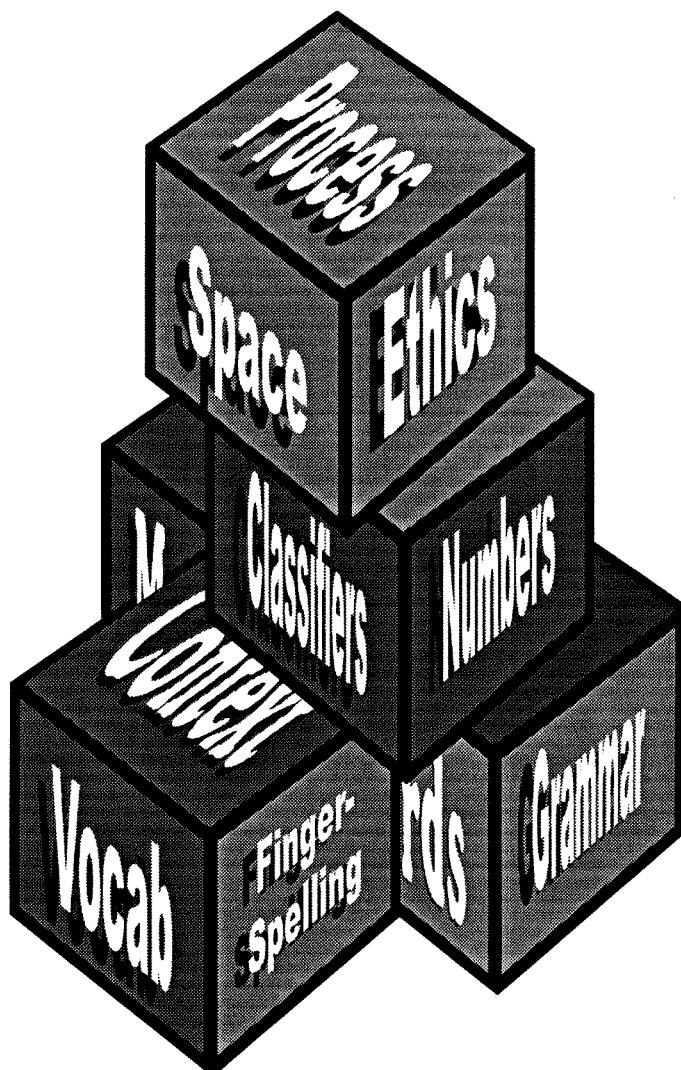
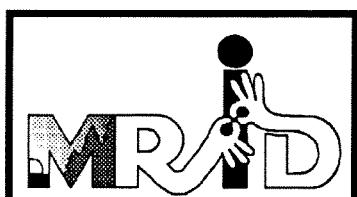




## **Self-Paced Modules for Educational Interpreter Skill Development**



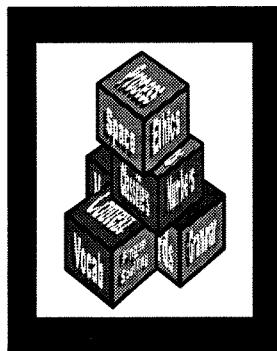
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Module**



**The Interpreting Process:  
Introduction and  
Skills Practice**

**Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf**

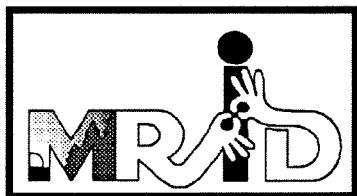
**Self-Paced Modules for  
Educational Interpreter  
Skill Development**



These self-paced learning modules are designed to be tools that educational interpreters can use to enhance their skills in pursuit of certification. Successful completion of this module series does not guarantee the interpreter will successfully obtain certification from the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) or any other certifying body, nor does it guarantee employment in an educational setting.

Any interpreter working with these modules must understand that the Minnesota RID, RID and/or Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning are not responsible for an interpreter's success or failure in taking any national certification test or in his or her pursuit of employment.

MRID, 1996



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# The Interpreting Process: Introduction and Skills Practice

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## ***I. Goals and Objectives***

This module establishes an important base on which you will be building your other skills. In order to become a competent interpreter it is essential to have a sound base in understanding the cognitive process involved in interpretation and the necessary pre-interpreting skills. The knowledge and skill areas covered in this module are essential components that you will come back to again and again throughout your interpreting career. You have heard that learning to interpret is a process, and the cognitive skills in this module are a vital part of that process. Not spending enough time on the module could be equated with building a house on sand. So, we encourage you to take your time with this module and develop a thorough grounding in the areas presented. By doing so we hope that you will construct a strong foundation on which to build your other interpreting skills.

Upon finishing this module, you will have had the opportunity to achieve the following competencies:

- ability to describe an interpreting process model
- ability to discuss/analyze your own interpreting work from a process model perspective
- ability to draw from a repertoire of pre-interpreting practice exercises to help you hone important cognitive processing skills in the areas of prediction, chunking/organizing information, processing time, listening/watching, analysis, visualization and self-monitoring.

## ***II. Equipment and Materials***

### **Equipment**

- ✓ VCR
- ✓ Monitor
- ✓ Camcorder
- ✓ Audio recorder/player

### **Materials**

Isham, William. "The role of message analysis in interpretation." 1986. Interpreting: The Art of Cross Cultural Mediation. Marina McIntire (ed). Silver Spring, MD. RID Publications. (*included in this module*)

Process in Interpreting and Transliteration. Teleconference by Betty Colonomos (1992)

Stauffer, Linda. 1991. "Enhancing Visualization Skills for Interpretation." Expanding Horizons: Proceedings of the Twelfth National Convention of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Jean Plant-Moeller (editor), Silver Spring, MD. RID Publications. (*included in this module*)

**P-6**

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n

## Pre - Test

### ***III. Pre-Test***

*A. Mark the following items as either being true (T) or false (f).*

- 1. Every word in a language has a “semantic twin” in another language.
- 2. Having a large vocabulary is the most important skill for an interpreter to have in order to able to interpret effectively in a wide range of settings.
- 3. If you don’t understand something, you can’t interpret it effectively.
- 4. A good interpreter retains the speaker’s exact words in memory.
- 5. In order to produce an accurate interpretation, you should try not to fall more than 3 seconds behind the speaker/signer.
- 6. A highly skilled, certified interpreter can walk in “cold” to almost any situation and do a good job.
- 7. Having a wide general knowledge base is essential for an interpreter.
- 8. The most difficult work an interpreter does is the mental work that takes place before the target language message is produced.
- 9. It is only necessary to understand and be able to apply the Colonemos model if you interpret at conferences.

*B. Define the following terms:*

source language

target language

consecutive interpreting

simultaneous interpreting

A language

B language

translation

interpretation

context

chunking

closure

paraphrasing

prediction

decalage

## P-8

### *C. Self-assessment of your own interpreting process skills*

*For this activity your ability to interpret is not important. What is important is your ability to understand what is going on inside your head! To complete the pre-test, video/audio tape yourself interpreting from ASL into English and from English into ASL.*

#### *Directions:*

- obtain the video tape(s) you will use as your source language texts. Many of the Sign Enhancer tapes have appropriate texts in ASL and in English
- do any preparation you feel is necessary before interpreting the tape
- interpret the tape, recording your interpretation on audio tape or videotape
- after interpreting the tape, write down your thoughts in response to the following questions

How did you organize the information in your mind? Did you work from individual words? Did you chunk information in meaningful pieces?

Were you thinking or seeing words? Ideas? Pictures?

What mental, physical and/or emotional reactions did you have if you missed something?

What do you think the goal of this signer was? Did that influence any choices you made in your interpretation?

What, if any, preparation or prediction did you do before interpreting? How did this influence your interpretation?

Did you understand the main points of the signer? Were you able to express those main points in English/ASL?

Where did your processing breakdown? What factors influenced this breakdown?

Can you see/hear transitions to new ideas in the interpretation?

How comfortable did you feel during the interpretation?

## ***IV. Pre-Interpreting and Interpreting Skill Development***

Interpreting is a complex mental task. By systematically practicing the following exercises, your ability to understand, retain and process information should be enhanced.

With any pre-interpreting or interpreting practice, it is advisable not to work in a vacuum. In other words, do not just put a tape in and immediately start interpreting. When interpreting between any two languages, context is always of the utmost importance. To the extent possible, you should consider the purpose for the discourse, the goal of the speaker(s) and what history or series of events brought them to this discourse event. This approach to framing an interpretation should be used, even in the practice exercises.

The Gish Approach (Part III) offers a very specific and well-organized way of managing the interpreting process. You may wish to read that section completely first, without doing the practice exercises. After that, you can complete the exercises in Part II, watch the Colonemos tape and then complete the exercises in Part III. In this way, you will be able to more thoroughly integrate all parts of this module.

Pre-Interpreting exercises are useful in several ways. For one thing, they can help you isolate and identify your strengths and weakness. If you have trouble for instance, with memory skills working from English to English, then you should consider strengthening that one component before moving to interpreting exercises that involve memory. When you actually interpret from one language to another, many skills are involved that are used almost simultaneously. Isolating these skills by first practicing intralingual skills (English to English and ASL to ASL) will help you assess your skills more accurately. Start by working from your native language to your native language, which for most sign interpreters is English to English. Keep working on a skill until you feel competent. At that point, repeat the same exercises working from ASL to ASL.

When you feel competent with those activities, then it would be appropriate to move to the next degree of difficulty, the interlingual skills of going from ASL to English and finally English to ASL.

Below you will find several mental skill areas defined as they relate to interpreting. Following the definitions, you will see a series of practice exercises. In order to complete the exercises you will need a variety of texts, both in English and ASL, from which to work. Many appropriate tapes are available at your local RSC; check the resource guide for specific listings.

## **A. Prediction**

**P**redictions are “informed speculations about what is to occur based on knowledge of the world, of language and culture, and of the subject matter.” (Gonzales, 1991). Two types of prediction have been identified by Lederer (1978). These are 1) language prediction, which involves predictions based on the interpreter’s knowledge of the syntax and style used by the speaker/signer and 2) sense expectation, which is based on the interpreter’s knowledge of the speaker, the speaker’s goal, the context and the subject matter. Clearly the more proficient you are in your languages and the more knowledge you have about the speaker, context and subject matter, the more effectively you will be able to predict and interpret effectively.

**P-12**



- 1. Select a videotape to watch. From the title and the signer's name, can you make any predictions? Watch the first few minutes of the tape and stop it. What kind of predictions can you make now? Continue watching the tape and making/checking your predictions.**
- 2. Video or audio tape a talk show or interview show. Listen/watch until you have a feeling for the speakers and the content. At appropriate places, stop the tape and predict what the speaker may say. Jot down these predictions so as you play the tape you can check which predictions were accurate.**
- 3. Read a question and answer columnist with whom you are familiar. Read the question, predict the answer and then check to see how your prediction compares with the columnist's answer.**
- 4. Keep an informal notebook of patterns you notice in different situations. When people introduce themselves, what are they likely to say? When a nurse interviews a patient before the doctor comes in, what are typical questions? What are certain conventions that occur at departmental meetings? How do people order things on the phone? What protocol is followed at a parent/teacher conference? (As an interpreter it is important that you have scripts for a variety of situations and that you can recall these in your mind quickly.)**

5. Before your next interpreting job, think about what you know about the participants, the subject matter and the context that will help you do a better interpretation. Write down your predictions. After the interpretation, assess for yourself what was helpful and why. Do this several times and see what patterns emerge. Mental flexibility is essential here. If a prediction turns out to be incorrect, you need to let go of it quickly.

## ***B. Chunking/Organizing the Incoming Message and Processing Time***

### **Chunking/Organizing**

**O**ne of the best ways to improve retention is by using a technique commonly referred to as "chunking." Chunking is a process which involves dividing a message into meaningful units. (Gonzales, 1991). Thus interpreters should not try to remember a string of words, but instead remember the key propositions, each of which can be retained by means of a visualization or key word. Some interpreters find the term chunking awkward to work with. Another way of thinking about this idea is to look at it as organizing an incoming text into manageable units. Chunking is a way of organizing the information so that it is manageable for the interpreter to work with. Many interpreters find it more useful to speak about organizing the incoming message instead of chunking.

### **Processing Time**

**P**rocessing time refers to the time interpreters use in order to sufficiently understand the message before interpreting. Before an interpreter can formulate the message in the target language they must hear or see enough of the message to have a complete idea to work with. For instance if the interpreter hears, "It is unknown whether or not we will be anticipating a....," s/he does not yet have sufficient understanding of the message to give an accurate interpretation. It is only after a speaker has completed a thought that the interpreter has enough information to fully comprehend the meaning of the speaker's utterance. To use processing time effectively requires that the interpreter rely on listening, prediction, memory and analysis skills. The quality of an interpretation suffers greatly if it is rushed. Allowing yourself the process time needed to accurately convey an idea will have an extremely positive effect on the interpretations you produce.



1. Work with a partner. Listen to an audio tape or listen/watch an English speaker on videotape. When you have a "chunk" of information you feel comfortable working with, stop the tape. Briefly discuss with your partner why you stopped the tape there. Start the tape again. Could you have benefited from a longer chunk? Why or why not? Discuss. After going through the tape, repeat the same exercise with the same tape but have the other person stop the tape after they take in a manageable chunk. Discuss as stated above. You will notice that different people chunk information differently. Try this exercise with other tapes of English speakers, either by yourself or with a partner. This time, after each chunk, paraphrase what you just heard. In this context, paraphrasing means that you will have heard the oral text, understood it and then you will restate it, using different words but retaining the ideas, in English. Allow yourself plenty of time to understand the message and compose it. Your paraphrasing should be well formed and well stated. You can audio tape your paraphrasing so you can check your accuracy or your partner can help with this. Try to get a good sense for how you organize information. What factors influence your ability to chunk and retain information?

**2. Repeat the above exercises with an ASL videotape.**

You may find it useful to do the entire exercise in ASL. In other words, watch the ASL signer, stop the tape and, when you discuss why you chunked the information the way you did, use ASL. That way you don't have to "switch gears" into the other language every time you stop and start the tape. This also applies to paraphrasing. When you stop the tape and paraphrase, do the paraphrase into ASL. Again, give yourself plenty of time to completely understand the message and compose what you will sign in ASL.

After you feel competent and confident with this task working from English to English and ASL to ASL then you can work with these same exercises going from ASL to English and finally English to ASL.

**3. There are many commercially available books on improving memory skills that you can borrow from your library or purchase at a local bookstore. In the bibliography at the end of this module you will find two references that may be particularly helpful. They are entitled Auditory Memory and Time Lag: A Materials Review by Eve Adelman West and Visual Memory and Lag time: Materials Review by Jean Wells. These materials were compiled by interpreter educators to be used as a reference by students and teachers of interpretation.**

## **C. Listening/Watching, Analysis and Visualization**

### **Listening/Watching**

**I**t is important here to emphasize the distinction between merely hearing/seeing a message and actively attending to a message. When interpreters listen, it is not a passive task of merely taking in the auditory or visual input. Rather, it is a conscious and active process of attending to and concentrating on the meaning of the message being presented. Good listening requires the interpreter to know the goal of the speaker, to know the topic and be able to make some logical predictions about material that will be covered.

### **Analysis**

**I**nterpreters need to be skilled at being able to extract the meaning of a message. Interpreting is not merely a word for word substitution from one language to another. Rather the interpreter must hear a message and very rapidly analyze the meaning before converting it to the target language. Comprehension, summary, text analysis and paraphrasing exercises can help in developing this skill.

### **Visualization**

**B**oth Colonos (1992) and Seleskovitch (1978) refer to the importance of visualization in the process of interpretation. Visualization is one way to retain meaning without retaining the original form (words or signs) of the source language text. Read the article included in this packet, "Enhancing Visualization Skills for Interpreting Between ASL and English." This article originally appeared in "Expanding Horizons: Proceedings of the Twelfth National Convention of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf." (1992) and is reprinted here with the permission of the author. In this article, Linda K. Stauffer discusses the usefulness of visualization as well as giving suggestions and resources for enhancing visualization techniques.

## **Section II American Sign Language**

# ***Enhancing visualization skills for interpreting between ASL and English***

by Linda K. Stauffer, M.Ed., CSC

**T**his paper will address the challenge of working between a visual/spatial language (American Sign Language) and an auditory/linear language (English) and the need to develop/enhance visualization skills for interpretation. It is primarily targeted for interpreters, but at the same time, will be of benefit to interpreter educators for inclusion in their own teaching.

Since most interpreters are hearing with English as their native language and American Sign Language (ASL) as their second language, they must develop the skills necessary to move between an auditory/linear language and a visual/spatial language. These skills are usually not directly assessed nor taught in sign language or interpreting classes, but rather are learned intuitively as mastery of ASL is obtained.

It is important for interpreters to understand their own visual abilities and to ascertain to what degree they utilize visualization in their daily lives. Awareness of visual imagery types that can be tapped for interpretation as well as understanding and practice in creating and manipulating visual images will increase the interpreter's ability to utilize visualization as a tool during interpreting.

A combination of theory and information was originally presented in lecture and discussion format. An assessment was provided for participants to ascertain their own visualization abilities. Additionally, participants were involved in "mind/hand-on" activities for skills development.

### **Introduction**

**E**veryday, interpreters face the task of working between a visual spatial language (American Sign Language) and an auditory/linear language (English). While beginning students can usually recite differences between American Sign Language and English, students and interpreters alike may not be aware of the unique challenges inherent in working between two languages and two modalities. One of these unique challenges is the need to develop strong and flexible visualization skills. Interpreters, many of whom are hearing with English as their native language and ASL as their second language, must develop these skills in order to move fluently between English and ASL. Visualization skills are usually not directly assessed nor taught in sign language or interpreting classes, but rather are learned intuitively as mastery of ASL and interpreting is obtained.

It is important for interpreters to understand the role visualization has in the interpreting process. It is equally important for interpreters to become aware of their own abilities to visualize and to ascertain the degree to which they utilize visualization in their daily lives. Awareness of visual imagery types that can be tapped for interpretation, as well as practice in creating and manipulating visual images, will increase interpreters' abilities to utilize visualization as a tool during interpreting.

### **The problem**

**A**s a person who accesses the world primarily through the visual sense, I grew up having little understanding that the rest of the world did not necessarily navigate life in the same way. It was not until my teacher preparation training in college that I realized some people access the world primarily through other modalities such as the auditory channel or the tactile/kinesthetic channel. This fact became clear to me as I began teaching ASL and interpreting courses at the university level.

Through the first couple of years of my teaching, I noticed that there were common problems among ASL students. They had trouble "turning off" the English in their heads and thinking in ASL. Students would prepare a signed discourse by thinking or writing it in English first, and then translating into ASL following rigidly learned grammatical rules. Sign production was stilted, unnatural and often made little sense. The students appeared to go through a similar process when watching a signer: internally "voicing" the signs and putting them into English structure. Efforts in imploring them to not write it down or think it through in English were not successful. The students did not trust their ability to function outside of English structure. A common question was, "When will I quit thinking in English and begin to think in ASL?" Although the temptation was to reply, "the sixth week, third hour, (or other such nonsense)," the truth is that I did not have an answer for them beyond the very unsatisfactory response, "Don't worry, it will happen." At the end of the semester, I often had students pair up and work from pictures. They would look at a picture I had provided, describe it to their partner (in sign) and then show their partner the picture. It became apparent that the students who were most successful in this task were also more closely approximating

ASL structure. Students often commented that it was the first time they had attempted to communicate through signs without first processing the message in English. It appeared that working from visual (picture) to visual (ASL) was a successful teaching technique IF the students had strong visual abilities.

It is necessary to note here, that in my early teaching days, we used a grammatical approach curriculum to teaching ASL. In the past year, we have progressed to a natural, functional language approach curriculum. The problems mentioned above have diminished somewhat, although students still find it frightening to let go of English structure.

At the same time that I was noticing these problems with ASL students, similar problems related to visual abilities were noticed with interpreting students. Conceptual errors, problems with ASL grammatical principles such as directionality, referencing, use of characterization, etc., were rampant in their interpretation. Again, I noticed that students who described themselves as visual tended to do better than students who disclaimed their visual abilities. In my own experience, people who are Deaf do not exhibit the kinds of problems that students exhibit. Many times in my interpreting career I have been awed by a Deaf person's ability to tell a story or relate an event, or describe the workings of a machine or process so clearly that it did not need "voicing." In fact, had I tried to voice these stories or descriptions, I could not have done the speaker justice. Clearly, native signers are comfortable in the visual realm in a way that non-native language and interpreting students are not. For me, the quest became how to teach our students to be more "Deaf-like" in their signing and interpreting and to try to approximate the visual ease with which many Deaf people communicate.

**The quest**

I began my quest with three basic questions:

- How exactly is visualization useful to interpreting?
- Can visualization skills be tapped and enhanced? If so, how?
- Can visual abilities be used as a predictor of success in language or interpreting programs?

In reviewing available literature on interpretation, no information could be found on assessment or teaching or enhancing visualization skills for interpreters. Although intuition told me that interpreters seem to be highly visual as a group, visualization skills were not being assessed or taught in language or interpreting classes. I could not find any curriculum information on skills development or practical application to signing and interpreting. My best guess was that avenues to tap and apply visual skills are learned intuitively as mastery of ASL and interpreting is obtained.

At the same time, I looked to the current interpreting process models. The Colonemos model of interpreting incorporates visualization as part of the process of retaining meaning while moving between a source and a target message (Colonemos, 1989). Danica Seleskovitch, in her book Interpreting for International Conference (1978), discusses visualization as a stage in both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation. She says that it is a "mental image which the interpreter visualizes [that] allows him [or her] to evoke the same image in the target language without remembering the words which describe it" (p. 55). Additionally, Robinson (1987) wrote eloquently on the relationship between visual memory and time lag. Clearly, the ability to visualize is a necessary component to this task called interpretation.

**Visualization — What is it?**

Visualization "is essentially a product of memory, seen with the mind's eye" (McKim, p. 84). While visual perceptions are seen with the eye, visual imagery is seen with the mind's eye. Visualization is the ability to form a mental image while in a waking state.

Described another way, visualization is the ability to create and manipulate pictures in the mind. These pictures can be a recreation of an actual place or event (memory), or a creation of never-before seen objects or places (imagination). They can also be a manipulation of real or imagined events not possible in real life (fantasy).

All people can and do visualize. For example, everyone can recognize a familiar face of a parent, sibling or spouse without having to verify the identity against a picture. People who drive do not need a map to drive home everyday. Without a visual image, people would not recognize loved ones or be able to travel familiar paths. Visual images allow people to function in everyday life efficiently and effortlessly. It has been said that a man being chased by a lion will retain an image of the lion rather than look over his shoulder to remind himself why he is running. Woe to the man who cannot retain a visual image of that lion! (source unknown).

Another example of imagery that is commonly shared is dreams. Everyone dreams; however, not everyone remembers his or her dreams upon waking. Dreams are rich in visual imagery, often full of color, patterns, lights and darks as well as images from other senses.

While all people visualize, not all people share the ability to visualize equally. According to W. Gray Walter, approximately one sixth of any normal group of people "do not use visual images in their thinking unless they are required to do so" (p. 84). Even then, their imagery may be weak. Another sixth of the group will

*utilize visual images with vivid clarity. The remaining two-thirds, "can evoke satisfactory visual patterns when necessary" (McKim, p.84).*

*Images can be real or imaginary. Utilizing visual imagery to recall a favorite moment shared with a friend is based on a real event. Imagery which projects you to places you've never been, such as a daydream about a trip to Greece, is imaginary. Imagery can be used to create images or objects which do not occur in real life such as childhood imaginary friends or a new invention. In these examples, imagination is used to go beyond known reality. Christopher Columbus envisioned the world as round long before man traveled into space and, looking back at the earth far the first time, visually confirmed his theory.*

*People described as imaginative often utilize strong visual imagery. Imagination allows one to manipulate objects without having them in hand. Imagination allows the five-year-old to ride a stick horse and "see" real cowboys and Indians. Imagination allows an architect to read specs for a new building and create a visual design that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Imagination allows a young girl to describe her "dreamboat" and have her friend sigh over the image. Without visual imagery, people would not have the ability to imagine and create.*

*A review of the larger literature on visualization and mental imagery led to the identification of ten types of imagery (Samuels and Samuels, 1975; Robinson, 1987) (see Appendix A). Of the ten, five appear to be helpful to interpreting: eidetic imagery, memory imagery, imagination imagery, daydreams and fantasy, and symbolic imagery. After identification, it became necessary to find a way to assess interpreters' ability to use the different types of imagery and to determine the visual strengths individual interpreters bring to the interpreting process.*

### ***Visualization check-list***

**T**he Visualization Check-List (Stauffer, 1990) is designed to assist persons in determining the extent to which they utilize visualization in their daily life (See Appendix B). The check-list consists of twenty questions or group of questions to which a forced choice yes-no answer is required. "YES" means, "I tend to do this, or this is me." "NO" means, "No, I don't tend to do this, or it doesn't feel like me." There is no set percentage to determine visual skills. Rather, the more YES answers one has the better the chances are that an individual possesses skill in visualization and tends to use visual imagery in his or her daily life. If one has more NO answers than YES answers, chances are that s/he is more other-sense oriented and may have problems utilizing visualization.

*In conducting visualization workshops across the country (IA, AR, LA, NY, NB, NM, DC), my experience reveals that interpreters tend to be highly visual people. Participant groups that have large numbers of students tend to be split more evenly with approximately 50% self-assessed as being visual, and approximately half as not being visual. In all cases, I have had at least one or two people who have more NO than YES responses. The discussion always leads to revelation when participants find out that not all people are highly visual and, conversely, the self-assessed non-visual participants discover the extent to which other participants are highly visual!*

*Can visual ability be used to predict success in language or interpreting programs? There is, as of yet, no answer to this question. My belief, so far unsubstantiated by research, is that it cannot be used as a predictor of success for student selection or rejection, but rather can be assessed to identify potential weaknesses to target for enhancement in interpreting students.*

### **Application to interpretation**

To date, some identified functions of visualization are:

1. to aid processing and memory
2. to apply correct usage of ASL features
3. to provide a tool for interpreting concepts with or without standardized signs
4. to provide choices for describing shapes
5. to assist Interpreters in:
  - a. interpreting for persons with minimal language competency
  - b. interpreting in legal situations (traffic scenes, assault or murder scenes, etc.), and
  - c. interpreting artistic passages (poetry, music).

I say, "to date," because I do not believe that the information on visualization and application to the interpreting process is definitive. There is much more to be explored on the topic. The five identified functions of visualization are:

#### **1. Processing and memory**

As stated previously, Colonomos, Seleskovitch and Robinson support the application of visualization in the interpreting process. I refer you to their original work rather than risk doing an injustice to their efforts through summarization.

#### **2. Use of ASL feature**

Robinson, in her article "Visual memory and time lag" (1987) suggests that there "appears to be a positive correlation between major ASL features and the schematic (visual) organization of

semantic memory" (p. 36). She particularly discusses ASL chronological sequencing, temporal features, as well as spatial and directional characteristics of ASL (p. 36). When looking at ASL features, it is clear to see that the ability to visualize can impact ASL usage. Additional ways are delineated and explained in Appendix C.

When watching Deaf people communicate in ASL, it is clear that the visual aspects of ASL often present problems for hearing interpreters attempting to voice into natural English. Some areas where interpreters have trouble are: use of classifiers, characterization, and descriptive adjectives. One example with the use of descriptive adjectives is discussed below.

**Example:** In a videotaped presentation, a Deaf person is describing the events of an accident that occurred in which a young girl was hit by a car and subsequently died. He identifies the car he was driving by first fingerspelling E-L C-A-M-I-N-O. The rest of that particular discourse segment goes on to give the interpreter information which will help identify the make of car. He describes the car as "half-truck" and "half-car" and then visually describes the shape and outline of the car including the tailgate. The fingerspelling is not clear and often missed by interpreters. Most interpreters then try to voice the description, word-for-word, missing the realization that the car is an El Camino. In actuality, the Deaf person employed the strategy of FINGER-SPELLING + ACTUAL INFORMATION + VISUAL DESCRIPTION to express the concept of an El Camino.

#### **3. Interpreting concepts with or without standardized signs**

Robinson (1987) notes that research shows that most people use only three or four cognitive strategies to accomplish most tasks in their lives (p.33). I believe

this to be true for interpreting as well. What strategies do most hearing beginner interpreters use when they encounter a concept they do not know how to interpret into ASL? I suggest that the following is a common scenario:

- a. panic (uh oh! I don't know how to sign this!)
- b. search for strategy:
  - 1. fingerspell (make mistakes, try again, drop it and go on)
  - 2. ask for speaker to repeat (hope something comes to you)
  - 3. rely on team interpreter to feed the information (if working with team interpreter)
  - 4. feebly attempt to interpret something (most likely it makes little sense, is skewed, or inaccurate)
  - 5. not interpret that chunk, hop back in again and continue.
- c. employ the strategy selected( 1—5 above) and continue interpreting until it happens again.

I believe visualization can be a "tool" in an interpreter's "tool box" of strategies that they use while interpreting. When encountering a concept that poses difficulty in interpretation, rather than using one of the above strategies, visualize the concept, describe it (pair with finger-spelling), and if appropriate move on. This IS, in fact, interpretation in which meaning is conveyed rather than words glossed into signs and expressed. (For practice exercises see Appendix D)

#### 4. Describing shapes

Gil Eastman, in his book From mime to sign (1989), clearly and eloquently describes the progression from line to two-dimensional shapes to three-dimen-

sional shapes. Interpreters are often unaware that when describing objects for size and shape, they have options. A sunflower, for instance, can be outlined with one or two fingers using lines for shape; with classifiers utilizing two-dimensional or three-dimensional shape. If made aware of these strategies and practiced, interpreters can greatly increase their repertoire of options for describing shapes.

#### 5. Other applications

The development and strengthening of visualization skills has great applicability to working with persons with minimal language competency when the only avenue of communication may be that which is visually understandable. Visualization can be utilized effectively in legal interpreting situations when setting up complicated traffic and or assault/murder scenes for graphic clarity and memory retention. In teaching artistic interpreting, visualization skills help students move from the written passage to a deeper understanding of the intended meaning before applying the interpretation process. All of these aspects of interpreting lend themselves well to a visual approach.

### **Visualization exercises**

There are several excellent exercises available to help interpreters develop and enhance their ability to use their visualization skills. McKim (1972) presents two exercises which strengthen these abilities. The first is "Assessment of Clarity of Mental Imagery" which asks the participant to respond to a stimulus such as a rosebud, a body of water at sunset, a newspaper headline, and then create a mental image. Each participant is then asked to rate each image as follows: "C" if the image was clear; "V" if the image was vague but recognizable; "N" if no image was created.

The second exercise is "Assessment of Control of Mental Imagery." In this exercise, the participant is again given a stimulus such as a rosebud very slowly blooming, a stone dropped into a quiet pond forming concentric ripples, a chair coming alive and carrying someone into the next room. Participants are asked to rate themselves according to the following scale: "C" if the image was well controlled; "U" if the participant was unsure; "N" if the image was not able to be controlled. Using these two exercises helps to strengthen the two aspects inherent in the definition of visualization (the ability to create and manipulate mental images) and tap some of the various types of imagery such as memory, fantasy, eidetic imagery, imagination, etc. Other exercises include visual problem solving which presents a dilemma. The participant must visualize the problem in order to solve it. For example:

*My house faces the street. A boy walks by my house in the morning, walking towards the rising sun, with my house at his right. Which direction does my house face?:*

*Answer: North (Robinson, 1987).*

### **Interpreting practice using visualization**

**V**isualization practice can be provided in the interpreting context by finding passages which are packed with specific ASL features for interpreting practice. For example, the following descriptive passage is much easier to sign/interpret if one visualizes.

*When I was seven years old, I decided I wanted to go out on Halloween dressed as a horse. I wanted to be the front end of the horse, and I talked a friend of mine into being the back end of the horse. But, at the last moment, he backed out and I was faced with the pros-*

*pect of not being able to go out on Halloween. At this point I decided to figure out some way of getting dressed up as the whole horse myself. I took a fruit basket and tied some string to both sides of the basket's rim, so that I could tie the basket around my rear end. This filled me out enough so that the costume fit me by myself. I then fixed some strong thread to the tail so that I could make it wag by moving my hands. When Halloween came, I not only went out and had a ball, but I won a prize as well!* (Boles, 1980).

Conversely, videotapes can be made of Deaf persons conversing. These discourses can be analyzed for various ASL features which may present sign-tc-voice interpretation problems for interpreters. Deaf people are THE experts on the language of ASL. Only a limited amount of information can be gained from the classroom. To learn to sign and to interpret between Deaf and hearing people, one must associate with and learn from Deaf people!

### **Blocks to visualization**

**T**here are many blocks to effective use of visual abilities, some of which are identified by McKim (1972) in Appendix D. Interestingly, the interpreting task, itself, can become a block in the use of visual imagery. Fear or anxiety about an interpreting assignment can inhibit one's abilities. Also, fatigue from long hours of interpreting can hinder one's ability to use visual imagery.

Lastly, inattention to detail through the five senses can dull visual images that can be brought to the interpreting experience. Interpreters are some of the busiest professionals around. They often have little time to visually attune to the world without interruption.

### **Summary**

**I**t is important for hearing interpreters to understand that growing up with an auditory language (English) ill prepares them to interpret to and from a visual language (ASL). Each interpreter and interpreting student should become aware of his or her own visual skills and develop visual strategies or "tools" for interpretation. Everyone has great potential to develop and/or enhance his or her visual skills, yet most people are not aware of the paths to skill development and enhancement. It is imperative that language programs and interpreter education programs assess their students' visual strengths and provide them with systematic practice and skill development exercises for their growth and development. While not everyone visualizes with equal strength and clarity, all persons have the ability to enhance their skills and utilize these skills in interpreting.

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## ***APPENDIX A***

### ***Types of Imagery***

#### **I. After imagery**

**A**fter imagery is to the eye what “ringing is to the ears.” It is a common visual experience which happens after a person looks at an image of high intensity for a brief period of time projected against a dark background. For example, if a person sees a bright bolt of lightning and then closes his/her eyes immediately afterwards, s/he will continue to see the bright flash for a few seconds. The original image is followed by a “negative” after-image. This after-image disappears only a few seconds after it is formed.

#### **II. Eidetic imagery**

**E**idetic imagery is sometimes referred to as “photographic memory.” It is the ability to recall images clearly and in detail. Eidetic imagery is not static, rather it can be scanned and manipulated. For example, some people when taking a test can scan their notes, find the right page and read the correct answer from their notes. Some people play music from memory by visually “reading” the mental image of the sheet music. Eidetic images are extremely vivid and can be two or three dimensional. These images can be scanned for detail much as if the person were looking at the actual concrete object. Eidetic imagery is strongest in childhood and tends to diminish during adolescence being replaced by more abstract thinking and use of verbal skills.

#### **III. Memory imagery**

**M**emory imagery is the recalling of past events. A memory image may be of an event that happened five minutes ago or fifty years ago. It is a common and familiar experience. This type of imagery is usually not as vivid as eidetic memory. Memory imagery may be stimulated by any of the five senses, and sensory information may be a part of the memory recall. An old discarded toy found in the attic will invoke many fond memories of childhood. A wrinkle of a nose or a particular tilt of a head may stimulate warm memories of a beloved relative who has passed away. Many people close their eyes and may notice a more serene, relaxed feeling during memory recall. Memory images may also be recalled at will. People have more voluntary control over memory images than other types of imagery.

#### **IV. Imagination imagery**

**I**magination imagery is the formation of a mental image without an actual reference. That is, it is not tied to a real object or even that has been seen. Imagination images can contain “elements of past perceptions, but arranged in a different way than when they were originally perceived” (Samuels & Samuels, p. 43). For example, a person can imagine a pig with wings, although such a creature does not exist. Imagination imagery is not limited to a shuffling of perceived events. Some images may be wholly created. Childhood imaginary friends and a new invention to solve a particular problem may be created in the mind. Imagination imagery is expressed as creativity.

### **V. Dream imagery**

**D**reams are images created during sleep. Everyone dreams every night though people rarely remember their dreams. Dreams can recall past perceptions (memory) or be imaginative in nature. Of all types of imagery, dreams have the strongest sense of reality. People believe that what is happening in the dream is real. People can wake up from a particularly vivid dream and wonder for a few seconds if it was real or not. Although the purpose of dreams is not fully known, dreams can sometimes provide answers to problems and or rehearse upcoming events. Dreams allow us to experience our fondest wishes or our greatest fears. They transpire time, space, and natural laws. There is no control over dream imagery.

### **VI. Hallucinations, visions, and prophecy**

**H**allucinations and visions are images that occur internally but are believed to have actually happened externally. Hallucinations may be induced by drugs, sleep deprivation or high fever. Visions may have a religious base. These images are very vivid and powerful. They may also be sources of great inspiration. Some of the world's greatest artists, poets and scientists were considered visionaries — having the power to see beyond the normal confines of life.

### **VII. Hypnagogic and hypnopompic imagery**

**H**ypnagogic imagery occurs just before falling asleep. It is an inner imagery experience which is autonomous. It is imagery without a script. Hypnagogic imagery occurs when the mind wanders where it will in a dream-like state just before sleep. It is the imagery that occurs when half awake, half asleep.

*Hypnopompic imagery occurs just as one is wakening from sleep. It is the time when the mind is not yet fully alert and the body and mind are free from pressure. "The content of the imagery is succinctly conceptual, has crystal clarity, is marked by sharpness and brevity. Ideas flow in, one after the other..." (McKim, p. 95). Both hypnagogic and hypnopompic imagery occur during a twilight state. "These reverie images tend to be vivid, detailed and beyond the reach of conscious control" (Samuels and Samuels, p. 47).*

### **VIII. Daydreams and fantasy**

**D**aydreams and fantasy are images that are a combination of memory imagery and imagination imagery. Daydreams may deal with past events or be future oriented. Daydreams and fantasy are marked by a willingness to enter a relaxed state and to focus on inner thoughts while shutting out outer reality. Daydreams are often a way to escape reality rather than deal with reality and, thus, are often predictable. A person who buys a lottery ticket dreams of winning. A person bored at work will fantasize about a Caribbean vacation. A person can author his or her own day dreams. They are not always autonomous in nature.

*"Memory, imagination, dreams, and visions all share a common link — visual images — and they can be looked upon as a continuum, rather than as entirely separate experiences. These divisions of visual activity are arbitrary and tend to overlap. But visual experiences do differ in details. Psychologists have found the divisions to be useful for exploring: visualization. Learning about the differences between the kinds of images helps people to become aware of their own inner processes" (Samuels and Samuels, p. 55).*

### **IX. Symbolic imagery**

**S**ymbolic imagery is composed of mental "schemas" such as dots, blobs, etc., which are used with abstract concepts and/or problem solving. For example, some people have a visual representation for how the days of the week are arranged, the months in the year, hours in a day, etc. These mental schemas are unique and may vary greatly from one individual to another. It appears that these symbolic images are not taught, but rather self developed to visually arrange abstract concepts.

### **X. Deja-vu imagery**

**D**eja Vu is the French word for "already seen." It refers to a sensation that everything being done has been done before. Approximately two-thirds of adults have had a *deja-vu* experience. Although the cause is unknown, several theories do exist. One theory states that electrical impulses in the brain associated with memory fire spontaneously making a person think s/he has experienced something over again. A second theory postulates that one side of the brain is aware of an experience fractions of a second before the other side receives the stimuli which causes the brain to think it is re-experiencing the event. Still a third theory states that an experience can set off old memories which make an individual think that a current activity is a repeat of a remembered activity.

Source: Adapted from: Samuels and Samuels, 1975; Robinson, 1957.

## ***Appendix B***

### ***Visualization check list***

#### ***How visual are you?***

**S**ome people are more visually attuned to their world than other people. The ability to visually attend to people, objects and events, to recall information visually, and to visually create new images are characteristics of visualization. The following check list will assist you in determining your ability to visualize.

Answer "yes" or "no" to the following questions:

1. When you read a book or poem, do you "see a movie" as you read, or hear the words only?
2. Do you often daydream? In color? Do you pay attention to details in your daydream?
3. Do you fantasize?
  - a. Imagine conversations or backgrounds of people while "people watching?"
  - b. Imagine what your children will look like? (if you don't have any)
  - c. Imagine what your children will look like when they are grown?
  - d. Imagine yourself the hero or heroine of an adventure?
4. Have you ever designed anything, real or imagined, such as clothing, furniture, ideal car, house, etc.?
5. Do you enjoy art? If so, realistic or abstract art? Do you like detail, line, color? Do you enjoy photography? Do you ever develop a story behind an intriguing picture?

6. When bored or distracted, do you like to doodle? If not, do you tend to hum or fidget instead?
7. Do you recall past memories through images, words, or a combination of the three? Or do you recall past memories through feelings?
8. Can you compare one image to another such as:
  - a. Mentally determining if a belt will match a particular dress
  - b. Mentally determining if a pair of earrings is the right shade of blue,
  - c. Mentally determining if a piece of furniture is too large for a particular space?
9. Do you enjoy working jigsaw puzzles? Can you evaluate pieces by color and shape to see if they fit? Can you compare individual puzzle pieces to the finished picture to determine where it might fit?
10. Can you take an image and turn it into another image such as:
  - a. Rearrange room furniture mentally
  - b. Evaluate different hair styles mentally
  - c. Imagine dress patterns with various materials, color, collars, etc.
11. Do you learn and remember better through vision (seeing information written on paper)? If not, do you tend to remember better through audition (hearing it) or some other sense?
12. When playing music from memory, do you mentally see the sheet music and read the notes? If not, do you recall the tune or memorize the feel of the notes?
13. Do you have a mental image of abstract concepts such as time, months in the year, seasons of the year, hours in the day, days in the week, etc.?
14. When driving, do you visually anticipate your next turn, the scenery or landmarks ahead? Do you visually anticipate the actions of the driver in front of you and respond accordingly? Do you find some avenues difficult to drive because the visual stimuli are overwhelming and fatiguing?
15. When giving or receiving directions, do you visualize the route to be traveled and any identifying landmarks, or do you memorize words alone?
16. Can you accurately describe the appearance of a friend or family member including details such as eye color? Can you easily describe events, pictures, movies, etc., that you have seen?
17. Do you dream frequently? Can you regularly remember your dreams? Can you remember dream details such as colors, settings, people involved, sequence of events?
18. Have you ever had a *deja-vu* experience? Have you ever walked down a street, entered a room, etc. and felt like you've seen it before even though you've never been there before? Have you ever met a person for the first time and felt that you already know the person?
19. Have you ever had an inspirational vision? Have you ever suddenly visualized a solution to a problem? Have you ever experienced a personal, inspirational, religious vision such as seeing angels or the Virgin Mary?

20. Have you ever had a flashback experience as a result of a trauma or drug use? Have you momentarily relived a traumatic experience such as a devastating accident or a wartime battle?

If you answer "yes" to many of the above questions, chances are you possess skill in visualization and use visual imagery in your daily life.

If you answer "no" to many of the above questions, chances are you are more auditory or other sense oriented and may have problems utilizing visualization.

Source: Stauffer, L. 1990.

2. spatial relationship/organization — If one can visualize the relationship between two or more persons or things, one can more accurately show this relationship appropriately. English handles this relationship through use of prepositions such as "under," "beside," "on top of," "across from," "in front of," etc. Although ASL can use separate signs to show relationship, more often it illustrates these relationships by using the signing space.

3. use of classifiers — If one can "see" the object, then the visual image can assist the interpreter in selecting the appropriate classifier. For example, CL:F would not be chosen to represent a dish because the visual image created indicates that CL:F is too small to represent a dish.

4. directionality — If persons and objects can be visualized then directionality can be correctly incorporated by visualizing the object and the subject thus identifying the correct direction for directional verbs.

5. descriptive adjectives — If you can "see" the person or object that is being described, the interpreter can more accurately choose adjectives and non-manual behaviors that reflect the description.

6. characterization — One helpful technique in interpreting is to take on the characteristics of the persons or things involved. The ability to "see" these persons or things will assist the interpreter in representing an accurate picture. For example, a wiz ened old lady and a gawky, awkward puppy would present very different images and use different characterization techniques.

7. eye gaze — If the interpreter can see the relationship being described (ex: child to adult, dog to master, mother to son, etc.) then correct eye gaze can be quickly determined.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Visualization and ASL features**

**A**SL is described as a visual, gestural language. When interpreting between English and ASL, the interpreter must move between an auditory/linear language and one that incorporates vision and space. The ability to visualize can greatly enhance an interpreter's ability to convey spatial, descriptive and conceptual information. Visualization can impact on ASL usage in the following ways:

1. placement/location of persons and things — If one can "see" where s/he has placed two or more people or things, s/he can more easily remember where they are when referencing them. Many interpreters complain that they forget placements when three or more people are included.

8. conceptual signs — Many times an interpreter's ability to choose a conceptually accurate sign can be enhanced through visualization. "Seeing" a duck swim will provide a different image and utilize a different conceptual sign than seeing an adult swim.
9. affect — Interpreters must accurately interpret affect as well as content. The ability to visualize a person will assist the interpreter in conveying the appropriate affect for that person. This will enhance the interpreter's ability to bond with the speaker.
10. sequential order — if one can "see" an action or series of actions, there is less chance that the actions will be presented out of order. This will aid in prediction skills by allowing the interpreter to predict what action will come next.
11. verb / adverb modulation — while English handles changes of "degree" with verbs by changing the adverb, ASL incorporates verb/adverb modulation. If one can "see" the adverb characteristic, s/he will more likely incorporate modulation and do so accurately. For example: read a book (carefully, carelessly, word-for-word, peruse, etc.).
2. Unwillingness to admit visualization. Discounting one's ability to visualize and/or discounting visual experiences: dreams, visions, etc.
3. Educational process of:
  - a. rotememory
  - b. overemphasis on the abstract
  - c. symbols: language

*Education encourages children to conform their mental activity rather than encourages self-expression.*
4. Non-use of visualization abilities. *Atrophy. If you do not utilize an ability it deteriorates. Visual ability is no exception.*
5. Unrealized potential. Everyone has visualization abilities; however, not everyone uses these abilities equally. Most people have untapped resources to develop greater visual abilities.
6. Socially induced blocks. Some people fear that their fantasies will appear foolish, childish or even insane and avoid using their imagination for fear of criticism. For this reason, visualization may be inhibited or discounted.
7. Excess tension. *Fear, anxiety or fatigue can block one's ability to visualize.*

*Source: Adapted from McKim, 1972.*

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Blocks to visualization**

1. Inattention to detail through the five senses.

"...failure to become aware of imagery is due chiefly to inattention to, and consequent lack of familiarity with, internal channels" (McKim, 1972).

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**Listen to a speech or presentation on the radio or TV. It is helpful to record it because then you can go back to check your work. As you listen make a mental outline in your head of the speaker's main ideas. Also think about the following: Is the speaker for, against or neutral about the topic? What relationships are being established? Are two or more ideas, objects or people being compared? Who is doing what to whom and why? How much of the information is new and how much of it is already known, both to you and to the audience? How much can you rely on prediction and context? How does the speaker transition into new topics or ideas? What is the overall goal or theme that ties all the ideas together?**

**When the talk is over, state the speaker's main idea in one sentence, (This is difficult to do!) Listen to the same speech again. Stop the tape after you have a complete chunk of text with which to work. State the main idea of that chunk in one sentence. (Up to this point, this activity should all be done from English to English.)**

**Repeat the same activity, this time using a videotape that has a lecture being given in ASL. This time when you state the speaker's main idea, produce it in ASL. After each chunk, state the main idea in ASL.**



Take the visualization "quiz" on pages 28 through 30 of Stauffer's article. Review the "Blocks to Visualization" on page 31. What areas can you work on? Practice visualization exercises based on what you read in Stauffer's article. For instance, after reading a short newspaper or magazine article, create a mental image of the story. Use of variety of sources to practice creating mental images including radio shows, storytelling tapes (in ASL or English) classroom lectures, various types of print material and signed texts on videotape.

Ask a partner to tell you a 3 - 5 minute story in English. Record the story on tape as it is being told. As you listen, create visual images of the story in your mind. When the story is over, take a few minutes to review the mental images in your mind. Using those mental images as a framework, retell the story, in English, to your partner. This version should also be recorded. When you are done, take a few minutes to discuss what helped you retain the meaning of the story. Then, listen to the original story and your retelling of the story. Was important information omitted? If it was, why do you think this occurred? What parts of the story were communicated accurately? How did your visualization influence these parts of the story? Repeat this activity with an ASL story. Use a text that is already on videotape or ask if you can record the signer on video. When you retell the story in ASL, record your rendition on videotape as well.



Watch a cartoon or a movie that does not have words. (Do not just turn the sound down - use a tape that was made without words.) When you see a complete "chunk" stop the tape, analyze what you saw, mentally compose it and, finally, express what you saw in English. If you are watching a videotape of Roadrunner cartoons, for example, you will notice that each cartoon consists of several different segments in which the coyote tries idea after idea to foil the roadrunner. Each little vignette might be an appropriate "chunk" to work with. Some of them may be long enough and complicated enough that you might need to break them down in smaller pieces. If you are watching a cartoon or a comedy, keep in mind why the chunk is funny and what the point of the chunk is. For starters, take at least 1 minute to analyze the chunk you just saw before speaking. You can record your "interpretations" and listen to them as well. After you are feeling confident with the consecutive format, try doing the same exercise simultaneously. Record yourself on audio tape. How does your consecutive and simultaneous work compare? Simultaneous work requires a much faster process of comprehension and analysis.



Have a colleague tell you a brief (3 - 5 minute) personal experience story. After you have heard the story, represent the ideas on a piece of scratch paper without using any words or letters. How did you organize the information? How did you retain the meaning without using English? Do the activity again with a different story. This time after you have drawn the ideas, re-tell the story using your paper as a guide. Do it again with yet another story. This time try to do the "drawing" in your head instead of on paper. Wait at least two minutes after hearing the story before you begin to tell it. Use this time to represent the story in your mind and to think of the speaker's main goal that you will be conveying.

Repeat the activity with several signed texts. After you see the signed story, represent it on paper as you did before. The second and third time you will be re-telling the story in ASL. Do not get hung up on details! Your focus here should be on speaker intent and content.

## D. Self-monitoring

**A**s the interpreter speaks the message, s/he needs to be aware of the accuracy of the content and intent of the message that she is conveying. When producing the message in the target language, the interpreter needs to be able to monitor his/her output. Dual tasking exercises can be helpful in developing this skill.



1. Using easy, non-complicated texts to start, paraphrase (staying in the same language) while audio or video taping yourself. First try this exercise using a consecutive format. Listen to a segment of tape, stop the tape, analyze the message and then paraphrase the message into English. When you have finished a 5 - 8 minute section, stop and mentally review your performance. Then listen to your audio/video. How well aware of your own language use are you? Were parts of the message that you thought were accurate actually incomplete? Do you have any specific patterns that you need to pay special attention to monitoring? Although most people tend to self-monitor well when speaking in their native language, it is difficult to do in your second language and even more difficult when you are going between two languages. After completing this exercise in the consecutive format, try it again using a simultaneous format. From there, you can repeat the exercise working from ASL to ASL, first consecutively and then simultaneously.
2. Some people find it useful to interpret with a camera and monitor in front of them so that they can actually observe themselves as they are interpreting. This is a good way to change specific areas and also requires a great deal of concentration.

## ***E. Dual-tasking (optional)***

Dual-tasking simply refers to being able to concentrate on more than one task at a time. Many people do this easily in many facets of their everyday life. Some examples might include: making a list and carrying on a conversation, doing the dishes and talking on the phone or watching a TV program and doing homework. For simultaneous interpreting, you have to be able to do several tasks at once as well — listening, analysis, production and self-monitoring. While you are listening for the next chunk, you are simultaneously producing the previous chunk in the target language.



- listen to a simple 3 minute text
- while you are listening, simultaneously do a distraction task such as writing numbers backwards from 500 or writing your name, address, zip code and telephone number over and over again
- when the text is over, summarize the content as accurately as possible; also check your writing and see how consistent you were
- evaluate your performance: was this easy or difficult for you? What factors influenced how you did?
- repeat the task with a longer (5 - 10 minute) and more difficult text; re-evaluate your performance
- repeat the activity with first a short simple video tape in ASL and then with a longer more complex videotape
- when watching ASL use distractions such as counting out loud from 500 to 100 or saying your name, address and phone repeatedly or repeating the alphabet. Both of these activities can also be good practice for not immediately pairing words and signs together in your head and not playing those word/sign tapes in your mind as you listen.

## **V. Introduction to the Colonomos Model and Interpreting Process Skills**

**I**n this section it is far more important to concentrate on what your brain is doing than on what is coming out of your mouth or off of your hands. As was said in the previous section, the truly difficult work of interpretation takes place in your head, before any signs or words are uttered. Because this is less tangible, it is easy to overlook. To develop the skills needed for competent interpreting, it is vital to develop the mental skills to do the job.

One of the ways we will emphasize the cognitive aspects of this approach is by first insisting that you do the interpreting task in a consecutive format. You may have heard your instructors in your interpreting program say, "There is no simultaneous interpretation, only fast consecutive." Again, to repeat a common theme of this module, if you are truly interpreting, you are listening for complete chunks of information to work with, not just words or pieces of the message.

As much as we like to encourage the use of consecutive interpreting, we know it is not practical for every situation, nor is it the mode used in any national certification test for interpreting. In this section, you will first learn about (or review) the Colonomos model. This model is specifically focused on consecutive interpreting. You will have the opportunity to see Betty Colonomos describe the model on videotape as well as doing some practice exercises. Her presentation is straightforward, easy to understand and practical. Some interpreters think of the Colonomos model as a series of dull boxes, circles and lines that they had to memorize during their training program. This tape does not dwell on the theory in isolation but lets you, the viewer, try the process yourself. After completing your work with this video, you will read two articles which are described in the next section.

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In order to help you apply the Colonomos model to simultaneous interpreting, we will then introduce you to (or review with you) the Gish Approach for process management. In this section, you will learn some specific techniques for handling incoming information. Often interpreters become overwhelmed by the speed or the details of a particular presentation. By using the Gish Approach you will learn how to manage the processing of information so that you can produce a comprehensible and reasonably accurate interpretation. Also included in this section are techniques for handling clarification and corrections, interaction guidelines and time management techniques. The module is structured throughout to give you the benefit of application and practice. So, roll up your sleeves and jump in...

## **A. *Colonomos Model***

**V**iew the "Process in Interpreting and Transliteration" teleconference by Betty Colonomos (1992) and complete the exercises on this tape. It is very important that you watch this tape before proceeding to the activities in the next part of the module. Understanding the Colonomos model is a vital component of this module.

## **B. *Reading***

*The Role of Message Analysis in Interpretation* by William Isham

**H**ave you ever wondered how skilled interpreters determine message equivalency? Would you like some guidelines to use in order to more effectively analyze the meaning of a message in one language and choose the appropriate equivalent in another language? If so, it would be well worth your time to read this article. The author takes you, step by step, through a technique for message analysis. One short piece of text is analyzed in terms of context, function, register, affect, contextual force and metanotative qualities. The examples are excellent and informative. If you are serious about improving the accuracy of your interpretations, this article is for you!

## ***The Role of Message Analysis in Interpretation<sup>1</sup>***

William P. Isham

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### **Introduction**

**I**n recent years, the field of interpreting has been inundated with new information, much of it based on linguistic research. As more information came to me about American Sign Language and the process of interpreting, the possibility of my ever having the necessary skills to interpret seemed further and further away.

The first inkling I had of help in a practical form was in a class taught by Betty M. Colonos,<sup>2</sup> who discussed analyzing passages for various characteristics. This I could do, and as I came to understand what each passage meant more deeply, I found that I suddenly had more options. My range of possible ways to produce that passage in another language had grown. From this I discovered that one obstacle to my own growth as an interpreter had been my lack of listening skills. I had been listening to the words and not the meaning.

I set out to teach myself how to listen properly. What resulted over time is an evolving structure which I extracted from the work of others in areas such as discourse and text analysis, and from

discussions with other interpreters. I then assembled this information into a form which suited my needs as an interpreter. I am presently calling this approach to listening "Message Analysis."

Message Analysis is an attempt not only to make theory usable, but also to some extent, to de-mystify this skill we call interpreting. Although at first glance the following information may appear to be more theory, I would like to emphasize that message analysis is a skill. It is practicable with time and effort, one can improve in it.

Enough of the preliminaries: let's begin.

### **The search for equivalence**

Seleskovitch (1978) presents a strong case against word-for-word translation as an appropriate model for interpretation. Without taking up that discussion here, this paper is based on an equally strong belief in the same principle. The interpreter's task, then, is not the search for the same words in another language, but, in Seleskovitch's own terms, the "search for equivalents in two different languages." (p.84)

Acceptance of this Philosophical stand leaves the question, "If not: words, equivalents of what?" Message analysis is an attempt to answer this question. In this paper, I present six parameters as initial suggestions of "what to search for," along with a sample text to demonstrate what is meant by each parameter. This will be followed by a general discussion of some techniques for applying message analysis while "on the job."

*There are three stages to successfully relaying an equivalent interpretation: identifying what needs to be relayed; searching for equivalents in the target language; and finally, producing them. The search for and production of equivalent interpretations will not be discussed here. The first stage — identifying — is the focus of this paper.*

*A particular utterance (also to be called a "text") in any given time and place conveys many different things simultaneously. A text can be likened to a many-sided crystal. Each face represents only one part of what a speaker expresses the moment the phrase or sentence is uttered, and taken alone, does not have much meaning. Only by seeing the entire crystal do we fully understand the speaker;<sup>3</sup> this sum of many parts shall be called the "message."*

*Comprehending another's message is routine for us; we do it without thinking. We are generally unaware that what we understand is actually composed of different parts. As interpreters, we must learn to dissect something most of us never realized was divisible.*

*Six "faces" of the crystal are important to our task: content, function, register, affect, contextual force, and metanotative qualities. These six parameters are generally useful in analyzing language for a number of purposes. Although there are others, these six are most directly related to the interpreter's task.*

*Aside from these parameters, there is another aspect — called "context" — which is necessary to understanding any message. Context is not included in the list above, for one must apply the notion of context to each of the parameter. One might say that the context is the pair of glasses one needs to see any part of a message. Therefore, context is our first topic.*

### **Context**

**U**nderstanding another's message when it is not intended for us is not an easy task. This is because we lack the background information a typical listener would possess. We operate at a disadvantage. Although the kinds of situations where interpreting occurs are those where the speaker and the listener do not know each other intimately, we still are left with a lot of guesswork about our consumers and their relationship to each other. Context is the tool we use to fill in the gaps.

*Understanding occurs largely from having background information and prior experience to draw upon. All of us have experienced enjoying a private joke with someone which depends on an experience shared between ourselves and our listener. A third party who does not have that past knowledge will not understand the joke, and will remain unmoved should someone try to explain it. Background information cannot be artificially forced into the present tense. Intuitively we know this to be true, and so when asked for an explanation of our laughter, we will simply say, "You had to be there."*

*Understanding any utterance one hears is very much like that private joke: there is always some amount of background information required to fully understand the speaker's intention. This background knowledge is called the "situation" by Germain (1979). He defines it as: "...the set of facts known by the speaker and the listener at the moment the speech act occurs." This would include the relationship between the speaker and the listener (i.e., father and son, teacher and student, best of friends, etc.), everything they know about each other's lives, and even everything they know about the world around them: their view of reality itself.<sup>4</sup>*

*Given enough time, some inferences about the situational context can be made from*

*the discourse itself. Thus, as we join two people in the middle of a conversation, not only can we deduce the topic under discussion, but we can make educated guesses about the relationship of the two people talking. Without knowing anything else about them it is easy to imagine ourselves knowing whether they are family, close friends, or merely acquaintances.*

*As interpreters, we must listen consciously for these clues we use so automatically everyday. This information provides enormous insight into each speaker's message, and is necessary for analyzing the other parameters. Not only must we listen for situational context to provide us with clues about the message, we must then use the message to help fill out our understanding of the situation. A cycle is formed. Understanding a little of how these people see the world and each other helps us to understand their discourse. The more we understand their discourse, the more we can understand their relationship and the way they view the world.*

*With this as preparation, we can move to the first parameter content.*

## **Content**

*"Content" refers to the facts, ideas, information and other objective material expressed in an utterance. In the sentence, "Tom has a brown four door," the content relates information about a specific car, its color, and who owns it.*

**A**t first glance, content seems to be an easy parameter to handle. It is more difficult than it appears. Listening for content involves many pitfalls, and because understanding seems to come so easily, we may not pay as much attention or give enough energy to analyzing content. From mere habit, we depend too much on the words. The first skill inter-

*preters must master, then, involves breaking an old and trusted habit: we must learn to listen for ideas and not words.*

## **Propositions**

**A** proposition is an idea, thought, or any objectively expressed concept within the discourse. A sentence may include several propositions. Returning for a moment to the first example used in this section, the difference between a sentence and a proposition can be clarified. "Tom has a brown four door," is one sentence, made up of six words and four propositions:

1. there is a car
2. the car is brown
3. the car has four doors
4. the car is owned by somebody named Tom.

*Note that the first proposition is not overtly stated, but is implied by the other three.*

*Paying attention to four propositions instead of one sentence seems to make matters more complicated and not less. In everyday conversation, of course, we hear these four propositions as one unit. Interpreters should do the same, and listen for manageable groups of propositions. Although it may appear we have returned to the sentence level, in fact we have not.*

*Van Dijk (1972) separates the two by saying that propositions represent facts, and sentences express propositions.*

*The difference between propositions and sentences is important. A certain set of propositions may be expressed in one sentence in Language A, and require two sentences in Language B. For example,*

take this sentence: "The man was exhausted after John made him run around the football field." In ASL, these propositions are best handled with at least two and probably three sentences. First, one would depict the man running around the field, and in the second sentence, relate how he was compelled to do so by John. Last, the fact that this left him exhausted could be conveyed. Of course there are other possibilities for combining these propositions.

Likewise, there are many samples of ASL sentences which would require two or more separate sentences in English. For these reasons, we should not restrict ourselves to interpreting messages one sentence at a time. Interpreters will help themselves by listening for propositions.

The sample :

After the discussion for each parameter, the following text will be analyzed as an example:

*Ladies, ladies... please. My mother always taught me not only that I have a right to disagree, but that should always be polite when doing so.*

*Although ideally a spoken text should be heard, it is hoped that we can glean enough from this written version to make the example worthwhile.*

*First, let us look at the context. The utterance was delivered by Geraldine Ferraro during a campaign speech. She was addressing a fairly large crowd outdoors from a stage. From the beginning of her address, she received loud protest from a group of middle-aged and middle-class women, who were supporters of the pro-life stance on the abortion controversy. At first, their loud protests were gauged to force Ms. Ferraro into discussing the issue, but in time, they resorted to insults about the candidate's personal life. Finally, after trying to*

*ignore their derision, Ms. Ferraro, in a tight but controlled voice, made the utterance we are using as the sample text.*

*Now having both the utterance and its context, we can look at its content. After getting their attention with "Ladies, ladies... please," Ms. Ferraro presented the following propositions:*

1. *I have the right to disagree*
2. *My mother taught me so*
3. *I should be polite*
4. *My mother taught me so*
5. *I should especially be polite when disagreeing*
6. *My mother taught me that, too.*

*This is the denotative meaning: the objective, external information. The subjective meaning experienced by the listeners, called connotative, is quite different. Connotatively, other propositions are inferred:*

1. *Your mothers taught you the same thing*
2. *Therefore, you should be polite*
3. *I am being polite to you now, proving my mother taught me well*
4. *You are not being polite*
5. *Therefore, your mothers did not teach you well*

*Notice that Ms. Ferraro used the term "Ladies" to gain quiet and to attract their attention. By using a term which, to an older generation, connotes gentility and good upbringing, she is foreshadowing the theme of the message to come.*

**Function**

**E**very time we say something, there is a general purpose behind our words. We intend to accomplish something. Whether it be to entertain, to inform, or to persuade, we communicate because we have a desired result. These purposes, the very reasons we speak at all, are called the functions of the message.

The function of the message greatly influences how something is expressed. If the aim is to convince another that our opinion is correct, certain features are likely to appear in our speech and gesture. We might raise our voices to a higher volume than is necessary for our listener to hear us, or we might stress certain key words, and various hand movements might be incorporated to add emphasis to our conviction.

It is for this reason that Cokely (1983c) stresses the importance of understanding "communicative functions" for students of interpreting. Indeed, any interpreter who works at understanding the function behind the words of the speaker has a great advantage. When interpreters can make their purpose the same as the speaker's, then the choices in delivery will be naturally shaped by that common goal.

**The sample:**

Ms. Ferraro clearly had one function in mind: to stop the distraction created by the group of protesting women. Her purpose was achieved indirectly, for by making these women look at their own behavior, Ms. Ferraro hoped that they would make their own decision to stop their heckling. A more direct command to "be quiet," no matter how politely put, may have backfired.

In many cases, the speaker's function can be found by asking the simple question, "Why did s/he speak in the first place?" If Ms. Ferraro hadn't needed to stop a

verbal onslaught, she wouldn't have addressed the women at all. Any interpretation which expressed Ms. Ferraro's idea but failed to quiet an unruly audience could not be called equivalent.

**Register**

**T**here are an infinite number of ways to express an idea in any language. In fact, it is impossible to say the same thing exactly the same way twice. We can vary the way an idea is expressed through vocabulary choice, syntax, intonation, facial expression, gesture and the like.

Each of these ways of varying expression can be analyzed for the relative effect it may have on the communication. For our purpose as interpreters, however, we are more concerned with the effects which result from variations of several of these components simultaneously. These variations in the surface structure have been called "linguistic style levels" (Joos, 1967; Cokery, 1983b), and are also commonly referred to as "registers."

One speaks differently when addressing a parent, a close friend, or a teacher. These differences reflect our relationship to the person we are addressing, and the situation we find ourselves in. Cokery describes this phenomena as "social distance."

The particular linguistic style that a person chooses to use is a communicative strategy for creating or maintaining social distance or proximity. That is, since people do not feel equally close to everyone that they communicate with the style level that a person uses is one indication of the degree of familiarity that s/he feels or wishes to establish. (Cokery, 1983b, p. 4)

In this same article, Cokery provides clear and succinct explanations of the five registers: frozen, formal, consultative,

informal, and intimate. (See Cokery, 1983b, for a detailed description.)

The sample:

One excellent illustration of register is to hear the same propositions expressed through language characteristic of different registers. Again we must make do with a written form and hope that still the point is made. Here is the Ferraro text in three of them: the original in its consultative (or neutral) register, followed by examples of the same propositions rendered first more formally, and then more informally.

Consultative Register

Ladies, ladies... please. My mother always taught me not only that I have a right to disagree, but that I should always be polite when doing so.

Formal Register

Excuse me, ladies. My mother not only taught me to stand up for my convictions, she also counseled politeness towards those whose beliefs differed from my own.

Informal Register

Hey... hey. Ya know, my mother taught me that it's okay not to agree but the least I could do is be nice about it.

Part of the interpreter's responsibility is to produce an utterance in the target language using the same register. Failing this risks misunderstandings, such as when a listener might think the speaker rude because the interpreter delivered the message too informally. We are not only responsible for the propositions of the message, we are also responsible for how they are expressed.

Changing the register is one way the delivery of a message may change. Altering the affect is another.

**Affect**

**A**ffect is the emotion and tone conveyed in the text. Affect is perceived by listeners through volume, stress patterns, vocabulary choices and other linguistic and paralinguistic clues given by the speaker.

Affect is nothing new to the field of interpreting. Most of us have received feedback regarding our attempts to relate the affect of the speaker. All too often, however, volume and pitch are the only tools employed to show emotion.

Thus, louder speech and changes in intonation are the vehicles which clue our audience in to the fact that the speaker, for example, is angry.

Strong emotion, or lack of it, influences much more than these more obvious indications. Vocabulary choice and syntax may be affected, to varying results and degrees. For example, anger may produce greater eloquence in some, and speechlessness in others. Intense emotion will alter the rate of speech, too, or create new rhythms with the pauses that can come from such things as the hesitancy to express oneself while experiencing deep emotion.

As interpreters, we need not only to be aware that it is our responsibility to convey affect, but to be consciously aware of how this is accomplished in any of the languages we are working with. Knowing how elation is expressed in the source language does not guarantee that these same strategems can be used in the target language. Finding equivalence in affect does not necessarily mean imitating the delivery of the speaker.

Knowing how to express tone and emotion in a second language is one of the more difficult tasks we must face. One can begin by heightening awareness of the effects of emotion on our native language, and then looking for similarities or

*differences while conversing in the second language. Mastering this skill will be a matter of time and effort.*

**The sample:**

*This is the most difficult of the parameters to discuss without the benefit of hearing the utterance itself. In fact, without hearing Ms. Ferraro's voice and seeing her gestures, facial expressions or postures, it is impossible to declare anything about her affect one way or another. For the sake of consistency, affect will be addressed, if for nothing more than exercise. The discussion will be restricted, however, to what can be deduced from the context and a little common sense.*

*Given the situation, her goal in delivering her speech (gaining votes), and the verbal abuse being directed toward her, it is easy to believe that some anger was involved with her utterance. The desire to speak out directly in her own defense was likely in conflict with the need to behave in socially appropriate ways, resulting in frustration. Finally, there may have been some satisfaction found in having expressed such an effective text.*

*These are just some of the possible emotions which Ms. Ferraro may have experienced and which may have been evident in her intonation, facial expressions and so on. Likewise, they represent just a few of the possible affects any interpreter will need to be able to convey.*

**Contextual force**

**C**ontextual force is the relative impact (low to high) a message has on its receiver. Hirsch (cited by Horton, 1979) calls it "significance" and contrasts it with "meaning." He points out that, depending on the listener, particular proposition has a relative impact or charge to it. It is either an emotional

*topic or it is not; it causes interest or it does not; it stimulates memories of past experiences or it does not.*

*The utterance meaning, then, is singular and determined by the speaker, while its significance, or contextual force, is multiple in that it changes from listener to listener. Some general claims can be made about social groups, however, that make contextual force more usable for interpreters. When a point about Gertrude Stein is mentioned, for example, the women in the audience will presumably experience a higher contextual force than the men will.*

*Knowing the context means knowing who our audience is and, in part, what might be important to them. Awareness of the potential impact a message might have to a particular group is important to the interpreter seeking equivalence.*

**The sample:**

*The contextual force of Geraldine Ferraro's statement can be assumed to be quite high for everyone who heard it, and especially so for the women to whom it was directed. For the audience in general, many must have been wondering how the candidate would deal with this difficult situation. Some may have been hoping for some kind of retort that would provide an interesting tale at the evening's dinner table. For both of these groups, raised expectations before the utterance contributed to the impact experienced when it finally came.*

*The high impact the utterance must have had on the group of hecklers is obvious. Ms. Ferraro managed to put down these women, cast doubt on their upbringing, and denigrate their mothers in addition to embarrassing them in front of a large crowd — all under the guise of a lesson in politeness. It was a verbal coup.*

### **Metanotative Qualities**

**A**s an audience listens to a speaker, they not only make judgments about what the speaker says, they are simultaneously making judgments about the person who is speaking. Smith (1978) calls this level of meaning for the listener "metanotative," as opposed to denotative and connotative. Cokery (1983a) explains it thus: "metanotative qualities of messages and speakers are those non-content characteristics that influence or determine a person's overall impressions of the speaker."

Perhaps the most easily grasped definition is one by Colonemos (personal communication) for what she calls the "speaker's style." Given the same context, content, affect, and register, the speaker's style is everything that makes Speaker A different from Speaker B.

Metanotative qualities of the message are what let us internally answer such questions as "What is the speaker like as an individual? Is he educated or uneducated? Is she friendly? Is she knowledgeable about her topic? Can I trust him?" and so on. Whenever we listen to another, we are forming completely subjective opinions based, in part, on the verbal behavior of the speaker.

As interpreters, our renditions of speaker's messages should reflect their individuality. A dry, monotonous delivery should not be transformed into something interesting by our own cleverness. The target language audience has just as much a right to know that this man is a bore as those who share his language.

#### **The sample:**

By definition, each of us must form our own judgments of speakers subjectively, so it would be a contradiction to state what judgments were made of Ms. Ferraro

in this paper. Some of the audience who heard her utterance may have decided that Geraldine Ferraro is witty, while others may have been impressed with her control in such a difficult position. Still other listeners may have thought her cowardly for avoiding the pro-life/pro-choice controversy.

If interpreters can reflect enough of a speaker's unique flavor, then the target language audience will make their own subjective judgments, just as they should.

### **Message analysis in practice**

**I**t would appear that interpreters have enough to do without having to consciously analyze each utterance in the light of these six parameters. At first, message analysis appears to be more hindrance than help. Yet, message analysis can be used in at least three separate ways, the first of which can be employed by anyone immediately,

The three uses of message analysis to be discussed in brief here are Critique, Identifying Difficulties, and Prioritizing. Although using message analysis requires some practice, it is not as difficult as one might think.

#### **Critique**

**A**ny interpreter may begin practicing message analysis by using it after the fact. By reviewing our performance after an interpreting assignment (perhaps with the help of another), we can use the six parameters to help clarify in our own minds where we were and were not successful. Various aspects of our own performance become clear with questions like these: "were the propositions I provided the target audience equal to those by the original speaker? Was my affect equivalent? Was my register the

same, or was I too formal?" By reviewing work done using this structure, we should be able to gain insight into our present level of functioning. At the same time, we are simultaneously solidifying our understanding of each parameter.

Likewise, we can offer others feedback of a similar nature. All of us have heard both positive and negative feedback that was too general to be of any practical use ("Your signs were not clear" or "You were wonderful.") Specific input based on identifiable criteria will be refreshing after such well meaning but useless feedback.

### **Identifying difficulties**

Eventually, as understanding of each parameter is solidified, the next step in using message analysis will most likely take place of its own accord. If your experience is similar to mine, you will not find yourself thinking about each parameter in turn as you are interpreting. Instead, you will suddenly become aware of a particular parameter because it is, at that moment, presenting you with a problem.

That "problem" might be a sudden shift in register that produced laughter in some listeners; or it might be a proposition which presumes context you know your target audience does not have. Whatever the case, the interpreter is suddenly saying to him - or herself: "Oh no. What do I do now?"

This phenomenon of select parameters entering the consciousness of the interpreter while working may imply that, at some level, the brain has in fact analyzed the other parameters and found equivalent phrases in the target language. Whether this is so is an interesting topic for discussion or research. In any case, that this does occur is of tremendous help to the interpreter. It allows us to focus

our energy on the "problem," thereby using that energy efficiently. Those few moments that we have between the utterance and our rendition are too precious to be wasted by doing nothing at all, or by trying to accomplish too much. Focusing in on the one or two parameters that are more difficult for a particular text is lag time well used.

### **Prioritizing**

When more than one parameter presents difficulty, it may not be possible to address each of them in the lag time we have provided ourselves. Here, interpreters can prioritize their analysis. There are several possible ways to order the importance of particular parameters for any given text.

First, the interpreter should have some idea of why that parameter is an issue at the moment. It may be that the roadblock lies in the interpreter: s/he does not know a target language utterance which will incorporate a given parameter.

Searching for an equivalent is impossible in a subjective sense. If this is the case, there is no point in putting energy into the matter. It is not message analysis that is judgmental; we are too hard on ourselves already. There is not an interpreter alive who can find equivalents a hundred per cent of the time, and so we should not waste energy feeling badly when we fail. We could be busy analyzing parameters that we can handle.

There is another case — when something is not interpretable at all by anyone — where we should again drop the issue immediately. This time, the search is impossible in an objective sense: there is no equivalent in the target language. When we have decided this is true, we should waste no time in moving on.

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*By eliminating the impossibilities, we are left with those parameters of a message which are just plain hard to interpret for any number of reasons. We become acutely aware of an utterance which would be equivalent for all parameters except one and suspect that with a little more time and creativity, we could find just the answer. Hopefully, after eliminating the "impossibilities," whether they are subjectively or objectively so, we only have one left to handle. Focusing all of our available energy on this parameter may tilt the scales in our favor.*

*It may be that even after elimination exercises, several parameters are still left which require individual attention. Here, we have to make a decision as to their rank of importance. One guide which is very often helpful is to consider the function of the message, and to concentrate on whichever parameter will best further the speaker's purpose. To illustrate, in a classroom the day before the final exam, the content of the lecture is of utmost importance. In a campaign speech such as Ms. Ferraro's, where voters are deciding whether or not to trust this potential leader, affect and metanotative qualities become crucial.*

*We will always be faced with such decisions, and it is certain that all of us will make both good and bad choices during our careers. Nevertheless, knowing what the issues are and then prioritizing our options will help with these difficult but necessary decisions.*

### **Conclusion**

**M**essage analysis provides a structure with which we can understand the speaker's meaning, and thereby search for utterances in the target language which will convey an equivalent message. Consisting of six parameters, each being analyzed in context, message analysis dissects meaning into manageable parts.

Message analysis is a skill. We tend to think of skills as mechanical or physical, but some, like message analysis, are entirely mental: it is learnable and teachable. Practicing message analysis will bring improvement in interpretation. It is suggested that those interested in trying, begin by using it to critique themselves after assignments. Eventually, message analysis will begin happening on the job almost of its own accord.

In the search for equivalence, message analysis is the first step. When we become aware of the message as a whole we can hope to interpret the wholeness of the message.

**Notes**

- 1) *I would like to express my deep appreciation to both Charlotte Baker-Shenk and Betty M. Colonomos for their suggestions and feedback. Any error in fact or understanding is mine alone.*

*In addition, I would like to thank the many people who helped by suggesting resources for further investigation, or by either proofreading or critiquing, the final draft. (There are too many of you to name here, but hugs are available upon request.)*

- 2) *Course title: "ASL to English; English to ASL: Theory and Practice."*
- 3) *For convenience in a written paper all examples will be taken from English. Message analysis, however, is equally applicable to any language, spoken or signed. Terms such as "listener," "speaker," and the like are to be understood generically.*
- 4) *The situation, of course, can only be fully understood in terms of the speaker's culture. Culture is of such overwhelming importance that it might be said that this paper avoids a central issue. I agree. No matter where I tried to introduce the role of culture in interpreting in general and its place in message analysis in particular, I was unable to do justice to such a complicated topic in the time and space allotted me.*

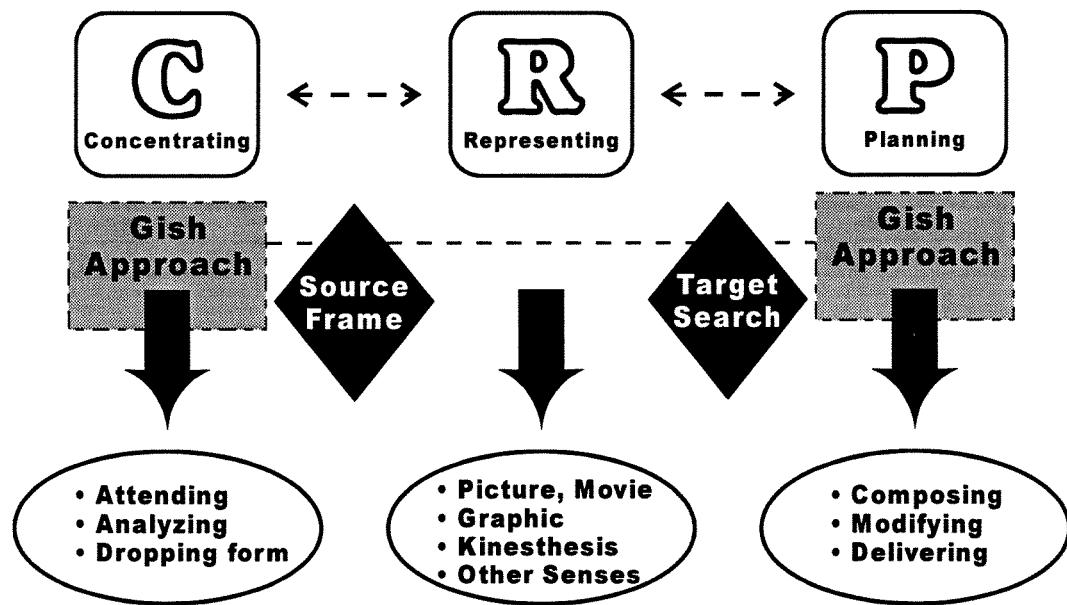
## **C. The Gish Approach to Information Processing**

*(The information in this section is based on materials originally developed by Sandra Gish in 1986-1994. The adaptation of materials, written narratives and integration of ideas was done with input and revision by S. Gish and members of the MRID project grant team.)*

### **Introduction**

**M**any interpreters feel overwhelmed when attempting to manage an incoming message. The Gish Approach to Information Processing, combined with strategies for clarifying the speaker's message, correction of errors and time management will lead to more accurate and complete interpretations. All of the information presented in this section is also available on video in a series of teleclasses presented by Sandra Gish. The series is two parts: "Information Processing: ASL to English" and "Information Processing: English to ASL." They are available to purchase through the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (see the Resource Guide for ordering information.) If you do not have access to these video tapes, the following section will take you step by step through the Gish Approach.

When an interpreter is taking in a message and analyzing it for comprehension, s/he needs some kind of structure to do the analysis so that the source message is not coming in as an overwhelming barrage of words and signs. The Gish Approach is a way to analyze the message as you are receiving it and also as you reconstruct the message in the target language. See the drawing below for a visual demonstration of where this approach fits in Betty Colonomus' Process model:



Using the Gish Approach, the interpreter has a set of guidelines from which to understand the meaning of the message, the structure of the message and to make predictions as to the next utterance and ultimate goal of the speaker. This results in a more cohesive interpretation. The other benefit of the Gish approach is that an interpreter is able to interpret something at any given time rather than experiencing a complete breakdown of the interpretation. Using this approach, the interpreter is able to convey the key elements of a text in a comprehensible manner rather than presenting a jumble of words or signs that have no connection or context.

You will be introduced to the Gish Approach through a series of practice exercises. These exercise can be done alone or with a group of colleagues. If you do work in a group, remember that each person will be working a bit differently. We strongly urge you to use the Interaction Guidelines enclosed in this section for both self and group analysis. Working through this structure takes time - do a little at a time and plan for several

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sessions to work through the entire process on one text. The work may seem silly and tedious, especially when you are an experienced interpreter, but by working the entire process, your ability to manage information will greatly increase. The elements presented in this model are also represented by the graphic on page 14 of this section.



## Identifying Speaker Goal

Choose a signed text (a Deaf speaker). Work through the rest of this module, completing all of the exercise from ASL into English. After finishing, work the Practice Exercises with a spoken source text into ASL. The text should only be one speaker. You don't have to understand every sign the speaker uses to practice this process. Ideally it should be the kind of text you will work with most often, a lecture or talk about a particular topic or a narrative of some kind. The Sign Enhancers' Model interpreting series have several stories that would suffice. When practicing English to ASL, you may also tape a class lecture and use that. The lecture should be at least 7-10 minutes long or longer.

1. Before viewing the tape, analyze the title or topic. Think about the reason this speaker is talking. What do you think their goal is? Write it down.
2. Start the tape and then freeze-frame the speaker. How does the gender, age and affect of the speaker influence your prediction of the speaker's goal?
3. Watch the entire tape. Do not "interpret" in your head.
4. After watching the tape, rethink the goal of the speaker — is the goal what you thought it would be?

## **Goals**

You have just completed an exercise identifying the first level of the Gish Approach; the Goal. All speakers have a goal or some reason for speaking. Interpreters can prepare for an assignment by predicting what the goal of the speaker might be or they may ask the speaker directly. Goals are described using a verb i.e.; to educate, to punish, to persuade, to amuse, to criticize, to inspire. In educational settings, teachers have clear and specific Goals — to teach a new skill, to confront specific inappropriate behavior, to reinforce learning and so on. Goals are almost never actually interpreted, unless overtly stated by the speaker, but Goals are the undercurrent behind the interpretation. The Goal shapes how the speaker presents information. For instance, if the Goal of a speaker is to amuse, they may open with some kind of joke, bring up the joke again throughout the discourse and check in with the audience frequently to make sure that they are engaged. If the Goal is to punish, the speaker will probably open with a comment of disapproval, speak in short, direct sentences and check to make sure the addressee comprehends at the end of the discourse. The discourse structure, sentence structures, vocabulary choices and rate of delivery will vary depending on the Goal.

During a discourse, a speaker may change Goals. If there are two speakers, they may be talking about the same thing (a late homework assignment) but may have different goals. The student's Goal may be to avoid punishment while the teacher's Goal may be to discipline. A teacher may begin with the Goal of teaching a particular skill, but during classroom interaction the Goal may shift to a reinforcement of behavior and then back to the teaching Goal. The interpreter has to constantly monitor the source language message in light of the Goal and be prepared to shift along with the speaker. Typically, the interpreter can sense when the interpretation is not "hanging together" and one of the reasons for that breakdown may be because the speaker has shifted Goals.



## Identifying Speaker Theme

1. Before seeing the text again, think of one sentence that would describe the point of this particular text. If this is a story, what is the "moral" of the story? Write it down.
2. Watch the text a second time. Again, don't "interpret" this text at all, just see if you can summarize the entire text into one sentence.
3. Sign or speak that one sentence into the "target" language you will be using.

## Conditions

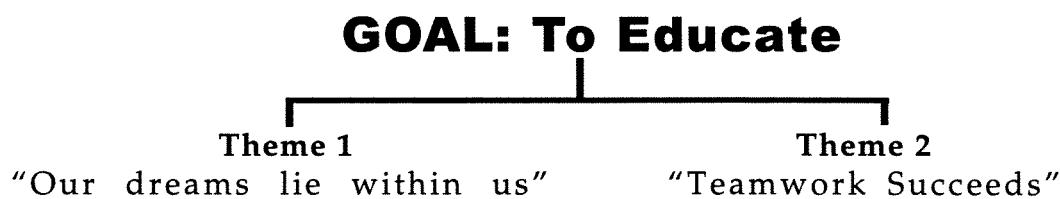
- Make the sentence grammatical, to the point and as efficient as possible.
- Don't end a good, complete sentence with "and."
- Have the whole sentence ready in your head before you open your mouth. Then sign the sentence and stop. Don't add any extra personal "noise" like shrugs, eye rolls, comments like "I don't know if this is right, but..." Merely interpret a complete grammatical sentence.
- If working with another interpreter, don't discuss what you think the speaker said. It's too easy to get hung up on the discussion, our disclaimers, etc. Force yourself to take a stand on what you saw.
- If you are working with a group and you disagree with another person's interpretation, offer another (don't discuss the interpretation).

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- Never interrupt or finish a sentence for another interpreter in this practice. It disrupts concentration and your ability to process more quickly will not help another interpreter with her/his processing.

## **Theme**

**W**hat you have just expressed can be called the "Theme" of the text. The Goal is the motivation or reason for speaking and the Theme is the main idea of the particular text used to achieve the Goal. Examples of Themes are: "Our dreams lie within us" (in "The Wizard of Oz"); "WW II was a series of accidents that almost destroyed the world;" "There is a cause for this patient's symptoms." Like the Goal, the Theme of a text is rarely overtly stated, but the interpreter needs to be analyzing the text in search of the Theme for it provides the structure for the source message and meaning. This is the frame from which the entire discourse is hung. As with Goals, a speaker may move to a second or third Theme in one discourse. If the Goal changes, naturally the Theme will change. It is also possible that the Goal will remain the same, but the Theme shifts. See the diagram below for help visualizing this idea.



In educational settings, the themes often switch with the activity though the Goal "To Educate" may continue throughout the entire day.



## **Identifying Objectives**

1. Without viewing the text again, see if you can write down the main points of the text, similar to writing the Roman numeral parts of an outline. For example, with the "Wizard of Oz," you could write:

- I. Dorothy decides her life would be better somewhere else.
- II. She and her dog take a strange trip and arrive in a new land.
- III. She and her dog have many adventures and make new friends and enemies.
- IV. Dorothy helps her friends get what they want and realizes she wants to go home.
- V. She learns she has the power to make her dreams come true.
- VI. Dorothy and her dog return home to be reunited with her family.

**2.** Watch the text again. Look for the broad, main “chunks” of the story. Stop the tape after you think a main point is finished. You can watch for “discourse markers” that indicate these large “chunks.” In ASL, the speaker may drop the hands out of the signing space, fold their hands, drop eye gaze/head, use a lexical item such as the sign glossed as FINISH or THAT, or hold their last sign for an extended period of time. When the ASL speaker begins again, the hands are brought up, eye gaze is reestablished, and a sign such as the one glossed as NOW or NEXT may be used. In English, the speaker may lower their voice, drop their body energy, refer to notes or papers or use lexical items such as “So...” or “Next...” When an English speaker begins again, they might look back up, take a breath, have a strong vocal inflection or use lexical items. In both ASL and English, a change of content indicates a new main “chunk.”

**3.** Think of one sentence that expresses the main point of the first section. Do not sign the sentence yet.

**Additional Condition**

- Don't re-view the segment. The purpose of this practice is to “train the brain” to move through the complete interpreting process (making a whole of the parts rather than getting stuck on analyzing the pieces). Often, we really don't need to see the text again, instead, we need time to process the text in our minds.

**4. Sign the main point of the first section in the target language.**

**Additional Conditions**

- No interpreter noise, e.g. "Ummmm...," "He, uh, no, he...," "Sort of...," "kind of...," "you know...," "I mean..."
- Use appropriate vocal or facial grammar
  - Statement (falling voice/eyebrows neutral)
  - Question (rising voice/eyebrows show Wh or Yes-No)
  - Continuation of thought (sustained voice/lifted eyebrows)
  - Watch that your face doesn't show that you are uncertain
- No interpreter processing out loud, e.g. "I don't know if i got this right...," "huh?," "Oh! OK!"

**5. Move to the next major chunk and repeat steps 2-4, but make sure the second sentence somehow links up with the first. There should be cohesion in the story, from one sentence to the next; the ideas need to congruent. If the next chunk is a different idea, then make sure there is some kind of transition indicator like the word or sign: "Next" or "Thirdly" or "On the other hand."**

**Additional Conditions:**

- Each sentence must be grammatical and complete.
- Each sentence must be equivalent to the speaker's meaning.
- There must be a pause between sentences.
- All of the sentences produced must be congruent in light of the message as a whole.

6. Repeat steps 2-5 until you are through the entire text. Make sure each sentence ties into the preceding sentence. Keep your sentences simple and to the point. The end result should sound like the outline of the entire text represented in the target language.

7. Have a colleague who doesn't know the text listen to your interpretation. See if they can identify the main points of the story.

## **Objectives**

The elements you have just been working on are called the Objectives in the Gish Approach. Objectives are the main points of the text. They are broad divisions of the text and rarely overtly stated. In preparing for an assignment, an interpreter can predict what the main points may be based on the title of the topic. In most discourse, the first Objective is an introduction of some kind. Sometimes an introduction can require two Objectives. The next several Objectives are the body of the text and the last is some kind of conclusion to the text. The graphic on page 14 can help you visualize the Objectives and how they fit under the Goal and Theme.

Objectives, like the Goal and Theme, hold the text together. As the interpreter is working s/he needs to be analyzing the incoming message for these elements. Interpreting just the Objectives of a text is an excellent practice exercise. In an actual assignment, if the source message is coming at the interpreter too fast and for some reason the interpreter cannot interrupt for clarification, the interpreter can at least interpret the Objectives of the text. Giving the consumer some idea of what the speaker is saying is, in many cases, a better approach than just throwing a handful of disjointed signs or words into the air hoping the consumer can make sense of them.

A text may or may not contain sub-objectives. For example, the following example is quite broad:

Objective: "Dorothy helps her friends get what they want and realizes she wants to go home."

You may sub-divide this very broad Objective into the following sub-objectives:

**Sub-objective 1:** Dorothy and her friends try to find help getting what they want.

**Sub-objective 2:** Dorothy's enemy tries to thwart them by kidnapping Dorothy.

**Sub-objective 3:** Dorothy's friends help her and in turn she makes sure they get what they want.

**Sub-objective 4:** Dorothy realizes that her greatest wish is to go home.

Typically, sub-objectives are not overtly stated by the speaker, however, they may be interpreted for practice, or, when the interpreter cannot stop the speaker, as the only interpretation possible.



## Identifying and Interpreting Units

1. View a segment of the text that feels like the normal "chunk" of information an interpreter uses before beginning an interpretation... this segment is smaller than the objective or sub-objective. It should feel like the first point the speaker makes or perhaps the introduction. To use the "Wizard of Oz" example again, this would look like: "Dorothy is playing outside her farmhouse with her dog." Stop the tape. Again, you can watch for discourse markers that show these smaller "chunks." They are similar to the ones that indicate Objectives, but are usually smaller in execution. In ASL, the speaker may drop the hands slightly rather than drop completely out of the signing space. There might be a slight hold on the last sign and a brief eye gaze away from the audience. In English, the voice may drop slightly and there will be a short pause before continuing.
2. Analyze the message, compose an equivalent message in the target language in your mind and then say/sign a grammatically-acceptable sentence in the target language.

### Additional Conditions:

- Less is more, e.g. "We put the baby in the car. Then my husband and I got in the car. Then the three of us went to the store." vs. "My husband and I put the baby in the car and drove to the store."

- Don't compose out loud. Compositions happens internally before you begin to speak, e.g. "The train was bumpy. The overhead light was flickering. I couldn't sleep. The light was flickering... The movement of the train made the overhead light flicker and I couldn't sleep."
- Don't use a fifty-cent "interpreter" word when an appropriate nickel word would do, e.g. "I approached him with my request" vs. "I went up and asked him."
- If you start a sentence, finish it, don't leave it dangling. If you feel stuck, "let go," finish that particular sentence and move on to the next.
- Remember that rhetorical questions function differently in ASL and English, voice/sign them only when appropriate. Rhetorical questions appear more frequently in ASL than English and are used more frequently in formal registers of ASL. Rhetorical questions are used in English when participants hold different social status or as a conversational technique (condescension, sarcasm, etc.) Automatically voicing rhetoricals may change register and meaning: "Where are we going for our vacation? Hawaii." vs. "We're going to Hawaii for our vacation."
- Remember that ASL uses role shifting to show dialogue between speakers, in more registers than English. Saying "I said," "she said" at the beginning of each sentence makes the speaker seem less formal. Saying "So I told her..." or "She refused my offer" may be a better way to interpret ASL role shifts.

3. Work through the entire text, moving from chunk to chunk - always remember to have each interpreted chunk tie in to the previous one. If there is a transition to a new point, make sure the interpretation shows that transition and doesn't just abruptly jump to that new point.
4. Have a colleague who does not know the original text watch/listen to the interpretation to see if the text is congruent. Does each sentence relate to the one before? Were there transition markers between ideas? Ask for feedback.

## **Units**

**A**t this level in the Approach, the “chunks” you’ve been using become Units. These are the “propositions” Isham refers to in the previous article. At this level, the interpreter actually starts working the text. Units are the concepts or ideas the speaker puts into words/signs. Units may be as short as one sentence or may contain several sentences. Units are separated by meaning. Each new concept or new idea is presented by the speaker based on the Objectives, Theme and Goal.

The interpreter listens/watches for each grouping of ideas and then interprets the meaning into the Target language. The words or signs used to express these ideas or concepts are not carried into the Target language. When words or signs are carried through into the target language, it is called “linguistic contamination.” An example of this is the English word “flocked.” Sometimes interpreters will say “People flocked to the meeting.” English speakers rarely use the word “flocked” to describe people. The target message has been contaminated by carrying through the sign commonly glossed as FLOCKED into the English sentence. An example of this in ASL would be to use the sign meaning “a disabled person” (glossed as D-A) in the interpretation of “There was a disabled car by the side of

the road." In the interpretation, remember that the words/signs used in the source text are deliberately discarded and only the meaning is retained (Seleskovich, 1978).

If an interpreter misses exact details of the source message (where, when, who...) and is unable to stop the speaker to clarify, the interpreter can still interpret the Unit. For example, if a Deaf speaker is telling the "Wizard of Oz" and begins by fingerspelling the place presented, the name of the girl and dog in the story and the interpreter is unable to understand the fingerspelling, the Unit or idea is still interpretable as, "There once was a girl who lived with her dog" or (depending on how much of the source message was understood) "There once was a young girl who lived on a farm with her dog." The interpreter will know that this interpretation is not fully equivalent. Fully equivalent interpretation happens at the next level in the model. However, interpreting at the Unit level does have a greater degree of equivalency than just interpreting word-for-sign (or visa versa) without any attempt to place the message in sequence or context.

If interpreters often work at the Unit level in their analysis and forget that the Objective Theme and Goal levels exist, the interpretation then becomes a series of disjointed ideas. Each Unit usually has either a connection or a deliberate break from the Unit before. Each has a connection to the Objective and is presented with the Goal and Theme in mind. Remembering this helps the interpreter predict what the next Unit might be, recognize Unit as it occurs, correct the prediction if necessary and then render an interpretation. An example of this in an educational setting might be this: The teacher's Goal is to Educate. The Theme is "Different color groups." If, in the first Unit, the teacher introduces Primary Colors, the interpreter can predict the next Unit to be a description of the three primary colors. Further prediction might be that the next Objective will be a series of Units talking about Secondary Colors. The interpreter can continue to predict and adjust as the teacher talks about the topic of different color groups. If the interpreter is only able to interpret at the Unit level, (There are a few primary colors) but is not able to include the details of "red," "blue," and "yellow" for some reason, the interpretation is more accurate than just saying / signing the words: "Primary

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Colors.” However, the interpretation is not complete until the details are incorporated. Interpreting at the Unit level is great for practice and helpful in situations where the interpreter is unable to work at a deeper level of process.

It is at the Unit level in the analysis that arguments begin about interpreters “adding” to the message in their interpretation. This often happens because English and ASL convey explicit and implicit information differently. English often carries implicit message in a text. For example, the English phrase “You had better not do that again” has an explicit warning, but an implicit message of “or you will be sorry.” If the interpreter judges the meaning of the message to contain both those points, they need to be rendered in the interpretation. Signing both the implicit and explicit message may not be “adding” but really be rendering a complete interpretation. If the interpreter is analyzing the source text in light of the Goal of the speaker and the main points, s/he has some basis for analyzing a text for both explicit and implicit meaning.



## Identifying and Interpreting Details

1. Before watching the text again, think about what details (fingerspelled words, numbers, statistics spoken too fast to catch) you still do not clearly understand. Try to use the context of the text to make predictions of what those details might be.
2. Go through the text again, stopping at each Unit, doing an analysis and interpretation of the message as completely as possible. Follow the same conditions about not re-viewing the segment, etc.

### Additional Conditions:

- Don't fall back into a word-sign interpretation. Sign each idea as it is presented and only carry through word-for-sign details that are exact, like names, dates and numbers. Fingerspelled words do not always have to be said in the translation - just the idea that is presented around that fingerspelled word may suffice.
- Don't get hung up if you miss a detail - finish the sentence (as a larger Unit-like idea if necessary) and move on to the next. If the speaker is live, you can use the correction/clarification strategies in this module to catch a detail. If the speaker is on tape, you have to move on but you don't have to lose the overall meaning of the interpretation.

## **Details**

**Y**ou have now done an interpretation of the text at the deepest level of the Gish Approach, the Detail level.

This level deals with specific data presented to express the ideas of the Unit. These are phrases, words, signs the speaker chooses. Primarily, the interpreter is not looking for the specific signs/words used but for the meanings they contain. The exception at this level are specific items that must be carried literally into the target message — names, dates, numbers. These data are embedded in the mental representation of the message and are placed in the interpretation in grammatically appropriate places. A complete and accurate interpretation will include all the Details as presented by the speaker.

Preparation by the interpreter can greatly assist in understanding the Details when hearing/seeing them. In an educational setting, the interpreter may have access to the notes, textbooks and materials used in the classroom. Knowing specific names, dates and times that will be mentioned, having the speaker's notes, and knowing the speaker's personal history will all improve comprehension. Having strong skills in clarification will make it easier for the interpreter to identify specific Detail categories missed (the name, when something happened) and to be able to quickly ask the speaker for clarification and then incorporate it into the interpretation. Specific techniques for Clarification, Correction and Time Management are included in this section of this module.

You have now practiced the entire process of analyzing an incoming text and composing an equivalent interpretation. Now you can go back and do the exercises from English to ASL or a transliterated message. The following graphic will show you a visual structure of the model. Use these same exercises to analyze several different kinds of texts. Experienced interpreters may be able to move through to the Unit level of

interpretation quickly. In practice session, always predict and confirm the Goal, Theme and Objectives of any text before beginning actual interpreting of the Units. See the practice exercises at the end of this section for further and more advanced work using this approach.

## **Now what?**

The benefit of using this framework to analyze incoming information is to give you a way to almost always be able to interpret something even if you are unable to interpret everything. This may sound like sacrilege, but there are times when such an interpreting situation happens. We cannot stop videotape texts for clarification and sometimes we cannot stop live speakers. Sometimes a text may be very difficult to understand and we, for whatever reason, cannot be fully prepared for the subject. For any interpreter who has experienced the moment of panic when they don't understand the speaker, the Gish Approach provides a way to analyze the incoming message so the interpretation can continue. If you miss a Detail, it can be identified, asked for and incorporated. If it can't be asked for, the Unit can be interpreted. If several Units are missed and can't be clarified, the Objective can be identified and interpreted. Interpreting at the Theme and Goal level is a great practice exercise but should only be resorted to in the direst of interpreting circumstances. Remember, a clear, grammatically correct statement of meaning is better any day than a jumble of signs and words with no connection or context.

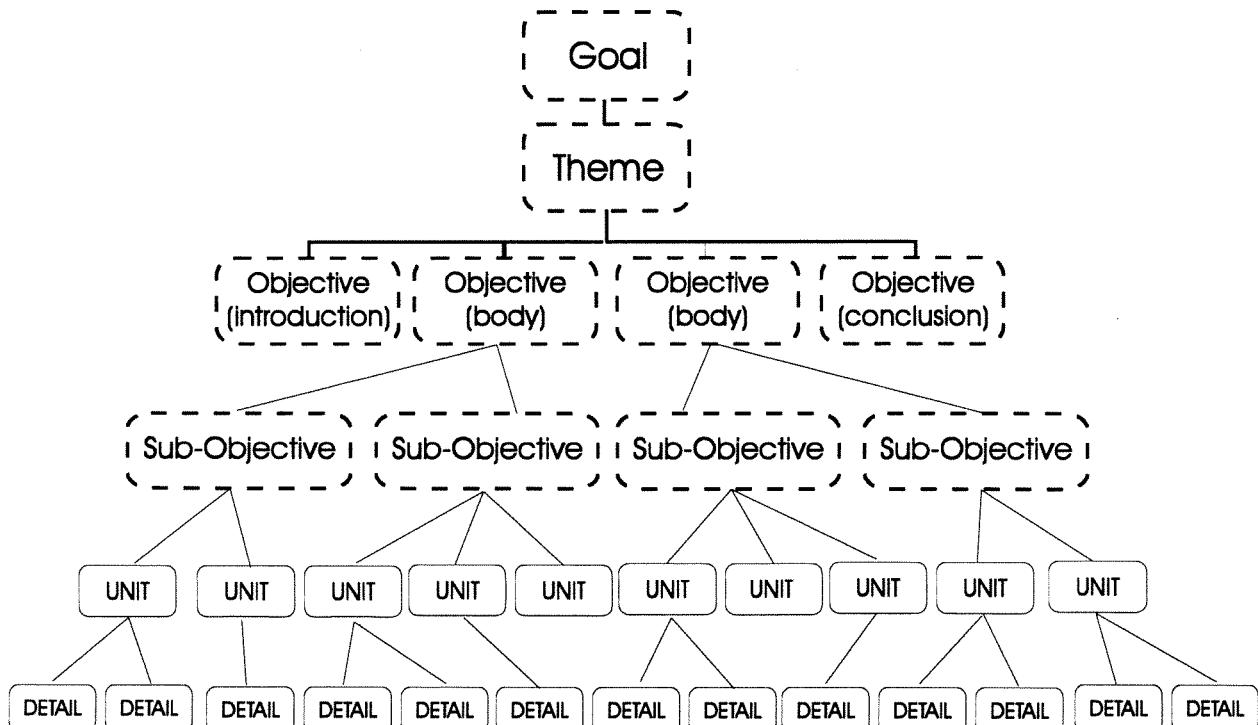
For those glorious moments when we can be prepared, can stop for clarification, have enough time to complete each point and fully understand the speaker, the Gish Approach will not just guide the interpreter into getting all the ideas out to the consumer. It will also enable those ideas to actually come out clearly, easily and connected, so the consumer understands not only all the words/signs... but understands the point as well.

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One note, the Gish Approach does not include analysis of register, affect or style of the speaker. These elements are part of the analysis of the message and will effect the meaning of the message. As the text is being analyzed, the interpreter needs to be aware of register, affect or style of the speaker and incorporate them in the interpretation.

No wonder we think we're working hard... we are!!

# The Gish Approach To Information Processing

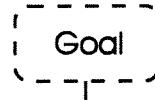


**Key**

--- = may or may not be overtly stated

      = what the speaker overtly says / signs

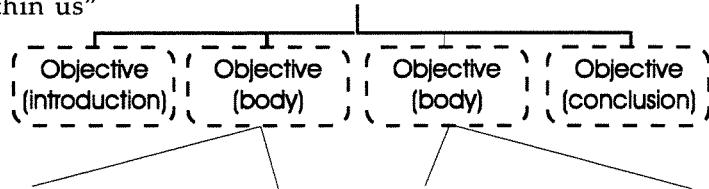
# The Gish Approach To Information Processing



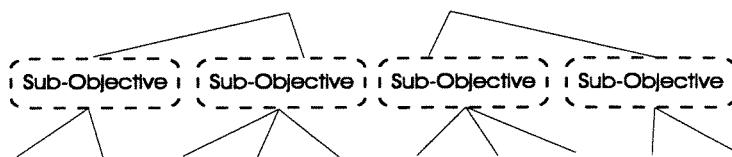
- the speaker's purpose — the reason s/he speaks, i.e. to educate, to amuse, to challenge
- rarely stated overtly — rarely overtly interpreted
- ex: in "The Wizard of Oz" the Goal is to educate



- The main point of the speaker's text
- rarely stated overtly - may be interpreted as practice or if it is the only interpretation possible under rare circumstances
- ex: in "The Wizard of Oz" the Theme is "our dreams lie within us"

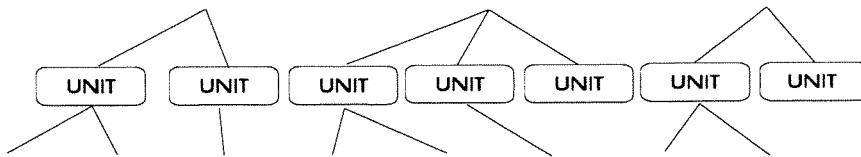


- the main points of the text
- seldom stated overtly - can be interpreted as a practice or as the only interpretation possible under some circumstances
- "ex: in "The Wizard of Oz"
  - Dorothy decides life would be better somewhere else
  - She and her dog run away from home
  - Worried, she tries to return home
  - She and her dog take an unusual trip and arrive in a strange land etc.

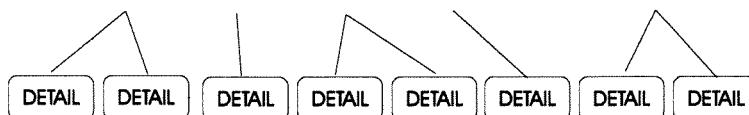


- a further breakdown of main points that are seldom overtly stated — may be interpreted as practice or as the only interpretation possible in some circumstances
- may or may not exist under the Objectives

- “ex: in “The Wizard of Oz”
  - Dorothy is frustrated by all the people she encounters in her daily life
  - Her dog’s life is threatened
  - She decides to run away



- a single proposition or series of propositions to be interpreted
- these are concepts/ideas, each Unit being a new concept or idea
- the level of analysis most commonly used in interpretation
- can contain both implicit and explicit information
- number of ideas that can be “chunked” into a Unit varies according to the interpreter
- “ex: in “The Wizard of Oz”
  - Dorothy is playing outside her farmhouse with her dog
  - She gets in trouble by falling in the pigpen
  - Her dog tries to bite the neighbor woman
  - The neighbor woman threatens the dog
  - Dorothy begins to wish she lived in a better place
  - Dorothy gets in trouble with her Aunt and Uncle
  - Dorothy decides to run away



- detailed information the speaker uses to make the Unit specific
- specific, non-changeable data: names, dates, numbers - these are interpreted literally
- ex: in “The Wizard of Oz”
  - Dorothy is playing with her dog, Toto outside their farm in Kansas
  - Dorothy tries walking on the fence around the pigpen and falls in
  - Auntie Em, in her mid 40s, scolds Dorothy



## **Advanced / Continuing Exercise with Gish Approach**

### **Semi-Simultaneous**

1. Predict Goal, Theme and Objectives of a text.
2. Watch the text, confirm or adjust the predictions.
3. Decide whether you are working at the Objective or Unit level. Start the tape. Interpret simultaneously only the Objective or Unit. Pause the tape whenever necessary to stop the incoming information in order to finish the interpretation. Don't discuss the meaning, process out loud or re-view any segment of the tape. Force yourself to render an interpretation that is grammatically accurate, message equivalent to the degree possible, with pauses between sentences and with each sentence congruent with the one before.

## **Simultaneous**

1. Predict Goal, Theme and Objectives of a text.
2. Watch the text, confirm or adjust the predictions.
3. Working at the Objective, Unit or Detail level, run the tape interpreting simultaneously. Do not stop the tape. Make corrections as necessary and move from Detail level up to Unit or Objective level when necessary. Again, challenge yourself to render an interpretation that is grammatically accurate, message equivalent to the degree possible, with pauses between sentences and with each sentence congruent with the one before.

## **Consecutive without previewing**

1. Predict Goal, Theme and Objectives of a text.
2. Run the tape "cold" and stop after a Unit. Determine if your predictions are accurate. See if you can identify the first Objective.
3. Interpret the Unit, if possible. Do not re-view the Unit.
4. Predict the next Unit.
5. Repeat steps 2-5.
6. Continue through the tape. If you go through six or seven Units without being able to identify an Objective or render an interpretation, the text may be too complicated or more work needs to be done identifying the Goal and Theme.

## **D. Clarification and Correction Techniques**

When interpreting between any two languages, the following statements apply:

- All interpreters make errors
- No interpreter can always catch 100% of a speaker's message

In other words, no matter how skilled and experienced you are and no matter what your level of certification, you will make errors. Therefore, it is paramount that interpreters develop skills for dealing with the inevitable errors and misunderstanding that will occur. The key to a successful interpretation is in how you approach these tasks.

Below you will find guidelines that have been developed by Sandra Gish to give interpreters a framework for building skills for clarification and correction. There are no secrets or tricks. The key is not to fall apart when a piece of information is missed and to make corrections in the least intrusive manner possible.

Keep in mind, too, that the Clarification Techniques only work when the interpreter is in a position to interact with the speaker. In situations where interaction is not possible, such as platform or testing situations, interpreters must rely more heavily on preparation, prediction and information processing to deliver the most accurate and complete interpretation possible. On the other hand, the Correction Techniques can be used even when it is not possible to stop the speaker.

## **Clarification Techniques**

**I**magine a situation where you have been interpreting, whether from sign-to-voice or voice-to-sign, where suddenly you realize you have missed something. Don't panic. There are ways to lessen the impact of the moment when you don't understand the source text. The mantra for the clarification process is this:

Get Ready  
Get In  
Get What You Need  
Get Out  
Get On

### **1. Get Ready**

- Interpreters/second language learners tend to miss specific kinds of information. These are:
  - Who: subject and object
  - Numbers
  - Where — especially if fingerspelled
  - Tense
  - Negation (when the source text is ASL)
  - Gender (when the source text is ASL)
  - Unit

When preparing for an assignment, be aware of these areas. Know which areas are weak for you and develop strategies to address those weaknesses. For example, have a team interpreter ready to feed numbers as they are fingerspelled or said. Another strategy may be to get a list of names of meeting participants and have that list in front of you as you interpret.

When you don't understand a portion of the source text, mentally identify which of the above elements you missed. You may miss pieces of information other than the ones listed above. You must know what kind of information you have missed before you ask for clarification. For example, suppose a hearing speaker is presenting a history lesson. You hear the source text message about a battle in a particular place. You are able to visualize everything except the name of the place. It's fairly easy in English for us to recognize that the missing element is "where." Knowing what we are missing, we can ask the speaker for the name of the place. Oddly, when the source text is ASL, we tend to panic and not use the visualized message to help us see what we are missing, but indeed, the process for identifying the missing element is the same.

## **2. Get In**

Once you know what you need, use a clear signal for getting the speaker's attention. For example:

- Gaining the speaker's attention without drawing too much audience focus; a raised finger, raised eyebrows and head tilt with a Deaf speaker, a slight pause in the spoken or signed interpretation, a quiet "excuse me" to a hearing speaker or just a hold on the interpretation until an appropriate time for interruption.
- Use a signal that is agreed upon by the speaker and the interpreter beforehand (this can be re-negotiated as the assignment goes on).
- Interrupting the speaker at linguistically/ functionally appropriate time - at the end of a unit or thought not the minute you miss something. You now know how a text is structured into Objectives, Sub-objectives and Units. Use that structure to guide you toward appropriate times to stop the speaker. You should be carrying a processed visualization of the message in your mind that will hold in your memory until you can ask for clarification.

- If necessary, continue interpreting what you can understand until you can ask for clarification (i.e. finish the thought at the Unit level and ask for the detail when you can, then incorporate the detail in the next interpretation).

### **3. Get What You Need**

- Do not call attention to yourself by interpreter process or interpreter noise (visual or auditory), e.g. "Huh?" "Wait a minute." "Uh..." "I'm sorry... I missed..." "I'm a beginner." "I always miss fingerspelling."
- Ask a clear question that lets the speaker know what you need:
  - "Who?"
  - "Where?"
  - "When?"
  - FINISH? WILL? or "You did or will do?"
  - "Ready or not ready?"
  - GIRL BOY WHICH? (to a signing speaker)
  - If you miss a complete Unit, describe the last unit or idea you did get and then: "From there on, what did you say?"

## **4. Get Out**

- Let the speaker know when you have the information that you need, i.e. a head nod or "thank you"

## **5. Get On**

- The goal is to get the focus back on the speaker and away from you.
- Use a gesture or comment that lets the speaker know you are ready for more information, i.e. nod, pick up hands, say or sign, "go ahead" "I got it" "OK."

Remember, no one gets everything. It's most important to recognize when you miss something, get what you need in the most efficient and least intrusive way possible, and move on.

## **Correction Techniques**

All interpreters make errors. Once an error is made and recognized, there are several ways to correct the error. The keys to correction are:

- Choose a correction technique that fits the situation
- Make a correction that
  - is clear to the audience
  - is efficiently accomplished
  - is appropriate to the situation and the setting
  - doesn't draw attention away from the speaker

Different correction techniques call less/more attention to the error and the correction. Which technique an interpreter chooses is based on the setting and on the consumers. The following techniques are listed in order from least intrusive to most intrusive. The most intrusive corrections usually are necessary for only the most extreme errors. Often interpreters leap to the most intrusive technique when using another, less intrusive, technique gets the job done in a way that calls less attention to the error.

### **1. Incorporation**

- Additional information (such as a detail that becomes clear or information fed by a team interpreter) is incorporated into the on-going interpretation. This is less a correction of an error than an addition of information that makes the interpretation more accurate and complete.

### **2. Change of vocal/sign inflection**

- Correction is made in tone of voice or by a slight shift in sign space or facial expression that makes it clear to the audience that it was the interpreter — not the speaker — who made the error and correction.

### ***3. Verbal/signed indicator of error and change of vocal/sign inflection***

- Use of "excuse me," WRONG-ME, or a negation head-shake.
- Correction is made in tone of voice or by a slight shift in sign space or facial expression that makes it clear to the audience that it was the interpreter — not the speaker — who made the error and correction.

### ***4. Verbal/signed indicator of error, a negation of what was said, a correction and a change of vocal/sign inflection***

- Use of "excuse me," WRONG-ME, "That was an interpreter error," a negation head-shake and an overt negation of the incorrect information to clearly indicate the error, e.g. "Excuse me, that was an interpreter error. It wasn't his daughter, it was his son."
- The interpreter may need the speaker to pause in order to negate and then correct the information.
- The correction may be made in the third person by a change in vocal/facial expression that indicates the correct information and that the correction is the interpreter's not the speaker's.

## ***5. Stopping the interpretation, backing up and correcting a portion of the presentation***

- Calls great attention to the error and the correction.
- Is necessary for a commitment to accurate interpretation.

## ***6. Correction at a later date***

- Interpreter indicates to clients that a previous interpretation was not correct/clear/etc. and that a correction is needed.
- Generally possible only for on-going interpreting assignments.
- May be necessary even though you are no longer returning to that interpreting situation.

Once a correction is made, it is important to "get on with it." The goal is to get focus back on the speaker and away from the interpreter. Sometimes it is necessary to let the speaker know that you are ready for more information with a head nod, "go ahead," or a gesture.

All interpreters make errors. If they are managed in a way that is efficient and professional, consumers learn to respect the process and complexity of the task rather than doubt the competency of the interpreter.

## ***E. Time Management Techniques***

**I**nterpreters sometimes feel overwhelmed with incoming information. The Gish Approach is a way to manage the overall message. Additionally, the following techniques are ways to manage the process more effectively. Managing your time during the process will aid in making the interpretation more accurate and complete. Managing the process happens before, during and after the actual interpretation.

### **Before**

**Preparation will help in several ways:**

- It saves time in the comprehension and composition stages of the process.
- It allows the interpreter to negotiate with the speaker, consumer and teammate on strategies to manage the flow of the interaction.
- It helps the interpreter to mentally focus on the task.

**Preparation breaks down into the following areas:**

#### **Preparation with topic**

- Reading just an outline or agenda can give the interpreter the framework of the speaker, saving time used in prediction and correction.
- In many settings, interpreters may have access to almost all the content of their interpreting assignment before it begins. When possible, read textbooks, handouts, overheads, minutes and agendas before beginning an assignment.
- Use the strategies outlined in the “Vocabulary” module to prepare.

### Preparation with speaker

- Arrange the pace of the speaker beforehand.  
Options may be:
  - Work consecutively (most easily done in one-on-one interactions).
  - Have the speaker pause intermittently (most easily done with a prepared lecture of some kind.) Ask the speaker to take pauses at the end of an idea, point or topic.
- Arrange a signal that can be used to let the speaker know that the interpreter needs time to finish the process and interpretation of an idea.
- When discussing pace with the speaker, be careful about using the words: "lag" time or "BEHIND CATCH UP." Using these terms/sign glosses can give the false impression that you are merely "behind" when actually you need time to process, comprehend, represent, compose and deliver the message. The more clearly you define why you need time, the more a speaker will actually value the time you take to process. Examples of how to present this idea are as follows:
  - "There are a lot of idioms in this story that don't translate into ASL easily. It may take me a few moments to finish the interpretation."
  - "When you point to indicate a group, I have to say the full name of the group in English, therefore it may take me a few moments to finish the interpretation. Can you keep an eye out for me and I will let you know if I need time?"
  - "This topic is one that is fairly new to me. I feel I understand it well enough to begin the interpreting process, however, there may be times when I'll need to ask you to clarify an idea so that I can then interpret it accurately."

### **Preparation with self**

- Give yourself permission to take time with the interpretation.
- Remember that you are in control of the interpreting process. You have the ability to ask for what is necessary to make the most complete and accurate interpretation possible.
- Arrange a team interpreter if the situation requires an extra person to handle the process, especially helpful in more formal presentations where it is difficult to stop the dialogue or speaker.

### **During**

#### **Use signals to stop/start the speaker**

- Hand up or finger up or "just a second" (signals need to be agreed on beforehand).
- Indicate that you are ready to continue the interpretation with a gesture, head nod or verbal comment.

#### **Use Gish Approach to manage the process**

- If you cannot stop the speaker, one strategy is to move to the Unit level for a stretch of time and back to Detail level when able. Remember to keep the interpretation grammatically accurate, message equivalent and congruent with the appropriate pauses and transition markers for the target language. A clear, grammatically correct statement of meaning is better than a jumble of signs and words with no connection or context.

### Use correction/clarification techniques

#### Rely on a team interpreter to:

- Handle papers that need to be referenced.
- Feed Details or Units that are missed.
- Stop the speaker if you are unable because you are in the midst of the interpretation (this is negotiated before the assignment begins).
- Interpret a section of the discourse that you missed (this is negotiated before the assignment begins).

### Negotiate and Renegotiate

- If the process is not working, renegotiate with the speaker during a break or when moving into a new activity.
- Renegotiate with the consumer. See if there are other ways to manage the information. Can the consumer read from a handout or overhead at the same time the speaker does instead of the interpreter attempting to keep up with a speaker?
- Renegotiate with a team interpreter to help manage the process.

## **After**

### Identify problems

- Identify areas where it felt like more time was needed to make a complete interpretation. Problem-solve possible solutions. For example, if the problem was that the source message was very technical and difficult to comprehend, preparation and study on the topic before the next presentation might be a solution.
- Talk with the speaker and consumer to determine if there are other strategies for next time.
- Talk with colleagues about their strategies for the same issues.

## **F. Interaction Guidelines**

*(The information in this section is based on materials originally developed by Sandra Gish in 1986-1994. The adaptation of materials, written narratives and integration of ideas was done with input and revision by S. Gish and members of the MRID project grant team.)*

The following guidelines help an interpreter process an interpretation after it has happened. This analysis can be done with colleagues, or, interpreters can use the questions provided to guide themselves through the process. The entire process is based on the theory that outside feedback on what one should or should not do ("don't use that sign for that") is not as helpful as an interpreter's self-discovery of their process. When interpreters are in control of their interpretations, they are also able to explore their own cognitive processes. Interpreters can learn to use their interpretations to understand the working processes of their minds by examining the factors that influenced an interpretation. Using these guidelines, you may discover patterns in thinking and in production. You may discover not only where a breakdown in interpretation occurs, but more importantly, why it occurs. When interpreters identify the process and product factors that drive effective and ineffective interpretations, they are ready to design their own strategies for improvement. Using these guidelines may seem awkward at first. However, the reward of this process is an increased awareness of what the real areas of strength and weakness are for each interpreter, leading to a greater control of the interpreting process.

## ***Interaction Guidelines***

### **Some Notes on Guided Self Analysis**

Working through guided self analysis is a hard task; following an interpreter's process, and formulating questions that lead the interpreter to further self analysis, is challenging.

1. Ask questions that will encourage your colleague to share her/his perspective. Listen.
2. Ask questions that encourage self-analysis and critical thinking on the part of your colleague. Listen.
3. Based upon your colleague's perceptions, ask follow-up questions that lead your colleague toward self-analysis and self-discovery. Listen.
4. Sample questions:
  - "What do you think? What happened?"
  - "Was there a section that went particularly well? What was happening during that section?"
  - "Was there a section that didn't go well? What was happening during that section?"
  - "When did you realize that was happening?"
  - "What influenced you to do that? What were you thinking? What factors led you to that decision?"

- “Is that a pattern for you? Does that usually happen? What do you usually do when that happens?”
- “I didn’t understand the section about \_\_\_\_\_. What was happening during that section?”
- “The section about \_\_\_\_\_ was really clear. What was happening during that section?”
- “If you did this again, what would you do differently?”

5. Allow your colleague’s comments to guide your questions/responses while you model more sophisticated questioning and comments (the following are samples; questions will depend upon the interpreter with whom you’re working):

I: The fingerspelling felt awkward in that section.

M: What was it about that section that influenced the fingerspelling?

I: The pace of the speaker was too fast.

M: Were you conscious of reacting to the speaker’s pace?

I: I just knew that I had to keep up.

M: Does it often happened that you feel you have to keep up?

I: Not usually, but today I really did.

M: So it’s not usually a problem for you, but it was today. What happened to your interpretation today in that section where you were trying to keep up with the speaker’s pace?

6. Any answer/response from the interpreter is a "right" one. Avoid asking questions for which **you** have a "correct" answer.

- follow the interpreter's issues, not your own
- it is significant/meaningful/priority for the interpreter
- honest self analysis allows the interpreter to claim the process, discover new insights her/himself (self reliance and responsibility)
- attention to one aspect/task of interpreting may positively affect another aspect (including the one that you noticed or would like to work on)
- your priority issue will probably re-surface later
- if you have direct feedback, or want to share information with your colleague, share it in the form of a statement. However, make sure that the information that you share is related to your colleague's issues and grounded in your colleague's perspective.
- *Remember: this process is not about what you know, but about listening to, and being honestly interested in, what your colleague knows and/or discovers about her/his interpreting process.*

7. Know when to stop: when your colleague has identified issues to satisfaction, has worked to capacity, or cannot continue.

8. Practice with your colleagues and/or in groups. Honestly acknowledge that this is a learning process and that everyone is learning a new way of discussing interpretation.

9. Enjoy the feeling of self-analysis and the discoveries you will make.

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A a B b C c D d E e F f G g H h I i J j K k L l M m N n

Post - Test

## ***VI. Post-Test and Answer Key***

### **Post-Test**

*Re-take the pre-test without checking the answer key. Compare your Pre and Post Test answers. Look at the answer key for the True / False answers and definitions.*

### **Answer Key**

#### *A. True and False Answers:*

1. F, 2. F, 3. T, 4. F, 5. F, 6. F, 7. T, 8. T, 9. F.

#### *B. Definitions:*

source language:

the language the interpreter interprets from

target language:

the language the interpreter interprets into

consecutive interpreting:	interpreting in which the interpreter produces the target language text after the speaker has uttered a sentence or a few sentences, usually constituting one turn in the conversation or one point in the discourse
simultaneous interpreting:	the interpretation is given in the target language at the same time as the source language is being delivered
A language:	the interpreter's mother tongue
B language:	although not the interpreter's mother tongue, this is a language of which s/he has excellent command
translation:	converting a message a written or videotaped message in one language to a written or videotaped message in another language (written English to ASL on video; ASL presentation on video to written English form; written Spanish to written English, etc.)
interpretation:	converting the meaning of a message in one spoken or signed language to another
context:	what has come before this particular text, what has been said so far

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chunking:	chunking is a process which involves dividing a message into meaningful units
clozure:	using anticipatory strategies and general knowledge to fill in "gaps" and make sense of the whole message
paraphrasing:	restating or rephrasing a given sentence or text; keeping the meaning but changing the words
prediction:	making informed judgments about what is to occur based on knowledge of the world, of language and culture, and of the subject matter
decalage:	decalage refers to the processing time interpreters use in order to sufficiently understand the message before interpreting

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