



1.1 Research Background

Conference interpreting plays a crucial role in the communication process of international conferences. Speakers rely on interpreters for an accurate rendition of their message, and audience members rely on interpreters for understanding. A highly complex activity, conference interpreting requires the interpreter to simultaneously listen, comprehend and analyze, and translate a speaker's utterances in real-time. During a conference, interpreters work in isolation within a sound-proof booth for simultaneous interpretation with sound equipment.

Many factors, including environmental/physical factors, may have an influence on the quality of interpretation. Each of these factors, including booth size, access, visibility, ventilation, lighting, acoustics, seating, and working surface (Cooper, Davies, and Tung, 1982; Jumpelt, 1985; and Altman, 1990), plays a crucial role in the interpreters' performance and comfort as well as the quality of interpretation. Thus, the design of booths for simultaneous interpretation is of importance not only to interpreters for producing "optimum quality" interpretation (Moser-Mercer, 1996);

but also to conference participants, to whom the quality of interpretation is critical to the understanding of conference proceedings; to speakers, for the accurate and quality transmission of their statements; and for the betterment of Taiwan's conference industry as a whole.

In Taiwan's interpretation industry, conference interpreters may often complain of the shortcomings of this venue or that, but the implications of this issue are not known, since no study of built-in (or mobile) interpretation booths has been conducted in Taiwan. This study aims to survey a sample of conference booths in Taipei, ascertain the needs of interpreters with regard to booth design, and determine whether these needs are fulfilled by existing booths.

1.2 Scope of Study

This study aims to explore the factors of built-in booths for simultaneous interpretation, the needs of interpreters with regard to booth design, and the compliance or noncompliance of current conditions with interpreters' needs and the International Standard ISO 2603 Booths for Simultaneous Interpretation (1998), established by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The literature review therefore goes into detail on standards and standardization, interpretation studies, workplace regulations, communication studies, and ergonomics, to ensure the

reader has a grasp of relevant issues. This study is exploratory in nature, and both qualitative and quantitative methods of field studies, questionnaire, and interviews will be employed in this investigation. The major objective of this study is to determine whether existing booths comply with the standard, and the level of importance or necessity interpreters in Taiwan place on the various regulations within the standard. This study focuses on easily observable booth factors, and it is beyond the scope of this study to examine more technical aspects of booth design, such as ventilation and acoustics. This study does not attempt to explore every aspect of booth design. Instead, the aim is to raise awareness of the importance of the interpreters' working environment and its effect on interpretation quality, and improve booth conditions by pooling relevant studies and materials for conference hall operators and designers to refer to. It is expected that some discrepancy will exist between current conditions, ISO 2603, and interpreters' needs. This study will explore some of the possible causes, and offer recommendations to improve the design of existing and future booths.

The terms "conference interpreting" and "simultaneous interpreting" are used interchangeably throughout this study, although differences will be explained in Chapter 2. For the purposes of this study, the term "booth" refers to built-in booths for simultaneous interpretation unless otherwise noted.

1.3 Organization of Study

The overall structure of this study takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on standards and standardization, conference interpreting, quality factors in interpretation, and general characteristics of booths for simultaneous interpretation. Chapter 3 discusses the qualitative and quantitative research methodology employed in this study. The results are presented in Chapter 4, and the analysis and implications of which are discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, the conclusion gives a brief summary and critique of the findings, and includes a discussion of the implications of the findings to future research in this area.