

**SIGHT TRANSLATION**

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**Introduction to Sight Translation**

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**Sight translation** means reading written materials in one language, and translating them *aloud* into another language, without having practiced, prepared or seen the materials before.

Mental agility is extremely important in sight translating – in your vocabulary and phrasing, and in your flexibility to switch registers, language, and intonation.

This session is designed to give you practice to develop your sight translation skills. It will also help you heighten your awareness of language usage by giving you practice in skills like paraphrasing and expanding the content. In actual sight translation, however, **the interpreter does NOT paraphrase, summarize or change the register of the original text**.

**Paraphrasing**

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**Paraphrasing**, as a preparatory exercise, means to replace as many words as possible with other words or phrases, while conserving the same meaning. Thus, “He ambled leisurely, and halted to inhale the perfume of the roses” can become “He strolled, and stopped to smell the roses.” To paraphrase well requires a large vocabulary in your languages and knowledge of idioms.

Paraphrasing exercises help you comprehend the source and stretch your vocabulary. Remember, **do NOT paraphrase** text you are sight translating for actual legal purposes.

**Directions:**  As you read the following passages out loud, replace each word (except for numbers and proper names) with others – synonyms, antonyms, or phrases – keeping the meaning intact.

1. A federal mediator ordered US West and its employees’ union, the Communications Workers of America, to return to the bargaining table today as the strike affecting the phone company’s service in 14 states enters a second week.
2. Talks broke up before noon yesterday.
3. The strike began last Sunday morning, affecting more than 34,000 workers in Washington, Oregon and 12 other states. Major sticking points are forced overtime, health benefits, and a plan to tie pay to job performance.
4. Early today, workers at Southern New England Telecommunications went on strike, after hours of negotiations failed to bring a deal on higher wages for 6,300 workers.
5. SNET is the nation’s oldest independent telephone company, serving nearly all of Connecticut’s 3 million residents.

*Now try it with this passage:*

A hideous scourge is reappearing all across America. It is heroin – but a sinister new kind, known throughout the drug culture as “China White.” It comes from the opium poppy-fields of the so-called Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia, where Burma (Myanmar), Laos and Thailand come together. And now secret Chinese criminal societies based in Hong Kong are flooding the US with it. In earlier times, heroin generally had a purity of 5 percent to 10 percent. But the new heroin is so pure – up to 90 percent pure – that it can be snorted or smoked just like cocaine.

**Changing Register**

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The level of language used, called the **register**, changes in response to a specific social setting. Chatting at a party means talking in a lower-level or informal register, for example. Applying for a job usually requires a higher level or more formal register.

**Directions:** Read the following paragraphs aloud and alter the register (higher or lower), being careful *not to stray* from the original meaning. For 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 my

 automobile at some point in time prior to noon, I observed that the

insignia which had formerly been positioned at the intersection of the thoroughfares known as Main and 1st to cause motorists to bring their vehicles to a 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 a Main and 1st.

1. Hey, man, I never stole no fucking wheels! Watch what you are telling me! It ain’t that way, I tell ya. The bitch was sick, was in need – you know what I’m telling ya? So, I took ‘er to the detox center, ya know. She says to me, she says, “You drive, baby, I’m too sick, I’m gonna crash.” Next thing I know after we get to the center, she’s gone. Man comes out and says, “Your friend is a goner.” I don’t even know her name, see, just her street name, Lula. An’ I end up with her stuff that she had in there and had to take the car someplace. And then the cop comes up and say’s he’s puttin’ me in the cooler for stolen property or somethin’? Man, I don’t get it. I was just trying to be good to her.
2. If counsel finds his case to be wholly frivolous, after a conscientious examination of it, he should so advise the court and request permission to withdraw. That request must, however, be accompanied by a brief referring to anything in the record that might arguably support the appeal. A copy of counsel’s brief should be furnished the indigent and time allowed him to raise any points he chooses; the court – not counsel – then proceeds, after a full examination of all the proceedings, to decide whether the case is wholly frivolous. If it so finds, it may grant counsel’s request to withdraw and dismiss the appeal. On the other hand, if it finds any of the legal points arguable on their merits (and therefore not frivolous) it must, prior to decision, afford the indigent the assistance of counsel to argue the appeal.

**Intonation**

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**Intonation** means changing pitch to convey grammatical meaning. Questions, for example, usually end with the voice going up, right? Emphasis (such as italicized and bolded words), and punctuation (where commas indicate pauses, for example) are parts of intonation.

**Directions:** Read these paragraphs with *proper* intonation. Punctuation has been eliminated, so think quickly where it should be. This type of exercise reflects your comprehension of the text.

1. Most health care professionals have three words to say about using fireworks don’t do it but they know from experience that people *will* celebrate the fourth of July with fireworks and they know from experience that some of those celebrants *will* suffer injuries ranging from burns to loss of fingers and loss of vision a few words of advice keep buckets of water immediately available these come in handy not only for submerging burned hands and fingers besides cooling the burn water helps dilute the chemicals involved but also for dousing unexpected fires if any chemicals get in your eye it is *critical* that you flush the eye for at least 20 minutes with running water this is more difficult than it sounds and usually requires at least two people to aid the victim one to aim and control the water the other to physically hold the eye open call a consulting nurse.
2. As members of the Thurston County food community we make personal decisions each day that affect and define the unique character of our county this is particularly apparent when it comes to choosing how and where we spend our money every dollar spent is the equivalent of a vote for the goods and services that we purchase so what are we voting for
economic sustainability means a dollar spent at a local farm or business will circulate *within* the community many times over “direct sales” means that the farm receives *100%* of each dollar spent on its products other farmers can expect to see as little as 18 cents for each dollar spent on their products at a large chain store local food tastes better the next time strawberries are in season in Thurston County compare their mouthwatering taste to California strawberries *local* food is fresher and more nutritious the faster food goes from farm to plate, the fewer vitamins and nutrients are lost farm goods purchased from local sources travel short distances using little fossil fuel the average bite of not-local food has traveled 1300 miles before reaching our mouth contributing greatly to air pollution and depleting a non-renewable resource.

**Expansion**

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**Expansion** is another exercise to stretch your vocabulary and agility with language. “No shirt, no shoes, no service” can be expanded into “Not wearing either a shirt or shoes means you will not be served by the staff.” **Do NOT expand** texts that you are translating in actual legal situations.

**Directions:**  Expand the following passages. Do not change the meaning or add any information.

1. In spite of what you may have heard, scientists are just like other people. A scientist walking down the street may look like an insurance agent or a car salesman – no wild mane of hair, no white lab coat.
2. Another tool gaining acceptance in education is the electronic whiteboard. It is an updated version of the board-on-easel. Educators can electronically write over computer images projected onto the whiteboard, control the computer applications by touching the board, save and print the notes written on it and more.
3. [Identity theft](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/identitytheft.asp) occurs so frequently that the FBI cites it as "America's fastest growing crime problem". Thieves steal and fraudulently use the names, addresses, [social security numbers](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/ssn.asp), [bank account](http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/05/051805.asp##) information, [credit card](http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/05/051805.asp##) numbers and other personal information of some 10 million Americans each year, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Learning about how thieves get your personal information is the first step toward protecting yourself from this devastating attack on your financial well-being.
4. We are the regional leader in high quality technology training. Using state-of-the-art PCs, Cisco networking equipment, a telecommunications lab, and a staff of trainers drawn from local consulting firms and industry, we offer students training opportunities seven days a week. In addition, open lab computer space is available for students to pursue studies, homework, and technical issues outside of class.

Suggested Skills-Enhancing Exercises:

Public Speaking and Vocabulary Building ****

The exercises outlined below will help you develop skills in sight translation. They are designed to build mental agility, linguistic flexibility, and analytical skills. 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 texts are useful for familiarizing yourself with legal language. Record or videotape yourself, then analyze the outcome critically. Pay attention to your voice, pitch (whether you sound squeaky high or rumbling low), tone (emotional quality), hesitations, sighs, projection (how far your voice is heard), enunciation (how clearly you say the words), 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, allowing you to ease your way into public speaking and build confidence. Court interpreting is an ongoing exercise in public speaking.

**Vocabulary Building**

1. **Extensive Reading:** Build up your reading vocabulary and, as a bonus, your fluency, by reading as much as possible in books (legal texts especially), newspapers and magazines. Read a passage aloud, and then read it again but more quickly.
2. **Vocabulary Lists:**  Keep a list of words you hear or read, but do not know their meaning. Look them up in both English and non-English dictionaries, including the pronunciation. Review the word list until you are very familiar with the words, translations and pronunciations.
3. **Rewriting:** Rewrite a paragraph from a book, changing the register or paraphrasing what is said. Use as many synonyms and antonyms as possible. Read the paragraph aloud.