

**The contents of this manual are intended to be adapted by state personnel to reflect the state's policies and procedures concerning state court interpreter certification examinations.**

## **Appendix 1**

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING FOR THE TEST<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Sight Translations:**

Take any written materials (for example, newspaper and magazine articles, letters, books, birth certificates, etc.) and, speaking into a tape recorder, perform sight translations. Evaluate your rendition against the source material. Practice on a variety of subjects and vary the type of material that you use. Continue practicing until you are able to comfortably translate at least 225 words accurately within a six-minute time frame.

#### **Consecutive Interpretation:**

Practice your ability to repeat sentences and paragraphs of varying lengths, from one to fifty words. You are likely to find a number of sources for practice materials. For example, your local court reporter's office may be willing to let you have draft copies of actual transcripts, or you may find practice materials on the World Wide Web. If necessary, you can ask friends and family members to create samples of "question and answer" formatted transcripts. Say a segment aloud in the source language (or have a friend or family member read the segment out loud for you), then interpret that segment into the target language. Be sure to vary the lengths of the utterances and practice until you are able, with the use of notes if you are trained in notetaking skills, to interpret long passages.

For many interpreters, note taking is extremely beneficial in all modes of interpretation, but especially in the consecutive mode. If you find that you benefit from note taking, develop an efficient note taking system in order to remember relevant names, dates, places, and figures. It is often essential to develop this skill under the direction of an experienced interpreter or teacher. However, the skill you develop will be your own personal method of note taking. Notes might be recorded in the form of simple outlines, charges, diagrams, or graphs. Listing information in the form of a diagram might be helpful while interpreting at a trial during which a particular scenario is repeatedly mentioned. An effective note taking system allows you to concentrate on the ideas and concepts contained in the message, not on taking the notes. It is important to adopt a strategy or strategies that work best for you. Attend as many different kinds of court proceedings as possible. As you listen, practice taking notes

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the information in this section is adapted from FUNDAMENTALS OF COURT INTERPRETATION: THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE by Roseann Duenas Gonzalez, Victoria Vasquez, and Holly Mikkelson. It is available from Carolina Academic Press, 700 Kent Street, Durham, NC 27701; 919-489-7486, Fax 919-493-5668.

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that highlight actions, specific information (dates, names, etc.) and legal concepts. Develop your own symbols for the court, the district attorney, the public defender, etc.

Practice consecutive interpretation until you are able to accurately interpret oral passages that are 850 to 900 words in length, with segments of varying lengths, within a 20- to 22-minute time frame.

### **Simultaneous**

Before the exam, practice your ability to listen through earphones and interpret out loud as you listen. Practicing silently is not as effective as practicing *out loud*. Being very comfortable with earphones and listening to a reader while interpreting out loud is important.

You should practice in front of other people so that you become comfortable with someone else being in the room, listening to your interpretation. It doesn't matter if the other person is bilingual or not. The goal is to become accustomed to having someone else listening.

Attend as many different kinds of court proceedings as possible. While you listen, render them silently to yourself simultaneously with the speaker. When you run into a word or phrase that you cannot interpret, make a note of it. When you return home, look up those words and phrases to determine their meaning and the appropriate interpretation of them.

Use television and radio broadcasts as interpreting materials. Interpret them aloud while you are driving or performing another activity simultaneously.

Practice will help you avoid being startled or "paralyzed" by what you don't know or a word you cannot remember. If you become "paralyzed" during the simultaneous portion of the exam, you will miss much of the incoming message.

### **Shadowing**

Shadowing is a basic exercise that will help you strengthen your simultaneous skills. It familiarizes the interpreter with performing two tasks simultaneously.

To practice:

- Have someone record varied paragraph-length passages in English and in the non-English language into a tape recorder.
- Listen to a passage. Then play it again and repeat everything you hear in the same language, staying as close to the speaker as possible.
- Listen to the passage again, repeating it in the source language.

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When you reach a point where this exercise is somewhat "easy" for you, increase your capacity by repeating the exercise and writing the numbers 1 through 100 at the same time.

When that becomes "easy" for you, repeat the exercises and simultaneously write the numbers 100 to 1 backwards. With progress, complete the following exercises:

- Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write 1-100 by 5's.
- Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write 1-100 by 3's.
- Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write out a poem you know from memory.
- Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write anything committed to memory such as the Pledge of Allegiance or the Preamble to the Constitution, or the names and telephone numbers of your family and friends.

These techniques are excellent for stretching your ability to *multi-task*. Multi-tasking is an essential part of interpreting. Repeating these exercises will essentially provide your brain with a "workout."

**Other exercises:**

Since effective court interpreting requires accuracy and speed, it is essential that you enhance your listening and concentration capabilities.

Listening: Practice your ability to listen through earphones and other mechanical devices.

Listening: Listen carefully to the meaning and concept of the communication rather than the separate words. You can practice critical listening anywhere at anytime.

Concentration: Learn to concentrate on what the person for whom you are interpreting is communicating. Concentrate only on the actual communication without being distracted by external factors such as physical appearance, gestures, etc. Accurate interpretation relies on how well the interpreter understands a message.

Understanding a message requires *intellectual listening*, that is, *listening for ideas*. An interpreter must listen to a message and simultaneously classify the information in the message into a *hierarchy*. An interpreter makes instantaneous decisions about which ideas are central and which are supporting or minor. The following is an exercise that may help build this skill:

- Have someone record several passages of approximately 15 words in English.
- Choose texts representing a variety of areas (a newspaper report about a local crime, a scientific report of the results of research, a passage from a book, etc.).
- Listen to each passage without taking notes. Turn off the recorder. Write down the main idea of the passage. (For example: "Language interpreting

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performance tests are oral tests designed to determine whether candidates possess the minimum levels of language knowledge and interpreting skills required to perform competently during court proceedings." Main idea of the passage: oral interpreting tests determine if one has the minimal level of skill required to interpret in the courts.)

- Continue this procedure with all the passages.
- Then listen to each passage again, confirming that the main idea you recorded was, indeed, the main idea of the passage.
- Listen to the passage again.
- Turn off the recorder.
- Note additional specific information that supports the main idea you had originally taken down. (For example: performance exams are oral tests that determine if one has the language knowledge and interpreting skills required to interpret in the courts.)
- Continue the procedure, taking notes and adding to the information until you have written a complete summary for each passage.

You should practice these exercises with another person or a small group of people in order to receive immediate and constant feedback. Practicing with others is a great way to increase your vocabulary and to be aware when more than one interpretation is accurate and acceptable. All of the exercises mentioned in this section and those that are suggested to you at training sessions are more beneficial when performed interactively.