Synopsis

This thesis is about interpreter-mediated conversation as a mode of communication, about interpreters and their responsibilities, about what they do, what they think they should do and about what others expect them to do in face-to-face interaction.

There is a concept in which interpreting has always been something of a poor relation to translation studies. Even within interpreting, the reflective emphasis has been on conference interpreting rather than interpreting, in a more broad sense, in face-to-face encounters. Consequently, the normative role of the interpreter is often referred to as a "mere medium of transmission", which means that interpreting is a unidirectional process of transfer from one person to another and from one language to another. However, this conduit model of communication to a great extent blocks our sight into the interpreting process taking place in face-to-face settings. Due to the interpersonal nature of face-to-face encounters, interpreters in such settings, could —and arguably should —play a role far beyond that of simply rendering the words of one language into another language. The interpreter, who is the only one knowing both languages and aware of the intentions of the speakers, has to actively involve in bridging the communicative gap between the primary parties.

The conduit model is monological, essentially linking to textual model. This means people's talk (as well as the interpreter's job) is explored as a production of texts, in the one or the other language, and language use is regarded from the perspective of the information prepared by the speaker. However, the present thesis takes an opposite stance for exploring the dynamics of interpreter-mediated communication, based on a dialogic, "talk-as-activity" view, following the ideas of Linell (1994, 1996 & 1998) and Wadensjö (1992 & 1998), whose works are the essential sources of inspiration for the current thesis. The dialogical, "talk-as-activity" model implies that the meaning conveyed in and by a talk is partly a joint product and can not be understood outside its specific context. When people engage in interpreter-mediated interaction, they can be seen as doing all kinds of things, such as interviewing, joking, arguing, and persuading. This applies to interpreters and other participants alike.

One of the aims of this thesis is to develop a theoretical model of interpreter-mediated communication. Among theories of human communication, there are basically two models as the major alternatives, namely the transfer model and the

social-interactionist model, which belong to monologic and dialogic views of language and mind respectively. Applying interactionist model, the author explores the dynamics of interpreter-mediated communicative pas de trois. People are co-present with each other and interact in a peculiar triadic situation. In this situation, communicative accomplishments, understanding as well as misunderstanding, take place in social interaction, and are not the effect of interpreters' contributions alone. And interpreters have to take an active participation in this mode of communication due to their unique middle position.

Of course, theoretical models are substantially different from actual cases. Actual cases are unique and a theory of this complex and varying activity can apply only to cases in general. Therefore, cases taking place in real-life situations are examined in the current paper, and it is found that each of these cases demands unique efforts from the interpreter in the interaction. Investigations of interpreters' performance in real-world situations reveals that interpreters should be seen as acting both translators and coordinators. In theory, translating and coordinating may be distinguishable activities, but in practice they are intimately intertwined. In different degrees, one or the other of these aspects will come to the fore in interpreters' words and actions.

Interpreters are constantly concerned with norms for good interpreting. "Just translate and translate everything" is probably the most useful shorthand explanation of the norm of interpreters' professionalism. However, since every case is unique in reality, there are actually no absolute criteria for defining a mode of interpreting which would be "good" across the board. Different situations with different goal orientations, as well as different concerns, needs, desires and commitment of the primary parties, imply different demands on the interpreter. And the performance of the interpreter should be evaluated with these variables being taken into consideration.

Nevertheless, if interpreting is to be acknowledged as a profession also when it occurs outside of international conference, i.e., in people's everyday communication, and if those of us who are working or will work as interpreters in face-to-face encounters are to gain the confidence and respect of the public, we need to have some well-founded and shared ideas about what interpreting in these settings is all about, what interpreters are good for, and about preferred standards to apply in various situations.

Key words: Interpreter-mediated Communication, Face-to-face

Interaction, Translation, Coordination
Table of Contents

Chapter 1　Introduction

1.1 Purpose of This Study

The communication explosion in the twentieth century, particularly in its second half, has given a new impetus to the study of translation and interpreting, on which much of our lives now depend. However, while translating has always had a strong profile in theoretical literature, interpreting has hardly featured until quite recently. Moreover, when translating has an extraordinarily extensive and well-documented professional history, and has touched on many fields, in which it has established itself as a valued activity, say in literary studies, in history, in science and technology, or in politics and diplomacy, interpreting does not enjoy anything like the same degree as translating. Interpreting has always been poorly related to translating as a sub-class of it partly due to the fact that the two activities are traditionally regarded as involving a similar process of recoding messages in the language transfer. And although increasingly now regarded as professional activity in its own right, with accreditation, standards and extensive training, interpreting still has not, at least until relatively recently, been seen as a subject of much study and research.

Even within interpreting, with very few exceptions, the existing research investigates the work of conference interpreters, and especially those performing in the simultaneous mode. However, in modern society, interpreters are seen in many other settings where the verbal exchange taking place is something impossible without the assistance of people serving as interpreters. As Gentile pointed out, "It is important to note that any field relating to an individual's everyday existence where communication is not possible may be an area where interpreters are necessary" (Gentile 1996: 112). Outside conferences, interpreters are seen in business settings, in community meetings, and in many less formal situations in tourism, education and cultural contacts, where all the participants including the interpreter are involved in a great intensity of face-to-face interaction. Nevertheless, although it is a pervasive social phenomenon, interpreting in face-to-face encounters "is still an undertheorized field of research" (Wadensjö 1998: 15). Hopefully this thesis can draw some attention from the theoretical field to research face-to-face interpreting in its own right. And through analysis of real-life situations the author herself has experienced as an

interpreter and analysis of interpreter-mediated encounters drawn from some experts' documentation, the thesis is here to describe, rather than prescribe the dynamics of the complex and fascinating world of interpreter-mediated communication.

1.2 Basic Assumptions

The present paper takes a new direction for research in interpreting based on a dialogic, "talk-as-activity", rather than a monologic, "talk-as-text" view in language and language use.

Traditionally, the image of the interpreter is very much influenced by a "transfer" model of communication. This way of thinking of human interaction, as a unidirectional process of transfer from one person to another, is what philosopher Reddy (1979) called "the conduit model of communication". What interpreters in principal think they are doing or ought to be doing when they do a good job is deeply influenced by the conduit model of communication. Metaphors used to describe the function of interpreters are quite revealing on this point. Take, for example, "the telephone", "the echo machine" or "the mouthpiece" —all instruments conveying information without themselves affecting this information except in a merely technical sense. Interpreters are thought of, and think of themselves as conveyers of others' words and utterances, and as the channel through which prepared messages go back and forth.

The conduit model which is monological in nature has been challenged by some key figures engaged in the research of interpreting in face-to-face settings with a small number of participants.

In such settings, as Cynthia Roy (1990) has shown, the two primary participants are not only active speakers, but also active listeners; moreover the two primary speakers present their ideas not only using different languages, but also using different automatic and unconscious conventions associated with their language (openings, closings, turn-taking, signaling, understanding or lack thereof). As the two primary participants do not know each other's language and language use conventions, the only person who can logically maintain, adjust, and if necessary, repair problems in communication is the interpreter. This means that the interpreter is an active, third participant in the communication event, with the potential to influence both the

direction and the outcome of the event. According to Roy (cited in Roberts 1995: 10-11):

> If interpreters are resolving overlap, offering turns and taking turns [through their knowledge of the linguistic system, the social situation, and how each participant used language to say what they meant], they are active at a level of participation beyond that of the simplistic conduit metaphor receiving information, changing its form to another language and producing the target form.

The same idea is brought out by Wadensjö's case studies, which show that interpreters do much more than just translate and that face-to-face interpreting involves both relaying and coordinating talk. According to Wadensjö (1998: 42):

> Interpreters on duty understand themselves not only to be translating between two languages, but also to be performing on others' behalf various activities, such as persuading, agreeing, lying, questioning, claiming, explaining, comforting, accusing, denying, coordinating interactions, and so forth. This links to a more dialogical view of language and mind.

It is certainly true that in interpreter-mediated conversation, lack of communicative contact between two parties not talking each other's language is effectively remedied thanks to the interpreter. And while in theory, translating and mediating may be distinguishable activities, in practice, they are intimately intertwined.

The following will be the basic assumptions of my thesis:

— Interpreters are seen as both translators and coordinators,

— Interpreters' and others' contribution in conversation are regarded both as individual actions and as communicative 'inter-actions',

— The interpreter-mediated encounter is seen as a special case of communication, comprising both dyadic and triadic interaction.

1.3 Organization of This Thesis

This paper is divided into five chapters, excluding an introduction and a conclusion. Defining and refining concepts for further debate is a necessary step in the development of any field. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 tries to define face-to-face interpreting as a distinctive mode of communication outside conference settings. However, before we make a definition, categorization of interpreting on the whole is attempted in this chapter by which the author draws a very generic line between the conference interpreting and the interpreting occurring in non-conference settings, that is, in face-to-face encounters. And on the basis of such classification, the definition of face-to-face interpreting foregrounds a great intensity of interaction, involving all the participants in the communication.

Chapter 3 accounts for some main theoretical implications of viewing talk in the one hand as text, and, on the other hand, as activity, drawing on the ideas from Wadensjö (1992 & 1998). This means that the chapter will take a brief look at theories of language use including translation and interpretation, where the opposition between these approaches can be found reflected. Chapter 3 will also point out differences between a monologic and dialogic perspective when investigating the dynamics of interpreter-mediated communication.

Chapter 4 is to develop a theoretical model of interpreter-mediated communication shaped on the social-interactionist model of human communication. To serve this purpose, two basic models of communication, i.e. the transfer and social-interactionist models and the monological and dialogical implications on these two models are reflected. Seen from an interactionist, dialogical perspective, interpreter-mediated communication involves a complex interaction between all parties present and interpreters with their unique middle positions have to monitor the discursive social situation in which interpreting takes place.

Chapter 5 explores interpreters in interpreter-mediated communication as performing translating and coordinating tasks in one. Looking at the translating aspect of interpreters' work, the author utilizes Wadensjö (1998)'s taxonomy of interpreters' "renditions" and finds that in practice, the interpreters' renditions do not, and at some particular points, should not correspond to the originals closely. On the other hand, from the point of view of coordinating, interpreters in face-to-face interactions do more than translate, exercising a certain control over the discursive situation, with the

potential to influence the direction and the outcome of the interaction. It is then concluded in this chapter that the translating and coordinating activities are simultaneously present in face-to-face communication and interpreter-mediated interaction is driven forward by interpreters' balancing between these two aspects.

Chapter 6 initiates a discussion concerning the definition of key criteria as regards the interpreter's professionalism. While in theory, the performance of the interpreter is evaluated by their ability to produce close renditions of what the primary parties said, in practice, there are no absolute and unambiguous criteria for the assessment of the interpreter's performance. Interpreting is considered "successful" when an effective communication is achieved with the elements of particular physical surroundings, primary parties' competence, expectation and goals etc. being taken into account.

Chapter 2   A Categorization of Interpreting

"The tendency to categorize", says Snell-Hornby, "is innate in man and essential to all scientific development"(1988: 26). This is so because the effort to classify involves the identification of similarities and differences, an exercise which makes it easier for us to make sense of diversity and to order and plan our activities. Categorization is therefore an important tool of learning and research.

Today, translator- and interpreter-mediated encounters vary tremendously in terms of their settings, modes, relationship among participants and other factors, posing a major challenge to the theory, practice and didactics of interpreting in particular. In translation studies, several attempts have been made to develop typologies of translation and interpreting. For example, Alexieva (1997) and Wadensjö (1992) have made detailed classifications of interpreter-mediated events according to their respective criteria, whereas Gentile opposed strongly against any categorization of interpreting by asserting "In Australia, we do not use the term community interpreting, but simply interpreting, just as we do not use the term ' salted butter' because all our butter is salted" (1995: 112).

In the author's view, the "non-categorization" point of view is too absolute, since there indeed exist various types of interpreting in the real world to which we need to give different considerations. However, a too detailed classification of interpreting is not intended in this chapter, for the aim of the author is just to make a very general distinction between the conference interpreting and interpreting in non-conference settings, so as to define the concept of interpreting occurring in face-to-face encounters, for the convenience of further debate in the following chapters.

2.1 A Categorization of Interpreting

According to Gentile (1995), traditionally, forms of interpreting have been discussed in terms of two elements: the first, relating to the setting or environment where the interpreting takes place. This has given rise to the labels currently used, namely, conference interpreter, court interpreter, and community interpreter. The second, according to the interpreting technique utilized in the performance of interpreting, namely, simultaneous and consecutive. A third element that is rarely used as

distinguishing feature in the discrimination between forms of interpreting is the language direction in which the interpreting takes place. A fourth element, which may be usefully explored, is the social dynamics found in the interpreting setting.

One point of departure on the subject seems to proceed from a standpoint of differences between community interpreting and conference interpreting. It is the case that as the conference interpreting has always been attracting much attention from the theoretical world, the study of community interpreting has achieved some currency over the last several years, especially in those countries where interpreting in legal, health, educational and social service setting is relatively well established as a profession. It is a type of interpreting carried out in face-to-face encounters between officials and lay people, meeting for a particular purpose at a public institution.

Another influential opinion on the categorization of interpreting is presented by Adolfo Gentile, Uldis Ozoljins and Mary Vasiala Kakos in their book, *Liaison Interpreting: A Handbook* (1996). In this book it is posited that there are two main genres of interpreting, i.e., conference interpreting and liaison interpreting which is typically

> "used at situations where the acquiring or giving of information is based on exchanges between interlocutors which produce a resolution of some program or lead to a decision, a diagnosis or generally improved understanding between interlocutors" (Gentile *et al*. 1996: 17).

However, the fact that there is no consensus on the classification and definition of types of interpreting may be partly due to the different aims and ways of research adopted by different scholars. Such situation of terminological confusion has produced the result that the activities which we here call community interpreting and liaison interpreting are described in numerous designations: cultural interpreting, ad hoc interpreting, contact interpreting, public service interpreting, dialogue interpreting, three cornered interpreting and a further suggestion of "interprète social"! Nevertheless, what all these terms have in common is the fact that they are all used for interpreting in a setting other than a conference.

Therefore, to avoid this confusion and for the purpose of facilitating her later discussion, the author here would like to draw a very generic line between the

conference interpreting and the interpreting taking place in non-conference settings, which the author will call "face-to-face interpreting" for lack of a better term. The author's use of "face-to-face interpreting" has indeed been to stress the defining primacy of the setting in which the interpreting under investigation takes place, i.e., in face-to-face encounters. Also, "face-to-face interpreting" foregrounds the mode of a communication in which a complex interaction is involved between all the participants, including the interpreter.

The following graph proposed by the author shows her attempt to classify interpreting types, however, in a most general way, between conference interpreting and face-to-face interpreting.
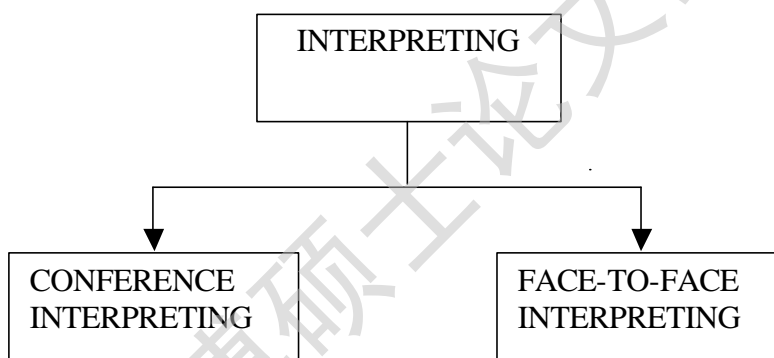
```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │  INTERPRETING   │
                    └─────────────────┘
                       │           │
                       ▼           ▼
            ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
            │ CONFERENCE   │  │ FACE-TO-FACE │
            │ INTERPRETING │  │ INTERPRETING │
            └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
```

Figure 2.1

2.2 Conference Interpreting

2.2.1 Historical Development

The first distinct interpreting role to be recognized is that of the international conference interpreter —a very recent development.

A number of studies have identified the Versailles peace talks in 1918-19 as the beginning of modern international interpreting, with consecutive interpreting as the sole means of interpreting in large gatherings, further development of such experiment was seen after World War Ⅰ with the general rise of international contacts. A significant advance for conference interpreters came immediately after World War Ⅱ when, at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, new technology allowed experiments with simultaneous interpreting, whereby interpreters worked from sound-proof booths

12

and relayed their messages through earphones to the listeners in the court-room. This method was quickly adopted at most international meetings, particularly the United Nations and its many organizations, and laid the basis for the very rapid development of an international conference interpreting profession. Moreover, a professional organization for interpreters —the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) was established, and interpreting schools developed to train future interpreters, maintaining strict standards and accept only the cream of candidates.

2.2.2 Its Prominence in Academic World

International conference interpreting gained its status from its milieu and its clientele. Therefore, it is no surprise that with few exceptions, the existing research on interpreting investigates the work of conference interpreters, and particularly those performing in the simultaneous mode. When the terminology "professional interpreting" is cited, it seems often to stand for simultaneous conference interpreting, i.e., interpreting performed by people who are enclosed separately in a booth, effectively removed form face-to-face interaction.

2.2.3 Main Ideas of Studies on Conference Interpreting

Conference interpreting is defined by Knapp-Potthoff and Knapp as "giving a more or less literal translation of what is said in language A into Language B" (1986: 152), and conference interpreter, termed as "professional interpreter", according to Müller, as "first and foremost as someone who is physically absent, providing simultaneous or consecutive interpretation as a voice ex-machina from behind the scene" (1989: 714). In a recent exercise conducted by the Reginal Centre Europe of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs, a professional profile of the interpreter and translator in the EC member countries was drafted. The resulting statement says of interpreters as follows:

> Their main occupation is to transfer messages in the form of oral translations for parties conversing in different tongues. They take a direct and active part in the communication process between the transmitter and the receiver of a message or information thus

experiencing directly the reaction to their "transfer process" (cited in Gentile 1997: 115).

Seleskovitch, proposing an interpretive theory which is tailor-made for her own professional field of conference interpreters, claims that "successfulness would mean to cope with the interpreter's sole responsibility", that is "to make sure that his listeners immediately understand what has been said" (Seleskvitch 1978: 111). Although Seleskovitch is innovative in her prescription for the interpreters to leave the linguistic forms behind and deliver in the other language only the sense of the original, her theoretical approach is, after all, founded on a monological view of language use and the interpreter is still viewed as a "complex information-processing device" (Wadensjö 1998 : 35).

In short, although conference interpreting has gained its prominence in the theoretical world of interpreting, most theories in this regard are founded in a monological way and conference interpreters are regarded as a "mere medium of transmission". The reason is mainly due to the fact that in conference settings, especially where interpreting is performed is a simultaneous mode, interpreters work into one language only and are not involved in face-to-face interactions. Nevertheless, such "non-involvement" point of view is not applicable to interpreting occurring in face-to-face settings, where interpreters work both into and out of one language and are actively involved in interaction between all parties.

2.3 Face-to-Face Interpreting

2.3.1 Its History & Status Today

The diversity of languages has, throughout history, created the need for ways of communication between speakers of different languages. Interpreting is thus one of the oldest human activities. In a sense, face-to-face interpreting is the earliest form of interpreting. While conference interpreting only came to the fore in the first half of the 20th century, face-to-face interpreting has been around since the first encounters between different linguistic groups. However, interpreting in face-to-face interactions, other than in conference settings, was not recognized as a distinct area of expertise and as a particular social role until quite recently. And it has grown up relatively

independently of, but in the shadow of, international conference interpreting.

In the post-World War II decades, several social and economic development led to the rapid growth of face-to-face interpreting in its own right. The two main areas of development were in international business contacts and, less spectacularly but more pervasively, in relation to immigrant and indigenous populations who did not speak the dominant language of their society.

And the lines of development of face-to-face interpreting have been remarkably similar throughout the world, though often with notable differences in terms of rate of development, focus of attention, political and social context and recognition of the processes.

In China today, with reform and opening-up policy, international business contacts have been witnessed in an ever-increasing number, where interpreting occurs with the highest frequency. And at the same time, the spread of international educational and cultural contacts also necessitates the growth of face-to-face interpreting, whereas the community interpreting is still quite an unusual phenomenon, which in author's point of view, will surely enjoy its development sooner or later with more and more foreigners being attracted to our country and settling down.

The modern world is characterized by the ever-increasing international contacts in every possible aspect of people's lives, which for face-to-face interpreters means more job opportunities and more room for development. However, so far, face-to-face interpreting has not generally achieved the same degree of professional organization and control as conference interpreting.

This status quo of face-to-face interpreting is, to a large extent, due to a lack of clear understanding of what it is. The following provides a definition of face-to-face interpreting and then identify its special feature.

2.3.2 Definition

Face-to-face interpreting is the name given to the genre of interpreting where interpreting is performed in two language directions by the same person physically present between a small number of participants. It covers every possible area of interaction outside international conferences where the consecutive mode of interpreting without the mediation of ancillary equipment is usually used.

Scope

The term "face-to-face interpreting", proposed by the author, seems, in its broadest possible sense, to include all interpreting situations which are outside the conference interpreting. The span of such distinction covers every possible area of interpreting in today's modern society: in business settings, where businessmen from different cultures and using different languages meet each other; in meetings between a society's legal, medical, educational and welfare institutions and its immigrants who speak a different language; in a whole host of less formal situations in tourism, education and cultural contacts. In sum, the interpreters in face-to-face settings may work in an extremely wide range of situations, and with and for a variety of people.

Spatial arrangement

The spatial arrangements in face-to-face settings are much more intimate than that in conference settings. Whereas in conference settings, interpreters usually sit in a small room specially designated to them, separating them from the speakers and the audience physically, in face-to-face encounters, interpreters are often placed between the interlocutors, which means a complex interaction is involved between all the participants including the interpreter, who could and should resort to every possible means to effect such interaction.

Language transfer

In contrast to conference interpreting where interpreting is performed in one direction, usually from the interpreter's acquired languages to his mother tongue, interpreting in face-to-face settings is typically bi-directional, that is, the same interpreter works in the two languages in question, operating both into and out of his mother tongue (A language) and his second (B) language.

Mode

In face-to-face interpreting the communication tends to consist of spontaneous, improvised pieces of spoken discourse and the setting and communicative interaction tend to be more personal. The nature of the communicative situation determines consecutive pattern of delivery being the most used mode of interpreting in face-to-face encounters, however, usually with the note-taking and equipment mediation being precluded.