



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the current working conditions of conference interpreters, to understand the conference interpreters' needs in terms of the physical working environment, and to compare these with the standards set out in ISO 2603. To this end, this study employs a three-pronged approach of field studies, questionnaire, and interviews, methods which are typical in an investigative post occupancy evaluation. This chapter presents an overview of this study's methods, participants, selection criteria, research tools, and data analysis process.

3.1 Introduction

After the literature was reviewed, the research questions of this study became clear. What is the state of working conditions in interpretation booths in Taipei, and do they conform to the standard ISO 2603? What are the needs of interpreters in Taiwan in terms of the physical working environment, and are those needs fulfilled by ISO 2603 or existing booths in Taipei? This study hopes to answer these questions. However, since there is no single research method that would answer all the above questions, this study therefore employs both quantitative (questionnaire)

and qualitative methods (interview and field studies).

As discussed in Chapter 2, several factors, such as size, access, visibility, windows, ventilation, acoustics, lighting, seating, work surface, and others in the booth environment affect whether or not the interpreter can produce optimum quality interpretation.

The current working conditions of interpreters are explored through field studies and observation. This study focuses on certain venues in Taipei, selected for reasons that will be further explained later in this chapter, and compares them with the standards set out in ISO 2603.

The venues selected for this study are then incorporated into the questionnaire, resulting in a series of questions to determine whether the needs of interpreters have been fulfilled with regard to different booth factors. In this step, this study hopes to determine which aspects of certain booths and ISO 2603 are or are not sufficient for interpreters' needs.

In addition, the literature review also reveals that different parties have different, and sometimes conflicting, interests when it comes to interpretation booths; e.g. interpreters need a booth large enough to work comfortably, whereas conference hall operators would prefer small booths, since the booths themselves are not always in use. Interviews with professional corporate organizers (PCO) and conference hall

operators will hopefully reveal some insight as to the reason for this difference or conflict of interest.

The figure below presents the research process of this study.

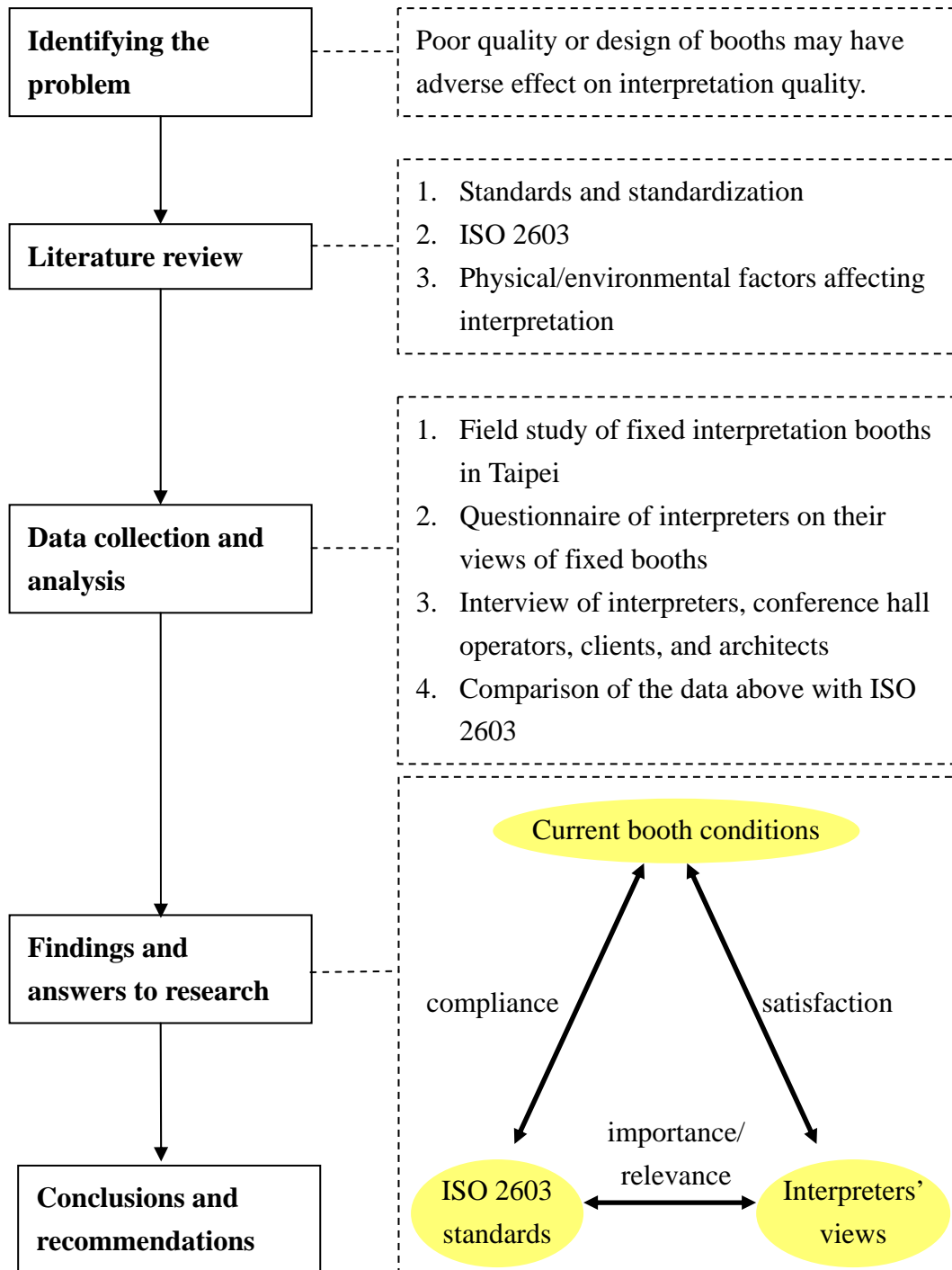


Figure 3.1. Research Framework

In summary, the three methods of field studies, questionnaire, and interviews not only provide data on current booth conditions and interpreter's views, but also provides information on their relationship with each other and with ISO 2603. This study examines whether interpreters are satisfied with current booth conditions, whether current booth conditions comply with ISO 2603 standards, and whether ISO 2603 standards are important or relevant to the responding interpreters (Figure 3.2.).

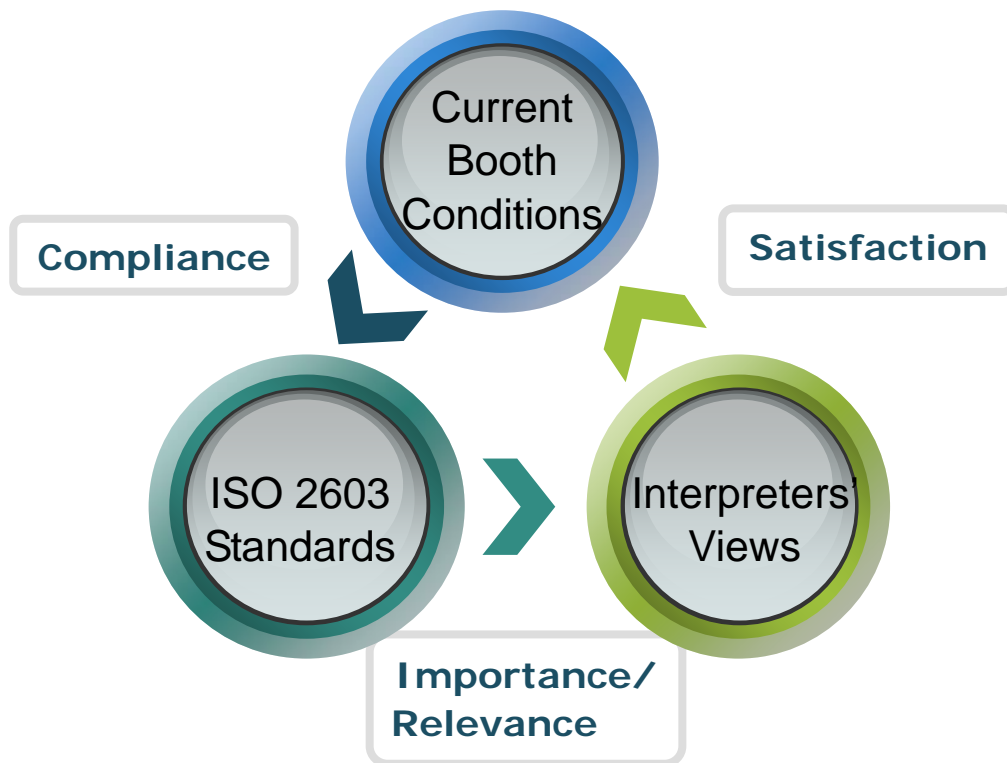


Figure 3.2. Research Issues

The research process of the field studies, questionnaire, and interviews is explained further in the following sections.

3.2 Field Studies

As stated previously, it is necessary to not only understand factors in booth quality, but also the existing conditions.

In Taiwan, the need for simultaneous interpreters for international conferences is most pronounced in Taipei, the capital as well as the commercial and financial center. It is no surprise, then, that this study focuses on booths located in conference halls/centers in Taipei. The selection of venues for the case studies is based on the frequency in which they are used (as expressed by interviewees), whether they are representative of other conference halls/centers in Taipei, and the availability of information (such as floor plans). Although most of the venues observed were selected for their frequency of use, one venue, the National Central Library, though not in use as frequently as some of the other venues, was selected based on its age. Venues observed in this study include the Taipei International Convention Center, the Auditorium of the Grand Hotel, the GIS Convention Center, Howard International House Taipei, National Taiwan University Hospital International Convention Center, and the National Central Library.

Based on the literature review, the observations of booths will focus on certain criteria stated in ISO 2603 Booths for Simultaneous Interpretation. Due to time constraints, the scope of these observations is limited to the general siting of the

booth (in relation to the conference hall), doors, access, booth dimensions, visibility, windows, some aspects of ventilation and lighting, working surface, and seating. Prior to the visits, a booth checklist, as can be seen in Appendix A, based partially on ISO standards was drawn up to facilitate proceedings.

At each venue, in addition to comparing the various factors of the booths with those on the booth checklist, photographs are also taken for the purpose of more clearly presenting the existing conditions. With the measurements and photographs taken onsite, a comparison will be made of this data with the interview and questionnaire results, as well as findings from the literature review.

In addition to being the focus of field observation, these venues are also used as reference points in the questionnaire targeted toward interpreters. As these are the conference halls/centers most frequently used in Taipei, interpreters were asked in the questionnaire to respond to whether these venues fulfilled their various needs.

An overview of each of the observed venues is as follows:

3.2.1 Taipei International Convention Center

Since its opening in 1990, the Taipei International Convention Center has hosted numerous events. Designed by Haigo T. H. Shen, the Convention Center is just one building of the Taipei World Trade Center, which also includes the Exhibition Hall, International Trade Building, and Grand Hyatt Taipei. In 2006, 703 conferences were held here, including 21 international and 682 domestic conferences. The TICC holds a number of conference facilities; those with built-in interpretation booths include the Plenary Hall, Rooms 101, 102, 201, 401, and the VIP Room (see Figure 3.2 and 3.3).

101

Room 101 is a flexible 640 m² space that can be used or divided by means of moveable acoustic walls into smaller meeting rooms (101A, 101B, 101C, 101D), with seating capacity ranging from 88 to 744 persons. Fourteen interpretation booths flank two sides of this room on a mezzanine level, positioned in a way so that each sectioned-off room is still serviced by at least three booths.

102

Seating up to 200 persons, Room 102 (232 m²) is a fan-shaped, tiered theater that doubles as a classroom. Located on the mezzanine level, four interpretation booths overlook the room and stage from one side of the room.

201

As with Room 101, Room 201 is an extremely flexible space that can be used as a whole, or divided into two, four, or six units (201A, 201B, 201C, 201D, 201E, 201F), with a total seating capacity of 800 persons (729 m²). Its fourteen interpretation booths are located above in the mezzanine level on two opposite sides of the room, identical in positioning relative to those of Room 101.

401

Seating 60 persons, this concentric meeting room (193 m²) is built for negotiations, high-level talks, board meetings, or academic seminars. Four interpretation booths service this meeting room, with two on opposite sides.

4F VIP Room

Suitable for banquets, receptions, and parties of up to 400 persons, the VIP room (368 m²) can also be used as a theater or classroom. Two interpretation booths are situated along one wall.

Plenary Hall

Seating up to 3,100 persons, the tiered Plenary Hall spans four floors (2,973 m²), with the 4 interpretation booths located to the side and above the stage on the fifth floor.

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Floor Plan

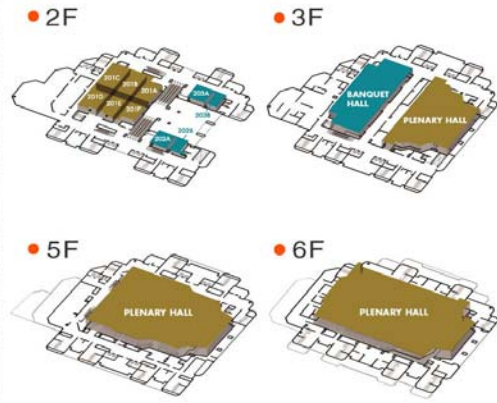
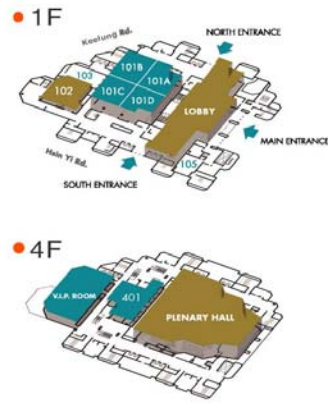


Figure 3.3. Floor plan of the Taipei International Convention Center (Source: TICC e-brochure)



Figure 3.4. TICC conference halls; from left to right, top to bottom: 101, 102, 201, 401, VIP Room, Plenary Hall (Source: TICC website)

3.2.2 NTUH International Convention Center

Completed in December, 2003, the National Taiwan University Hospital International Convention Center, designed by Fei & Cheng Associates, houses two halls, 301 and 401, with booths for simultaneous interpretation. The two halls both seat up to 220 persons, and are approximately 284 m² in area each (see Figure 3.4).

3.2.3 Auditorium, Grand Hotel

The Grand Hotel, designed by architect Yang Cho-cheng, opened in 1973, and was reopened in 1998 after refurbishment following a disastrous fire in 1995. The Auditorium (see Figure 3.5), located on the tenth floor with a capacity of 400 people, has been retrofitted with booths for simultaneous interpretation on the mezzanine.

3.2.4 GIS Convention Center/NTU

GIS Convention Center/NTU provides a number of conference facilities, the largest of which is the Alexander Hall (838 m²), as shown in Figure 3.6, with 364 seats and 4 interpretation booths.

3.2.5 Howard International House Taipei

Howard International House Taipei began test operations in 2000, and official operations in 2001. The House contains the first floor Conference Room and second floor Convention Hall (see Figure 3.7), both of which are equipped with booths for simultaneous interpreting. The Conference Room seats up to 200 persons (1,161 m²),

while the Convention Hall has a maximum seating capacity of 728 persons, with 462 seats (1,092 m²) on the lower deck, and 266 seats (796 m²) on the upper deck.

3.2.6 National Central Library

The design of the NCL was commissioned in 1984, and construction was completed and operations began in 1986. The conference hall (see Figure 3.8) is located in the south wing of the building.

In 2006, of the 77 conferences held, only 4 used interpretation equipment. As of June 2006, 8 out of the 23 conferences held used interpretation equipment.

The selection of these venues were based largely on initial interviews with interpreters and a prominent conference organizer in Taiwan, with expert knowledge on conference venues and their frequency of use. After consulting with them, this study chose these six venues, not only for observation and measurement, but also as a reference for the questionnaire described in the following section.

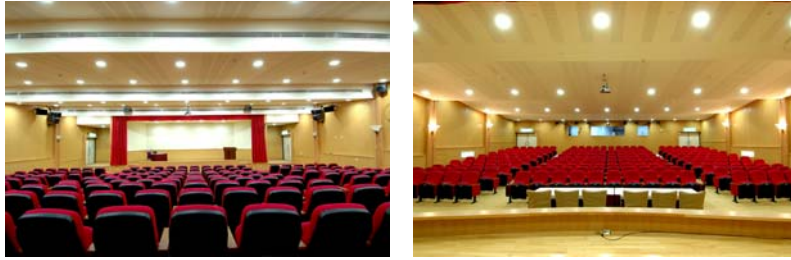


Figure 3.5. Room 301 and Room 401

(Source: NTUH International Convention Center website)



Figure 3.6. Auditorium, Grand Hotel (Source: Google images)



Figure 3.7. Alexander Hall, GIS Convention Center/NTU (Source: GIS Convention Center/NTU website)



Figure 3.8. HIHT Conference Room (left), HIHT Convention Hall (right)

(Source: Howard International House Taipei website)



Figure 3.9. NCL Conference Hall (Source: NCL website)

3.3 Questionnaire

3.3.1 Participants

It is difficult to estimate the number of interpreters working in Taiwan. The study conducted by the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation, NTNU and Taiwan Institute of Economic Research (2004) puts the number of freelance interpreters in the country at 53. Pilot interviews conducted by this study suggest that this is a very conservative number, and estimates that the number is closer to 100.

This study sent out email invitations to approximately 100 interpreters to fill out the online questionnaire. A roster of active interpreters, with 96 email addresses, was kindly provided by one of the leading conference organizers in Taiwan. Later invitations to respond to the online questionnaire were sent out to Monterey alumni through a mutual contact. However, this study cannot be certain of how many interpreters were contacted, and whether there are any overlaps with the roster given by the conference organizer.

A total of 212 questions were asked.

3.3.2 Background questions

The background information within the questionnaire includes (1) gender; (2) age; (3) years of experience as an interpreter; (4) working languages; (5) number of

conferences interpreted in 2006; and (6) frequency of work at selected conference venues. This information is selected based on past research. Because these variables are not the major objects to be observed, the information was collected for the control variables in this study.

3.3.3 Questionnaire of interpreters on their views of the physical working environment

Based on the literature review and criteria stated in ISO 2603, the researcher developed the questionnaire, which can be categorized into two parts: (1) physical/environmental factors for booths in general; and (2) physical/environmental factors for specific booths. The former part is concerned with how important various factors are to interpreters in their working environment. The latter deals with whether various needs have been met in different booths in Taipei.

For booths in general, 31 questions were categorized as follows: size, access, doors, visibility, windows, ventilation, acoustics, lighting, seating, work surface, and general/miscellaneous. Respondents were asked to rate each with “no opinion”, “very unimportant”, “unimportant”, “average”, “important”, or “very important”. In this section, respondents must choose one answer. Table 3.1 shows the categories of questions in this section as well as the number of questions asked for each category.

Table 3.1

Categories for Questions Regarding Booths in General within the Interpreters' Questionnaire

Category	Number of Questions
Size	1
Access	3
Doors	4
Visibility	7
Windows	2
Ventilation	3
Acoustics	3
Lighting	3
Seating	1
Work Surface	2
General/Miscellaneous	2
Total	31

Source: compiled by this study

The booth-specific section of the questionnaire repeats the same 19 questions for each of the following booths: TICC booths (except for 4F VIP Room booths), TICC 4F VIP Room booths, NTU ICC booths, Grand Hotel 10F Auditorium booths, GIS Convention Center/NTU booths, Howard International House Taipei Convention Hall booths, Howard International House Taipei Conference Room booths, and NCL booths. For each specific booth, the 19 questions were categorized as follows: size, access, visibility, windows, ventilation, acoustics, lighting, seating, work surface, and general/miscellaneous. Respondents were asked to rate each with “not applicable”, “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree”, or “strongly agree”. The questions in this section differ from those in the general booth section

since they elicit opinions on whether certain needs are met in different booths. Hypothetical questions and statements of fact are left out of this section. Respondents were not required to answer all the questions in the booth-specific section of the questionnaire, since they could not be asked to comment on venues or booths they have not frequented before.

The purpose of this section is to determine which needs are being fulfilled by which booths. These questions are loosely based on ISO 2603 standards. However, it is difficult to ask interpreters whether the ISO 2603 standard for the minimum dimensions of booths (2.5 meters wide, 2.4 meters deep, and 2.3 meters high) is enough to suit their needs. Instead, this study provides them with specific venues and booths, as well as photographs to refresh their memories, so that interpreters may respond whether these booths satisfy their needs.

Table 3.2 shows the categories for questions within this section and the number of questions asked for each booth.

Table 3.2

Categories for Booth-Specific Questions within the Interpreters' Questionnaire

Category	Number of Questions
Size	1
Access	1
Visibility	2
Windows	2
Ventilation	2
Acoustics	3
Lighting	3
Seating	1
Work Surface	1
General/Miscellaneous	3
Total	19

Source: compiled by this study

3.3.4 Further Comments

In addition to the multiple-choice questions for general and specific booth conditions, the questionnaire also asks interpreters to comment, in their own words, on what aspects of interpretation booths need to be further improved.

The original questionnaire in Mandarin is presented in Appendix B, and the English version of the questionnaire with responses can be found in Appendix C.

3.3.5 Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire

The pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted online at <http://my3q.com>, and posed 291 questions. The structure of the pilot test was roughly the same as the final questionnaire and was given to three interpreters. The interpreters responded that although many of the questions in the booth-specific section repeated

themselves for each venue, the questionnaire was too long, and was liable to frustrate interpreters into not responding. In addition, as this study had initially based the questionnaire on standards in ISO 2603, many of the questions were initially conceptualized in English and then translated into Chinese. With this additional process, the respondents felt that the wording of some questions were ambiguous and could be construed as misleading. The respondents also had suggested an alternate method of structuring the booth-specific section of the questionnaire, with the questions on the left-hand column and the list of venues in a row at the top. In this way, respondents could fill in or select their choice for each question, and the questionnaire would not be over-long for repeating each question a number of times. However, this proved to be impossible, since the website this study uses did not allow for such a function. Therefore, working within the limitations of the questionnaire website, although this study could only repeat each booth-specific question for each venue, it removed the booth-specific questions deemed unnecessary and shortened the final questionnaire to 212 questions.

3.3.6 Measures and Research Procedure

To collect the necessary data, convenience sampling was chosen in this study. The questionnaire was posted online on July 31, 2007 and invitations to fill out the questionnaire were sent to 96 interpreters. The questionnaire was originally

scheduled to be open for responses for 6 weeks. However, at the end of the 6 weeks, only 13 responses were logged. Thus, the online questionnaire was extended for another 2 weeks. During the total of 8 weeks, from July 31 to September 26, 2007, 28 questionnaires were returned.

This study uses the website <http://my3q.com> for the online questionnaire. The website offers different options for the three different types of memberships. As a general user, the researcher created the pilot studies and formal questionnaire online, and could open the questionnaire to the public for up to 6 months. However, as a general user, the questionnaire had to be open to the public, despite the researcher's attempts to focus only on interpreters. This was solved by emailing invitations to interpreters to answer the online questionnaire, and respondents to the invitations could be identified by reviewing their emails to those on the researcher's roster. However, there are those who responded to the questionnaire not by clicking on the link attached to the invitation, but instead visited the website on their own. Although these respondents cannot be identified, this study is relatively assured that there were no repeat respondents, because the website provides the IP address of each respondent.

3.4 Interview

3.4.1 Participants

Based on an initial interview with one of the leading conference organizers in Taiwan, this study was able to contact a large number of interpreters for the questionnaire. Within the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they would be interested in being interviewed in order to clarify their needs and views in regard to the physical working environment of the interpreters' booths. In addition, interviews were also conducted with two professional corporate organizers (PCO) and conference hall operators to ascertain the needs of organizers/clients/interpreters and the background of each venue and its use.

By interviewing not just interpreters, who are the ultimate users of booths for interpretation albeit indirect users of the standards for said booths, but also conference hall operators, this study hopes to show a more comprehensive picture of whether booths fulfill the needs of the interpreters, and if not, why they were designed or created in that way.

There are ten PCOs in Taipei, of which this study interviewed two. Between the two PCOs interviewed, it is estimated that they account for two-thirds of all conferences held in Taipei.

The conference hall operators interviewed in this study were individuals

involved in the maintenance and administration of the venues selected for the field studies.

These interviews are unstructured (ethnographic).

3.4.2 Interview Questions

As this study uses the three methods of field studies, questionnaire, and interviews to gather relevant data, some of the questions asked are associated to the other research methods.

Interviews with interpreters were conducted as a supplement to the questionnaire. Whereas the questionnaire is mostly in a multiple-choice format, the interviews allow interpreters to expound, in their own words, their views on booth criteria and current booth conditions. Interpreters were asked what they considered to be basic requirements for interpretation booths, bad booth designs to be avoided, experiences working in various booths, and ways in which booths could be improved. The full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix D.

The purpose of interviews with PCOs and conference hall operators is to provide an alternate viewpoint on booth criteria. As explained in the previous chapter, in the case of booths, different users of booth standards have different and sometimes conflicting interests. Through the following interviews, this study hopes to explore the interests of non-interpreter, booth-related parties and possible reasons

behind current conditions.

The interview questions for PCOs can be categorized into venues, number of conferences, client preferences, conference organization, and interpreter preferences. PCOs are asked to name some of the most popular or most frequented venues, which help to determine the specific venues for this study's field observation. The purpose of these interviews is not only to understand the views of PCOs on booths, but also the views of the large number of conference organizers whom PCOs come in contact with. Since PCOs come in contact with both conference organizers and interpreters, they are an ideal information source on how the two parties view booths differently. Questions asked in the interviews can be found in Appendix D.

Conference hall operators are also interviewed to provide background information on the venues selected for the field studies, which will be discussed later in this chapter. These interviews inquire about the frequency of use, booth design and maintenance, and comments from clients and interpreters; the full list of questions can be found in Appendix D.

In summary, the interviews with interpreters were conducted to supplement the information gathered through the multiple-choice format questionnaire. PCOs are asked questions regarding the different preferences of conference organizers and interpreters in a general conference setting, while conference hall operators provide

responses about these preferences in a specific conference setting, in addition to providing background information about the venue. The purpose of these interviews is twofold: 1) to learn more about interpreters' needs with regard to their working environment; and 2) to provide additional information on the views of non-interpreter, booth-related parties.

3.5 Data Analysis and Comparison

Data collected from the three aforementioned methods – field study, questionnaire, and interview – will be analyzed and compared against standards set out in ISO 2603.

Responses from the general questions regarding physical/environmental factors for booths in the questionnaire are analyzed to determine the importance of each for interpreters. Likewise, responses to the booth-specific questions determine how well each booth fulfills interpreters' various needs. By calculating the weighted average of each response, this study is able to provide a scale of how important interpreters think each factor is, and how well needs are provided for by each booth.

Information gathered from field studies at each individual venue in the form of booth checklists is then compared against requirements stated in ISO 2603. This comparison results in a number of different factors in different booths which do or

do not adhere to the standard. Floor plans of the venue and photographs of the booths are also studied and presented to provide a clearer image of current booth conditions.

This study then draws upon the responses from the booth-specific questions in the interpreters' questionnaire and interviews with interpreters and analyzes them against the aforementioned comparison of data from the field studies and requirements specified in ISO 2603. Booth-specific questions inquire into the level of satisfaction interpreters' feel regarding the fulfillment of certain needs in specific booths. Compared against the objective data of the field studies and standard ISO 2603, this study is able to find the degree to which ISO 2603 reflects the needs of the interpreter, and the degree to which current conditions fulfill them.

From the field studies, questionnaire, interviews with interpreters, and ISO 2603, this study is able to compare and analyze the similarities and differences between the importance interpreters place on various physical booth factors, requirements specified in standard ISO 2603, objective and current conditions, and whether interpreters' needs have been met either through standardization or through current conditions.

One of this study's hypotheses is that current conditions do not satisfy interpreters' needs, and possible reasons for this will be explored through comparing

the difference between current conditions, ISO 2603, and interpreters' level of satisfaction regarding booths with the responses from interviews with PCOs and conference hall operators. Whether or not ISO 2603 adequately reflects interpreters' needs can be determined in the general section of the questionnaire, where interpreters determine the importance of factors regulated by ISO 2603.

A chart displaying the process of data analysis and comparison for this study is shown in the following figure.

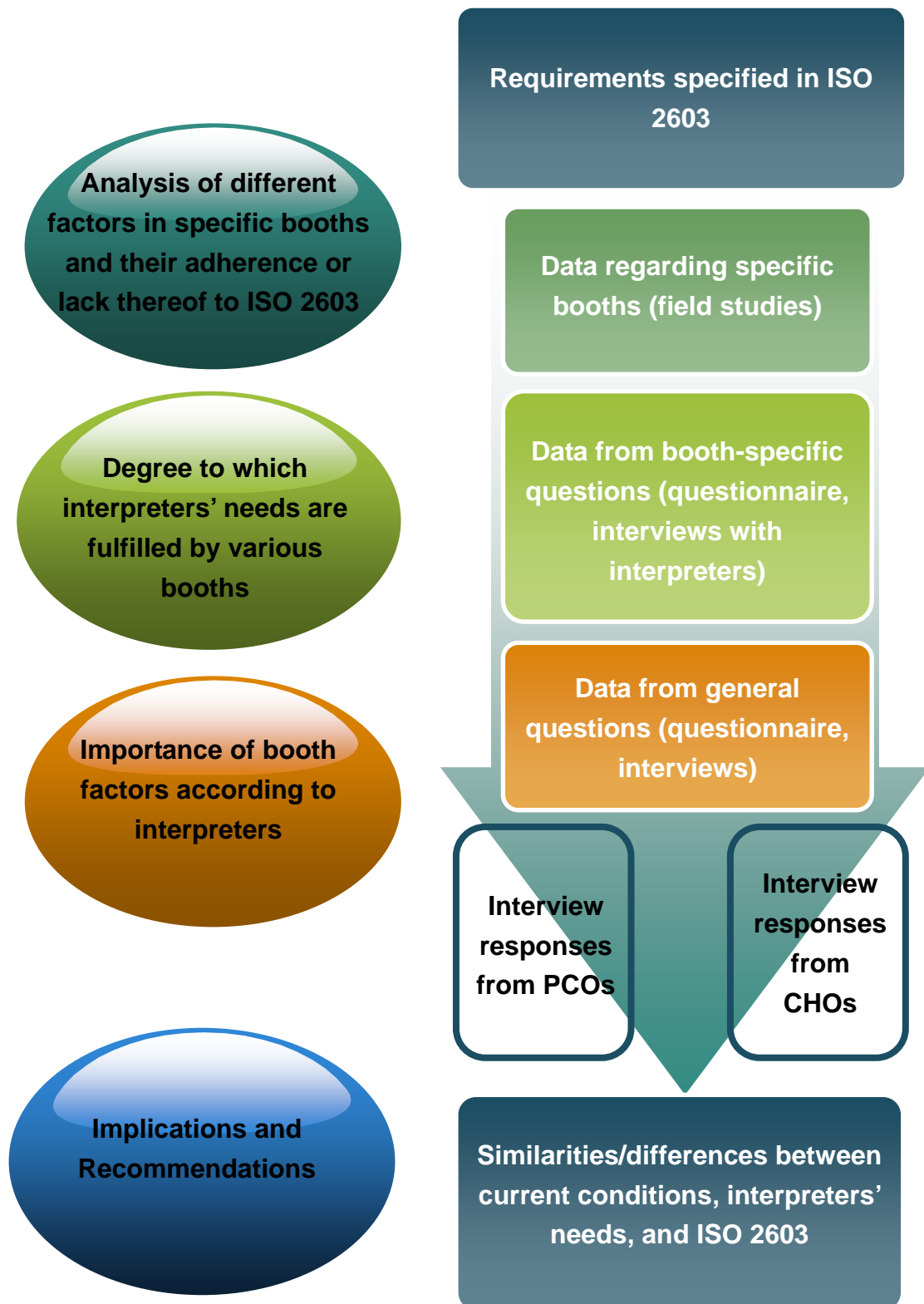


Figure 3.10. Data Analysis and Comparison Flowchart

As mentioned before, this study closely resembles the framework of a post occupancy evaluation, which is comprised of the planning, conducting, and analysis phases. This chapter can be regarded as the planning phase, in which the researcher has identified the issues and established the parameters and purpose of study. Similar to investigative POEs, this study uses interviews, field studies, and questionnaire to gather data. The quantitative data from the questionnaire was complemented by the qualitative data of the interviews and field studies to identify whether current conditions conform to ISO 2603 standards, whether current conditions satisfy interpreters' needs, and whether ISO 2603 standards reflect interpreters' needs. The results of the data analyses are reported in Chapter 4.