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Address form shifts in interpreted Q&A sessions

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This paper examines the use of address forms in interpreter-mediated question and answer (Q&A) sessions in international conferences. The address forms analyzed include both the names and the pronouns the questioners used to address the presenters. The data were collected from two conferences held in Taiwan during which Chinese/English simultaneous interpretation were provided. The Q&A pairs were divided into three categories: (1) bilingual/multilingual communication between questioners and presenters who spoke different languages; (2) monolingual communication between questioners and presenters who spoke the same language; (3) English-as-lingua-franca communication between questioners and presenters who spoke different language but chose to use English as a common language. The results show that (1) shifts in address forms occurred most frequently in interpreter-mediated bilingual/multilingual communication, (2) simultaneous interpreters tended to conform to target-culture conventions in their renditions of address forms, even though their decisions were still influenced by the cognitive constraints ubiquitous in the process of simultaneous interpreting.

1. Introduction

Simultaneous interpreting (SI) enables communication between speakers of different languages. With the interpreters seated in a soundproof booth some distance away from the participants, conference participants with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can communicate with each other in a language they feel more comfortable with, face-to-face, in real time and uninterrupted. It is little wonder, therefore, that to people outside of the interpreting profession, the simultaneous interpreter is sometimes perceived as an “input–output robot” (Roy 1993/2002), whose sole function is to transfer words from one language to another. People familiar with the interpreting profession, however, will argue that interpreters are “communication facilitators”, rather than “invisible translating
machines” (Pöchhacker 2004:147). Despite the physical distance between them and the conference participants, the simultaneous interpreters are part of the communication event. They pay close attention to the dynamics of interaction on the floor, striving to iron out the differences brought about by cultural and linguistic disparities among the participants. To ensure smooth communication, the situation of the interaction, or the communicative context, is just as important as the text to be interpreted (Pöchhacker 1995).

This paper investigates how the interaction on the conference floor among the participants can affect the simultaneous interpreters’ interpreting strategies and vice versa. We focus on one part of a conference where interaction is most frequent and obvious — the question and answer (Q&A) sessions, and the one element that is essential in every Q&A session — the use of address forms.

2. Background

2.1 Simultaneous interpreting during Q&A sessions

Question and answer sessions are a common feature in public discourse and hence a usual part of conference interpreters’ work. The function of the Q&A sessions can be described as to provide opportunities of dialogue between the presenters and the audience, shifting the interaction in the conference from a mainly one-directional communication process to a bidirectional one. In bi/multilingual conferences, an interpreter’s interpreting performance becomes even more pivotal during this bidirectional communication process, as the success or failure of the interpreting will immediately affect the dynamics of interaction between the speakers and the questioners (Wu & Chang 2007).

Research on academic conferences has found that Q&A sessions usually follow similar procedures (Shalom 1993; Ventola 2002a). First the chair opens the discussion and assigns a turn to a questioner who indicates the intention to speak, usually by raising hands. The questioner who is given the turn initiates the question or comment. The presenter then responds to the question or comment. After that, the chair elicits questions or comments again and gives the floor to another participant. The process goes on until all participants willing to speak get their turn or until time runs out and the chair closes the session (Ventola 2002a).

The structure of Q&A becomes more complex in international conferences where the participants come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For one thing, the conference participants may need to negotiate their language choices. In Ventola’s (2002b) study of a two-day symposium held in Germany, participants code-switched between German and English, especially during the
discussion stage. As English has become the lingua franca for international conferences, more code-switching phenomena may be expected. In an international conference where SI is provided, the form and function of the Q&A may be even more complicated, as communication between the questioner and the presenter may have to go through the simultaneous interpreters. Listeners in the audience who do not speak the same language as the presenter or the questioner will have to rely on the interpreters as well.

Although Q&A sessions provide opportunities for dialogue between the presenters and the audience, this dialogue is different from that found in community interpreting, where the speaker, the addressee, and the interpreter are usually physically close, giving the interpreter the opportunity to negotiate meaning or ask for clarification (Angelelli 2000). Using Alexieva’s (1997/2002) multi-parameter model of interpreter-mediated events, SI-mediated Q&A sessions in most international conferences can be characterized as follows: (1) There is uninterrupted delivery of the source text (from the questioner then the presenter) and parallel production of the target text (from the interpreter); (2) The physical distance between the primary participants (the presenter on the stage and the questioner in the audience) and between the primary and secondary participants (the interpreter in the booth) is usually great so that communication requires the use of microphones and headsets; (3) Depending on the primary participants’ command of the source and the target languages, amongst other things, they may or may not use their interlocutor’s language to communicate, and it may be hard to predict the language choice of the questioner; (4) The power of the speaker and the addressee is usually balanced, though the presenter sometimes has a higher level of expertise than the questioner. These characteristics present challenges to simultaneous interpreters in Q&A sessions that are different from either those presented to dialogue interpreters or those presented to simultaneous interpreters during other parts of the conference. In this study we will focus on a particular challenge to the interpreters; namely, the language choices made by the presenters and questioners in the Q&A sessions and their effects on the use of address forms.

2.2 Language choices in Q&A sessions

In SI-mediated Q&A sessions, any question and its response may take any one of at least three forms: First of all, Q&A may take place between a presenter and a questioner using different languages, requiring interpretation. Many linguistic and cross-cultural problems may arise in interpreting this type of interaction, in which linguistic and cultural differences may come into play. How the interpreter deals with these challenges has a strong impact on the interaction, and the success or failure of the Q&A very much depends on the interpreter.
Another type of communication is Q&A between presenters and questioners who share a common native language and use it to communicate directly. The function of SI in these situations is only to enable the listeners in the audience who do not share that language to follow the interaction. According to Alexieva’s typology of interpreter-mediated events, when the event is located in the speakers’ home country, there tend to be more “culture-specific lexis and strategies” (Alexieva 1997/2002). When both presenter and questioner are in their home country and communicating in their shared language, they may assume more shared knowledge that is unavailable to listeners who are from another country and who do not share their language. As a result, the interpreter may need to devote more effort to “explaining” the cultural aspects of the source discourse.

The third possible scenario is communication between presenters and questioners who do not share the same native language but use English to communicate with each other directly. As English is increasingly becoming the lingua franca of international conferences, more and more non-native English communication is seen in Q&A sessions. Again, because the presenter and the questioner can communicate without an interpreter, the SI is only intended for listeners who do not understand English. As is often found in the case of non-native speaker production, the questioning can be characterized by more hesitations, self-corrections, and grammatical errors, which may become another challenge for the interpreter, as the quality of the original will inevitably affect the quality of interpreter’s output (Kalina 2005).

So far little research has been done on how these different forms of interaction affect simultaneous interpreters during the Q&A sessions. As our first attempt to fill this gap, in this paper we examine interactions in these three categories to see if the use of forms of address and pronouns by the interactants is influenced by the languages they choose to use.

2.3 Address forms in Q&A sessions

Many studies have shown that the use of address forms reflects the co-participants’ perception of roles and relations during their interaction. The classic studies of Brown and Gilman (1960) and Brown and Ford (1964) revealed how people’s choice of names and pronouns are consistently governed by power and solidarity semantics. More recent research has indicated that other complex factors such as gender, age, and attitude affect people’s choices of address forms in political interviews and debates (e.g. Bull & Fetzer 2006; Kuo 2002; Rendle-Short 2007), in business organizations (Morand 2005; Poncini 2002), and in school settings (Wortham 1996).
The use of address forms, however, varies extensively in different languages and cultures (Fasold 1990). Some forms of address in one language do not exist in another language, or the usage of seemingly equivalent ones may be governed by different norms in different linguistic and cultural contexts. The highly language- and culture-specific nature of address forms can pose great challenges for translators and interpreters, who work with at least two different cultures and languages (Baker, 1992). Translators of narrative fiction, for example, often have to deal with various address forms used in literary dialogue among different characters in the source text. To reflect interpersonal relationships in the target text, the translators need to take into consideration factors ranging from the characters’ gender and degree of intimacy to the target language’s grammatical system and the target-readers’ expectations (Baker 1992; Rosa 2000).

Compared with the translation of literary works, dealing with address forms in interpreting should be a less complicated task. Many potential problems can be avoided because of the interactants’ awareness of the intercultural communication context. The speech event itself also limits the possible choices. However, the cross-cultural, face-to-face interaction that characterizes interpreting events can make the use of address forms just as complex, especially during SI, when the demand for communication is immediate. Pöchhacker (1995) argues that address forms are especially relevant for interpreting theory, as interpreting deals with personal interaction across cultures and therefore the culture and the politeness principles underlying different cultures. For example, he describes a case study in which the interpreter renders the first-name address used in the English source language into the title plus last name in German, taking into account the cultural expectations of the German target audience.

When dealing with language combinations that involve great cultural distances, the situation may become even more complicated. Take for example Chinese and English, which differ considerably in the use of general honorific titles, professional titles, personal names, and kinship terms (Qu 2005). To begin with, while in English the given name precedes the family name, Chinese names start with the family name. These differences can cause confusion for both Chinese and English audiences. For example, when an English name is translated phonetically into Chinese during a conference, the Chinese audience can mistake the first name for the last name, and English-speaking audiences can make similar mistakes with Chinese names. Differences in pronunciation may also pose a problem. Many Chinese are familiar with common English first names, but find the last names hard to pronounce. For non-Chinese speakers, Chinese names may be difficult to pronounce. Thus, addressing someone from another culture can become a face-threatening event and may result in errors or else in the avoidance of all forms of address.
The use of personal pronouns is another problematic area. Some recent studies in dialogue interpreting have investigated the use of the first, second and third person pronouns during interpreter-mediated interaction (Angermeyer 2005; Bot 2005; Dubslaff & Martinsen 2005). In these studies, Goffman’s (1981) participation framework has been applied to the interaction between the primary participants and the interpreter, with personal pronouns being used to establish the interac-
tant’s footing, or stance, towards the other speakers in the interaction. Goffman classifies speaker’s role according to her/his degree of responsibility for what was said, and the listener’s role according to how the speaker recognizes the listener as an addressed or an unaddressed participant. These different speaker and listener roles are often revealed by the use of pronouns. For example, the use of the third person pronoun by a speaker when referring to a listener shows that the speaker has recognized that particular person as an unaddressed participant or a bystand-
er instead of an addressed participant. Naturally, the speakers usually design their utterances for the addressed rather than for the unaddressed participants (Clark 1992, 1996). While pronoun shifts in dialogue interpreting can often be attributed to the presence of the interpreter, in simultaneously interpreted Q&A sessions, the interpreters are in a booth which is often at a considerable distance from the primary participants. We were therefore curious to investigate whether there might be similar shifts of pronouns in SI-mediated Q&A sessions.

3. The study

This study investigated how two common address forms, by personal name and by pronoun, are used in interpreter-mediated Q&A sessions, including how the primary participants and how interpreters handle these address forms in their delivery. Since names and personal pronouns are potentially important cues to determine the participation framework in an interaction, we use the participation framework to investigate the primary participants’ as well as the interpreter’s changing participation status. The focus of this study is on the questioners because, in contrast to presenters who are generally professional speakers, questioners in the audience often have less experience of cross-cultural communication and can present more challenges to the interpreters. Our research questions are as follows:

1. How do language choices made by the questioners in the Q&A session affect their use of address forms?
2. How do interpreters deal with these address forms?
3.1 Data

The data were collected from two international conferences held in Taipei with Chinese/English SI by the same team of two interpreters. Both interpreters had more than ten years’ professional experience. The researchers were participant observers in the two conferences, making recordings and taking field notes.

The first conference was a half-day seminar on the topic of digital publishing. Of the three presenters, one was a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese, one of English, and one of Dutch. The English and Dutch speakers presented and fielded questions in English. The Mandarin Chinese speaker presented and fielded questions in Chinese. Approximately 160 people attended the seminar, and a third of them listened to the SI. The Q&A session followed the three presentations and lasted for about fifty minutes.

The second conference was on the topic of floral art and culture. It lasted two days and included ten presentations. Of the ten presenters, four were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, two of Japanese, one of English, one of Korean, one of French, and one of Dutch. All Chinese speakers presented and fielded questions in Chinese. One Japanese speaker and the Dutch speaker presented and fielded questions in English. The other Japanese speaker presented and fielded questions through a Japanese-Chinese consecutive interpreter. The Korean speaker also spoke through a Korean-Chinese consecutive interpreter. The French speaker presented in English but fielded questions through a French-Chinese consecutive interpreter.Nearly 300 people attended the conference and about four fifths of them listened to the SI. When the speaker used a language other than Chinese or English, the Chinese-English interpreters took relay from the consecutive interpreter. Q&A sessions took place after one or two presentations and were chaired by different moderators, all of whom were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese who could also speak English. Each Q&A session lasted between 10 and 30 minutes. There were six Q&A sessions in this conference, lasting for about 110 minutes in total.

Details of the Q&A sessions are given in Table 1. All recordings of the Q&A sessions were fully transcribed for analysis. In the first conference, four pairs involving questioners asking more than one presenter were further divided into sub-pairs. To avoid the added complexity caused by the relay from CI, two questions from a Korean speaker, one in Session 3 and one in Session 6 of the second conference were excluded from the analysis. In total, 36 Q&A pairs were analyzed, 15 from the first conference and 21 from the second.

In our analysis, we refer to the speaker in the conference as the Presenter, the moderator of the session as the Chair, and the audience member who raised questions as the Questioner. All questions were analyzed with their respective replies
but we focus on the way the Questioners addressed the Presenter. To ensure anonymity of both Questioners and the Presenters, we have changed their names in the presentation of the data. To enhance internal validity, we presented the transcriptions and our tentative analysis to the interpreters for comments throughout the study. Comments obtained from these informal interviews will also be presented in the next section where appropriate.

Table 1. Question–answer adjacency pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>No. of presenters</th>
<th>No. of Q&amp;A pairs</th>
<th>Languages involved</th>
<th>Length of recording (mins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Publishing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15*</td>
<td>5 C/E**, 5 C/C, 5 E/E</td>
<td>48:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Art</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 E/E, 1 C/E</td>
<td>10:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Art</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 C/E</td>
<td>7:07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Art</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 C/K, 1 C/C, 1 E/C, 1 K/C</td>
<td>21:51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Art</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 E/C, 4 C/C</td>
<td>14:03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Art</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4 C/J, 3 C/F</td>
<td>37:04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Art</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 K/C, 2 C/C</td>
<td>10:53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*15, including sub-pairs

**C/E: Chinese-speaking questioner/English-speaking presenter; K: Korean; J: Japanese; F: French

4. Results

We divided the 36 question-answer pairs into three categories according to the languages the questioners and presenters used (see Appendix). The first category is Q&A between a presenter and questioner using different languages and therefore needing interpretation, for example, when a Chinese-speaking questioner directs a question to an English-speaking presenter who must follow through SI (bilingual/multilingual-mediated communication). When the presenter responds in English, the questioner and other members in the audience who do not understand English must also follow through SI, in this case into Chinese. In the second conference, which also involved Japanese, Korean, and French, Q&A sometimes had to go through consecutive interpreting first, which was then taken on relay from Chinese by the simultaneous interpreters. In this study, eighteen Q&A exchanges involved different languages, and eight of which involved consecutive and relay into SI.
The second category is Q&A between presenters and questioners who shared a native language and used it to communicate with each other directly (monolingual communication). Since both conferences were held in Taipei, all monolingual Q&A pairs occurred between Chinese-speaking presenters and Chinese-speaking questioners. The function of SI in these situations was to enable non-Chinese-speaking listeners in the audience to follow. In this study, there were twelve such exchanges.

The third category comprised communication between the presenters and questioners who did not share the same native language but nevertheless used English to communicate with each other directly rather than through the interpreters (English-as-lingua-franca communication). In this study, several Chinese questioners used English to raise questions or make comments that were addressed to the English-speaking presenters. In these cases, SI was intended only for listeners who could not understand English. Only six such pairs were found in our data.

We looked at the use of address forms by the questioners in these three categories and examined discrepancies, or shifts, if any, between the original use of address forms and the interpreter’s rendition. As shown in Table 2, there are many more instances of shifts in the category of bilingual/multilingual-mediated communication, even proportionally (61% and 55%). In the following, we will discuss the shifts in address forms in the three types of interaction.

Table 2. Instances of shifts in address forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of communication</th>
<th>No. of QA pairs</th>
<th>No. of address name shift</th>
<th>No. of pronoun shifts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual/multilingual-mediated</td>
<td>18 (100%)</td>
<td>11 (61%)</td>
<td>10 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-as-lingua-franca</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>1 (16%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Bilingual/multilingual-mediated communication

4.1.1 Address name shifts

In the eighteen instances of SI-mediated Q&A pairs, as many as eleven address name shifts were observed. Most of these occurred when the questioner seemed to avoid addressing the presenter by name, or made an error when addressing the presenter by name.

4.1.1.1 Avoidance of address name. Many instances of address name shifts occurred when a questioner failed to address the presenter directly and the interpreter chose to add the name of the presenter in the delivery. Compared to interactions
between questioners and presenters in the same language, the questioners who did not use the same language as the presenters seemed likelier to avoid addressing them by name, possibly due to uncertainty about how to address them, often referring to the addressee’s company or speech topic to make it clear whom they were addressing.

Example 1 is from the only session in the digital publishing conference in which all three presenters from the conference were fielding questions on the stage at the same time. The Chinese-speaking questioner indicates to whom the question is addressed by referring to the presenter’s company. The interpreter considers that it is “more polite” to identify the presenter by name opts to add the name of the presenter, using the first name. Of the three presenters, the chair of the session had been addressing the two English-speaking presenters by their first name only and the Chinese-speaking presenter by an official title (President of a company) plus last name, following the Chinese convention of using the honorific title to show politeness. The interpreter had been following the address forms established by the chair as did all the questioners who had identified the presenters by name.

(1) ST: ……那請教首先對Google的一個問題就是……我要產生的問題是 說：Google是怎麼看待和出版商的關係？就是它選擇的出版商都是大型的嗎？……那Google要怎麼樣去和他們合作，還是基本上是在商言商，就是以價格取勝？
(…first, for Google I have a question. …The question that I have is: how does Google see its relationship with the publisher? That is, does it choose large publishers? …So how is Google going to work with them? Or will business take precedence and price be the most important consideration?)

TT: …I have a question for Tom at Google. …But my question is, how does Google look at the relationship with the publisher? Because you have worked with large publishers….And do you work with these publishers or do you just work with those that can bring you revenue?

The address pronouns used in this example are also interesting. While the questioner uses only “it” to refer to the company Google, the interpreter uses the second person pronoun “you” four times. Furthermore, since this questioner had questions for two presenters, one English-speaking and the other Chinese-speaking, it is interesting to compare that he addresses these two presenters differently. While he does not address the English-speaking presenter by name, when it comes to the question for the Chinese-speaking presenter, he uses his official title plus last name (See Example 11).
Another way to identify the presenter is to use the topic of the presentation. In Example 2, the questioner does not address the presenter directly but refers to the topic of the presentation. The interpreter, however, elucidates the indirect reference by rendering “a question about Japanese floral art” into “a question for Professor Katsu Hashimoto”.

(2) ST: 你好，我要問一下日本花道這邊；因為台灣的神木信仰喔，是日據時代的時候……
(Hello, I have a question regarding Japanese floral arts; because the belief of sacred trees in Taiwan, started during the Japanese occupation…)

TT: I have a question for Professor Katsu Hashimoto. In Taiwan, there is a popular belief in the holy tree. And I think this is probably a residue of Japanese influence in Taiwan…

(3) ST: 請教那個從庇里牛斯山來的貴賓，法國的香水不是很有名嗎？那都是用花做……
(I would like to ask the distinguished guest from the Pyrenees. Isn't French perfume famous? Perfume is made from flowers…)

TT: I have a question for Justine from Pyrenees. French perfume is famous, and perfume is distilled from flowers…

In Example 3, again the questioner avoids addressing the presenter by name but the interpreter renders “the distinguished guest from the Pyrenees” as “Justine from Pyrenees.” Note that in so doing, the interpreter also changes the register (“distinguished guest”) to an informal one (“Justine”).

Both Example 2 and 3 are from sessions in which consecutive interpretation was provided. When a consecutive interpreter was present on the rostrum, the questioners seemed to become more aware of the indirectness of the communication between themselves and the presenters.

4.1.1.2 Speaker’s error. When the speaker made an error in the form of address, the interpreters tended to correct the error. In our data, there were three instances of the questioner’s using a title plus first name to address a presenter. As mentioned earlier, the confusion may have been caused by the different conventions in the use of Chinese and English names. According to the interpreters, this confusion is quite common in their experience and they would usually correct the error.

Example 4 and 5 are from the same Q&A session, with English-speaking presenter. Both questioners use the general title plus first name (Mr. Raul) to address the presenter, though in the first example, the questioner mispronounces the presenter’s first name when trying to pronounce it in English. It should be noted
that in the Chinese version of the conference program English presenters’ names were translated phonetically into Chinese (e.g. Raul as ‘勞爾’ pronounced ‘Lao-er’) while keeping the original First Name + Last Name order, making it easy for a Chinese speaker to mistake the first name for the last. In fact, the chair of the session had been addressing the presenter in this way, and the questioners may have been following the address form established by the chair.

(4) ST: Rouly先生，謝謝你，非常精彩，那我們都收穫很多，但是我們最想要知道說你設計圖這麼漂亮，那你如何來…
(Mr. Rouly, thank you. That was excellent. We learned a lot. But we would really like to know, since your drawings are so beautiful, how…)

TT: Sir Ramirez, thank you. Thank you for a wonderful presentation. We learned a great deal. What we would like to know is, you have such beautiful drawings, so how do you…

(5) ST: 我是來自嘉義的愛花朋友，很感謝勞爾先生提供這麼美妙的創意…
(I am a flower-lover from Chiayi, I want to thank Mr. Raul for the wonderful creativity…)

TT: I came from Chia-yi. I want to thank you Raul, for such wonderful creativity and we really learned a great deal…

In Example 4, this Title + First Name is rendered as Title + Last Name. The interpreter explained that, realizing mistake made by the questioner, (s)he decided to change the address form to Title + Last Name in conformity to the English norms, but apparently did not notice that the use of the title “Sir” with Last Name might not be appropriate either. In example 5, the same use of Title + Last Name is rendered by the same interpreter as First Name only. According to the interpreters, since it takes less effort to repeat the sound made by the source language speaker, they sometimes adopt a strategy of eliminating the title while keeping the first name. This strategy can again be observed in Example 6, in which the questioner addresses the presenter twice. The first time, she uses Title + First Name + Last Name in English, and the interpreter opts to change the general title “Madame” to the professional title “Dr.” as the presenter holds a doctoral degree. When the questioner addresses the presenter for the second time, using Title + First Name, the interpreter opts to repeat the first name while omitting the general title. The interpreter admitted not being confident about the pronunciation of the French last name and had therefore used the first name instead. Again, it should be noted that this strategy alters the interpersonal relationship between questioner and presenter. Whereas in Chinese the questioner had intended to show respect by addressing the presenter with a general honorific title plus last name, to the SI users the questioner would seem to have addressed the presenter in a casual way.
In the eighteen interpreter-mediated Q&A pairs, ten pronoun shifts were observed, four of them from no use of pronoun in the Chinese source text (which is possible under the null-subject construction in Chinese), to use of the second person pronoun in the English target text. The remaining instances are all shifts from the third person to the second person pronoun. The reason for the primary speaker’s choice of third person perspective is uncertain. One possible explanation is that the questioners were trying to show deference to the presenters by not addressing them too directly. This explanation, however, cannot hold as we do not see similar ways of showing deference in the other two categories of communication. A more probable explanation may be that these questioners were aware of the indirectness of the communication between themselves and the presenters, and therefore, instead of addressing the presenters directly, chose to address the Chinese-speaking chair, who had given them the floor. The presenters here became unaddressed recipients of the messages; that is, instead of being “talked to”, they were “talked about,” as the third person pronoun has turned them from an interlocutor into an exhibit (Wortham 1996).

As demonstrated by the following examples, interpreters consistently dealt with this use of third person pronouns by questioners by shifting them into the second person, in an apparent interpreter’s attempt to re-impose the “correct” participation framework on the interaction, as if the questioner had addressed the presenter directly. The recurring pattern of shifting from the third to second person pronoun also reflects the interpreter’s goal of facilitating the communication process.
TT: I would have a question for Professor Park Mi-la. You talked about palatial silk flowers, and it suddenly occurred to me that….We were looking at your PowerPoint, we know that…

In Example 7, the Chinese-speaking questioner commented on the Korean-speaking presenter’s presentation. The questioner refers to the presenter in the third person (“she talked about”, “her PowerPoint”) but the interpreter changes the perspective to second person (“you talked about”, “your PowerPoint”) as if the questioner were addressing the presenter directly.

(8) ST: …..我想要特別請問那個橋本教授。就是那個，日本在那個十九世紀到二十世紀初期他們的那個城市發展……那花藝，就是花道想必是受到很大的衝擊，那他們是如何復出他們的那個這樣子的傳統文化這樣，謝謝。
(… I have a question especially for Professor Hashimoto, that is, Japan in the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, their cities developed….so the floral arts must have been greatly impacted, so how did they revive their traditional culture, thank you.)

TT: …I have a question for Professor Hashimoto. From the 19th to the 20th century in Japan, we saw rapid urban development in Japan….I’m sure that floral arts was negatively impacted. So, how did you revive the floral arts in Japan after World War II?

In Example 8, notice that after saying to whom the question is addressed, the questioner refers to the presenter’s country three times in the third person. The interpreter omits the first of these third-person references, and shifts the next two into second-person.

Pronoun shifts can also be observed on the part of the presenters, though only rarely, as they are usually more experienced with cross-cultural communication. Example 9 is an interesting and telling example. Here, the presenter is responding to a comment made by an English-speaking questioner, who was a presenter the day before.

(9) ST: 各位都有同歩口譯可以知道他剛剛大概在談什麼，老實說我的看法跟他不完全相同啦……那我所考量的方向是你這樣買一束花回去看半年都不會來買[台語]，這是我們這個是從另外一個角度來考量……
(You have all been listening to the simultaneous interpretation so you know what he was just talking about — honestly speaking my views differ from him…But my consideration is that if you were to buy a bouquet like that you wouldn't return to buy flowers for another half year [in the Taiwanese dialect], so we should think about this from another perspective.
Address form shifts in interpreted Q&A sessions

TT: So you have all been listening to simultaneous interpretation, I am sure you understood what Mr. Balman was saying…. However, from my personal perspective is that this will be bad news for flower growers. So, of course there are pros and cons…

Unlike many presenters in our data who started their responses to the questions or comments by recognizing the questioner in the second person (e.g. “thank you for your question”), in this case when responding to the questioner’s comments, the presenter starts by addressing the Chinese-speaking audience in the second person, referring to the English-speaking questioner in the third person (“You have all been listening to the simultaneous interpreting so know what he was just talking about”). With this change of perspective, or “footing” (Goffman 1981), the Chinese presenter has aligned with the Chinese-speaking audience, while excluding the English-speaking questioner, turning the questioner into an unaddressed receiver of the response. We would like to suggest that this change of footing is not unmotivated. As the questioner actually made a comment that was at odds with the presenter’s point of view, the presenter’s change of footing may be regarded as an attempt to influence the audience in favour of his own point of view (Brown & Gilman 1960; Brown & Ford 1964). This change in the participation framework is further strengthened by the presenter’s code-switching between Mandarin Chinese and the Taiwanese dialect, two languages that are shared by his Chinese-speaking audience. When we look at the interpreter’s rendition of the response, one obvious shi is the explicitation of the pronoun “he” to “Mr. Balman”. The interpreter reported in retrospect that (s)he considered it more polite to refer to the questioner, who had been a presenter on the previous day, by title and last name instead of just using “he”.

4.2 Monolingual communication

In the 12 instances of monolingual Q&A pairs, three address name shifts (all of them related to differences between Chinese and English address conventions) and three pronoun shifts (two of them were from no pronoun in Chinese to second person in English and one from third person to no pronoun.) In the following, we first present a typical example of monolingual communication and then some examples of shifts.

4.2.1 Address convention in Chinese

In accordance with the Chinese convention, in all instances of Chinese monolingual pairs, including those involving shifts, questioners addressed presenters using title plus last name. When the presenter had an official title, that title was used; otherwise, a general honorific title such as “Mr.” plus last name was used.
In Example 10, the questioner used the honorific title “Director” plus last name to address the presenter.

(10) ST: ……請問那個張處長，剛剛講到那個蘭花喔那個以及基因轉植那個，可以和我們說一下 [台語]，大約它那個是什麼花種，或者是那個什麼時候可以出來，跟我們說一下好嗎 [台語]? 謝謝。
(...I would like to ask Director Chang about the orchid that has been genetically modified, is it possible to tell us [in Taiwanese dialect], what kind of orchid species, or when they will come out, is it possible to tell us [in Taiwanese dialect]? Thank you.)

TT: …I would like to ask Director Chang. You talk about the genetically modified orchid that can bloom for over six months. Can you maybe tell us when these genetically modified orchids will be hitting the markets? I am very curious to find out.

It should be noted that the presenter in this example, “Director Chang”, is the same official described in Example 9. As we mentioned earlier, this Mandarin-speaking presenter sometimes code-switched to Taiwanese in his presentation to seek solidarity from the Mandarin-Taiwanese bilingual listeners in the audience. The questioner in this example also code-switched into Taiwanese twice when addressing the presenter (“can you tell us?”). Code-switching, however, is difficult to convey through SI. Hence the subtle changes in the affective aspect of the interaction can go unnoticed by the English language listeners.

4.2.2 Differences in address conventions between Chinese and English

Example 11, from the digital publishing conference, is an instance of shift in interpreted monolingual communication. It should be noted that the chair of this conference had been addressing the three presenters in different ways, the two English-speaking presenters with first name (“Tom” and “Thomas”), and the third Chinese-speaking presenter, the president of a technology firm, as “President Yang”. In Q&A, members of the audience seem to follow the chair’s lead; in this example, the Chinese-speaking questioner addresses the presenter as “President Yang”, but this is rendered in SI only as “Mr. Yang”. When asked about this change, interpreter explained that it would have been hard for the English listeners, mainly the two English-speaking presenters, to identify “President Yang”. (It might also seem strange to have three people sharing the same stage represented as “Tom”, “Thomas”, and “President Yang”, though the interpreter did not give this as an explanation.) Another questioner also addresses the presenter as “President Yang”, and the SI again changes the title to Mr., though this time with the presenter’s full name, as “Mr. Kevin Yang”.

Because the questioners in both “President Yang” instances raised questions for two presenters in their turn of questioning, first to the English-speaking presenter from Google (“Tom”) and second to the Chinese-speaking presenter (“President Yang”), it is interesting to contrast the way they address the English-speaking and Chinese-speaking presenters (e.g. Example 1 vs. Example 11). Whereas they both address the Chinese-speaking presenter with official title plus last name, they either use the company name to refer to the English-speaking presenter or do not address the English-speaking presenter at all.

It is worth noting the lack of consistency in the interpreters’ choices and strategies toward the use of address names in this category (see Appendix). While in the bilingual category the interpreters had consistently chosen to conform to the target language convention, in this category, they sometimes changed the Chinese forms of address to conform to English-language conventions (“Teacher Chuang” to “Mr. Chuang”), but sometimes kept the Chinese form (“Director Chang” and “Director Lin”). When we presented this data to the interpreters, they said they were aware that using “Teacher” as a professional or honorific title is uniquely Chinese and had therefore dropped it in their English rendition. But they did not consider addressing people with job titles such as “Director” or “President” plus last name to be inappropriate, since this is commonly seen and widely accepted in the English used in the Chinese-speaking community, and hence in conference settings in this part of the world whenever English is the conference language. In other words, from the interpreters’ point of view, they had consistently conformed to the target language convention in this category as well.

Among the three pronoun shifts, there are two instances in which the shift is from no pronoun in Chinese to second person pronoun in the English interpretation, a necessary step when translating null-subject Chinese sentences into English. The only “real” pronoun shift in this category is described in Example 12, where the questioner used the third person to refer to the presenter. A possible explanation for this use of the third-person perspective is the pragmatic function of the questioning — that is, making comments. The questioner was speaking from the perspective of the audience, or at least on behalf of his floral art association, as
can be seen by his use of the first person plural we perspective from the very beginning. The use of the third person pronoun, however, was not rendered into English.

(12) ST: ……我們很有幸，在這段時間裡面，共同閱讀了莊先生的內心之美。同時，我們也跟他共同分享了這個美麗的世界，我們這個時間，也共同閱讀了，那個一部的佛經，這就是佛經，就是經典。

(…We are very honored, to have been able, in this period of time, together to have read, the beauty of Mr. Chuang’s heart, also, we have shared with him this beautiful world, in this time, we have read together, a part of the Buddhist scripture, that is the Buddhist scripture, the classics.)

TT: …We are so fortunate in this short period to have the opportunity to read the inner beauty of Mr. Chuang’s heart. We also, we shared this beautiful world together. And actually we also read some of the important essence of Buddhism, of the mantras.

4.3 English-as-lingua-franca communication

Our data included a total of six instances of English-as-lingua-franca Q&A pairs. All of the questioners were native speakers of Chinese. Except for pair 12, between the chair of a session and the presenter in the floral art conference, all pairs occurred in the digital publishing conference. Only one instance of address name shift was found, and no pronoun shift was observed. In contrast with the situation in bilingual/multilingual-mediated communication, those who used English to put questions to the English-speaking presenters all consistently addressed the presenters by name. Furthermore, in contrast to the many uses of the third person pronoun found in bilingual/multilingual-mediated Q&A pairs, all questioners in this category used the second person to refer to the presenters.

Example 13 is typical of this category. The questioner addresses the presenter by first name and consistently uses the second person pronoun to address him.

(13) ST: Sorry. I have one question for Tom. Regarding to the uh the Google Book Booksearch….And the second one is, do you accept all the publishers or do you make any selections? …

TT: 我有一個問題要問Tom。有關這個Google Booksearch……第二個問題是：
你接受所有的出版社嗎？還是說你有一個篩選的過程？……
(I have a question for Tom. This is related to Google Booksearch…. The second question is: do you accept all publishers? Or do you have a screening process?…)
As mentioned earlier, the chair of the Q&A has been addressing the two English-speaking presenters by their first names. This may be the reason why all questioners followed suit and addressed the two English-speaking presenters by their first name. In the Chinese rendition, the interpreters also used the presenters’ first names, pronounced in English. When we consider the interpersonal relationship between the presenter and the questioner, however, we see that the use of the first name may not be appropriate here. While the chair and the presenter may have known each other on a first-name basis, it is more appropriate for the questioner to address the presenter with title plus last name. However, the questioners may see themselves as following “Western” norms of using first names when addressing people.

It should be noted here that the two presenters’ last names may also play a role in explaining why the questioners chose to address them by their first name. The first presenter, Thomas, for example, has a rather unusual last name and this may account for the questioners’ use of his first name instead of title plus last name; they prefer not to risk misusing or mispronouncing the presenter’s last name or lose face both for themselves and for the presenter.

The only instance of shifts in forms of address in this category is when a questioner mispronounces the presenter’s name “Thomas” as “Toms” — which sounds similar to the name of the other presenter (“Tom”). The interpreter apparently realized this and immediately corrected it to “Thomas”. This example of repair also illustrates the many challenges interpreters face as an increasing number of non-native English speakers choose to use English at international conferences even when interpretation into their native languages is available.

5. Conclusion

In an international conference where SI is provided, participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can use different languages to talk to one another, directly, and without interruption. A close look at the interaction on the floor, however, reveals that although the provision of interpreting services may create the appearance of direct, smooth communication, interaction among the participants is still shaped by the languages they choose to use. This is particularly true during Q&A sessions, when the general audience, often less experienced with cross-cultural communication, is invited to take part.

This study investigated how address names and pronouns used by the questioners may be influenced by the languages they use, hence creating different challenges for the interpreters. The results have demonstrated the complexity of simultaneous-interpreted Q&A sessions, as well as the interpreters’ efforts to “optimize the interpreting product and make an event more communicative” (Kalina 2005).
When the communication is between questioners and presenters using different languages, the use of address forms can be influenced both by the different address conventions of their respective languages and their awareness of the cross-cultural nature of the communication event. The different conventions of address in the languages may result in the wrong use or avoidance of forms of address, especially among audiences with limited experience in cross-cultural communication. Having a better knowledge of the conventions in the target language and recognizing the importance of clearly identifying the addressee(s), the interpreters may choose to correct the speakers’ errors, adapt their rendition to conform to target language conventions, or add addressees’ names explicitly. However, the decision may also be influenced by immediate cognitive constraints and the results may not always be successful, as the variation in address form systems in different languages can be hard to master, even for cross-cultural communication experts such as professional interpreters.

In addition, even though SI services are available, the questioners may still be aware of the indirectness of the communication between themselves and the presenters. This awareness may manifest itself in their use of the third person to refer to presenters, thus framing them as unaddressed recipients of their messages. Again, the interpreters, who are experienced cross-cultural communicators, may try to impose on the interaction the “appropriate” framework of participation, shifting from third to second person, thus creating the illusion of direct communication.

When the communication is between speakers of the same language, the interpreters may feel more relaxed, as they are now providing a “running commentary” of what is going on. However, different challenges may present themselves, as the questioner and the presenter may become less aware of the cross-cultural communication situation. This assumption of common knowledge may make the interpretation more challenging as the interpreters need to overcome these “culture-specific lexis and strategies” (Alexieva 1997/2002). One of the challenges in the use of address terms is manifested when the presenters and the questioners follow the conventions of a source language that lacks direct equivalents in the target language, which the interpreter may cope with by providing no translation at all. Even when an equivalent term exists, the interpreter may also choose to render it differently depending on the situation. Another complicating factor in the interpretation is the code-switching used by questioners and presenters who share more than one common language, since such code-switching cannot come across through the interpretation, making it impossible for target language listeners to detect the socio-cultural function of code-switching in the interaction.
With the increasing use of English as the lingua franca of international conferences, more audiences may choose to use English. Questioners using their second language may make more mistakes grammatically, semantically, or phonologically, which would require the interpreter to divert more effort to the comprehension of the source language message. The resulting common use of first names in this study suggests that non-native speakers of English may regard the norms of American English as the ones to follow whenever English is spoken, regardless of the speakers’ native languages and cultural backgrounds. How interpreters deal with this situation may depend on how important they believe the style of their interpretation is. One interesting characteristic of this type of communication is that, although the use of English seems to make communication between the questioners and the presenters more “direct,” at least judging by the use of the second person pronoun, the questions tend to be shorter and the types of pragmatic functions they cover also seem to be rather limited, as compared to the communication enabled by the interpreters. Although it is unfair to draw any conclusion from the small sample of English-mediated Q&A pairs in this study, this possible “diluting effect” of English-as-lingua-franca communication as compared with interpreter-mediated communication may merit further research.

The analysis of the small corpus of professional SI in this paper has shown that interpreters are conscious of their goal of facilitating the bi-directional communication during Q&A sessions. The way they deal with the address forms used by the questioners and presenters represents their effort to facilitate, or even “manage”, the communication. The interpreters’ inconsistency in dealing with the same address forms also supports the claim that the interpreter’s decision-making process is both norm-based and cognitively constrained (Shlesinger 1999; Chang & Schallert 2007).

We hope this study will contribute to the understanding of how interaction works in multilingual conferences, and how the interaction on the floor impacts simultaneous interpreters; we also hope to generate more interest in the study of interaction in conference interpreting.

Acknowledgement

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References


Appendix

1. Bilingual/multilingual-mediated communication

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<th>Questioner language</th>
<th>Presenter language</th>
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<td>C</td>
<td>E (D)</td>
<td>Google</td>
<td>Tom from Google</td>
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<td>他 [his]</td>
<td>你的 [you]</td>
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<td>Sir Ramirez</td>
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<td>她 [her]</td>
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2. Monolingual communication

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source text</td>
<td>Target text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>3–2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>楊董 [President Yang]</td>
<td>Mr. Yang</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>5–2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>楊董 [President Yang]</td>
<td>Mr. Kevin Yang</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>你 [you]</td>
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### 3. English-as-lingua-franca communication

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Pair</th>
<th>Questioner language</th>
<th>Presenter language</th>
<th>Address Name</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
<th>Source text</th>
<th>Target text</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>you</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>10–1</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>王先生 [Mr. Wang]</td>
<td>you-honorific</td>
<td>Mr. Wang</td>
<td>you-honorific</td>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>10–2</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>吳先生 [Mr. Wu]</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Mr. Wu</td>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>張處長 [Director Chang]</td>
<td>you-honorific</td>
<td>Director Chang</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>莊先生 [Mr. Chuang]</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Mr. Chuang</td>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>you</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FA4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>莊老師 [Teacher Chuang]</td>
<td>you-honorific</td>
<td>Mr. Chuang</td>
<td>you-honorific</td>
<td>you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>莊先生 [Mr. Chuang]</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>Mr. Chuang</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>( )</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA6</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>FA6</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>you</td>
<td>Director Lin</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>you</td>
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REPORT

Interpreter training and research in mainland China
Recent developments

Wang Binhua and Mu Lei
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies

Against a background of favorable socio-economic conditions and the development of Translation Studies into an autonomous discipline, translation and interpreting programs are mushrooming in mainland China. This article reports on the development of interpreter training and research here in recent years through an overview of different types of training programs, curriculum designs, training models or paradigms, new textbooks and interpreter accreditation tests. Some salient examples of interpreting research in mainland China are also critically reviewed.

1. The development of Translation Studies into an autonomous discipline in mainland China

With rapid economic and social development, the need for high-quality interpreting services in China is surging, and interpreter training and research in mainland China have been booming, especially in the past decade. This development has occurred against the background of the gradual emergence of Translation Studies (including interpreting studies) as an autonomous discipline in China since the 1980s. By 2008, several top foreign studies universities in mainland China had established Graduate Institutes of Interpreting and Translation Studies. Among them were Beijing University of Foreign Studies (Beijing Waiguoyu Daxue, known as ‘Beiwai’), Shanghai International Studies University (‘Shangwai’) and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (‘Guangwai’), all of which now offer both MA and PhD programs in translation and interpreting studies. In addition, nearly twenty other universities have set up Schools or Departments of Translation and Interpreting, offering mainly undergraduate programs in translation and interpreting.
Favorable socio-economic and institutional conditions have created a unique opportunity to improve the status of interpreter training programs. In 2000 interpreting was listed for the first time in the National Syllabus Guidelines as a compulsory course for all undergraduates majoring in English, and it is now taught as a two-semester course in the third or fourth year of most BA programs. In 2006 the Ministry of Education added a BA in Translation and Interpreting to its list of university degree ‘majors’ and authorized three universities to offer a BA in Translation and Interpreting (BTI). To date (early 2009), nineteen universities have been authorized to offer the BTI course, with an intake of 20–50 students per institution each year. In 2007 the National Degree Committee under the State Council authorized fifteen universities to launch a new Master’s program in Translation and Interpreting (MTI), although in practice the two streams can and have been separated: nine of these institutions have been approved to launch the Masters in Interpreting (MI), about half of which already have students in first and/or second years.

This rapid development of translation and interpreting programs has generated a rising interest in relevant pedagogy and research, especially among university teachers, who are now grappling with such challenges as the design and development of syllabi and curricula, modes of training and teaching methods.

2. An overview of (translation and) interpreting programs

Currently, both translation and interpreting (T & I) are widely taught in universities and colleges in mainland China at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Training in interpreting falls into the following four broad categories:

1. Translation and/or interpreting as an elective course
   Translation and interpreting are offered in some higher learning institutions as an elective course at undergraduate level for non-foreign-language majors.

2. Translation and/or interpreting as compulsory courses
   All undergraduates majoring in English (and in several other foreign languages) are now required to take courses in translation and interpreting, usually in the third and fourth years. The main goal both of these compulsory courses and of the above-mentioned elective is to enhance foreign language competencies, traditionally listed as ‘listening’ (comprehension), speaking, reading, writing (听，说，读，写 ‘ting, shuo, du, xie’) and recently expanded to include Translation (yi, 译).

3. Translation and/or interpreting as a ‘specialization/orientation’
   In most foreign language departments, a T&I ‘specialisation/orientation’ (专业方向 ‘zhuanye fangxiang’) track is offered to some postgraduate students who are
selected for their aptitude to specialise in translation and interpreting. “Specializing” or “oriented” courses in translation and interpreting are offered alongside courses in linguistics and literature, usually comprising about one third of total class hours, and aimed chiefly at developing actual translation ability.

4. Translation and/or interpreting as an autonomous subject/discipline
Translation and interpreting are taught as an autonomous subject at undergraduate level at universities authorized to run the BTI program. T&I are also taught at (post)graduate level at many universities, including the fifteen approved to run the new MT (Masters in Translation) and MI (Masters in Interpreting) programs. In the case of Shangwai, these degrees are in addition to a separate Professional Diploma in Conference Interpreting (without an MA degree attached). In some cases these postgraduate programs and their degrees still come under Departments of English Language and Literature (see Section 4 below). In addition, Beiwei, Guangwai and Shangwai have been authorized to confer MA and PhD degrees in Translation Studies (in addition to the MTI degrees), within which a specialization in interpreting studies is possible.

Collectively, these programs add up to an independent and relatively complete system of programs in mainland China teaching translation and/or interpreting as a discipline, in which (core) T&I courses, aimed at cultivating students’ translation and/or interpreting skills, comprise over 40% of total class hours.

A significant step has been the gradual move towards institutional autonomy of the T&I programs, which had earlier been no more than a minor component of the syllabus in departments of foreign languages and literature. The independence of T&I programs may give a strong impetus to their development: institutional autonomy of T&I within academe may well bring more support from educational authorities at different levels, leading to better curricula. All in all, these developments may earn better recognition for translation and interpreting as professions distinct from other occupations requiring bilingual skills (see Gile 2008).

Two specific features of these T&I programs should be mentioned here. One is the distinction between “MA in T&I Studies” on the one hand, and “Masters in T&I” (and some other existing vocational interpreter training courses) on the other, the former being oriented towards academic research and the latter towards professional practice. Another feature is the specialization into translation or interpreting at postgraduate level, as seen with the creation of the MA in Interpreting Studies and Masters in Interpreting (MI). At the undergraduate level, translation and interpreting are not separated, with exceptions in one or two institutions.
3. Interpreter training: Curriculum design

At the postgraduate level, interpreter training programs in mainland China include the MA in Interpreting Studies which is more research-oriented, and those more oriented to professional practice, such as the new Masters in Interpreting (MI) and a few other, pre-existing programs.

A survey of three representative institutions in mainland China — namely the Graduate School of Translation and Interpreting (GSTI) at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), the Graduate Institute of Interpreting and Translation (GIIT) at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), and the Graduate School of Interpreting and Translation (GSIT) at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) — shows a number of common features in their respective postgraduate interpreting studies and interpreter training programs, including the following four curriculum components, though the emphasis varies somewhat between institutions:

1. skills-based component, e.g. consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting, sight translation;
2. subject-knowledge-based component, e.g. topic-based interpreting practice, specialized knowledge courses;
3. language-pair-specific component, almost always centering on Chinese–English;
4. professional-practice-oriented component, e.g. observation and appraisal of interpreting, mock conferences or internships.

In addition, interpreter training programs often include a course in written translation and/or research-oriented components (introduction to interpreting studies, basic theories of interpreting, introduction to translation theories, methodology of translation studies, etc.). The traditional MA programs also require students to complete an academic thesis, which is usually written towards the end of training.

In Table 1 we present the outline curriculum for the (vocationally-oriented) Masters in Interpreting (MI) proposed by the National MTI Commission for the MI in 2007.

As shown in Table 1, most of the compulsory credits proposed for the MI are in skills-oriented courses, including the foundation courses in interpreting, consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting, supplemented by topic-based interpreting practice and foundation courses in translation and translation theories. The additional options proposed for MI students (sight translation, mock-conference interpreting and specialized courses such as business interpreting, court interpreting or diplomatic interpreting) could be offered by any institution as desired, where feasible (i.e. depending on local faculty, demand, etc.).
Towards the conclusion of the training, MTI students would be required to present an internship (‘field practice’) report, as a counterpart to the traditional thesis in academic MA programs.

Within the above template, the institutions authorized to launch the MTI (MT and/or MI) in 2007 have been left considerable freedom, and were expected to report back to the Ministry of Education in late 2009 or 2010, after the first student intake had graduated.

At undergraduate level, a general survey of universities offering the BTI program shows that such curricula consist of three components:

1. Enhancement of bilingual competence, including courses in both English (pronunciation and intonation, grammar, vocabulary, listening comprehension, speaking, reading and composition), and Chinese (Traditional Chinese, Modern Chinese).

2. Practical translation and interpreting, including the foundation course in interpreting, consecutive interpreting, topic-based interpreting practice, English/Chinese interpreting, translation practice, specialized translation and literary translation;


### Table 1. Curriculum template for Master of Interpreting (MI) in mainland China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of curriculum component</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Credit value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory for Master courses in China</td>
<td>Political theory</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese language and culture</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory for all MTI</td>
<td>Foundation course in interpreting</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foundation course in translation</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General theory &amp; practice of translation</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory for MI (interpreting majors)</td>
<td>Consecutive interpreting</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simultaneous interpreting</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topic-based interpreting practice</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional options in MI (interpreting)</td>
<td>Second foreign language</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sight interpreting</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mock-conference interpreting</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business interpreting/Court interpreting/Diplomatic interpreting</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A striking change in curriculum design for interpreting has been the shift from topic-based to skills-based teaching systematically proceeding from short to full consecutive at the undergraduate level to full consecutive and simultaneous interpreting at the postgraduate level. Some schools also emphasize the specificity of interpreting from and into Chinese. The rationale can be attributed to three factors:

1. **Students’ level in their B language** — Whereas European schools in particular can draw on a large pool of bilingual or even multilingual trainees, China does not possess such an asset, and students are usually in need of language enhancement, especially in their B language.

2. **The need to interpret into the B language.** In contrast to the Western tradition of favouring interpreting into the A language (with little or no ‘retour’ on some markets), interpreters in China are virtually always required to interpret both ways, placing higher demands on their B language.

3. **Perceived major linguistic/structural differences.** Perceived differences between Chinese and Western languages are believed by some schools to justify a curriculum component specifically targeting language-(pair)-specific problems.

4. **Examples of post-graduate interpreter training programs in leading institutions**

There seems to be some variation in the way different institutions are implementing the MTI in this trial period, while other, often multiple courses in interpreting continue to be run in the same institutions, in different departments and at different levels. Here we present some of the better-known postgraduate-level conference interpreting programs (some but not all of which are now ‘MI’ programs) which have trained most of the graduates now working on the local or national markets, either freelance or with governmental or international agencies.

These programs have local or institutional specificities as well as some common features. For example, most have a two-stage entrance exam in which candidates are short-listed after a first test (including tasks like composition, translation, gap-filling (Cloze), summary/gist and sometimes a general-knowledge quiz or reading comprehension test), then finally selected based on an interview with improvised speeches and retelling in both languages, designed to test communicative and public speaking skills, language proficiency, and aptitude for interpreting (some programs specify this to include intellectual curiosity, personality, etc.). But they also differ in a number of points, as will be seen from these brief summaries.
4.1 Beijing University of Foreign Studies (‘Beiwai’)

The tradition of interpreter training in Beiwai may be traced back to 1979, with the establishment of the UN Training Program for Interpreters and Translators, which turned out 98 interpreters out of a total of 217 graduates. Beiwai still enjoys the reputation of being the alma mater of these interpreters, most of whom work for the UN and other international organizations, Chinese government agencies, or freelance (including some who work as instructors in interpreter training courses overseas, such as the Monterey Institute of International Studies in the US and the University of Westminster in London).

After the UN-funded program was discontinued in 1995, Beiwai continued to train interpreters in a newly established Graduate School of Translation and Interpreting (GSTI), the first home-grown program of its kind in mainland China, offering two-year professional training in conference interpreting at MA level.

Beiwai’s distinctive features include (i) a large student intake — last year approximately 80 candidates were admitted for postgraduate interpreter training — and high pass rate (all trainees completing the course obtain a qualification); and (ii) provision for other language combinations than English; since 2007, Beiwai has been offering an ‘MTI Plus’ in Chinese–English plus optional French, German or Russian.

4.2 Shanghai International Studies University (‘Shangwai’)

The Graduate Institute of Interpreting and Translation (GIIT) of Shanghai International Studies University was established in 2003. It offers a two-year Professional Diploma in Conference Interpreting and is the only program in mainland China recognized by the AIIC Training Committee in 2005 as “fully meeting AIIC criteria”; most of its interpreting instructors are AIIC members. The program takes about ten trainees per year. Towards the end of first year there is an eliminatory mid-point screening test, and at the end of the second year, a graduation (diploma) examination, including both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting in both directions is held with a panel of external and internal examiners including representatives of the interpretation services of the UN and European Union. The EU’s DG-SCIC supports the program and since 2007 has sent grant students to GIIT and UIBE (see below). Students go on internships every year at UN agencies.

With the addition of an MTI program in interpreting in 2008, GIIT is currently running both a government-sponsored (MI) and an independent, ‘special project’ (Professional Diploma) course.

BUFS-GSTI (‘Beiwai’) and SISU-GIIT (‘Shangwai’) were the first two Chinese training schools to join CIUTI, in 2008 and 2009 respectively.
4.3 University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) (‘Jingmaoda’)

In the 1980s, UIBE began sending teachers to Brussels for training, and in 2001 UIBE’s SIS (School of International Studies, formerly the Department of English) and DG-SCIC jointly established an EU-China Interpreter Training Center on their Beijing campus, leading to a two-year MA program in conference interpreting (consecutive and simultaneous) in 2004. SCIC representatives are present at the admission and at the final exam, as well as the mid-term (eliminatory) screening test at the end of first year.

A distinctive feature of the UIBE program is its use of the SCIC method, with all classes being team-taught by (at least) one native speaker of each language. Instructors are all active and trained professional interpreters with teaching experience. Since 2007, the Center has accepted European scholarship students (one or two per year) selected by its EU counterpart.

4.4 Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (‘Guangwai’)

Since the late 1970s, Guangwai has offered courses in interpreting to undergraduate students in the English Department. In 1993, cooperation with the British Council in interpreting curriculum design and instructor training led to the establishment of the Department of Translation and Interpreting, the first of its kind in mainland China. In 2005 the Graduate School of Interpreting and Translation (GSIT) was formally established, drawing upon the experience of the previous decade.

Alongside other programs at different levels (including MI and BA in T&I), Guangwai offers a three-year MA program in conference interpreting, which covers both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. This program takes about 10 students a year, and passing-out rate is high (all trainees completing the course and the graduation thesis obtain the MA degree).

The program in Guangwai features an admission test of applicants’ proficiency and an aptitude test for interpreting, a mid-term screening test and a graduation exam (with no external examiners, however). Systematic curriculum design is a typical feature of the program in Guangwai. Four curriculum components are designed to train the different aspects of interpreting competence, with distinct foci on interpreting skills, interpreting topics and extra-linguistic knowledge, language-pair-specific transference and professional practice. In 2007, the curriculum was designated a ‘National Quality Curriculum’ (‘guojia jingpin kecheng’) by the Ministry of Education.

Guangwai has been a leading promoter of the MTI project and its President currently chairs the national commission for the MTI.
4.5 Xiamen University (‘Xiada’)

Xiada began offering interpreting courses to undergraduate English majors in the mid-1980s, culminating in 1991 with the creation of its three-year MA Interpreting Program within the College of Foreign Languages & Cultures. Its main overseas partners and contacts have been the British Council (in the 1990s), the Asia-Link Program of the EU (in 2004) and other schools, including Monterey and Westminster (London). Alongside a newly-launched MI (20 students), Xiada continues to offer its MA in Interpreting within the Department of English Language and Literature (8–10 students).

The curriculum includes consecutive and simultaneous interpreting (128 class hours over 2 semesters in each), frequent mock conferences with SI, as well as basic translation theories, research methods, discourse for translators and general linguistics (64 class hours each over a single semester). Final certification is granted on successful completion of all required courses, a graduation thesis and an oral defence. No foreign students had been admitted until 2009, but parallel instructors (native speakers of English and Chinese) are used for mock-conference feedback.

The Xiada program is known for its Xiada Interpreter Training Model, presented in Lin et al. (1999), one of six sets of interpreting coursebooks published by members of its staff (e.g. also Lei & Chen 2006). This model was the first in mainland China to advocate a skills-led (against the then prevalent theme-oriented) syllabus as the cornerstone of interpreter training. Its core postulate is that interpreter training should be based on the cultivation of skills (analytical listening, working memory, public speaking, note-taking, etc.) and the nurturing of professionalism, with particular emphasis on the preparatory phase (knowledge and language skills) and quality control.

These five institutions are among the nine now approved to launch the MI (Masters in Interpreting) following the nationwide guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education. All these institutions are still experimenting with the new MI course in parallel to their existing postgraduate interpreter training programs.

5. Textbooks for interpreter training

One possible difference between practices in mainland China and the West is that, at least at undergraduate level, interpreter training courses within the national educational system are encouraged to use approved textbooks. As far as the authors were able to ascertain, textbooks are specified for almost all undergraduate courses in interpreting, and course instructors usually go by the book; whereas textbooks
are only sometimes used in postgraduate programs: A common practice in teaching is to utilize audio and visual materials taped in authentic conferences or downloaded from the internet along with some materials from textbooks.

Close to one hundred textbooks on ‘interpreter training’ have been published in China since the late 1970s, but most are designed mainly for self-study applicants to accreditation tests (see below) while some target specialized domains, such as business or escort interpreting. Among those adapted for classroom use, our information suggests (see also Hu 2008), that some textbooks — in particular: Wu (1995), Mei (1996), Lin et al. (1999), Zhong et al. (2006, 2007, 2008), Lei & Chen (2006) and Wang (2006) — are used more widely than others.3

The textbooks fall into two broad paradigms (Hu 2008:30): topic-based (organized around subject-matter frequently met in interpreting) and skills-based (organized around interpreting skills). Typical examples of topic-based textbooks include Wu’s Oral Interpretation: A Course Book and Mei’s An Advanced Course of Interpretation. Skills-based resources include Lin’s Interpreting for Tomorrow, Lei & Chen’s Challenging Interpreting: A Coursebook of Interpreting Skills and Zhong’s textbook series A Coursebook/Foundation Coursebook of Interpreting between English and Chinese and A Coursebook for Simultaneous Interpreting between English and Chinese. Wang’s Conference Interpreting: Theories, Skills and Practice is designed as a textbook for a new MA course in interpreting theory and practice, and comprises four major parts: a simple introduction to interpreting theories, an explanation of interpreting skills, selected authentic conference speeches for practice and tips for aspiring professionals.

6. Interpreter accreditation

As early as 1995, the Shanghai Municipal Government launched a test-based accreditation scheme entitled the Shanghai Interpreters Accreditation (SIA), which has been widely recognized by business employers, especially in the eastern provinces of China, as a valuable complementary proof of English proficiency for non-English majors. Thousands take the tests every year, preparing with the help of targeted textbooks (e.g. Mei 1996). In 2003, in view of the rapid development of translation and interpreting as a profession in mainland China, the Ministry of Personnel created a test-based, multi-level national accreditation system, the China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters (CATTI), which in-house civil service T & I personnel are required to pass at specified levels for promotion purposes. Several other accreditation tests have also been created in some economically developed provinces and by some universities with experience in interpreter training, such as the National Accreditation Examinations for Transla-
tors and Interpreters (NAETI) developed by Beijing University of Foreign Studies and the English Interpreting Certificate test at Xiamen University, but these have not been as influential as the SIA or CATTI.

The testing methods used in the CATTI and SIA interpreter accreditation tests may be of interest to an international readership.

The CATTI test includes two stages: (1) a listening comprehension test consisting of multiple choice questions, gap filling and summarising; and (2) practical interpreting, including consecutive and simultaneous from B into A and from A into B.

Candidates for SIA accreditation are required to pass similar tests, with some differences: listening, reading comprehension and ‘translation after listening’ in stage 1, followed in stage 2 by public speaking and consecutive interpreting (B into A and A into B).

Interpreter accreditation tests in mainland China, as represented by CATTI and SIA, mainly assess candidates’ interpreting competence, including their language competence (especially in their B language) as tested in stage 1 and interpreting skills as tested in stage 2. However, interpreter accreditation must not only assess the potential interpreter’s linguistic competence (including bilingual competence, extra-linguistic knowledge and interpreting skills), but also their psychophysiological competence, profession-related competence and professional ethics (Wang 2007; see also Chen J. 2003).

7. Published interpreting research in mainland China: An overview

7.1 Journal articles in interpreting studies

A topic search of the China Academic Journals Full-text Database reveals that interpreting studies has been growing fast in recent years, as evidenced by the number of published journal articles (see Figure 1).

As shown in Figure 1, there has been a steady increase from the small number of publications in the 1980s to the 161 articles published in the 1990s and as many as 839 articles between 2000 and 2007.

A closer look at the research topics covered in the journal articles reveals that about three quarters of all publications focus on four different topic areas; namely, interpreter training (30%), interpreting techniques (19.4%), general theory of interpreting (15%) and quality and accreditation (10.5%). Other topics include language transference in interpreting (9%), the interpreter’s role (4.7%), cross-cultural issues (3.4%), evaluation and criticism of interpreting practice (2.9%), the interpreting market (2.7%) and comparisons of translating and interpreting (2.4%).
It is important to note that the main body of many of these articles consists of introductions, reviews or borrowings of theories or research results from the West. In other words, while Chinese researchers are actively seeking to learn from colleagues in the West, they have yet to explore and develop issues and research themes more specific to interpreting in China. One topic worth noticing is “language transference in interpreting” (9%), which may imply that researchers in China pay special attention to the issue of language specificity in interpreting.

7.2 The National Conference on Interpreting

A major event in the development of interpreting research in mainland China was the launching in 1996 of the National Conference on Interpreting, which soon became a major biannual gathering bringing together interpreting teachers, researchers and practitioners from China’s mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao. Since 2002 the event has become an international forum with invited keynote speakers from abroad. The first seven conferences (at Xiamen, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou) have yielded a total of 467 papers. Recent themes have included “Professionalisation in interpreting: international experiences and developments in China” (5th Conference, Shanghai, 2004); “Towards quality interpretation in the 21st century” (6th conference, UIBE, Beijing, 2006), and “Interpreting in China: new trends and challenges” (7th Conference, Guangzhou 2008). Proceedings of the 5th (Chai & Zhang 2006) and 6th conferences (Wang & Wang 2008) have been published, while the proceedings of the 7th are currently in press.

7.3 Books on interpreting studies by Chinese authors

An encouraging sign of the improving status of interpreting studies in the Chinese academic landscape is the inclusion of four monographs on interpreting in
the Translation Theory and Practice Series published by the China Translation and Publishing Corporation (CTPC): Bao (2005), Liu (2005), Yang (2005) and Cai (2007). Bao Gang’s (2005) book was the first monograph in interpreting studies written by a Chinese author (the first edition was published in 1998). Taking the interpretive theory (or ‘theory of sense’) as his theoretical foundation, Bao systematically analyzed the stages of listening comprehension, memorizing, note-taking and translating in the process of interpreting, with a special focus on training and (in Chapter 1) a summary of research methods in interpreting studies.

Liu Heping is a representative researcher of interpreter training in mainland China. Her book (Liu 2005) offers an overview with commentary on interpreter training programs here, including teaching goals, syllabi, textbooks and teaching methods.

Yang Cheng-shu, Director of the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpretation (GITIS) of Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, is another representative researcher in the field of interpreter training. Her book (Yang 2005) is in two parts: the first focusing on interpreting courses for foreign language students and the second covering professional interpreter training programs. The book offers a carefully designed framework for training with meticulously presented pedagogical case studies.

Cai Xiaohong is an active researcher on quality issues in interpreting. Her book (Cai 2007) provides an overview of research into interpreting quality assessment in China and overseas, with chapters on quality assessment in interpreting practice, training and research.

In addition to this breakthrough on the academic scene, recent years have seen a growing number of papers in international journals by Chinese authors, or on issues related to interpreting with Chinese.

Despite the considerable progress made in recent years, however, interpreting research in China still suffers from some weaknesses, particularly in terms of methodology. Many journal articles are based on random experiences from practice in the field or even on sheer speculation. There is a lack of empirical studies and data-based studies (see Wang & Mu 2008). Researchers still need to learn more about the latest developments in interpreting studies outside China. Another weakness is that most researchers are former foreign language teachers who now teach interpreting, but have little or no interpreting experience.
8. Looking ahead: Challenges and opportunities

While we may applaud the progress achieved in interpreter training in mainland China, we also need to be aware of the significant challenges which remain. The first challenge is how to differentiate the training goals/objectives of different programs. As we have reported above, interpreting is now taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate (MA and MI) levels; as a major in some institutions and as a “specialization/orientation” for English majors in others; courses in interpreting are compulsory in some curricula, elective/optional add-ons in others; and interpreting is combined to varying degrees with training in text translation. Currently, interpreting is taught as a major in at least four different kinds of programs: BA in Translation and Interpreting, MA in Interpreting Studies, Master of Interpreting (MI), and (at Shangwai and UIBE) a Professional Diploma without official academic status. How to differentiate their curriculum design towards serving different training goals is a challenge that must be confronted.

The second challenge is the lack of qualified staff. Presently only a few institutions (mostly those listed in Part 4) can boast instructors qualified to train interpreters. Typically, these instructors are active professional interpreters with MA-level academic qualifications. But in other institutions, most trainers are former foreign language teachers with little or no interpreting experience, and the language-teaching tradition remains strong in their pedagogical approach. In order for interpreter training in mainland China to improve, more training of trainers is needed.

The third challenge is the integration of valuable international experience into the training concepts applied in mainland China. In developed markets, the AIIC model has been a powerful tool for maintaining high-level professionalism. However, rather than assume that institutions in mainland China should adopt it, we must carefully consider whether it suits emerging conference interpreting markets like China (see Gile 2006). Some specific issues to be taken into consideration in the Chinese market include the need to interpret into a B language, the language specificity of Chinese, and the highly diversified needs of this market.

This paper has presented a general overview of the development of interpreter training and research in mainland China in recent years. The rising interpreting market, the boom in training programs and the blossoming of interpreting research all point to the potential for extensive further development, but also to new challenges facing colleagues in China — from the design and implementation of training programs to the improvement of quality in interpreting research. One way of coping with these challenges will be to communicate with the rest of the world and learn from the experience of others, with a view to greater cooperation and better recognition — all of which need not mean blindly copying authoritative “models”. This paper represents a modest encouragement to this end.
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Notes

1. CIUTI: International Permanent Conference of University Institutes of Translators and Interpreters (www.ciuti.org).
2. See the review in this volume.
3. Two of these — Lin et al. (1999) and Zhong et al. (2006) — are reviewed in this volume.
5. The China Academic Journals Full-text Database is the largest searchable full-text and full-image interdisciplinary Chinese journals database in the world. It forms part of the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), a national project aimed at knowledge sharing throughout China and the world.
6. Three of the four authors, namely, the late Bao Gang, Liu Heping and Cai Xiaohong did postgraduate studies at ESIT (Ecole supérieure d’interprètes et de traducteurs, Université de Paris III (now Paris-Dauphine).

References


