



## JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

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Dear Aspiring Interpreter,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a California certified court or registered interpreter. Please find the following information to learn about the profession and steps required for becoming a credentialed interpreter.

As a court interpreter, you will play a key role in our trial courts by interpreting for defendants, litigants and witnesses, thereby helping to ensure access to justice for thousands of Californians with limited English proficiency.

In a state where over 200 languages are spoken, there is a significant need for court interpreters. You will have the opportunity to experience California's cultural diversity firsthand. You will also be part of a group of trained professionals who have merged their language skills and their public service ideals into the rewarding career of court interpreting.

This information is a guide that includes the step-by-step process for becoming a court interpreter. We look forward to working with you as you take the first steps towards this new exciting profession.

Court Interpreters Program  
[courtinterpreters@jud.ca.gov](mailto:courtinterpreters@jud.ca.gov)

## **Contents**

<b>I.</b>	<b>Steps to Becoming a Certified Court Interpreter.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Steps to Becoming a Registered Court Interpreter.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Next Steps After Passing Your Examinations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>You passed the examinations, what's next?.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Frequently Asked Questions .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Association and Resources.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Interpreter Training Programs:.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Suggested Skills—Enhancing Exercises for All Languages .....</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAHY.....</b>	<b>22</b>

## ***I. Steps to Becoming a Certified Court Interpreter***

In California, candidates choosing to become court interpreters must be certified if their language of choice for conducting interpreting business is listed below. If your language is not listed, proceed to section II—Registered Court Interpreters.

### **Languages that require certification:**

American Sign Language (ASL)  
Arabic  
Eastern Armenian  
Western Armenian\*  
Cantonese  
Farsi (Persian)  
Japanese\*  
Khmer  
Korean

Mandarin  
Portuguese  
Punjabi  
Russian  
Spanish  
Tagalog  
Vietnamese

\*The certification exam (the Bilingual Interpreting Exam) is not available for this language.

### **Step 1: Review [the Candidate Information Bulletin](#).**

#### **The bulletin provides information on:**

- ✓ The court interpreter profession;
- ✓ Existing requirements for certified interpreters;
- ✓ How to prepare for the Bilingual Interpreting Exam (BIE); and
- ✓ The certified court interpreter testing processes.

### **Step 2: Review the court interpreter's information on the Judicial Council's [Court Interpreters Program website](#).**

### **Step 3: Take the Qualifications for Court Interpreting and Self-Assessment ([Click here](#))**

### **Ready to move forward in becoming a certified court interpreter?**

If so, follow these next steps.

### **Step 5: Create a Prometric Account**

This step only applies if you are: (1) a new candidate; (2) you do not have a Prometric online account; and (3) don't have a dedicated Prometric ID number.

**Note:** All candidates must create and maintain a Prometric online account. The Prometric online account serves as the gateway for scheduling future exams.

### **Step 6: How do I create a Prometric Account?**

To create a Prometric account, please click on this link: [Create a Prometric Account](#).

### **Step 7: How do I obtain the Prometric ID number?**

If you **do not have a Prometric ID number**, you will need to contact Prometric Candidate Care staff directly by calling **1-866-241-3118**. Candidate Care will review your online Prometric account information, and upon validation, they will provide you with the dedicated ID number. This ID number will be your identifier through the testing process, so keep this number (when you receive it) confidential.

**Important:** Before you contact Prometric Candidate Care to obtain your Prometric ID number, you must first create a Prometric online account.

### **Step 8: How do I schedule my next examination?**

Before you can schedule your next exam, you are encouraged to review the [Court Interpreter Written Examination handbook](#). Candidates must first take and pass the written examination to be eligible to take other exams. To schedule the written exam, please visit the [CALIFORNIA COURT INTERPRETER WRITTEN EXAM INFORMATION](#) page on the Prometric website.

### **Step 9: Scheduling the exam**

Click here to schedule your exam: [“Schedule my Exam”](#) If you prefer to schedule your exam(s) by phone, please contact:

**Prometric Candidate Care at 1-866-241-3118.**

### **Step 10: What do I do next?**

Once you have scheduled, taken, and passed the written exam, you are now eligible to schedule the Bilingual Interpreting Exam (BIE). You are required to take and pass this exam in one session.

**Please note:** the BIE examination is offered twice a year during March, and in September, dates are subject to change. For information about the BIE and examination testing dates, please visit the [Prometric website](#) and select the [Certified Interpreters column](#).

## **II. Steps to Becoming a Registered Court Interpreter**

To become a registered court interpreter, candidates must first complete and pass a written exam and complete and pass two Oral Proficiency Exams, including one in the language in which the candidate is proficient and will practice as a registered court interpreter. \*

*\*With over 200 languages spoken in California, testing is limited to approximately 70 languages. Testing may not be available for your language; if this is the case, you must only complete and pass the writing and the English Oral Proficiency Exam. Please consult with Prometric candidate care for additional information on the availability of a test for the language you want to practice as a registered court interpreter.*

### **Step 1: Review [the Candidate Information Bulletin.](#)**

#### **The bulletin provides information on:**

- ✓ The court interpreter profession;
- ✓ Existing requirements for registered interpreters;
- ✓ How to prepare for the writing examination;
- ✓ How to prepare for the Oral Proficiency Examination (OPE); and
- ✓ The registered court interpreter testing processes.

### **Step 2: Review the Court Interpreter Information on the Judicial Council's [Court Interpreters Program Website.](#)**

### **Step 3: Take the Qualifications for Court Interpreting and Self-Assessment [\(Click here.\)](#)**

#### **Ready to move forward in becoming a certified court interpreter?**

If so, follow these next steps.

#### **Step 4: Create a Prometric Account**

This step applies if you are: (1) a new candidate and (2) you do not have a Prometric online account, or (3) a dedicated Prometric ID number.

**All candidates must create and maintain a Prometric online account. The Prometric online account serves as the gateway for scheduling future exams.**

#### **Step 5: How do I create a Prometric Account?**

To create a Prometric account, please click on this link: [Create a Prometric Account.](#)

#### **Step 6: How do I obtain the Prometric ID number?**

If you **do not have a Prometric ID number**, you will need to contact Prometric Candidate Care staff directly by calling **1-866-241-3118**. Candidate Care will review your online Prometric account information, and upon validation, they will provide you with the dedicated ID number. This ID number will be your identifier through the testing process, so keep this number (when you receive it) confidential.

**Important:** Before you contact Prometric Candidate Care to obtain your Prometric ID number, you must first create a Prometric online account.

### **Step 8: How do I schedule my next examination?**

Before you can schedule your [next] exam, you are encouraged to review the [Court Interpreter Written Examination handbook](#).

Candidates must first take and pass the written examination to be eligible to take other exams. To schedule the written exam, please visit the [CALIFORNIA COURT INTERPRETER WRITTEN EXAM INFORMATION](#) page on the Prometric website.

### **Step 9: Scheduling the exam**

Click here to schedule your exam: [“Schedule my Exam”](#) If you prefer to schedule your exam(s) by phone, please contact:

**Prometric Candidate Care at 1-866-241-3118.**

### **Step 10: What do I do next?**

Once you have scheduled, taken, and passed the written exam, you are now eligible to schedule the Oral Proficiency Exam. These two exams can be scheduled and taken anytime. For information on how to schedule your next exam, please contact **Prometric Candidate Care at 1-866-241-3118.**

**Required:** Candidates must identify the language they want to practice as a registered court interpreter. Prometric Candidate Care must receive and document the correct language the registered interpreter will practice in a court setting. Without a language on file, Judicial Council of California, Court Interpreters Program staff will not be able to process the candidate's registered court interpreter credentials.

### III. Next Steps After Passing Your Examinations

**Checklist**—Did you complete and pass your examination requirements? Use this checklist to track your progress.

Type:	For Certified Court Interpreters	For Registered Court Interpreters
<b>Written Examination</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Oral Proficiency Examination (OPE)</b>	Certified court interpreters may choose to take an OPE exam in any language if seeking to enhance their interpreting language skills or want to also become a registered court interpreter in a non-certified language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Bilingual Interpreting Examination (BIE)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Registered court interpreters may choose to take the BIE only if seeking to become certified in one of the listed certified languages*

\*Please refer to section I—For becoming a Certified Court Interpreter.

### IV. You passed the examinations, what's next?

Passing the examinations alone do not make you a recognized certified or registered court interpreter. You must first enroll as a credentialed court interpreter with the Judicial Council. Enrolling includes completing an enrollment packet and doing the following:

- ✓ Take the on-line course “Interpreter Orientation: Working in the California Courts”; a link will be provided with your enrollment materials;
- ✓ Submit the enrollment application to the Judicial Council to become a certified court or registered interpreter (including certificate of completion from the on-line orientation and the enrollment fee);
- ✓ Abide by Rule of court 2.890, professional conduct for interpreters;
- ✓ Attend a Judicial Council Code of Ethics Workshop within the first two-year compliance period; and
- ✓ Read and abide by the [Compliance Requirements for California Certified Court and Registered Interpreters](#).

## **V. Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is a court interpreter?**

A court interpreter is someone who interprets in a criminal, civil or any legal court proceeding (e.g., arraignment, motion, pretrial conference, preliminary hearing, deposition, trial) for a witness or defendant who speaks or understands little or no English.

Court interpreters must accurately interpret for individuals who possess an advanced level of education and/or linguistic ability, as well as for individuals with limited education and/or language skills, without changing the level of the language spoken (“register”) by the speaker. Interpreters are also responsible for orally translating written documents from English into the foreign language and from the foreign language into English. It is also necessary to have exceptional memory skills and an extensive legal vocabulary in both languages to be a successful interpreter.

### **Is it necessary to have a degree to be a court interpreter?**

Although there are no minimum requirements that must be met to take the state certification exams, candidates are encouraged to complete formal, college-level course work and training in both languages, as well as in all three modes of interpreting before applying for the examination. There are several colleges and universities throughout the State of California that offer introductory courses and certificate programs in interpretation or translation. We encourage you to research these programs and others that may be available.

### **Is special training recommended to become a court interpreter?**

Yes. Specialized training is recommended as court interpreting is a demanding occupation that requires **impeccable** fluency in both English and the foreign language. The level of expertise required is far greater than the fluency level required for everyday bilingual conversation. The interpreter must be able to handle the broadest range of language terms that may be presented in the courts, ranging from specialized legal and technical terminology to street slang and idioms. Most people do not have full command of all registers of both English and the foreign language required for court interpreters and need special training to acquire it.

Interpreter training programs are widely available in English and Spanish; training in other languages, with limited exceptions, is not as readily available. We encourage you to contact the programs listed at the end of this packet and request their current information.

For languages where no formal training is available, the following self-study techniques are suggested: (1) expand your vocabulary, (2) develop your own glossaries, and (3) develop and practice interpreting techniques. Suggested skills-enhancing exercises are available to help you develop in the three modes of interpreting: (1) consecutive interpretation, (2) simultaneous interpretation, and (3) sight translation. These self-study techniques are also recommended even if formal training is available.

## **What is the difference between a certified and a registered interpreter?**

A certified court interpreter is a spoken language interpreter who has passed the Bilingual Interpreting Exam in one of California's certified spoken languages, and subsequently enrolls with the Judicial Council. The certified languages for which bilingual interpreting exams are available are: Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Cantonese, Farsi, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.<sup>1</sup> The spoken language certification process consists of a Written Exam and a Bilingual Interpreting Exam.

A registered interpreter is an interpreter of a spoken language other than the certified languages who has passed all the required exams and enrolled with the Judicial Council. Registered interpreters are required to pass the Written Exam, and the Oral Proficiency Exam in English, and the Oral Proficiency Exam in the non-English language to become registered.

**Please note:** Only someone who has enrolled with the Judicial Council of California may refer to themselves as a certified court or registered interpreter, even if they have passed the required exams.

## **If I do not pass on the first attempt, how many times may I retake the Written Exam or the Oral Proficiency Exam in order to become a registered interpreter?**

You must wait a minimum of 90 days before retaking either the Written Exam and/or the Oral Proficiency Exam and pay the full fee each time an exam is taken. For more information please visit: [www.Prometric.com/California](http://www.Prometric.com/California).

## **Once I pass the Written Exam, how many times may I take a Bilingual Interpreting Exam to become a certified court interpreter?**

Once you pass the Written Exam, you are permitted four attempts to take and pass the Bilingual Interpreting Exam for certified languages. There is no time limit to take or to complete the four attempts. You can take the oral exam in a language only once during any week-long exam cycle.

If you do not pass the Bilingual Interpreting Exam within four attempts, you must begin the testing process again by retaking and passing the Written Exam before taking the Bilingual Interpreting Exam again. For more information see the steps below to prepare you for becoming a certified court interpreter.

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<sup>1</sup> Western Armenian and Japanese are certified languages, but there is no certification exam available.

## **What is the job market like for court interpreters?**

The job market for court interpreters varies by region, but demand for interpreters is growing. However, certified court or registered interpreters are often used in administrative, conference, mediation or other areas where interpreting skills are required. We encourage you to research those courts and or agencies where your services may be needed and check the employment opportunities available.

## **Is U.S. citizenship required to be employed as a court interpreter?**

U.S. citizenship is not required to work for the courts, however a court interpreter must be able to prove that he or she can work legally in the United States (possess a valid permanent resident card, or work permit issued by the USCIS authorities).

Is there an age requirement for becoming a court interpreter?

## **Is there a minimum age requirement to take the written and/or the oral exam?**

There is no minimum age requirement; however, candidate test takers must be of legal working age as required by the California Courts.

## **Does the Judicial Council of California provide sponsorship for green card, H-1 B visa, or permanent resident status?**

No, the Judicial Council of California does not provide sponsorship for green card, H-1B visa, or permanent resident status.

## **Is certification required to become a sign language interpreter?**

Under California Evidence Code §754(f) a qualified sign language interpreter is an interpreter who has been certified as competent to interpret court proceedings by an organization approved by the Judicial Council.

The California courts still uphold the SC:L, formerly administered by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) as the only certification recognized in the California state courts in order to serve as an American Sign Language Interpreter (ASL). The Judicial Council of California is aware that RID is no longer awarding this certification and is in communication with professional members of the ASL community and other stakeholders regarding the need for alternatives which may be viable or under development.

In the past, an ASL interpreter had to hold a valid generalist certification for ASL/English interpretation and obtain both formal legal interpreter training and mentoring before they could stand for the SC:L. These prior pre-requisites may help you prepare. If you would like to leave your name and contact information, we are keeping a list of interpreters, like you, who are interested in court interpreting, and will inform you of any decisions regarding ASL interpreters in the California Courts.

## **Does California offer certification reciprocity with other states?**

The Judicial Council **currently** offers reciprocity for only those languages that are certified in the state of California and includes:

- Federally certified court interpreters;
- ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters who hold the Specialist Certificate: Legal issued by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID); and
- To individuals who have successfully passed the Bilingual Oral Interpreting Exams offered in Consortium for Language Access in the Courts member states, *if all criteria for reciprocity are satisfied*. **Please note** that the Court Interpreters Program will only recognize bilingual oral interpreting exam standards and scores that meet or exceed the requirements in California and only offers reciprocity for those seeking reciprocity as Certified Court Interpreters.

Reciprocity is **not** offered for languages that are designated as registered.

## **How do I become a certified translator?**

While interpreters provide oral-to-oral or written-to-oral interpretation, translators work exclusively with written documents, providing written-to-written translation. The Judicial Council of California does not certify translators. For information about translator certification, contact the American Translators Association at 703-683-6100 or visit <http://atanet.org>

## **How do I contact the Court Interpreters Program?**

Please direct your questions to [CourtInterpreters@jud.ca.gov](mailto:CourtInterpreters@jud.ca.gov). You will also find information and a suite of videos on our public website: <http://www.courts.ca.gov/programs-interpreters.htm>

## **VI. Association and Resources**

### **National Center for State Courts**

<https://www.ncsc.org/>

Provides information and resources regarding court interpretation and language access

<https://www.ncsc.org/Services-and-Experts/Areas-of-expertise/Language-access.aspx>

<https://courses.ncsc.org/> (Online courses, at cost or no cost)

<https://courses.ncsc.org/course/lep> (This is a free online course on Domestic Violence Interpretation)

<https://www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/State-Interpreter-Certification/Self-Assessment-Tools.aspx> (Self-assessment tools)

<https://www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/State-Interpreter-Certification/Legal-Glossaries-and-Dictionaries.aspx> (Dictionary & Glossary)

### **For candidates seeking to become certified in the Arabic:**

[https://www.ncsc.org/~media/Files/PDF/Education%20and%20Careers/State%20Interpreter%20Certification%202/Becoming\\_an\\_Arabic\\_Court\\_Interpreter\\_May\\_2010.ashx](https://www.ncsc.org/~media/Files/PDF/Education%20and%20Careers/State%20Interpreter%20Certification%202/Becoming_an_Arabic_Court_Interpreter_May_2010.ashx)

### **United States Courts: Federal Court Interpreter Certification**

<https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/federal-court-interpreters/federal-court-interpreter-certification-examination>

### **The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators**

<https://najit.org/>

### **American Translators Association**

<https://www.atanet.org/>

### **Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf**

<https://rid.org/>

## **VII. Interpreter Training Programs:**

The following is a list of some of the colleges and universities that offer court interpreter training programs. This is not a complete list. You are encouraged to conduct your own research into educational opportunities available. This list does not constitute an endorsement of these programs but is provided for information only.

## **San Francisco State University**

College of Extended Learning  
SFSU Downtown Center  
835 Market Street, 6th floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-817-4223

[www.cel.sfsu.edu/interpretation](http://www.cel.sfsu.edu/interpretation)

Spanish/English Legal & Court Interpretation Certificate Program. This is an online program.

## **University of California San Diego Extension**

9500 Gilman Drive, 0170-A  
La Jolla, CA 92093-0170  
858-964-1046

<https://extension.ucsd.edu/courses-and-programs/translation-and-interpretation>

(Main page for sublevel courses)

<https://extension.ucsd.edu/about-extension/locations-maps-and-transportation>

<https://extension.ucsd.edu/courses-and-programs/introduction-to-court-interpretation>

<https://extension.ucsd.edu/courses-and-programs/translation-and-interpretation-program-information-session>

Translation and Interpretation Certificate Program Spanish/English–Spanish/English Professional Certificate in Translation and Interpretation CIMCE credits available for select classes for California certified court or registered interpreters. This is a one to two-year program.

## **University of Arizona- National Center for Interpretation**

National Center for Interpretation  
PO BOX 210432  
Tucson, AZ 85721  
520-621-3615

<https://nci.arizona.edu/>

Spanish/English Court Interpreting course offered through the Agnese Haury Institute for Interpretation. Hybrid courses online courses and onsite.

## **New Mexico Judiciary - Center for Language Access in the Courts**

Partnership with the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts  
505-270-0206

<http://www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org/index.php>

<https://nmcourts.gov/Language-Access-Services/language-access-specialist-interpreter-training.aspx>

<https://www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org/cms/images/pdf/certification-resources-1.0.pdf>

<https://www.nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org/cms/images/pdf/certification-resources-2.0.pdf>

Offers certificate in Justice System Interpreting and certificate as a Language Access Specialist. The interpreting course is 20 weeks and includes an internship. Online courses are combined with a face-face internship. Professional development courses available for current interpreters.

### **Middlebury Institute of International Studies**

Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation Non-Degree Programs

460 Pierce Street

Monterey, CA 93940

Phone and FAX: 831-647-4100

<http://translate.miis.edu/ndp/index.html>

Master's degree in Translation, Translation/Interpretation, Conference Interpretation, and Translation/Localization Management; Two-year program or one-year advanced program

### **Northridge Institute of Interpretation**

P.O. Box 920160

Sylmar, CA 91392-0160

818-644-0407

<http://niiedu.com/Welcome.html>

Spanish/English Court Interpreter Certificate Program; *(18-month program)*

Home Study course also available.

### **Southern California School of Interpretation**

10012 Norwalk Blvd., Suite 120

Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

562-906-9787 FAX 562- 906-9780

<http://www.interpreting.com/>

E-mail: [SCSINTER@ix.netcom.com](mailto:SCSINTER@ix.netcom.com)

Branch locations: San Diego, Corona and Las Vegas, Nevada. Online program available.

Spanish/English court translation and interpretation courses for interpreters at precertification and continuing education stages. This is a six-month program.

### **Boston University – Center for Professional Education**

808 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 270

Boston, MA 02215

Phone: 1-866-633-9370 or 617-353-4497

<https://cpe.bu.edu/search/publicCourseSearchDetails.do?method=load&courseId=37604&selectedProgramAreaId=21297&selectedProgramStreamId=21468>

Offers certificate in Spanish, Mandarin or Portuguese interpreting.

## **AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE**

### **American River College**

4700 College Oak Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95841  
916-484-8011

<https://arc.losrios.edu/academics/programs-and-majors/asl-english-interpreter-preparation> A.A. degree in Sign Language Studies/Interpreter Preparation Program  
Part of the Humanities Division of the college.

### **College of the Sequoias**

915 S. Mooney Blvd  
Visalia, CA 93277  
559-730-3700

<https://www.cos.edu/en-us/academics/language-communication>

### **San Diego Mesa College Interpreter Training Program**

7250 Mesa College Drive  
San Diego, CA 92111  
619-388-2604

<http://www.sdmesa.edu/academics/academic-programs/american-sign-language.shtml>

Certificate and A.A. in ASL Interpretation

### **Gallaudet University**

800 Florida Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
202-651-5149

<http://www.gallaudet.edu/interpretation.html>

B.A. and M.A. in ASL-English Interpretation

### **National Technical Institute for the Deaf**

52 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY 14623  
585-475-6713

<https://www.rit.edu/ntid/academics/interpreting>

BA in ASL-English Interpretation

AAS in ASL-English Interpretation

## **VIII. Suggested Skills—Enhancing Exercises for All Languages**

With limited interpreter training classes in languages other than English/Spanish available it is often difficult to obtain feedback on interpreting performance. The exercises described below will provide both the novice and the experienced interpreter with methods to improve skills in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting and in sight translation.

### **Effective Listening**

1. Observe conversations conducted outside of earshot, (e.g., across a room, with the volume turned down on the television, or in a crowded area, such as a shopping center or an airport). Note how facial expressions, gestures, body movements, posture, and eye contact (or lack of it) reveal what the speakers may be saying. What are they talking about? Which, nonverbal cues suggest the nature of a conversation? What language are the participants speaking? How do you know? Do this exercise in all your working languages. How do the cues differ in each language?
2. Listen closely to someone you cannot see, such as a telephone caller or radio broadcaster, and analyze the person's manner of speaking: voice pitch, tone, and volume as well as other sounds, such as sighs, hesitations, stutters, and tongue clicking. Do this exercise in all your working languages and compare the differences among them.
3. Analyze words and their meanings by asking others what they mean when they use a particular word or phrase. How does their word usage differ from yours?
4. Ask someone for directions to a place you know how to get to, and then ask for directions to an unfamiliar place. What happens in your mind in each situation? Do you lose your train of thought or do you jump ahead?
5. The next time you have a conversation with someone and miss part of what was said, analyze what went wrong. How did you lose your concentration? Were you daydreaming? Were you distracted by an unfamiliar word or a physical interference? Did a previous, unresolved conversation or thought intervene?
6. While listening to a speaker, try to determine the speaker's point early in the presentation. At the conclusion of the speech make another evaluation. Were your evaluations the same? Why or why not?
7. How and why are “linkage” words (“however”, “but”, “unless”, “therefore”, etc.) used? How do they establish the relationships of ideas? Make a list of these words and analyze their usage. Do this in all your working languages.

## **Memorization Techniques for Consecutive Interpreting**

1. How do you remember? Are you a visual or a verbal learner, neither, or both? If you forget something you have heard, try to understand what prevented you from storing or retrieving the information.
2. Your short-term memory capacity is normally limited to between five and nine bits of information (units of memory), and your ability to recall depends on how well you can organize what you have heard by finding patterns. Have someone read a series of seven unrelated numbers to you. Once you are able to repeat the series accurately, try to repeat it backwards. To do this, you must be able to retain the series in your short-term memory.
3. Increase your analytical skills by reading a newspaper or magazine. After finishing each story, try to summarize what you read in a single sentence. Do this in all your working languages. Try this after listening to a news report or a radio or television talk show. Summarize the main idea in a single sentence.
4. For the exercises below, have someone read a newspaper or magazine article into a recorder, or record talk or interview programs from the radio or television.
5. Limit yourself to non-technical material. Do not record the news, because the newscaster reads from a prepared script. Record increasingly longer texts as your skills improve. You will only repeat the information you hear in the same language and will not interpret it.
  - Listen to the passage without taking notes and try to repeat as much as possible.
  - Listen to the passage and write down key words to help you remember the content. Then repeat as much information as possible. Compare the results you achieved with and without notes. Which worked best for you?
  - As you listen to the passage, try to condense it into a few meaningful units. Organize the information into groups. For example, if a person were to list the schools she had attended and the subjects she studied, you could group the schools by location and the subjects studied by topic. Numbers can be grouped the way people recite phone or social security numbers, in groups of two, three, or four numbers, rather than as a string of unrelated numbers. Please note that when interpreting testimony, you should maintain the speaker's word sequence as spoken, except to accommodate the syntax of the target language.
  - Do not allow your opinions to color your rendition of a speaker's words. Pay close attention to your reaction to the text while listening and maintain the same level of language (register) as the speaker.

*Note that improving your listening and memory skills is an ongoing and lifelong endeavor. As you gain experience and confidence your skills will improve.*

## EXERCISES FOR SIGHT TRANSLATION

The exercises outlined below will help you develop skills in Sight Translation. Practice them in all your working languages.

### Exercises in Public Speaking

1. **Reading Aloud:** Stand in front of a mirror and read passages aloud from any book, newspaper, or magazine. A legal textbook, code book, or other legal text is useful for familiarizing yourself with legal language. Record or videotape yourself and analyze the outcome critically. Pay attention to your voice, pitch, tone, hesitations, signs, projection, enunciation, and posture.
2. **Controlling Emotions:** Practice controlling your emotions while reading aloud texts with high emotional content, such as fear, anger, humor, etc. Make sure you convey the author's intended emotions and not your personal reaction to the subject matter.
3. **Public Speaking:** Practice speaking before a group of people at every opportunity. People you know will constitute a less threatening audience and will allow you to ease your way into public speaking and build your confidence. Court interpreting is an ongoing exercise in public speaking.

### Reading Ahead in Text

1. **Extensive Reading:** Build up your reading speed and, as a bonus, your vocabulary by reading as much as possible in many different fields.
2. **Analyzing:** Analyze the content of each text and practice picking out the subject and verb to determine the core meaning.
  - a. Example: Although less influential than in Argentina, migration from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century affected the development of Chilean political culture. Subject: migration; Verb: affected.
3. **Identifying Sentences and Embedded Sentences:** While reading a text aloud, break up long sentences into smaller, more manageable units.
  - a. Example: Juvenile delinquency, which is seen most often among minority youths in urban ghettos, cannot be attributed to the urban environment alone, as it plagues the suburbs as well.
  - b. Three separate sentences are embedded in this complex sentence:
  - c. Juvenile delinquency is seen most often among minority youths in urban ghettos.
  - d. It cannot be attributed to the urban environment alone.
  - e. 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.

## **Analytical Skills**

1. **Reading for Content:** Read a text aloud to a friend and then have the person ask you questions about its content.
2. **Chunking:** Choose a text and mark off the units of meaning in it.
  - a. Example: I was getting ready/ to go out to lunch with/ my mother-in-law/ when/ suddenly/ 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 chunking 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.
  - a. 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:
    - b. How long before the incident
    - c. You first saw the defendant
    - d. In the El Camino bar
    - e. Tell us, or give approximation
    - f. Had seen defendant prior to date of incident
    - g. Mentioned in earlier testimony
    - h. Mr. Jones
    - i. 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.

### **Examples:**

- a. After being reprimanded unfairly by her boss in front of her coworker, the secretary tendered
  - b. The judge determined that the defendant had strong ties to the community and therefore released him
  - c. As you do this exercise, note the errors you make and be aware of how susceptible we are to reach false conclusions based on partial information.
5. **Paraphrasing:** Read a text aloud and rephrase it as you go along, taking care not to change the meaning.
    - a. 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 political parties; the implications of elections may differ profoundly from those of our own culture.

- b. **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 cultural, environmental, and historical influences on the development of parties that commonly held ideas are contradicted. Elections are held periodically in most 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 (i.e., say the same thing in more words) as you are going along, again taking care not to change the meaning.
  - a. **Example:** Despite 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.
  - b. **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 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 (i.e., say the same thing in fewer words) as you go along, retaining the same meaning.
  - a. **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.
  - b. **Condensed:** Many cues are used to classify the environment. They are reconstructed from the subject problem-solving strategies. Often, because the cues are not uniformly reliable and are valid only statistically, 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.
  - a. **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.

- b. 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 to cause motorists to bring their vehicles to a stationary position, which had formerly been stationed at the intersection of the thoroughfares known as Main and 1st, had been displaced.
- c. 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, and 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.

## **EXERCISES TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING SKILLS**

The suggested exercises listed here are based on experiences gained in the training of both conference and court interpreters. Since the various modes of interpretation involve many of the same mental tasks, the exercises recommended in the sight translation and consecutive interpreting sections will contribute to the development of simultaneous interpreting (SI) skills as well. The exercises in the sight translation section that are designed to develop analytical techniques are particularly applicable to SI, as are the memory-building exercises outlined in the consecutive interpreting section.

The following exercises, designed specifically to build the skills involved in simultaneous interpreting, are divided into those that emphasize dual-tasking and those that emphasize input analysis. These exercises should be done in all the interpreter's working languages, beginning with the native or more dominant language. They should be practiced daily for about a half hour at a time, as SI skills must be acquired and developed over time to insure for continued competency.

### **Dual-Tasking Exercises**

1. Have someone record passages from magazines or newspapers or record radio or television talk shows or interview programs (news broadcasts are not suitable for these exercises because the pace is too fast, and the content is too dense). The subject matter of these passages is irrelevant, but it should not be too technical or contain too many statistics and proper names. Essays and opinion columns are good sources of texts for recording. As you play back the tape, "shadow" the speaker: repeat everything the speaker says verbatim. Try to stay further and further behind the speaker, until you are lagging at least one unit of meaning behind.
2. Once you feel comfortable talking and listening at the same time and are not leaving out too much, begin performing other tasks while shadowing. First, write the numerals 1 to 100 on a piece of paper as you repeat what the speaker says

(make sure you are writing and speaking at the same time, not just writing during pauses). When you can do that, write the numerals in reverse order, from 100 to 1. Then write them counting by 5's, by 3's, and so on. Note what happens whenever numbers are mentioned in the text you are shadowing.

3. When you can do exercise 2 with minimal errors, begin writing out words while shadowing. Begin with your name and address, written repeatedly. Then move on to a favorite poem or a passage such as the preamble to the US Constitution (always choose a passage in the same language as that which you are shadowing). When writing this text, you should copy from a piece of paper placed in front of you. Do not try to write the passage from memory while shadowing the recording.
4. While shadowing the recording as in the previous exercises, write down all the numbers and proper names you hear. Then play the recording back and check to see if you wrote them correctly.

The purpose of the above exercises is to train your brain to operate on two "channels" at once, and to force you to lag behind the speaker. If you find yourself breezing through the exercise with no problem, move on to the next one. You should always be fully taxing your mental capacities. On the other hand, if you are having difficulty keeping up with the speaker and are barely able to mumble a few words at a time, go back to the previous exercise until you are comfortable doing it. These exercises should be repeated as many times as necessary over a long period of time.

### **Analysis Exercises**

1. Using the same recordings you prepared for the above exercises (or new ones, if you have grown tired of those), rephrase what the speaker says rather than simply repeating it (see the paraphrasing exercise in the sight translation section). Stating a message in different words forces you to lag behind the speaker, waiting until he or she has said something meaningful for you to work with. To change the wording of the message without altering the meaning, you must thoroughly analyze and understand the original message. This exercise also develops your vocabulary because you are constantly searching for synonyms and alternative phrasing. It is perfectly acceptable, and even advisable, to look up words and phrases in a dictionary or thesaurus before attempting to rephrase a passage. It does not matter how many times you go over the recording. Even if you have memorized the passages, you are still deriving benefit from the exercise. Rephrasing simulates mental processes required in SI in that you must abandon the original wording and put the message into a different external form while retaining all its meaning.
2. To develop your ability to predict the outcome of a message based on your knowledge of the source language syntax and style and on your common sense and experience, do the following exercises with written passages from a magazine or newspaper:

- a. Cover up the latter half of a sentence and try to predict what it says. Do certain key words in the first half provide important clues?
  - b. Read the title of an entire article or essay and try to predict the content. Confirm or reject your conclusion as you read the article.
  - c. Read the article, paragraph by paragraph, predicting what will come next. Again, pick out key words that contain hints about the direction in which the author is heading.
  - d. Repeat exercises a and b with oral input, having someone read the passages to you.
  - e. As you increase your awareness of key words, learn to look for pitfalls that can lead you astray, such as embedded clauses and dangling participles. Develop your ability to skip over those distractions and get to the heart of a sentence or passage.
3. Using all the techniques you have developed in the preceding exercises, begin interpreting from the source language to the target language. At first, use the recordings you have already recorded and worked on in the other exercises, then make new recordings specifically for interpreting practice. You may want to choose texts related to law and the courts for this purpose, but do not make them too technical at first. When you feel you are ready, record some actual court proceedings for practice. Court reporting schools are a good source of professionally recordings of law-related texts.

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