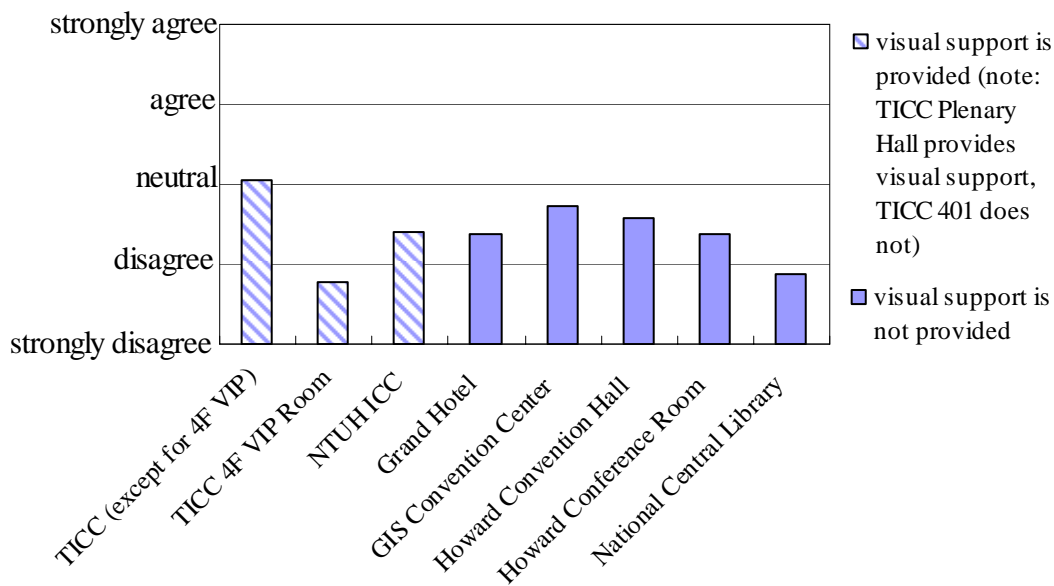


Figure 5.5. Questionnaire responses to “I can see the speaker’s facial expressions” with differentiation between provision of visual support.

Figure 5.6 presents the responses of interpreters towards the visibility of conference halls from various booths. The differentiation of solid and striped bars represents the findings of the field studies; however, many of them are rather subjective since, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the issue of having a direct view may be open to interpretation and personal opinion. Again, the responses for TICC booths (excepting VIP Room booths) may be inaccurate, due to this study’s lack of consideration for the different sitings for various booths in this venue. Other factors that must be taken into account include the size of the hall and the angle at which the booth is positioned.

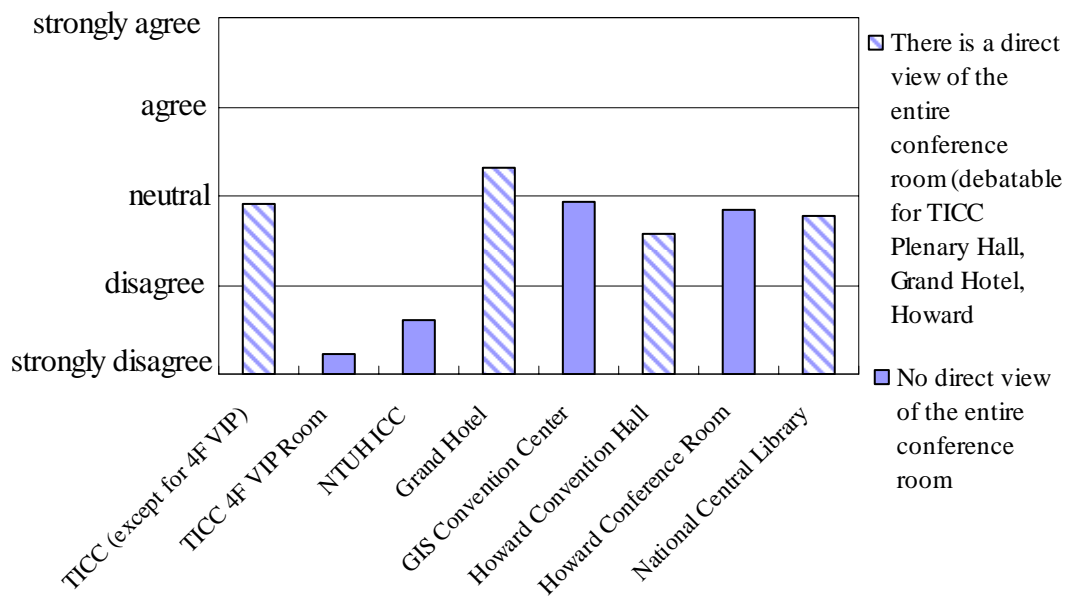


Figure 5.6. Questionnaire responses to “I have a good view of the conference hall from the booth” with differentiation of findings from the field studies

Despite the high importance given to most aspects of booth visibility by interpreters, the interaction between interpreters and delegates as well as the visibility between booths through side windows is statistically less important, with a weighted average of 3.00 and 3.29 respectively. A breakdown of questionnaire responses is presented in the following figure, Figure 5.7.

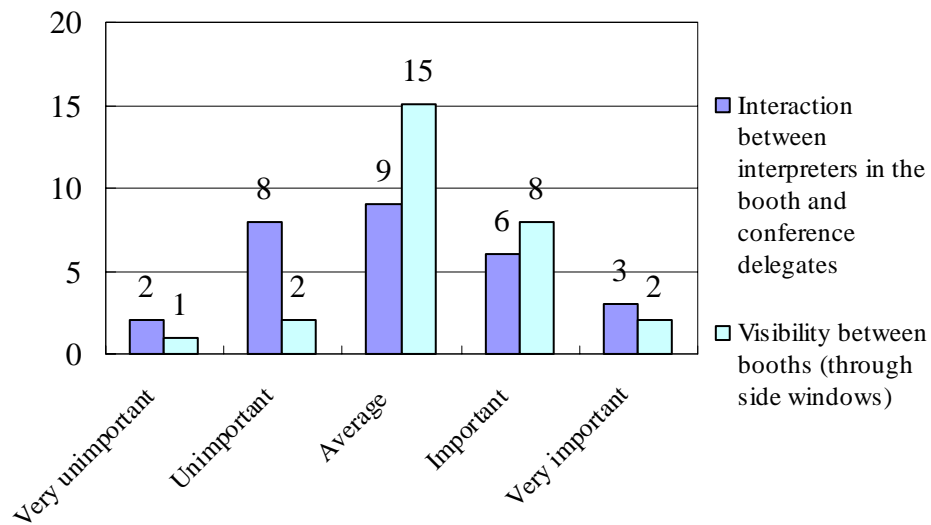


Figure 5.7. Distribution of questionnaire responses to the importance of interaction between interpreters and delegates and visibility between booths

The interviews with interpreters provided some insight as to this difference of opinion. Some felt that visibility of interpreters in other booths was not necessary, mainly because, as mentioned before, a majority of the conferences held in Taipei use only Mandarin and English, hence no other booths are in use. However, some felt that this factor was important, especially when other booths were in use and when interpreters were doing relay interpretation. The importance of interaction between interpreters in the booth and conference delegates was equally divided. Interpreters responded in the interviews that this was a nice thing to have, but for the most part, interaction between interpreters and delegates was nonexistent, which may explain the distribution of responses.

Implications:

As mentioned in Chapter 2, if interpreters cannot see, they cannot interpret. Perhaps the common misconception among non-interpreters is that interpreters need only to hear the message to interpret. This does not take into account the nonverbal messages that may be conveyed during a conference. The potential effects of poor visibility from the simultaneous interpretation booths may be the interpreter's discomfort, distress, or poor-quality or inaccurate interpretation, which may then affect the audience's understanding and the speaker's ability to communicate with the audience.

Since most aspects of visibility were rated as quite important in the questionnaire, and interpreters also responded that they generally could not see the speaker's facial expressions nor did they have a good view of the conference hall, it is quite clear that this is one of the factors which interpreters feel strongly about and are less than satisfied with.

Recommendations:

As reported in the interview findings of Chapter 4, interpreters felt it was necessary to bring in visual support in the form of monitors to facilitate the interpretation process in booths with poor visibility. One interpreter even suggested that all booths should be fitted with monitors, since interpreters needed to read the

fine print on slides that are often located too far to discern. Although PCOs and interpreters themselves are very much aware of the importance of visibility to the interpretation process, other related parties, such as conference hall operators, conference hall designers, conference organizers, and possibly even the speakers and audience members, should be made aware of this need, so as to ensure the quality of interpretation and pleasant conference proceedings. Even though the installation of monitors will present an additional cost for conference hall operators, the findings of the questionnaire and interviews have sufficiently expressed the necessity of seeing the speaker's facial expressions and slides for quality interpretation.

Regardless of whether the interpreters wish to see the speaker's facial expressions, the podium, or the audience, an interpreter's ability to see outside the booth is largely related to the design of booth windows, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.5 Windows

As with visibility, interpreters found booth windows to be highly important factors, with a weighted average of 4.50 for the size of front windows. Overall, the compliance rate for windows is 23%, as found in the field studies. Figure 5.8 presents whether the front windows of various booths fit interpreters' needs, as well as the distinction between booths whose windows do and do not conform to ISO 2603.

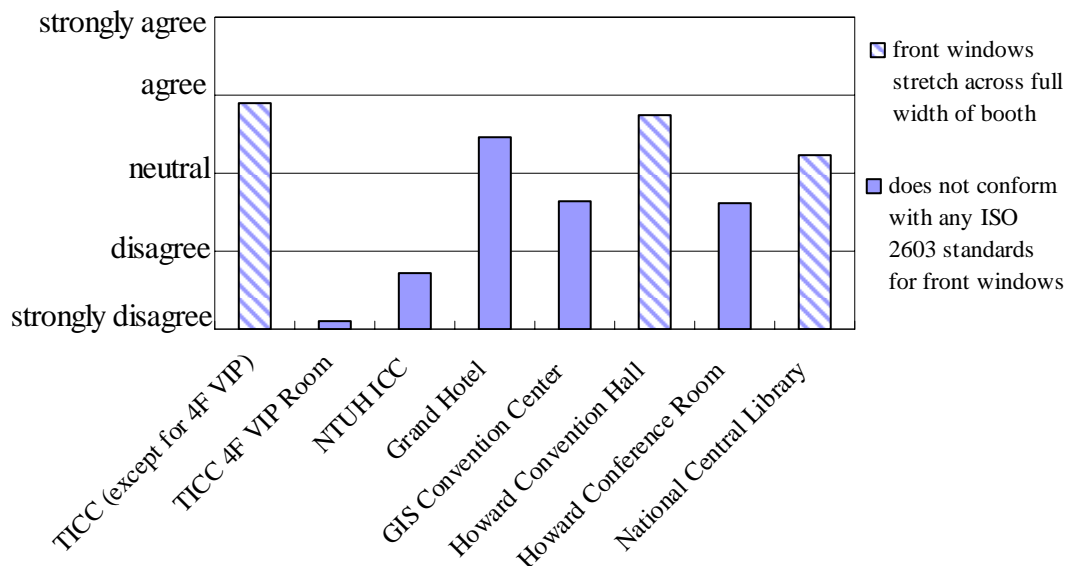


Figure 5.8. Questionnaire responses to “The size of the front windows fulfills my needs” with differentiation of findings from the field studies

Unsurprisingly, front windows of booths which conform, albeit somewhat, to ISO 2603 are among those which interpreters feel fulfill their needs in terms of window size. The front window of the Grand Hotel booths was considered the most satisfactory among the nonconforming booths, since they nearly stretch across the full

width of the booth. In addition, the booths of the Grand Hotel are located on the mezzanine level, where the height of the window is not quite such a big issue for interpreters' line of sight. The front windows of GIS and Howard Conference room measure 80cm by 110cm and 114cm by 150cm, respectively, and are placed quite high above the working surface, forcing interpreters to stand to see out of them. The front window of the NTUH International Convention Center is quite similar, measuring 93cm wide by 90cm high, placed 30cm above the working surface. Its size seems even smaller in comparison with the wide expanse of the front wall, which is 4.07 meters across. From the findings of the field studies and questionnaire, it is apparent that the TICC VIP Room booth window is the worst.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, only TICC booths (with the exception of VIP Room booths) are fitted with side windows. One PCO mentioned that an overwhelming majority of conferences which use simultaneous interpretation only uses one booth, mostly for Mandarin/English channels. She estimates that fewer than 10% of international conferences use three or more booths, and speculates that the number may be even smaller than that. Thus, with the frequency of more than three booths of a hall in use at the same time being so small, it is not surprising that side windows are overlooked and not incorporated into many of the conference venues. Another possible explanation is that designers simply were unaware of the need for side

windows.

Interpreters also considered it quite important that windows do not cast off glare, giving it a weighted average of 4.46, and it was found in field studies that most of the booth windows cast some level of glare, the exceptions perhaps being the TICC VIP Room and Grand Hotel booths, due to overly small windows and insufficient lighting, respectively. However, as Figure 5.9 shows, interpreters feel that the windows of TICC VIP Room and NCL booths cause more glare, statistically speaking.

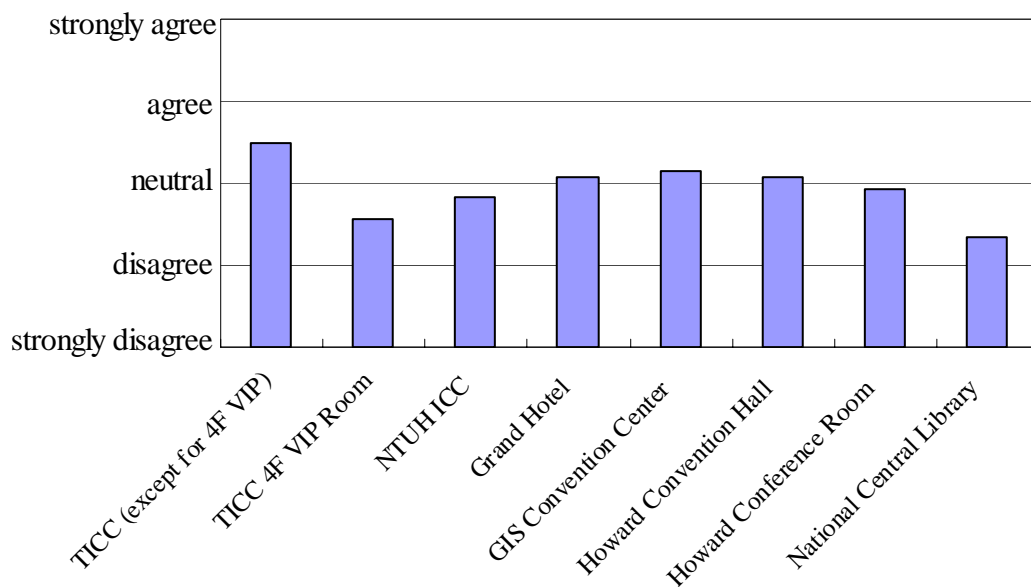


Figure 5.9. Questionnaire responses to “The front windows do not cause glare”

Implications:

Obviously, window size is important; not only for itself, but for how well interpreters can see out of it. In Chapter 4, some interpreters responded that it was not so much the width of the window which was important, but rather the height at which

the window is placed, because it dictates whether or not interpreters will be able to see while seated. The fact that so many booth windows are placed so high above the working surface implies either a lack of consideration towards booth design or the misunderstanding that interpreters work standing up.

Recommendations:

First, the front windows of interpretation booths should be enlarged, according to interpreters interviewed, and placed at a height suitable for seated interpreters to see out of. Ideally, the lower edge of the front window should be level with the working surface, per the requirements of ISO 2603, to ensure that the interpreters' line of sight not be obstructed. In addition, windows should use untinted glass so that interpreters will not be hampered by glare and be able to clearly see the conference proceedings. Another suggestion would be to raise the floor level of the booth, thereby concealing cables and wires beneath the flooring and bringing the interpreters up to a height where they may more comfortably see out the window.

Second, although the importance of side windows is often overlooked, and thought of as important only in situations requiring relay interpretation, considering that Taiwan is moving towards globalization and closer cooperation with international partners, the number of conferences using multiple languages and relay interpretation can only increase, possibly resulting in a future need for more and more booths

equipped with side windows. In light of this, it is recommended that conference halls which frequently use multiple languages and channels ensure that side windows are placed to allow visual communication between booths.

5.2.6 Ventilation

In the previous chapter, interpreters stressed the importance of ventilation, revealing through interviews that poor ventilation can cause distraction, discomfort, and even adversely affect an interpreter’s performance. From the questionnaire, interpreters expressed that all ventilation factors surveyed are important to very important. Figure 5.10 presents questionnaire results, showing that interpreters are not, on the whole, satisfied with the temperature and air quality in various booths. More than one interpreter remarked that the booths at Grand Hotel are exceptionally cold, which is also somewhat noticeable from Figure 5.10.

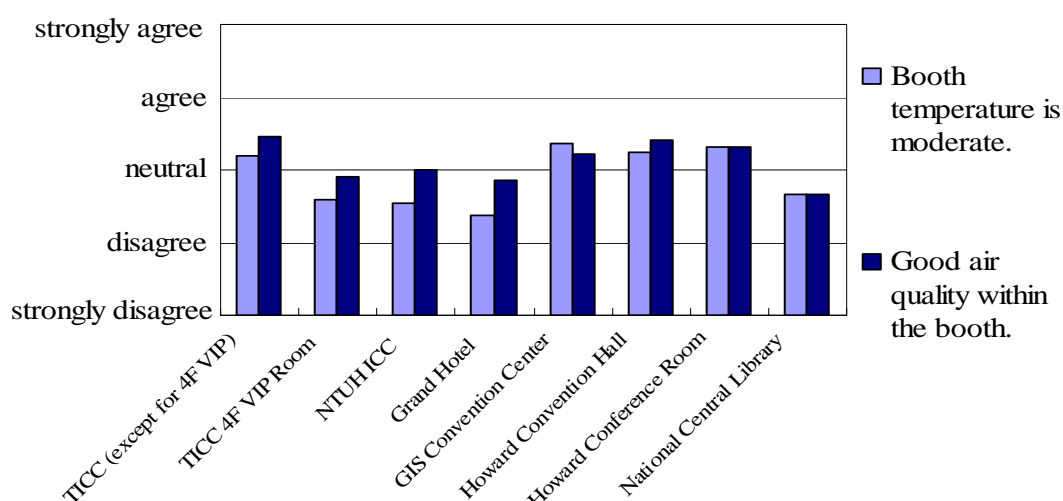


Figure 5.10. Questionnaire responses to “Booth temperature is moderate” and “Good air quality within the booth”

Interpreters interviewed for this study also mentioned that booths were often too stuffy, not due to the temperature itself, but to lack of air flow within the booth.

Recommendations:

The interpreters interviewed have suggested that improvements be made with regard to ventilation and booth temperature, recommending the use of air purifiers or fans as temporary solutions. However, these temporary solutions are not without setbacks; air purifiers tend to give off heat and both air purifiers and fans create background noise, which may pose as additional sources of distraction for interpreters.

Each booth should have its own independent temperature regulator, to ensure that interpreters can adjust the temperature according to their needs and work in a comfortable environment.

This study was not able to conduct an in-depth look into current ventilation conditions due to limitations in the scope of study. Further research is needed to understand the root of interpreters' complaints and how best to improve booth ventilation.

5.2.7 Acoustics

It is no surprise that respondents to the questionnaire considered acoustics to be the most important category of factors with regard to booths for simultaneous

interpretation, with “acoustic separation between booth and conference hall” receiving an average of 4.75, 4.64 for “acoustic separation between booths”, and 4.96 for “quality of sound transmission”, which is significantly higher than the first two, statistically speaking. Figure 5.11 shows the results of how well booths fulfill interpreters’ acoustic needs in various booths. Interpreters generally agree that TICC booths (except for VIP Room booths) provide good acoustic separation between booths and the conference hall, as well as between booths. The TICC VIP Room booths were a later addition to the convention center, and thus perhaps were not as well equipped in terms of sound insulation compared to the other booths of TICC. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the NTUH International Convention Center has only one booth per hall, thus the matter of acoustic separation between booths is moot, as well as for Howard Convention Hall booths, which are located on opposite sides of the hall. The unique conditions of the Grand Hotel booths were also discussed in the section on windows in the field study results of Chapter 4, explaining that the reason for the booths’ terrible acoustic separation between booths resulted from the partitioning wall not extending all the way to the front windows, leaving a gap in which sound travels from one booth to the other. Generally speaking, interpreters are moderately satisfied with the quality of sound transmission, with the exception of the National Central Library, which this study speculates may be the result of the aged building structure

and sound system.

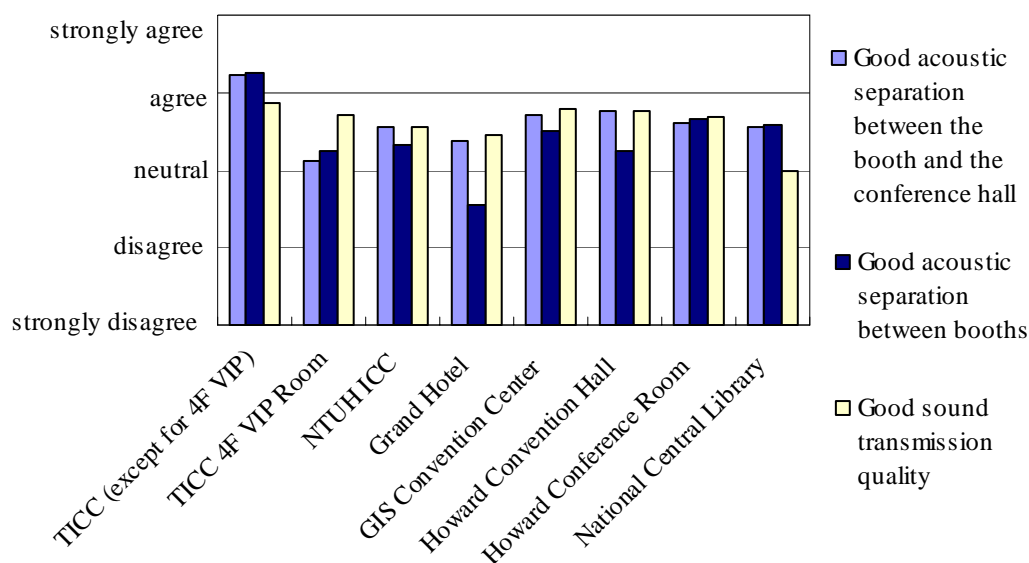


Figure 5.11. Questionnaire responses to “Good acoustic separation between the booth and the conference hall”, “Good acoustic separation between booths” and “Good sound transmission quality”

During the interviews, interpreters often overlooked this factor, which one subject explained may be due to the fact that interpreters generally feel that this is so basic a requirement that they take for granted that all booths should allow interpreters hear clearly without distraction.

Implications:

As one interpreter simply states, “If I can’t hear, I can’t interpret.” The quality of sound transmission is dependent on a number of things, such as the sound system, the skills of the technician, and the console and headsets. This factor is so important that it is the primary concern for conference organizers, as reported by the PCOs

interviewed.

Acoustic separation is also deemed important by interpreters. Although this should be an obvious factor, considering that interpreters require intense concentration in their work and other noises can only serve as a distraction, non-interpreters can sometimes forget this fact. As more than one interpreter mentioned, one such conference hall uses curtains to separate booths, believing it to be sufficient in terms of actual and acoustic separation. As mentioned in previous sections, many of the shortcomings in booth design, such as a lack of acoustic separation, may be due to a lack of understanding in the work requirements of an interpreter. The alternative is that interpreters' needs were never considered in the first place. Either way, it is imperative that interpreters be recognized as playing a crucial role in the process of communication and conferences and that booths be designed and equipped to meet their needs.

Recommendations:

Interpreters suggested that poor or malfunctioning sound systems be improved or replaced. Booths with poor acoustic separation should be renovated and soundproofing materials be added to ensure that interpreters can work without undue distraction.

5.2.8 Lighting

As mentioned in previous chapters, lighting is an important booth factor, and interpreters generally feel the same, giving “booth lighting is controllable by interpreters” a weighted average of 4.32, 4.14 for “light switches are easily accessible to interpreters”, and 4.36 for “work lights are provided in addition to general lights” in terms of importance. Figure 5.12 presents how interpreters feel towards whether there is sufficient lighting and work lights in the booth. Unsurprisingly, the two venues that do not provide work lights, the Grand Hotel and NCL, received relatively lower ratings.

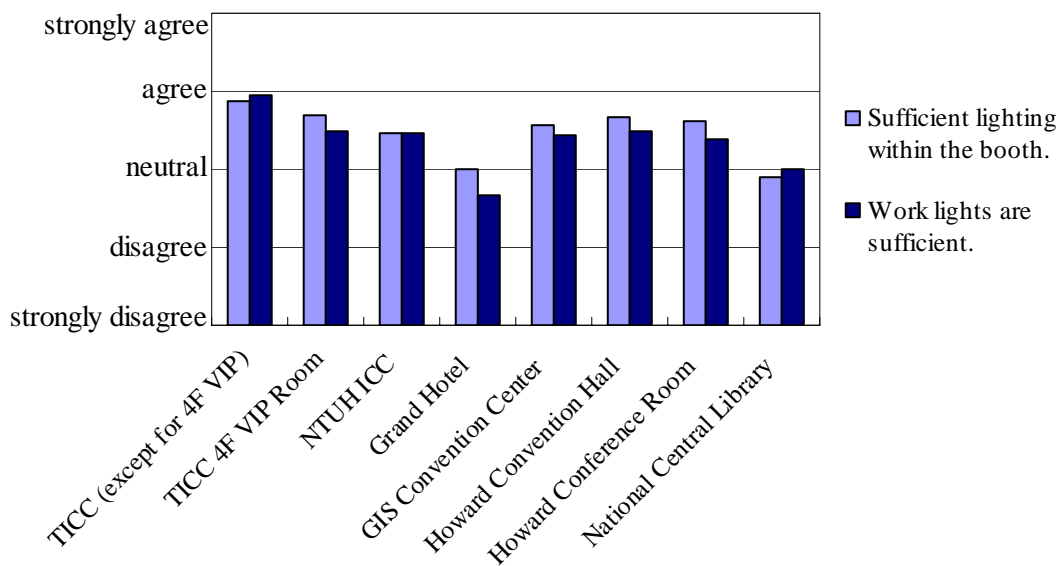


Figure 5.12. Questionnaire responses to “Sufficient lighting within the booth” and “Work lights are sufficient”

Equally unsurprising is the correlation between easy access of light switches and their location by the door, as shown in Figure 5.13, where the TICC VIP Room,

NTUH, and Grand Hotel, whose light switches are located outside the door, across the sound control booth, and controlled by sound booth technicians, respectively, receive relatively lower ratings than other booths.

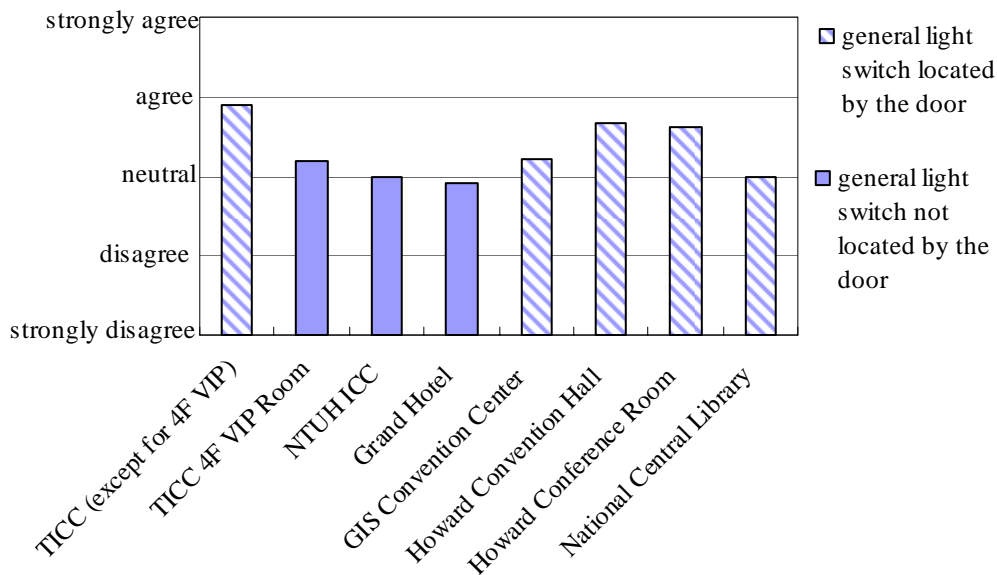


Figure 5.13 Questionnaire responses to “Light switches are easily accessible to interpreters” with differentiation of findings from the field studies

Implications:

As Chapter 2 mentions, lights often have to be dimmed in the conference hall for slides or presentation, and it is important for booths to have independent lighting and work lights so as to be able to see the speaker, delegates, and conference hall in general, as well as refer to the documents and other material before them.

Visual discomfort can arise without proper lighting, or with poor or inadequate lighting, as was also mentioned in Chapter 2. Symptoms of visual discomfort, such as

red, sore, itchy, and watering eyes, headaches and migraine attacks, gastrointestinal problems, and aches and pains associated with poor posture, can appear, and may result in a decrease in the quality of interpretation.

Recommendations:

All booths should have independent lighting from the hall, and the general light switch should be easily accessible to interpreters. Work lights are a must, and should be adjustable as to avoid glare on the windows. In addition, dimmer switches should be added, so as to allow the interpreters themselves to control the amount of light they receive.

5.2.9 Seating, Working Surface, and Shelving

According to interpreters, the comfort of booth seats and having sufficient working surface in the booth rates somewhere between important and very important, with a weighted average of 4.46 and 4.57 respectively.

Figure 5.14 shows the interpreters' perception of comfort of booth seats in various booths. As mentioned in Chapter 4, none of the booths seats fully comply with ISO 2603; however, there is also no great difference in interpreters' perceptions.

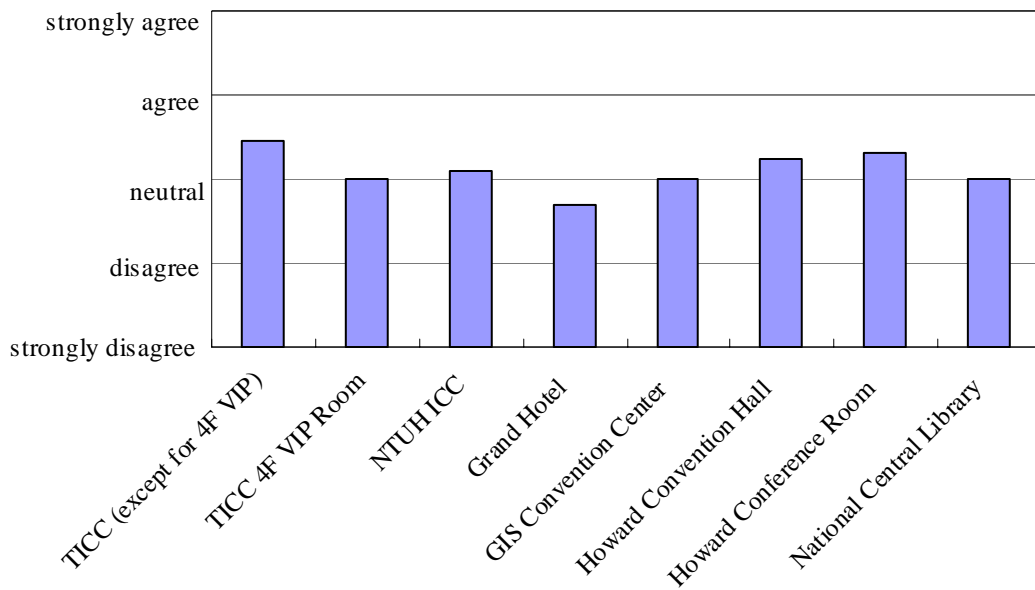


Figure 5.14. Questionnaire responses to “Booth seats are comfortable”

The degree to which interpreters feel working surfaces in various booths fulfill their need to read documents seems to not be affected by whether or not said working surface conforms to ISO 2603 standards. Figure 5.15 shows very little relation between interpreters’ satisfaction with sufficient working space compared to whether or not the working surface stretches across the full width of the booth. What the figure does not show, is the relationship between size of the working surface and size of the booth. For example, although the working surface of the Grand Hotel booths does indeed stretch across the whole width of the booth, the booth is by no means wide enough and hence the amount of working surface is deemed less sufficient than those in other booths, such as the NTUH booth’s working surface.

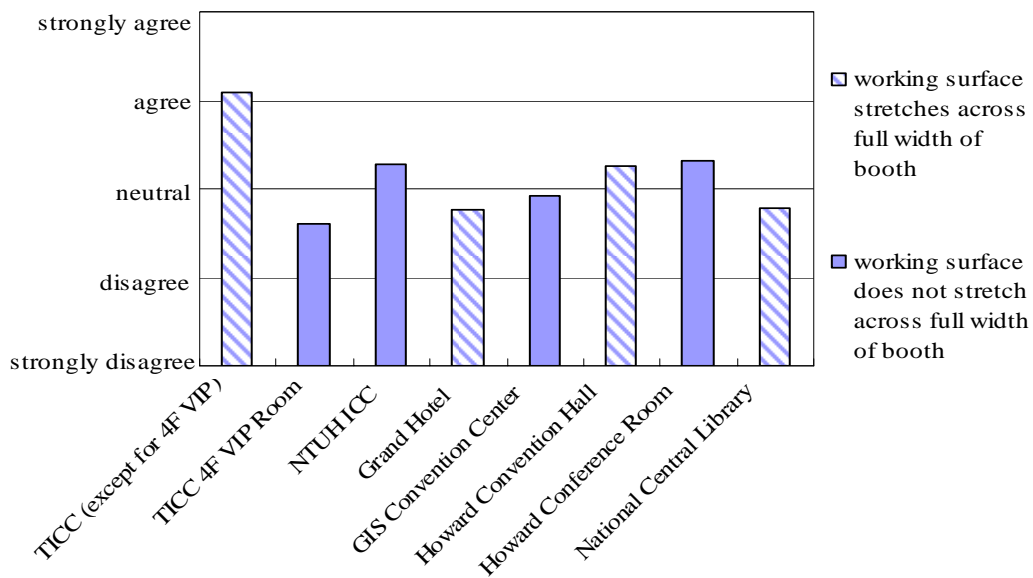


Figure 5.15. Questionnaire responses to “I have sufficient working surface in the booth to read documents” with differentiation of findings from the field studies

Out of the eight booths asked in the questionnaire, only the NTUH and Howard Convention Hall contained shelving. Interpreters felt that sufficient shelves or trays were only of average importance, giving it a weighted average of 3.14. As Figure 5.16 shows, interpreters seem to show no strong opinion for whether or not a booth provides shelves or trays.

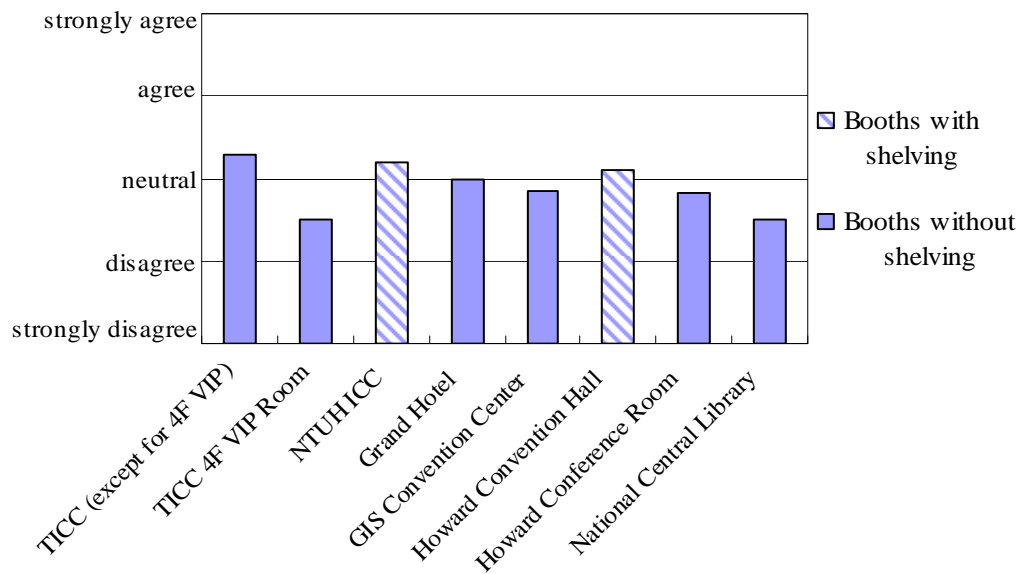


Figure 5.16. Questionnaire responses to “The booth provides sufficient shelves or trays for document storage” with differentiation of findings from the field studies

Implications:

Uncomfortable seating can cause neck and back pains, which may lead to a decrease in interpretation quality. Insufficient working surface may cause distraction; the clutter of materials in the booth without adequate space to place them may cause interpreters to break their intense concentration. Although these may seem like minor details, it is all the more important to pay notice to these factors since they are so easily resolved.

Recommendations:

Chairs and working surfaces are easily replaced, so the persons responsible should ensure that chairs comply with ISO 2603 standards; most notably, the height

and back rest should be adjustable to allow each and every interpreter to sit comfortably. Enough working surface are should be provided so that interpreters will have space to lay out their documents, materials, and laptop computers.

5.2.10 Additional Booth Factors

In the interview findings in Chapter 4, interpreters made special mention of three additional booth factors that affected their comfort or work – cleanliness, internet access, and water source.

It should go without saying that booths should be kept clean. No one enjoys working in a slovenly environment, covered with dust or with drawers full of leftover food or beverage containers. Likewise, booths should not be used as a storage room, as it creates unnecessary clutter in an already small space. This lack of regard towards the interpreter’s working environment may create discomfort.

The latest version of ISO 2603 was published in 1998, and recent times have seen the increased use of laptop computers and internet access that was perhaps not considered during the drafting of the standard. Three of the six interpreters interviewed mentioned that a power source and internet access was essential for their work, as interpreters often need to research materials during the course of the conference.

During simultaneous interpretation, the interpreter must continually interpret the

speaker's message into the target language, which requires speaking into the microphone. For this reason, large amounts of water are consumed by the interpreters during the course of a conference. It has been suggested that as an alternative to providing many bottles of bottled water, which can accumulate and clutter the working surface, drinking fountains should instead be installed in the hallway outside the interpreters' booths.

5.3 Implementation Checklist for Existing Booths in Taipei

Although there are many conference halls in Taipei, few if any of the booths conform to the requirements set out in ISO 2603. The three main causes of discrepancy between ISO 2603, current conditions, and interpreters' needs are as follows:

1. The designers' lack of understanding for interpreters' needs. Examples of this include insufficient booth size, poor visibility, overly small or misplaced windows, and poor acoustic separation.
2. Different practices in Taiwan's conference interpretation industry. Examples include lack of booths big enough to seat three interpreters and absence of signage indicating assigned languages and channels due to the predominance of conferences using only one booth, mostly in

Mandarin-English or Mandarin-Japanese.

3. Opposing points of view between conference hall operators and interpreters. Examples include insufficient booth size and booths doubling as storage space based on operators' claim of rare usage.

The main idea behind post occupancy evaluation is that the design of spaces can be improved by asking users about their needs. Thus, conference halls can improve the current conditions of booths by referring to ISO 2603 or consulting with interpreters. While complete renovation of booths may be unfeasible for conference halls booked many months in advance, some modifications can be made to better the working conditions of interpreters, and in so, ensuring the quality of interpretation. Conference hall operators and designers should acquaint themselves with the needs of interpreters prior to undertaking the renovation of booths for simultaneous interpretation. Based on the findings of this study and current booth conditions in Taipei, below is an implementation checklist for conference hall operators to refer to.

1. Booths should be large enough to comfortably seat two interpreters. If booths were originally built to seat one interpreter, combine two adjoining booths into one by taking down the partition wall.
2. Visual support in the form of monitors should be installed in booths with poor visibility.

3. Windows should be enlarged and fitted with untinted glass. The lower edge of the window should be level with the height of the working surface. In the case that conference hall operators find it impossible to retrofit windows, monitors should be installed as a temporary means for interpreters to view conference proceedings.
4. Air purifiers and/or fans should be brought in to temporarily compensate for poor ventilation conditions until such time that the ventilation system itself can be improved. Each booth should be able to control the temperature independently.
5. Poor or malfunctioning sound systems should be improved or updated. Booths with poor acoustic separation should be fitted with soundproofing material as needed.
6. Work lights should be added in all booths, one to each interpreter. General lights for booths should be independently controllable by the interpreter, and the general light switch should be located close to the door. Dimmer switches, for both general and work lights, should be added.
7. The working surface should extend across the full width of the booth, and provide enough space for documents and interpreters' laptop computers.

The chairs should be comfortable, and have adjustable height and back rests.

8. Booths should be regularly cleaned and aired. Booths should not be used as storage rooms, and should be kept free of unnecessary clutter.
9. Booths should provide power outlets for the interpreters' laptop computers, and have internet access for interpreters to research materials.
10. A source of water, such as a drinking fountain, should be located near interpreters' booths.