
FUNDAMENTALS
OF COURT
INTERPRETATION

THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

SECOND EDITION

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Carolina Academic Press

Fundamentals of Court Interpretation

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UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
AGNESE HAURY INSTITUTE FOR
INTERPRETATION SERIES

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Durham, North Carolina

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

\González, Roseann Dueñas.

Fundamentals of court interpretation : theory, policy and practice / Roseann D.
González, Victoria F. Vásquez, and Holly Mikkelson. -- 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-89089-294-7 (alk. paper)

1. Court interpreting and translating--United States. I. Vásquez, Victoria F. (Victoria
Félice) II. Mikkelson, Holly. III. Title.

KF8725.G66 2012

347.73'1--dc23

2012021086

Carolina Academic Press
700 Kent Street
Durham, NC 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America

Chapter 36

Sight Translation

This chapter explores sight translation (ST), beginning with its definition and an explanation of its uses. Next, the different skills that comprise ST are discussed. In addition, the procedure of sight translating a given text is analyzed step by step, and exercises to improve ST skills are provided.

1. Definition

Sight translation means the oral translation of a written document, a hybrid of translation and interpretation, often known as “sight interpretation.” Jiménez Ivars (1999) points out the lack of agreement on what to call this form of translation and how it should be defined. After reviewing a number of definitions proposed by scholars over the years, she arrived at this definition:

Sight translation consists of the oral reformulation in the target language of a text written in the source language for at least one recipient; this recipient may be a listener who shares the communicative situation with the translator, or a reader who will later read a written transcript of the oral reformulation carried out by the translator. (p. 148) [*Fundamentals* authors’ translation]

ST has a number of different applications outside the judicial sphere. Professional translators often use ST as a strategy for problem-solving, for dictating drafts, for assisting clients in determining whether a text is to be translated partially or in its entirety, and even for providing an audio version of a text to a client (Biela-Wolonciej, 2007; Gorszczyńska, 2010; Jiménez Ivars, 1999; Jiménez Ivars & Hurtado Albir, 2003). Conference interpreters sight translate documents as they are preparing for assignments in order to assimilate technical terms and rehearse phrases that are difficult to pronounce (Weber, 1990). During conferences, they provide sight translations of reports, slides, and other visual aids presented to the audience, proposals or draft texts that are being negotiated, as well as agreements and press releases issued at the conclusion of meetings and summits. The technique is also employed by interpreters who are given the text of a speech shortly before it is to be delivered, so that they can supplement what they hear in the booth with a written script (Gile, 1995; Weber, 1990). In addition, ST is a common occurrence in business, healthcare, and community interpreting (Bancroft & Rubio-Fitzpatrick, 2009; Jiménez Ivars & Hurtado Albir, 2003; Mikkelsen, 1994).

ST is analogous to sight reading in music: The interpreter is given a source language document never seen before, and, with minimal preparation, the interpreter provides a complete oral translation of the document into the target language (TL). Like accomplished musicians who play an apparently effortless version of a piece they have never laid eyes on, interpreters are actually drawing upon years of training and experience to

perform this feat. The end product should be both faithful to the original text and pleasing to the ear (that is, in free-flowing, natural-sounding language).

2. Elements of Sight Translation

2.1 Differences between ST and Other Modes of Interpreting

Agrifoglio (2004) highlights features that distinguish ST from other modes of interpreting:

Reception Conditions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input = written text Absence of author Punctuation [as an aid to comprehension] Continuous access to information in the text Attention sharing between visual input and oral production Nonsequential reception (reader can go back) Interpreter-paced
Production Conditions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considerable time delay between SL text production and translation Coordination of Reading and Production Efforts Monitoring production while reading Progressive access to new information (no previous reading), [or] Prior access to information (previous reading) Extreme risk of [source text] interference Interpreter-paced No help of colleague (p. 49)

Although Gile (1995) posits that there is no Memory Effort in ST, Agrifoglio (2004) contends that there are indeed short-term memory demands in ST similar to those involved in simultaneous interpreting (SI):

Although in ST the interpreter can control his/her rhythm of perception, smooth delivery is possible only when s/he starts reformulating while still reading. Moreover, syntactic differences between languages may force the interpreter to store some information in memory until it can be appropriately inserted in the target-language speech. (p. 45)

However, Jiménez Ivars (1999) suggests, based on the results of her research, that memory is such a multifaceted component that more research will be necessary to elucidate the role it plays in ST.

Another difference between ST and other modes of interpreting that has been emphasized by several scholars is the risk of source language (SL) interference because “words

and linguistic structures are ever-present before the practitioner's eyes" (Gile, 1995, p. 184), in contrast to the rapid disappearance of SL sounds in SI. As Agrifoglio (2004) notes, "The two main differences between the input in ST and in interpreting from an oral source are related to the opposition between oral and written language, and between the reading and listening processes," but she goes on to argue that "the main difficulty of ST lies not in the written nature of the source text, but in the smooth coordination of the R[ead- ing], M[emory] and P[roduction] Efforts, while struggling against increased visual interference from the source language" (p. 47). She cites research showing that whereas listeners pay more attention to the gist of a message, readers tend to recall the actual words of a text, making it more difficult for interpreters to abstract meaning from form in ST and render an idiomatic version of the source text. Indeed, in an experiment in which experienced professionals interpreted similar texts in all three modes of interpreting, all of them had fewer meaning problems and more expression problems in ST than in simultaneous or consecutive interpreting.

2.2 Conservation

Just as in every other aspect of judicial interpreting, the court interpreter must pay particular attention to conserving the register of the SL text. If the text to be sight translated is a complex legal document from another country, the interpreter must ensure that the TL version reflects the intricate, erudite style of the original. Similarly, if the text is a handwritten letter from a defendant with little education, the TL version must reflect the simple language and grammatical errors contained in the SL text. The users of interpreting services are generally unaware of the complexities of ST, which explains why they use phrases such as, "Will the interpreter read the document into the record?" Since ST appears to be a simple reading task, especially if it is performed well by a competent interpreter, novice translators and their employers do not realize how demanding it is.

2.3 Written Language

Part of the complexity of ST lies with the nature of written language. Abbott, Greenwood, McKeating, & Wingard (1981), in their study of foreign language comprehension, point out that written material is usually more densely packed with information than spoken language. The two forms also differ in lexical variety, sentence construction, level of vocabulary, and involvement or detachment (Agrifoglio, 2004). Furthermore, in written discourse there are no pauses to allow the listener to catch up, and no intonation or stress to provide additional clues for comprehension. Although punctuation serves the function of intonation in most written documents, many handwritten documents that court interpreters are called upon to sight translate contain little or no punctuation, which further complicates the task.

2.4 Reading Comprehension

In order to perform the task of ST proficiently, interpreters must be adept at grasping the meaning of written texts, even those that are drafted in a complex, turgid style. Jiménez Ivars (1999) emphasizes the differences between comprehension of oral language and that of written language in her study of the unique features of ST. To develop the ability to understand written texts quickly and effectively, interpreters must read widely and voraciously.

ciously. As the *Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Manual* (González, 1986) points out, "Many interpreters suggest that their expansive vocabularies have been developed through extensive and intensive reading of a wide variety of materials such as newspapers, journals, and literature in the respective languages over a period of years" (p. 5). This propensity to read is not just a preparatory exercise for becoming an interpreter; it should be a way of life. So vital is reading comprehension to the task of the court interpreter that the written portion of the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (FCICE) includes a section that measures this skill. González (1986) explains the reason for this part of the exam:

Reading comprehension questions assess the examinee's ability to read keenly, to analyze a written passage from a variety of perspectives, including his or her understanding of not only explicit material but also of assumptions underlying such material and its implications. The length of the written passage creates a substantial context that enables the reader to examine a variety of relationships within the passage. In this way, the examinee can perceive the function of a single word as it relates to the passage more broadly, the interrelationships of ideas within the whole passage, and the author's relation to both the topic and the audience. (p. 16)

2.5 Prediction

One cognitive feature that ST shares with SI is prediction. As discussed in Chapter 34 of this unit, prediction is a strategy interpreters must employ in order to process the SL message efficiently. Interpreters are able to predict the outcome of an incomplete message because of their knowledge of the SL syntax and style, as well as other sociolinguistic factors in the SL culture. In the case of ST, interpreters must be thoroughly versed in the various writing styles used in the SL (e.g., legal documents, personal letters, business correspondence, technical reports) so that they can be alert to common constructions that may pose translation problems. For example, legal documents in Spanish often begin sentences with a verb: *Comparecieron ante mí los subscribientes e hicieron constar lo siguiente*. English syntax requires that the subject precede the verb, so interpreters, recognizing that the initial verb is a common pitfall in translating from Spanish to English, must "predict" by reading ahead and finding the subject *los subscribientes* in order to render the following translation: "The undersigned appeared before me and declared the following." The importance of prediction as an interpreting skill is reflected in the fact that the first version of the written portion of the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (González, 1986) included a section on sentence completion, which gauged the candidate's ability to "recognize words or phrases which best complete the meaning of a partial sentence, with reference to both logic and style" (p. 15).

3. Need for More Research

Little research has been done on ST; it is rarely mentioned in discussions of the skills required of interpreters and translators or of the mental processes involved in interpretation (Jiménez Ivars, 1999). Courses designed for the training of interpreters often devote less time to ST than to other modes of interpreting. Agrifoglio (2004) mentions that many scholars view it as a mere pedagogical exercise for getting started in the techniques

of interpreting and improving their oral skills. For example, Viaggio (1992) calls ST “perhaps the most effective and complete prelude to and preparation for attacking simultaneous interpretation” (p. 45). Descriptions of interpreting modes often omit ST altogether. Only Weber (1984) and Gile (1995) discuss ST in any detail in their books on training interpreters. Although they do refer to ST as a mode of interpretation and provide examples of real-world applications, they primarily emphasize its value as a method of training interpreting students:

Through sight translation, students learn how to conduct themselves in front of an audience. They also acquire the basic reflexes required to transpose a message into another language (assuming that they have not had any translation courses beforehand). Moreover, they develop a swift eye-brain-voice coordination, which becomes vital in the process of simultaneous interpretation of speeches that have been prepared beforehand and are read at top speed by the speaker. Finally, it is a little easier to analyze a message that is presented visually than one that is presented orally. (Weber, 1984, pp. 27–28)

Jiménez Ivars (1999) acknowledges the paucity of empirical research on ST in her extensive review of the literature, noting that most of what has been written on the topic to date is more theoretical or pedagogical in nature. According to Gorszczyńska (2010), scholars did not focus their attention on ST until very recently, although Agrifoglio (2004) does cite research from 1989 and 1993. Gorszczyńska introduces her own research project by referencing two other studies carried out in 2007, in addition to Agrifoglio’s work (she may not have been aware of Jiménez Ivars’ research, as it was published in Spanish). Viezzi (1989) found that interpreters who performed ST of a text retained less of its content than they did when simultaneously interpreting, suggesting that the “permanent” presence of the source text made interpreters less likely to focus on processing for retention. Viezzi concluded that ST and simultaneous interpreting involve different strategies. Jiménez Ivars (1999) had a group of interpreters sight translate and then perform a written translation of the same text, and then she compared the perceived difficulty of the task and the number of errors between the two products. Not surprisingly, she found that the interpreters experienced more difficulty with ST than with written translation, and also made more errors. Whereas the problems with written translation were attributed to a variety of different factors, “psycho-physiological” factors due to time limitations (anxiety control, memory capacity and speed of semantic access) accounted for 50% of the difficulties encountered in ST. Less predictably, Jiménez Ivars found no correlation between the results of a memory test and the quality of ST performance or between the ability to control anxiety and ST performance. Of the factors analyzed in her small-scale study, only speed of semantic access (oral fluency) was positively correlated with ST performance. She also found that interpreters with limited ability to quickly find semantic equivalents made the most errors on an ST task, and concluded that speed of semantic access is the most important of the skill components analyzed.

4. Sight Translation in the Judicial Setting

ST is a vital component of the court interpreter’s work, as evidenced by the fact that it comprises one-third of the oral portion of the FCICE and the Consortium exams (Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, 2005a; González, 1986). The New Jersey

Supreme Court Task Force on Interpreting and Translation Services (1985) emphasizes the importance of making forms and documents available to non-English-speaking defendants, pointing out that it is "simply not feasible to publish a translated version of every court form in every language that will appear in the courts" (p. 46). The logical solution to that problem is for interpreters to provide sight translations of the specific documents as they are needed.

As previously stated, there is a paucity of research data on ST in any setting, let alone in the courts. No known job analyses have been conducted to determine what percentage of their time court interpreters devote to ST. It can be asserted, however, that ST is frequently required of the court interpreter (e.g., see Hewitt, 1995). The document may be sight translated on the record, in the presence of the judge and/or jury, or off the record, normally in the presence of counsel (Hewitt, 1995, p. 39). The nature of the documents to be translated will vary depending on whether English is the TL or the SL.

4.1 English Documents

Perhaps the most frequent occasion for ST involves official documents such as waiver forms and probation and police reports sight translated to the defendant (Edwards, 1995; Hewitt, 1995). In state agency hearings, one of the interpreter's prehearing duties is to sight translate the documents of the case file for the benefit of the claimant so that the latter may respond to them during the hearing. In all of these documents, the English tends to be a combination of very formal language at a high register and bureaucratic jargon, with occasional informal, very idiomatic usage. For example, a police report may contain the following language: "Reporting officer was traveling E/B in LN1 and observed suspect's vehicle traversing LN2 in a perpendicular fashion, as a Caucasian male shouted out the window, 'You're dead meat!'" As with every other aspect of court interpreting, interpreters must not change the level of language or alter the content in any way. On the other hand, interpreters must have sufficient command of the English language to enable them to understand fully the language that is used in these documents.

The jargon of specialized agencies (probation, police, social services, unemployment, and the like) is often very difficult to understand and may include many abbreviations. For example, a file in an unemployment appeals hearing may contain the following notation: "Cl't states was LOLW on 4/2/09, RTW on 5/30/09, Er rept wages totaling \$845 for month of May, det. done on 6/3/09, clmt disq'd as of 5/3/09." The interpreter who is familiar with the jargon and abbreviations used by the staff of the unemployment department will know that this sentence means, "The claimant states he was laid off for lack of work on 4/2/09 and returned to work on 5/30/09, but the employer reported wages totaling \$845 for the month of May. A determination was done on 6/3/09, and the claimant was disqualified as of 5/3/09." When in doubt, the interpreter should ask the author of the report or an employee of the agency to explain the meaning of this "shop talk" (assuming such a person is available). If interpreters encounter a term they do not understand and no one is available to explain its meaning to them, they should inform the court or the hearing officer of this problem; they should not attempt to guess at the meaning.

4.2 Non-English Documents

The court interpreter will be called upon to sight translate a wide variety of documents from other languages into English. These documents can be divided into two categories:

informal and formal (Hewitt, 1995). The first includes affidavits and statements by witnesses or interested parties, letters to the judge, or other court personnel, and other documents written by nonprofessionals who do not have a full command of legal registers or conventional styles or whose level of literacy makes their language difficult to comprehend. These documents may be written by hand, so in addition to the problems posed by poor grammar and spelling, run-on sentences, and nonstandard usage, the interpreter may be faced with the task of deciphering illegible handwriting (Edwards, 1995). Figure 36.1 illustrates the difficulties involved in sight translating handwritten documents.

The second category includes official documents from other countries such as birth, death, and marriage certificates, and school, criminal, and medical records. These documents are often written in very formal, technical language which is difficult to understand on the first reading. For example, the following sentence may take several readings to interpret properly:

Vista: La revocatoria interpuesta a fs. 1-2 contra el auto que abre esta causa a prueba. Fundándola, expresa el actor que se trata de un juicio por cobro de honorarios que debe tramitarse por el procedimiento de ejecución de sentencia (Artículo 23 de la Ley 123/78) y que por aplicación de los artículos 16 y siguientes del Código de Procedimientos, resultan inadmisibles las excepciones de inhabilidad de título y de compromiso opuestas; y a fs. 3-4 el demandado se opone a la revocatoria aduciendo que el procedimiento señalado no es aplicable cuando no se ejecutan honorarios contra la parte vencida, sino contra el patrocinado; que la circunstancia de haberse presentado un documento de donde surja un pago a cuenta que se presume una quita o remisión especial, es procedente la apertura a prueba y finalmente que unidos tales antecedentes con la circunstancia de haberse librado mandamiento por una suma mayor, alteran la ejecutoria, haciendo procedente la excepción de falsedad, de quita, pago y espera o remisión opuestas.

The translation rendered after careful scrutiny of the original text and based on an extensive knowledge of Spanish legal language would resemble this version:

Considering: The brief on pages 1-2 pursuing the revocation of the decree which summons the parties to produce their evidence in this cause. To substantiate such brief, Plaintiff states that the matter at hand concerns the collection of fees which must be pursued in accordance with the procedure for executing judgments (Article 23 of Law 123/78) and that, pursuant to Article 16 and successive articles of the Code of Procedure, the exceptions of invalidity of title and of compromise that have been raised are inadmissible. On pages 3-4 Defendant challenges such revocation, alleging that the aforementioned procedure is not applicable when the execution for fees is not directed against the losing party but against the client; that the circumstance of having submitted a document from which a payment on account emerges, which is presumed to be a quittance or special remission, does justify the summoning of the parties for production of evidence; and finally, that when such antecedents are added to the fact that a judicial order has been issued for a larger amount, the executory procedure is thus altered and the exceptions of falsity, quittance, payment, and delay or remission which have been raised therefore become fit and proper.

If interpreters examine a document that is to be sight translated and determine that they need more time to research the terminology, they should inform the court or the hearing officer. In some cases, all that is needed is an explanation of what the document is or a summary of its contents. That assessment should be made by the court, however; in-

Figure 36.1. Example of Sight Translation Document

HASTES -
 a. 23 de Julio de 1985
 Estimada y adorada esposa Espero que al
 recibir esta carta se encuentren gozando
 cabal salud. Como son mis mejores deseos
 despues de saludarles paso a lo siguiente.
 mira Jose de lo que me mandas decir de q
 me bañe pues mira mi amor pues si
 boy a ser madamas por que me lo pid
 por que yo estaba pensando que no te
 acordabas ya de que el 27 era mi
 cumpleaños bueno mira Jose. y de lo
 que me mandas decir que si te das
 dinero a tu abuelito pues ayudalo hi
 Na sabes que para mi familia y para
 tuya todo Jose. que te mando estas
 200 dolares a i mira. Quiero que me
 mandes decir cuanto me cuesta la
 estufa. y una cama para mi hijo.
 Para mandarte los mira te va a mandar
 500 quientos pero todavia no iba a
 cobrar deca de este dia que te
 escribo me faltaban dos dias para ser
 la semana y es por eso y hui el de
 escorto de compras en carro a el
 y es por eso que no te mande lo
 400 es lo que te iba a mandar pe
 agarre 200 pero mira. ESTE.
 Sabado te boy a mandar otros 100

terpreters should never decide on their own to summarize a document. If a translation
 of the entire document is required, interpreters should inform the court how long they
 think it will take to do the research. If they do not feel competent to translate the docu-
 ment at all, this should be made clear.

5. Skills Required

ST is a hybrid interpreting technique that involves fundamental translation and in-
 terpreting skills, as well as a number of ancillary abilities.

5.1 Full Command of Working Languages

Court interpreters encounter a wide range of subject matters and registers in the documents they are called upon to sight translate. They must therefore have a full command of both the SL and TL at all levels of usage so they can render every aspect of meaning accurately.

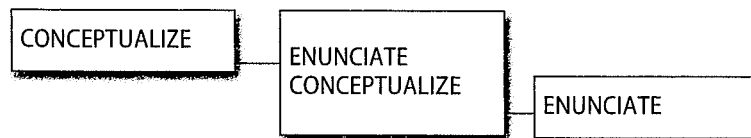
5.2 Public Speaking

Another skill required for ST is public speaking, which involves voice projection, clear enunciation, good posture, and smooth pacing. Coughlin (1984) states that the court interpreter “will ... need to be heard distinctly and clearly and he will have to know how to protect his voice from becoming strained after several hours of work” (p. 420). When ST is done properly, it sounds as if the interpreter is simply reading a document written in the TL.

5.3 Mental Agility

Sight translation demands mental agility, that is, the ability to multitask. During the ST procedure, while the interpreter is uttering the TL version of one segment of the SL document, she is also reading ahead in the document, analyzing the contents and preparing what she will say next. In other words, her mind is working on two channels at once, and this requires a great deal of agility and flexibility, or, as Jiménez Ivars (1999) puts it, speed of semantic access. Weber (1990) likens ST to giving a speech without notes, and describes it in this way:

Once one of these [meaning] units has been clearly conceptualized in the speaker’s own mind, he will then enunciate it, while at the same time concentrating on conceptualizing the following meaning unit, and so on. The flow can be schematically illustrated as follows:



The simultaneity of the two phases is obvious. If any speaker or interpreter were to wait until the end of conceptualization of the following idea, the delivery would become very halting indeed. (pp. 47–48)

It is the “smooth coordination” of all the Efforts involved in ST that makes it such a challenging task, even more demanding than simultaneous and consecutive interpreting (Agri-foglio, 2004; Gile, 1995).

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of ST is that the SL text is on paper, and it is therefore much easier to be constrained by the structure of the original. The interpreter must avoid being “hypnotized by the words,” as Seleskovitch (1978a) emphasizes, concentrating instead on the underlying meaning:

Words are actually a hindrance and not a help when one attempts to make sense out of a string of hundreds, if not thousands, of words. Taken in isolation, a word has a tendency to evoke all its current connotations and even its etymological

meaning. The more evanescent, the more fleeting a word is, the easier it will be for the interpreter to discard it and retain only the meaning of the message; an accurate interpreter preserves meaning, not words. (p. 18)

As has been stressed repeatedly in this text, the interpreter must abandon the external structure of the SL message and penetrate to the underlying meaning. Agrifoglio (2004) emphasizes the difficulty posed by what she calls "source-language interference," making ST a particularly demanding mode of interpreting.

6. Process of Sight Translation

This is the procedure the interpreter follows when performing a typical ST, step by step: First, the interpreter takes a few moments to scan the document to determine the subject matter, context, style, and country of origin, and to discern the overall meaning of the text (Edwards, 1995). An interpreter who is adept at ST will be able to grasp the meaning and intent of the document by immediately identifying the subject and predicate of each sentence. The interpreter is also alert to and makes a mental note of common pitfalls that are unique to the SL, such as dangling participles, and features such as parenthetical statements and embedded clauses that can pose problems for ST in any language. Utilizing features such as punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes), the interpreter skims passages quickly and identifies key features. Gile (1995) recommends actually marking the text during this initial reading as a means of visually segmenting sentences in anticipation of the restructuring that will be necessary, and even writing down TL equivalents of difficult terms. Court interpreters may not have the freedom to write on the documents they are asked to sight translate, however.

Then the interpreter begins translating sentence by sentence, focusing on one unit of meaning at a time. As the interpreter is uttering the translation of one unit, her eyes are scanning the next unit and she is analyzing its meaning in preparation for translating it. As we noted in Chapter 32, however, units of meaning are not always conveniently lined up one after another; they may be divided up. For example, in a typical criminal complaint, the interpreter will see a phrase like this: "did willfully, unlawfully and feloniously commit an assault." The predicate in this sentence is "did commit an assault"; those four words are a single unit of meaning. The experienced interpreter will recognize that "did" is a past tense marker, will know that the words between it and the verb are adverbials, and will then search for the verb after the adverbials before attempting to translate the sentence.

It is important to maintain a steady pace when sight translating. One unit of meaning may be very easy to translate because it has a direct equivalent in the TL, while the next unit requires some mental gymnastics and takes a little longer. Interpreters should not hurry through the first one, only to be bogged down on the next. Rather, they should utter the TL rendition of the first unit slowly and evenly, buying time to concentrate on how they are going to handle the next unit.

7. Exercises

The novice interpreter can do a variety of exercises to build the skills required for ST. These exercises are grouped according to the particular skill that they emphasize. They should be performed in all of the interpreter's working languages.

7.1 Public Speaking Exercises

(1) *Reading aloud*: Take a magazine, newspaper, or book (a law textbook or legal form book would be helpful to practice reading legal language) and read passages aloud. It helps to have an audience, but if you do not have one, standing in front of a mirror is sufficient. Record yourself (audio or video), and as you play back the recording, listen to yourself critically as if you were someone in the audience. Pay attention to your voice, posture, and speech mannerisms.

(2) *Controlling emotions*: Choose texts with a high emotional content (humor, anger, sadness) or with very controversial themes and read them aloud as in Exercise (1). Practice controlling your emotions, making sure that you convey the emotion the author would have, not your personal reaction to the text.

(3) *Public speaking*: Look for opportunities to speak in public (school board meetings, city council meetings, church groups). Speaking before a group of people you know in a nonthreatening situation helps you “break the ice” and gain confidence, so that speaking in an interpreting situation will no longer seem so intimidating.

7.2 Reading Ahead in Text

(1) *Extensive reading*: Build up your reading speed by reading as often as possible in a wide variety of fields (this also helps build vocabulary).

(2) *Analyzing*: After reading a text, analyze its content. Practice picking out the subject and verb of each sentence to find the basic kernels of meaning.

Example: Although less influential than in Argentina, migration from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected the development of Chilean political culture.

Subject: migration Verb: affected

(3) *Identifying sentences and embedded sentences*: Read a text aloud, and as you are reading, break up long sentences into smaller, more manageable units.

Example: Juvenile delinquency, which is seen more often among minority youths in urban ghettos, nevertheless cannot be attributed to the urban environment alone, as it plagues the suburbs as well.

There are three embedded sentences in this complex sentence:

- (a) Juvenile delinquency is seen more often among minority youths in urban ghettos.
- (b) It cannot be attributed to the urban environment alone.
- (c) It plagues the suburbs as well.

(4) *Deciphering handwriting*: Obtain texts written by hand (e.g., letters) and practice deciphering the handwriting on the first oral reading.

7.3 Analytical Skills

(1) *Reading for content*: Read a text aloud to a friend, and afterward have the person ask you questions about its content.

(2) *Chunking*: Choose a text and mark off the units of meaning in it.

Example: I was getting ready to go out to lunch with my mother-in-law when all of a sudden I felt sick to my stomach. It occurred to me that it might be something psychosomatic, but I later found out that I was simply allergic to the perfume she always wore.

I was getting ready / to go out to lunch / with my mother-in-law / when all of a sudden / I felt sick to my stomach. / It occurred to me / that it might be something psychosomatic, / but I later found out / that I was simply allergic to the perfume / she always wore.

(3) *Using transcripts:* Perform the same task with transcripts of court proceedings (or any document with a question-and-answer format). Try to establish a hierarchy of importance of the units of meaning.

Example: Now, Mr. Jones, in your earlier testimony you mentioned that you had seen the defendant in that bar prior to the date of the incident. Can you tell us, or give us an approximation of, how long before the incident it was that you first saw the defendant in the El Camino bar?

Hierarchy of importance:

- (a) How long before the incident
- (b) You first saw the defendant
- (c) In the El Camino bar
- (d) Tell us, or give approximation
- (e) Had seen defendant prior to date of incident
- (f) Mentioned in earlier testimony
- (g) Mr. Jones
- (h) Now

(4) *Completing phrases:* Have a friend write a series of incomplete phrases. Complete the phrases and determine whether the resulting sentences convey the same idea the friend originally had in mind.

Example: After being reprimanded unfairly by her boss in front of her co-workers, the secretary tendered ...

The judge determined that the defendant has strong ties to the community, and therefore released him ...

As you do this exercise, take note of the errors you make and be aware of how susceptible you are to reaching false conclusions based on partial information.

(5) *Paraphrasing:* Read a text out loud, and rephrase it as you are going along, taking care not to change the meaning.

Example: Since political parties are found almost everywhere in Latin America, they would seem to be a common denominator in the region's political life. Yet this is not the case. Cultural, environmental, and historical influences on party development are so varied they challenge conventional notions. Most nations hold periodic elections, but, like parties, the implications of elections differ profoundly from those we assume from our own culture.

Rephrased: Because political parties can be found in just about every Latin American country, one might conclude that they are a common thread in the political life of this region. This is not so, however. There is such a great variety of cul-

tural, environmental, and historical influences on the development of parties that commonly held ideas are contradicted. Elections are held periodically in the majority of countries, but the implications of these proceedings, like those of parties, are very different from the assumptions we can make in our own culture.

(6) *Expanding*: Read a text aloud and expand it (that is, say the same thing in more words) as you are going along, again taking care not to change the meaning.

Example: In spite of what you may have heard, scientists are just like other people. A scientist walking down the street may look just like an insurance agent or a car salesman: no wild mane of hair, no white lab coat.

Expanded: Although you may have heard assertions to the contrary, there are no differences between scientists and people who are not in that profession. As a matter of fact, if you saw a scientist out for a stroll on the sidewalk, you might mistake him for a person who sells insurance, or for an automobile dealer. Scientists don't all have wild manes of hair, and they don't always wear white laboratory coats.

(7) *Condensing*: Read a text aloud, and condense it (that is, say the same thing in fewer words) as you are going along, retaining the same meaning.

Example: The multiplicity of cues which are utilized in the categorizing and sorting of the environment into significant classes are reconstructed from the strategies and modes of coping with the problems presented to the subjects. In many situations, no certainty can be achieved; the varying trustworthiness and merely statistical validity of the cues frequently make inferences only probable.

Condensed: Many cues are used to classify the environment. They are reconstructed from the subjects' problem-solving strategies. Often, because the cues are not uniformly reliable and are only statistically valid, the results are not certain.

(8) *Manipulating the register*: Read a text aloud and alter the register or language level as you go along, being careful not to stray from the original meaning.

Example: As I was driving to work in the morning, I noticed that the stop sign which used to be on the corner of Main and 1st had been removed.

Higher level: Upon transporting myself to my place of employment in a motor vehicle at some point in time prior to noon, I observed that the insignia which had formerly been stationed at the intersection of the thoroughfares known as Main and 1st to cause motorists to bring their vehicles to stationary position, had been displaced.

Lower level: On my way to work in the morning I saw that they took out the stop sign that used to be at Main and 1st.

Note: These are learning exercises designed to build mental agility, linguistic flexibility, analytical skills, and to heighten awareness of language usage. In actual sight translation, the interpreter does not paraphrase, summarize, or change the register of the original text.