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The Importance of Liaison Interpreting in the Theoretical Development of Translation Studies

Elaine Hsieh

Abstract

This paper examines the distinct characteristics of liaison interpreting and explored the contribution of liaison interpreting to the theoretical development of translation studies. The historical development and theoretical themes of translation studies suggest that the ideology and codes of conduct of consecutive interpreting are heavily influenced by theories of translation and simultaneous interpreting. An overview of the theoretical development of interpretation across various disciplines (e.g., anthropology, sociology, applied linguistics, discourse analysis, psychology, and communication) suggests that the latest development of examining interpreter-mediated conversations as a communicative activity will allow researchers to explore the dynamic and interactive aspects of interpretation. I propose a new field of investigation, liaison interpreting, in lights of its potential contributions to various disciplines. The distinct characteristics of liaison interpreting (i.e., the dynamics of interpreting activity, the mediation of roles and identities, and the contextual influences of interpreting) provide researchers rich resources to explore the complexity of interpreting as a communicative activity coordinated between multiple parties and to develop effective models to facilitate interpreter-mediated interactions.

Keywords: Liaison Interpreting, Community Interpreting, Medical Interpreting, Communication

Before 1950, consecutive interpreting was the dominant mode of interpreting; however, unlike interpreters who specialized in simultaneous interpreting ("simultaneous interpreters[1]"), interpreters who work in consecutive mode ("liaison interpreters[2]") have much more diverse backgrounds and identities. More importantly, unlike simultaneous interpreters, who entered the arena of politics, judicial systems, and other high-profile areas as established professionals, historically, liaison interpreters were seldom regarded as "professionals." Often they are treated as non-professionals, such as bilingual aids, bilingual guides, go-betweens, or bilingual helpers (Gentile, Ozolins, & Vsilakakos, 1996). Despite their importance in cross-cultural encounters (e.g., missionary, commerce, and power and territorial expansion), before the seventeenth century, these "non-professional" interpreters often were slaves, kidnapped natives of the newly explored or conquered regions, who were forced to learn the language

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[1] Simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting are both *modes* of interpreting rather than *types* of interpreters. It is, therefore, inappropriate to categorize interpreters as simultaneous interpreters or consecutive interpreters; however, for the conciseness of the paper, I decided to abbreviate interpreters who work in simultaneous modes as "simultaneous interpreters."

[2] In this paper, I use liaison interpreting (which is also called community, ad hoc, public service, contact, three-cornered, or dialogue interpreting) in its broadest terms to include interpreting activities that have interpreters to interact *directly* with at least two parties. Generally speaking, liaison interpreters work in consecutive modes. However, at times, liaison interpreters may choose to work in a simultaneous mode due to specific concerns (e.g., time constraint). In other words, the mode of interpreting (e.g., simultaneous vs. consecutive) is not a defining criterion for liaison interpreting; rather, the defining criteria and eminent characteristics are the visibility of an interpreter and other speakers' ability to challenge and control liaison interpreters' communicative and interpreting strategies in face-to-face settings. Several different types of interpreting (e.g., business interpreting, court interpreting, medical interpreting, sign language interpreting, and telephone interpreting) are all included in this form of interpreting.

of their abductors (Bowen, Bowen, Kaufmann, & Kurz, 1995; Gentile et al., 1996; Karttunen, 1994). To reduce the escape of interpreters, Columbus even brought his captives' wives abroad so that the men would not leave (Kurz, 1990). The low social status of these interpreters provided them few opportunities to contribute to the theoretical development of translation studies.

In contrast to translators and simultaneous interpreters' concerns to the theoretical development of translation as a discipline (for a detailed review, see Hsieh, 2001b), liaison interpreters have made relatively few contributions to the development of translation studies and the study of consecutive interpreting has been limited. From a professional point of view, consecutive interpreting has grown up somewhat independently of, but in the shadow of, simultaneous interpreting (Gentile et al., 1996). Today, the vast majority of interpreters work in less visible and, often, less formal environments (e.g., hospitals, judicial courts, or immigration services). To differentiate these interpreters from other types of translators and interpreters, they often are called *liaison interpreters*.

Liaison interpreting is a genre that is performed in two language directions by the same person (Gentile et al., 1996). Liaison interpreting generally often is carried out in face-to-face encounters between officials and laypersons, meeting for a particular purpose at a public institution, such as legal or healthcare settings (Gentile et al., 1996; Wadensjö, 1998). Nevertheless, there are other forms of liaison interpreting that interpreters do not interact with speakers in a face-to-face situation (e.g., telephone or satellite interpreting) or that the interpreters serve for two officials (e.g., diplomatic interpreting). The defining criteria and eminent characteristics of liaison interpreting are the visibility of an interpreter and other speakers' ability to directly challenge and control liaison interpreters' communicative and interpreting strategies. Several different types of interpreting (e.g., business, court, diplomatic, medical, sign language, and telephone interpreting) are all included in this form of interpreting. Liaison interpreters often are untrained bilinguals who see "interpreting as a temporary occupation, practiced while awaiting an opportunity to start a 'real' job" (Wadensjö, 1998, p. 53). They sometimes even refrain from putting effort and time in developing professional skills due to the instability of the labor market for liaison interpreting (Wadensjö, 1998). As the public recently has paid more attention to the values of professional interpreters, more liaison interpreters are now trained professionals. Their trainings, nevertheless, vary drastically. For example, a diplomatic interpreter may go through years of rigorous training at a graduate level, whereas a hospital interpreter may simply go through a 40-hour industry standard training.

The professionalism, ethics of conduct, and ideology of liaison interpreting are strongly influenced by the theories and concepts (e.g., neutrality, detachment, conduits, and fidelity) developed from translation and simultaneous interpretation (Hsieh, 2001b). Liaison interpreters simply adopted interpreting strategies and professional roles developed from translation theories generated by translators and simultaneous interpreters; however, as researchers and liaison interpreters examined the actual practice of liaison interpreting, it soon became clear that there are many discrepancies between the practice and the ideologies of interpreting (Hsieh, 2001b; Metzger, 1999; Wadensjö, 1998). These discrepancies indicated significant flaws in researchers' conceptualization of translation as a communicative activity and provide great opportunities for theorists to reexamine the missing pieces in translation studies (Hsieh, 2001b).

The interactive nature of liaison interpreting provides researchers rich resources to examine how different *variables* influence individuals' behaviors (including the speaker's, the audience's, and the interpreter's behaviors) in an interpreter-mediated event. The main objective of this paper is to provide theoretical foundations for those variables. I will first begin with a brief overview of findings related to interpretation across various disciplines. By examining these findings, researchers will have a better understanding about the various factors that influence individuals' production, perception, and evaluation of interpretation. Then, I will examine the contributions of liaison interpreting to the theoretical development of translation studies. The distinct characteristics of liaison interpreting (i.e., the dynamics of interpreting activity, the mediation of roles and identities, and the contextual influences of interpreting) provide researchers rich resources to explore the complexity of interpreting as a communicative activity coordinated between multiple parties.

Findings of Interpretation Across Disciplines

Although liaison interpreters, liaison interpreters in particular, have provided relatively little theoretical input to translation studies (Gentile et al., 1996), the importance of simultaneous interpreters and the prevalence of liaison interpreters have attracted attentions of researchers from various disciplines. In this section, I will discuss how researchers in anthropology, sociology, applied linguistics, discourse analysis, psychology, and communication have contributed to the recent development of the study of interpretation. Although the researchers in these disciplines may not conceptualize interpretation-related issues with translation theories in mind, the various perspectives they highlight are still valuable assets in the study of interpretation.

Anthropology and Sociology

Anthropology and sociology have made significant contributions to the discussion of translation and interpretation in two areas: (a) the use of translation in fieldwork and (b) the anthropology and sociology of translation. The first is closely related to the methodological concerns of the two disciplines and the second is related to the examination of social process through the use of language.

Use of translation in fieldwork. Anthropologists and sociologists often need to translate oral narratives of the locals to a different language. In these situations, they need bilingual informants to act as interpreters of the language and the *culture* of the natives. It goes without saying that the performances, interpreting strategies, and mediating techniques of these interpreters would significantly impact researchers' interpretation of events. For example, Crandon-Malamud (1991) discussed an incident that one of her informants intentionally mistranslated her conversation with others. Crandon-Malamud pointed out that she would not have known the deception of her interpreter if a bilingual bystander were not at the scene by chance. Therefore, anthropologists and sociologists have recognized the use of interpreters as a methodological and practical issue of great importance.

The anthropology and sociology of translation. Another area that has attracted the attention of anthropologists and sociologists are the social, political, and power process of translation. Although most studies of this topic, which often centers on the translation strategies of colonization, used translation as the main source of data, researchers have observed some interesting findings that are applicable to both translators and interpreters.

One of the important findings of this topic is that translation is not only a product of cross-cultural interactions but is also an entity that is capable of changing the language, ideology, and knowledge of both the source culture and the target culture (Asad, 1986; Hsieh, 2000, 2001a; Niranjana, 1992; Venuti, 1995). The final product of translation is not a neutral or value-free product that conveys the 'real' message of the source text. It reflects the underlying interests of its creator. Translation is a tool that is actively involved in the transference, control, and perseverance of cultural values, knowledge, and powers (Wolf, 1997). As Woolard and Schiefflin (1994) pointed out

> European missionization and colonization of other continents entailed control of speakers and their vernaculars. Recent research on colonial linguistic description and translation has addressed the ideological dimension of dictionaries, grammars, and language guides, demonstrating that what was conceived as a neutral scientific endeavor was very much a political one. (p.68)

Other researchers have made similar observations (Niranjana, 1992; Rafael, 1988). Venuti (1995) and Niranjana (1992) have argued that domesticating and normalizing the foreignness embedded in the translation is an imperialist strategy because it promotes a narcissistic image of the target culture (i.e., the dominant culture). In addition to the cultural and social influences on translated texts, researchers have also observed translators' active incorporation of their personal agenda (e.g., resisting the dominant values, preserving the target culture, or expanding the conceptual framework of the target culture) into their translation strategies (Gupta, 1998; Hsieh, 2001a).

In summary, the contributions of anthropology and sociology to the field of translation studies are their attention to the active roles of interpreters and their efforts in contextualizing translation as a dynamic activity (as opposed to a static text). These two perspectives were traditionally ignored in the early development of translation theories, which emerged from literary criticism and focused on the examination of the translated texts rather than the translators. However, as translation theorists have become aware of the communicative, dialogic, and interactive aspects of translation, I believe that anthropology and sociology will have much to contribute to the future develop of translation studies.

Applied Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Psychology

Applied linguistics, discourse analysis, and psychology have provided crucial momentum to the recent development in the studies of interpretation. Linguistics, especially contrastive linguistics, provided the basic explanatory models for translation studies (Hatim, 1997). As translation schools began to develop in the 1950s and 1960s, researchers soon discovered the limitations of a pure linguistic approach and proposed that an interdisciplinary approach was necessary (Shreve & Koby, 1997). The various sub-fields of linguistics and psychology (e.g., sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse linguistics, neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurophysicology, and cognitive psychology) have brought new perspectives and approaches to the investigation of interpretation. One of the strengths of these areas is that they have already established valid research methods in examining human discourse. The themes and concepts that have been explored in these fields include (a) cognitive processes of interpretation, (b) equivalences of translation, and (c) the neutrality of interpreters.

Cognitive processes of interpretation. This is an area that has been well developed and investigated, particularly on the cognitive processes of simultaneous interpreting. This subject has fascinated researchers early on because it seeks to reveal the mysterious and intense process of interpreting. Researchers from many different fields (e.g., neurophysicology, neurolinguistics, cognitive psychology, and psycholinguistics) have studied this topic. The topics investigated include interpreters' use of short-term and long-term memory (Daro, 1997; Moser-Mercer, Lambert, Daro, & Williams, 1997), cerebral activity during interpreting (Fabbro & Gran, 1997; Rinne et al., 2000), translation and information processing models (MacWhinney, 1997; Moser-Mercer, 1997), and other factors (e.g., the characteristics of stimuli, different modes of interpreting, and the speed of input data) that may influence the performances of interpreters (de Groot, 1997; Fabbro & Gran, 1997).

One of the reasons for such enthusiastic research interest is researchers' belief that the understanding of cognitive processes of translation is a significant component in developing training programs for translators and interpreters (Dodds et al., 1997). Basing on the results of relevant studies, researchers have developed various training techniques, such as shadowing exercises (Kurz, 1992), comprehension strategies and coping tactics (Gile, 1995), acquisition of translation competence (Shreve, 1997), and knowledge acquisition strategies (Gile, 1995).

Equivalences of translation. The core of every translation model is the theorists' concerns of the elements that constitute a "good" translation. Unlike authors of creative writing, whose work is judged as a complete product, translators are always bound by source texts and their work is never an isolated or independent product in itself. Translations are always compared against the source texts and, although there may be some recognitions of translators' freedom in interpretation or representation, there is no doubt that a translation needs to resemble the source texts in certain ways (i.e., achieve some form of equivalence) in order to be the *legitimate translation* of a particular work rather than a piece of creative writing. In fact, the pursuit of equivalence has been the center of the development of translation theories.

In this area, Hsieh (2002) proposed a conceptual framework that used the constructs of speech act theory (i.e., locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act) to explain the concerns about equivalences of various translation models. For example, due to its great attention on the preciseness of words, the model of translation as transmission (i.e., literal translation) defines translation as a communicative activity to produce equivalent locutionary acts in the target texts. The model of translation as communication seeks to achieve equivalent illocutionary forces (and, perhaps implicitly, perlocutionary acts) in the target texts. Finally, in the model of translation as creation (i.e., free translation), the pursuit of equivalent creative energy, linguistically and artistically, suggests that translators using this model seek the equivalence of perlocutionary effects.

To a certain degree, the changes in the objects of equivalences (i.e., equivalences of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary forces) in translation theories reflect the shifts of theoretical development in linguistics. As linguists shifted their attention from syntax to semantics, then, to pragmatics, translation theorists have developed different models that respond to the different equivalences of translations. However, because the central focus for linguistic-related research is on the texts (of a translation or an interpretation) rather than the individuals (e.g., interpreters, audiences, and speakers) involved in translation processes, translation studies generated from the perspectives of linguistics often have failed to see the dialogic and dynamic perspectives of translation process.

The neutrality of interpreters. This seems to be the latest area that applied linguists have devoted much attention to and have observed numerous discrepancies between the ideology and the practice of interpreting. This topic has taken several turns over time. The early research has focused on the errors (e.g., correcting informant's statements, selective interpreting, adding complementary information, or omitting details) made by non-professional interpreters (Cambridge, 1999; Elderkin-Thompson, Silver, & Waitzkin, 2001; Pöchhacker & Kadric, 1999; Vasquez & Javier, 1991). It often was assumed that professional interpreters would not have committed these "mistakes" because these interpreting styles have deviated from the valued ideology of interpretation, such as neutrality and faithfulness (e.g., Woloshin, Bickell, Schwartz, Gany, & Welch, 1995).

Observations of professional and licensed interpreters have suggested, however, that the neutrality envisioned in traditional ideology (i.e., interpreters as conduits) is not a reality in practice (for review, see Hsieh, 2001b). The majority of research in this area currently still centers on the "problematic" performances of non-professional and professional interpreters. Despite the conflicting results observed by researchers, applied linguists, perhaps due to disciplinary limitations, have generated few theoretical models or directions that resolve the discrepancies. Among the researchers who have tried to generate translation theories from these latest observations, many have introduced theoretical frameworks that emphasize the participants (as opposed to texts) of a discourse. For example, Wadensjö (1998) and Metzger (1999) have reframed interpreters' performances through Goffman's (1974) participant framework. However, their formulations of translation theories were sketchy and unsystematic. Hsieh (2001b) adopted Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic model to provide theoretical foundations of interpreters' non-neutrality; however, how a dialogical model of interpreting can be implemented and incorporated into interpreters' training remains to be answered.

In summary, the recent development of translation studies has shifted to the communicative nature of translations. Although applied linguistics (e.g., sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics) has included the contexts of translation in their conceptualization and have broadened the scope of translation studies, the discipline itself does not provide established theories that offer theoretical foundations for the roles, social identities, communicative goals, interactional patterns, or organizational roles of the individuals involved in interpreter-mediated conversations. To incorporate these various perspectives, researchers have advocated an interdisciplinary approach to the study of translation.

Communication and Interdisciplinary Approaches

In a high-level conference on interpreting, researchers identified the need to investigate the communicative process of translation (Tommola et al., 1997). In the same conference, participants noted the lack of qualified researchers as a major obstacle to future development of translation studies (Tommola et al., 1997). Although the contributions of the "outsiders" (i.e., researchers who are not interpreters but have disciplinary interests in interpreting, such as cognitive psychologists and neurolinguistics) have been fruitful, few practicing interpreters have investigated interpreting from their perspectives.

Reasons for interpreters' lack of research interest include (a) insufficient research training, (b) insufficient financial and social motivation, (c) the lack of institutional support, and (d) the lack of interactions with the academic community (Tommola et al., 1997). As a result, while other disciplines (e.g., linguistics) have devoted themselves to the more apparent features of interpretation (e.g., types of mistakes made by interpreters), interpreters were into personal theorizing (which mostly based on personal experience rather than empirical data), assertions, and counter-assertions (Dodds et al., 1997). In contrast to the seemly subjective topics investigated by the outsiders, interpreters were much more interested to the objective, active, and dynamic nature of interpreting (e.g., Haffner, 1992; Loutan, Farinelli, & Pampallona, 1999).

Researchers across various disciplines have now, fortunately, recognized the complexity of translation as a communicative activity and have pushed for interdisciplinary efforts to investigate translations (Neubert, 1997; Tommola et al, 1997; Toury, 1980). Communication, as a field that is interdisciplinary in nature, provides an excellent foundation for the future development of translation studies. The various sub-fields of communication (e.g., interpersonal communication, group communication, organizational communication, and health communication) have provided valid grounding for the theoretical foundations for the roles, social identities, communicative goals, interactive patterns, organizational roles of the individuals involved in interpreter-mediated events, and the impact of institutional, organizational, and group dynamics on interpreting activities. Some of the contributions of interdisciplinary (mainly communicative) approaches follows.

Communicative goals and social identities. Communication researchers have long noted that communicative goals and social identities have significant impacts on individuals' formulation, interpretation, and evaluation of messages (Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hsieh, 2002; Boydell, Goering, & Morell-Bellai, 2000; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; O'Keefe & McCornack, 1987). From this perspective, an interpreter may adopt a specific communicative goal (e.g., obtain correct medical history) or a specific role (e.g., physicians' aide or patients' advocate) and exercise his or her informational power accordingly. In Bolden's (2000) analysis of a medical history taking session, the interpreter "only conveys information related to the medical contingencies and leaves out information presented by the patient if it is unrelated to that set of contingencies. Additionally, patients' narrative, experiential, subjective accounts are rejected and excluded from summary translations" (p. 414). Similar observations were made by Cambridge (1999).

The different communicative goals of the individuals involved in interpreter-mediated conversation may lead to frustration and miscommunication. For example, Metzger (1999) discussed a case in which a pediatric physician was frustrated and dissatisfied with an interpreter-mediated conversation because the interpreter was focusing on obtaining medical-related information rather than building rapport between the physician and the patient, which was a major communicative goal for the physician. It is important in future research to examine how interpreters and other interlocutors choose and negotiate their communicative goals and social identities in order to identify relevant factors that can influence the evaluation and the quality of interpreter-mediated conversations.

Institutional influences. Communication researchers have highlighted the influences of organizational environments and group dynamics on individuals' communicative patterns (Keenan, Cooke, & Hillis, 1998; Marin, Sherblom, & Shipps, 1994). Because interpreters generally work where the contexts of institutions (e.g., United Nations, diplomatic occasions, hospitals, courts, and immigration services) are strong, it is crucial to examine how the institutional contexts have influenced interpreters' performances.

There has been little research on this perspective; however, some researchers have hinted at institutional influences. For example, research on the practice of medical interpreters often showed that interpreters took up the role of physician advocate more often than the role of patient advocate (Bolden, 2000; Davison, 2000; Elderkin-Thompson et al., 2001). Although many researchers have suggested that the results of their studies on interpreting could be attributed to an institutional influence (e.g., Elderkin-Thompson et al., 2001), none has conducted a systematic research on the effects of institutional influences on the roles or performances of interpreters.

Other interdisciplinary approaches. One of the important trends in the recent studies of translation is the utilization of various qualitative and quantitative research methods in other disciplines. For example, researchers have used participant observation (e.g., Stuker, Gross, & Sabbioni, 1998), interviews (e.g., Carrasquillo, Orav, Brennan, & Burstin, 1999), surveys (e.g., Leman & Williams, 1999), and experiments (e.g., Hornberger et al., 1996) as data-gathering methods. Researchers across disciplines have become more aware of others' work and their publications have extended beyond the traditional translation-related disciplines (e.g., linguistics, translation studies, and literary criticism). Nowadays, research on translation and interpretation can be found in the fields of medicine, communication, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, jurisprudence, and intercultural studies.

Despite the recent interdisciplinary approaches, researchers of translation appeared to construct their research with very applied aims (e.g., "Which interpreting method is more effective or preferred?") and without attempts to generate *theories* of translation and interpretation. As a result, the studies of various disciplines often have been isolated, with unsystematic observations and findings that do not provide insights to a larger understanding of translation and interpretation. The lack of theories will, in the long run, damage the development of translation and interpretation as legitimate disciplines. It is necessary that in addition to the utilization of research methods across disciplines, researchers not only need to connect their research on translation to the theoretical concerns of their mother disciplines but also to develop theoretical foundations for future development of translation studies.

Summary

In this section, I have reviewed several major disciplines that have contributed to the discussion of translation and interpretation. It is important to point out that many sub-fields in these disciplines have developed more defined and narrow interests on specific issues of translation and interpretation. The recent attention to the communicative nature of communication and the need for interdisciplinary efforts for translation studies have spurred researchers on to new directions; however, it is important that researchers can build upon the observations they made and construct a systematic understanding of translation.

Contributions of Liaison Interpreting to Translation Studies

Translation and simultaneous interpreting have been intensively investigated, yet the development of translation theories in general has been slow. One of the reasons is that researchers of translation have been trapped in theoretical and conceptual debates (i.e., whether a translation should incline towards the source or the target language, and the consequent faithful vs. beautiful, literal vs. free, form vs. content disputes) without have empirical and data-based research to support their arguments (Hsieh, 2002). In these debates, the contexts in which translations were understood and used as a tool, a resource, and a product of communication were made invisible. As a result, the theorists often treated translations (and interpretations) as isolated and independent texts and believed that a “perfect” or “ideal” translation can be achieved and valued across the boundaries of time, space, and peoples.

On the other hand, in the area of simultaneous interpreting, although researchers have made significant contributions to the understanding of the cognitive processes and the information processing models of interpreting, some studies (e.g., neurolinguistics) have been criticized for being “pure scientific” that do not have practical use (e.g., training programs) (Dodds et al., 1997). Even when examining simultaneous interpreting as a communicative activity, researchers often failed to observe the interactive and dynamic perspectives of interpreting because simultaneous interpreters generally work in isolated booths, interpret unidirectionally from one language to another, and are not seen by speakers or audiences. To a large extent, simultaneous interpreters are similar to translators in terms of their working conditions. As a result, research on simultaneous interpreting has paid little attention to the interactive perspectives of interpreting.

As researchers have now recognized the importance of the communicative process of interpreting (Tommola et al., 1997), liaison interpreting will be the field that marks the watershed of the development of translation studies. In this paper, I use liaison interpreting (which is also called community, ad hoc, public service, contact, three-cornered, or dialogue interpreting) in its broadest terms to include interpreting activities that have interpreters to interact *directly* with at least two parties. Generally speaking, liaison interpreters work in consecutive modes. However, at times, liaison interpreters may choose to work in a simultaneous mode due to specific concerns (e.g., time constraint). In other words, the mode of interpreting (e.g., simultaneous vs. consecutive) is not a defining criterion for liaison interpreting; rather, the defining criteria are the visibility of an interpreter and other speakers' ability to directly challenge and control liaison interpreters' communicative and interpreting strategies. Several different types of interpreting, such as business interpreting, court interpreting, medical interpreting, sign language interpreting, and telephone interpreting, are all included. Situations that have more than two interpreters at work either translating for more than two languages (e.g., relayed interpreting) or that one interpreter interprets for multiple language combinations are also included. I also include not only the trained or professional interpreters but also the untrained and non-professional interpreters, who often are the majority of practicing interpreters, in my discussion. I will not make explicit references to all forms of liaison interpreting; however, I believe that the principles apply to them all.

The Dynamics of Interpreting Activity

Liaison interpreting is typically bi-directional; that is, the same interpreters need to translate to and from two or more languages in a single occasion, which rarely happens in simultaneous interpreting. The model of liaison interpreting requires the interpreter to take on multiple voices in the communicative process. Because liaison interpreting is an interpreting style that has all parties interacting with each other in the same setting, any individual is able to change his or her communicating strategies (e.g., repairs or repeats) at any point of time. Whereas the author (or the speaker) and the audiences of translators and simultaneous interpreters do not have the opportunities to "interfere" with interpreters' performances or to "respond" to the third parties' (i.e., the speaker vs. the audience) verbal or non-verbal cues, all individuals involved in liaison interpreting (i.e., the speaker, the audience, and the interpreter) are *visibly* and *actively* involved in the communicative process.

In liaison interpreting, all individuals (e.g., health care providers, interpreters, and patients in the case of medical interpreting) are involved in the constructions of communicative contexts. For example, researchers found that untrained interpreters often shift between first person style interpretation (e.g., "I have been coughing for the past two weeks."; "Have you been taking the prescription I gave you the last time?") and third person style interpretation (e.g., "She said that she has been coughing for the past two weeks."; "The doctor asked you if you have been taking the prescription he gave you the last time.") (Elderkin-Thompson et al., 2001; Pöchhacker & Kadric, 1999). It is important to note that, although these interpretations can all be understood, carrying the "same" information, in the communication, the constructions of the communicative contexts invoked by the two interpreting styles can be very different (Hsieh, 2001b). Although it appeared that third person style is used more often, Cambridge (1999) suggested that untrained interpreters' choice of style may be influenced by physicians' use of the third person (e.g., "Ask him if he coughs."). Interpreters' choice of style could be influenced by other participants' communicative behaviors.

One particularly surprising finding is that the quality of interpretation of untrained interpreters can vary dramatically from one setting to another. Elderkin-Tompson et al. (2001) noted, "A nurse [interpreter] could do an excellent job with one physician only to have difficulties with the next one. …Every physician…had an individual style for relating to the patient, and the nurse [interpreter] had to accommodate that style" (p.1355). This finding also implicitly underlined the importance of the physicians' role in achieving a successful bilingual health communication.

The dynamics and the interactive nature of liaison interpreting can have significant contributions to translation studies as well as communication studies. Because liaison interpreters interact with other participants directly and because their choice of interpreting styles (e.g., first person vs. third person style) could have immediate impacts on the communicative contexts, researchers have numerous opportunities to examine interpreting as an communicative and interactive activity. All types of translation and interpretation are interactive and dynamic, although some are more obvious than others. It is just that among all forms of translation and interpretation, liaison interpreting has the most observable and apparent contexts of the dynamics of participant interactions.

Several issues can be explored from this perspective. For example, what are the strategies (e.g., interpreting style, eye gaze, and non-verbal gestures) interpreters employ to contextualize the communicative process? How and why do other participants modify their communicative patterns in response to the presence of interpreters or the performance of interpreters? How do the dynamics of interpreting influence participants' response, performance, and evaluation of the quality of interpreter-mediated communication? The answers to these questions not only have practical value to the training of interpreters (and healthcare providers) but also will help researchers to understand the important factors that influence translators' and interpreters' performances, which will undoubtedly benefit the theoretical development of translation studies.

Examining interpreting as a dynamic and interactive activity allows researchers to explore the roles and performances of each participant in the communicative process. Because liaison interpreting often occurs in institutional contexts (e.g., hospitals, courthouses, and police stations), participants often assume specific roles and have specific communicative goals. An interpreter not only needs to be aware of different roles and communicative goals of other interlocutors but also is required to be the mediator of the various roles and communicative goals that emerged in the interpreting activity.

The Mediation of Roles and Identities

Although the officials and institutions (e.g., governments, hospitals, courthouses, or refugee centers) are usually the ones who pay for liaison interpreting, laypersons often expect liaison interpreters to side with them, acting as advocates. Such inherent conflicts in the role expectations for liaison interpreters force the interpreters to act as mediators, taking more independent measures to initiate or to facilitate the communication.

Studies have shown that untrained interpreters tend to provide the clinical information expected by the physician when doctors and patients have different perceptions of the problem (i.e., siding with the physician rather than the patient) (Davidson, 2000; Elderkin-Thompson et al., 2001; Pöchhacker & Kadric, 1999). As a result, it is more likely that the doctors' utterances are translated to the patient than the other way around. Briskina's (1996) study showed that on average, 74% doctors' utterances were translated (range = 71-79%) and only 54% of patients' utterances were translated (range = 22-83%). Unfortunately, there has been no research that explores whether professional interpreters have these non-neutral performances. I am inclined to believe, however, that these non-neutral performances were not caused by the (un)professionalism of interpreters but more to the communicative goals and social identities assumed by interpreters.

For example, there are situations in which the conduit model of interpreting may significantly reduce the quality of communication and the effectiveness and quality of health care services (Hsieh, 2001b). In an emergency department, a physician and a gunshot victim may have very different communicative goals in mind and have very distinct communicative patterns. Whereas the victim may be frantically discussing the severity of his injury, requesting a painkiller, or moaning in pain, a physician has a specific order of questions that need to be answered so that the priority of the emergency treatments can be determined. If an interpreter adopts the conduit model, he or she is required to interpret whatever information is said by the victim to the physician, which could include screaming for pain, yelling at bystanders, or incoherent talk about his injury. By interpreting the victim's speech indiscriminately, an interpreter not only hinders the effectiveness of the communication but also delays the necessary treatments urgently needed by the victim. In such situations, the effectiveness and the quality of communication may be best achieved by interpreters' active identification as a proxy of the physician.

There are several important issues that can be explored here. First, it is interesting that, despite the traditional ideology that emphasizes interpreters' neutrality, interpreters do not and cannot be a neutral participant (Hsieh, 2001b). This is a point that has not been fully and systematically explored in research. Several researchers have noted interpreters' non-neutral performances (e.g., Metzger, 1999; Wadensjö, 1998) but the reasons and justifications for these performances have not yet been systematically explored.

Second, in interpreter-mediated communication, interpreters are not only participants but also mediators, who have the power and the ability to control information and information flow based on communicative access to others. Because physicians and healthcare staff do not share the same language as the patient, all parties (i.e., physicians, healthcare staff, and patients) need an interpreter to communicate with each other. Because an interpreter is the only person who is able to communicate with all other participants in the clinical encounter, an interpreter, then, has the power to control the flow of information, deciding what is said and heard.

It would be interesting to examine how such power is evaluated, controlled, manipulated, and exercised by various individuals through communication. For example, in cultures that family members assume the responsibility of information control when a patient is ill, family members sometimes informed care providers about their unwillingness to discuss the diagnosis with the patients (Beyene, 1992), explicitly declined the use of interpreters (Muller & Desmond, 1992), emphasized that direct communication with the patient being diagnosed was unacceptable (Kaufert & Putsch, 1997; Kaufert, Putsch, & Lavallée, 1999), or simply distorted the doctor's diagnosis when acting as interpreters for the patients (Kaufert & Putsch, 1997).

Third, several research areas (e.g., intercultural communication, international negotiation, health communication, mediation, medical interpreting, and court interpreting) may benefit greatly by examining how interpreters and other interlocutors negotiate their communicative goals and social identities through the dynamic interactions of interpreter-mediated conversations. For example, if the communicative goal of a speaker is to be deceptive or ambiguous, how should the speaker convey his or her intention so that the interpreter would understand such intention and reproduce utterances that have the deceptive or ambiguous quality? How should an interpreter respond to the speaker's desire to be ambiguous or deceptive? For example, in judicial settings, a lawyer or a police officer may intentionally to be deceptive or ambiguous (Wadensjö, 1998). What if a defendant is the one trying to be ambiguous or deceptive? Do interpreters respond the same way? Can they? Should they?

This is an issue related to interpreters' loyalty. Businessmen cited their uncertainty to the loyalty of their interpreters as one of the reasons for their hesitance toward using interpreters (Kondo et al., 1997). The presence of interpreters often is regarded as an intrusion, both physically and psychologically, at the negotiating table (Kondo et al., 1997). In a medical setting, interpreters' dual loyalty to the physician and the patient often is questioned as well (Wadensjö, 1998). A careful examination on the communicative strategies employed by various individuals in interpreter-mediated communication would allow researchers to understand how communicative goals and identities are negotiated. More importantly, researchers may obtain insights into the roles of interpreters in general and develop effective interpreting models and strategies for successful communication in different contexts (e.g., international and business negotiation, medical interpreting, or court interpreting).

Contextual Influences of Interpreting

It is important to remember that all communicative activities are carried out in specific contexts. Because liaison interpreting is a extremely large category that includes almost all types of interpreting activity except simultaneous interpreting, the contexts of liaison interpreting vary greatly from one another. Because contextual influences are significant to individuals' communication strategies (Brashers et al., 2002), the various contexts of liaison interpreting would provide tremendous resources for researchers to examine how contexts influence individuals' communicative style.

For example, due to the visible presence of hospital interpreters, one specific rule is set for on-site interpreters: to use the *first person singular* when interpreting (i.e., speaking as if the interpreter were the original speaker). When a patient says, "I have a headache," instead of saying "the patient says she has a headache," an interpreter says, "I have a headache." Roat, Putsch, and Lucero (1997) suggested that the advantages of first person interpretation include shortening the communication, avoiding confusion as to who is speaking, and reinforcing the primary relationship between the provider and the patient. By using first person singular, the interpreter simplifies the interpreting context by presenting himself or herself as a non-person. Goffman (1959) defined non-person as "those who play this role are present during the interaction but in some respects do not take the role either of performer or of audience, nor do they pretend to be what they are not" (p.151). By situating oneself as a non-person, the interpreter creates the illusions of dyadic physician-patient communication.

On the other hand, telephone interpreters are required to use third-person interpretation (i.e., the interpreter always refers to the patient or physician as he or she) (Roat et al., 1997). This is because the difference in communicative contexts. The interpreter use third-person interpretation to avoid confusion, so all parties are aware of each other's existence. Telephone interpreters also need to take a more active role in gate-keeping the flow of communication. On-site hospital interpreters can use nonverbal signals to guide the flow of communication (Dimitrova, 1997; Goodwin, 1981), yet a telephone interpreter does not have the access to nonverbal cues. Telephone interpreters, consequently, tend to give verbal cues to guide the flow of the communication. In one study, Wadensjö (1999) found that compared to other interlocutors, telephone interpreters are more active in interrupting others' utterances, causing overlapping talk. A telephone interpreter often actively guides the flow of communication so that each party understands whose turn it is to speak, and when to pause for interpretation. Telephone interpreters must give clear verbal cues to set up the beginning of the call, the close of the call and the turn-taking during the call. Hsieh (2001c) summarized the differences of interpreting styles between on-site interpreters and telephone interpreters that are caused by their contextual differences (e.g., communicative channels and access to non-verbal cues). Table 1 presents these characteristics.

Table 1

Role Comparisons Between On-Site Interpreter and Telephone Interpreter

Characteristics	On –Site Interpreter	Telephone Interpreter
Style of interpretation	First Person	Third Person

Informing the involvement of cultural elements	High	Moderate
Interpretation of nonverbal messages	Active	Avoid
Guiding the flow of communication	Moderate (Do not interfere unless necessary)	Active (Use Verbal cues)

In short, the contextual differences between on-site interpreting and telephone interpreting have led to very different interpreting styles. The individuals involved in interpreter-mediated conversation may have very different communicative patterns as a result of the contextual differences. Contexts of liaison interpreting also can include a variety of themes, such as institutional contexts (e.g., hospitals and courts), cultural contexts (e.g., cultural beliefs and folk beliefs), and communicative contexts (e.g., communicative channels and sources of information). It is from this perspective that I believe liaison interpreting is an excellent area for researchers to explore the influences of contexts on individuals' communicative behaviors.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper is to explore the different *variables* that influence individuals' behaviors (including the speaker's, the audience's, and the interpreter's behaviors) in an interpreter-mediated event. I began with an overview of the theoretical development of interpretation across various disciplines (e.g., anthropology, sociology, applied linguistics, discourse analysis, psychology, and communication). The latest development in these disciplines has indicated the importance of examining interpreter-mediated conversations as a communicative activity that is both dynamic and interactive.

The distinct characteristics of liaison interpreting (i.e., the dynamics of interpreting activity, the mediation of roles and identities, and the contextual influences of interpreting) provide researchers rich resources to explore the complexity of interpreting as a communicative activity coordinated between multiple parties. By taking advantage of these characteristics, researcher can begin to identify the various factors (e.g., organizational environment, communicative goals, communicative patterns, and communicative channels) that influence interpreters' performance and thus, generate directions of future research and interventions. For example, if certain strategies used by medical interpreters are related to specific contextual features (e.g., the interpreters' organizational roles in the hospital or specific communicative styles of health care providers), researchers can develop effective communication models and interventions for health care providers, medical interpreters, and even patients to provide quality provider-patient communication and health care services for patients with limited-English-proficiency.

Liaison interpreting has expanded the research horizons of translation studies by demonstrating the interactive nature of interpretation (and translation). Interpreting is not a communicative activity solely controlled or performed by interpreters but is an activity coordinated between various individuals. Other participants involved in the interpreting event can influence interpreters' performance by their communicative goals, social identities, or communicative styles. Other contextual variables (e.g., institutional influences or communicative channels) also can alter interpreters' performances. Recognizing the multiple factors that interfere with interpreters' practice allows researchers to examine the complexity and the dynamics of interpretation. Researchers can bypass the never-ending philosophical debates and begin to investigate the actual practice of individuals' production, perception, and evaluation of translation and interpretation. More importantly, findings of such investigation will provide researchers effective models to facilitate interpreter-mediated interactions.

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Author's Note

Elaine Hsieh　（謝怡玲）is a doctoral candidate of Speech Communication at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Correspondence should be directed to Elaine Hsieh, Department of Speech Communication, University of Illinois, 702 S. Wright Street, #244 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, IL 61801-3631. Fax 217-244-1598. E-mail: ihsieh@uiuc.edu.

The Importance of Liaison Interpreting in the Theoretical Development of Translation Studies

對話口譯對翻譯理論發展的重要貢獻

謝怡玲

伊利諾州大學香檳分校口語傳播系 博士候選人

摘要

本文檢視對話口譯（liaison interpreting）的特性，並探討對話口譯理論發展對整體翻譯理論之貢獻。傳統翻譯理論的發展深受筆譯理論及即時口譯理論影響，往往重視字義、語境對應，而忽略翻譯員靈活運用翻譯策略促進對話雙方溝通的層面。長久以來，對話口譯員的翻譯理念及行為準則（如：角色中立、傳聲筒理論）亦深受筆譯理論及即時口譯理論影響。但最新研究顯示專業對話口譯員往往主動介入溝通過程，影響他人的溝通方式。此一發現點出傳統翻譯理論之缺失，即傳統翻譯理論無法解釋翻譯員在明知其行為準則時，為何刻意選擇不符合該理念的翻譯策略（如：擇要翻譯、主動加入解釋）？本文作者綜合整理各領域（包括人類學、社會學、語言學、語言分析、心理學及傳播學）的口譯研究發展，討論由溝通、互動角度檢視口譯員的翻譯行為對翻譯理論的重要貢獻。對話口譯的特性（即口譯過程的靈活互動、對話參與者的角色扮演及溝通協調、情境因素對口譯過程的影響）點出口譯過程的複雜性。翻譯者並不完全追求字義、語境對應，翻譯人員受各種內在、外在因素的影響，改變其翻譯策略以促進各方溝通。了解影響翻譯人員表現的各

種因素可使研究者更了解口譯活動，也可研發訓練計畫教導翻譯員及客戶減少跨文化、跨語言溝通過程中的障礙。

關鍵詞：翻譯理論、口譯、對話口譯、醫療口譯、傳播學