Defining Interpretation and Transliteration

WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

Many candidates for the Certificate of Interpretation (CI) performance examination have requested guidance for understanding what the target production of the English-to-sign portion of the test should look like. RID raters have reviewed the minimum standard, and performances of passing and failing candidates, and have agreed upon the following description of "interpretation" as applied to the RID Certificate of Interpretation Examination. Three categories of variables have been defined: ASL Grammar and Vocabulary, Processing, and Mouth Movement Patterns.

ASL Grammar and Vocabulary (English to ASL Interpreting)

- Use of appropriate ASL grammar (use of space for characterization, subject-object agreement and verb inflections; facial grammatical forms for questions, topics, commands, etc.).
- Semantically correct sign choices used appropriately for ASL syntax.
- Limited amounts of "initialization" are acceptable but only to the extent used by deaf adults.

Processing

- The minimum acceptable level of processing is at the phrasal to sentential levels. Word-for-word processing will not pass the certification examination.
- Some syntactic influences of the original text may appear in the interpretation, but only so long as the interpretation remains clear and makes "visual sense."

Mouth Movement Patterns

- Mouth patterns should reflect appropriate adult ASL usage.
- Mouth movements which only represent exact English word order will not pas the test.

Overriding all of these details is the requirement that the target message resulting from the interpretation process remains true and accurate with regard to the source test. There should be no substitutions (missing a concept from the original and replacing it with a different concept) and no significant omissions (all of the main points and nearly all of the supporting details) of the source test should be reflected in the target test.

Working into Spoken English

For the Certificate of Interpretation performance examination, candidates should create a grammatically correct and coherent English text which remains true and accurate with regard to the source text. There should be no substitutions. Extended periods of silence (processing time) are acceptable so long as there are no significant omissions.

WHAT IS TRANSLITERATION?

Many candidates for the RID Certificate of Transliteration (CT) examination have requested guidance in an effort to understand the goal of the English-to-sign portion of the exam. Raters have reviewed the minimum standard in addition to performances of passing and failing candidates, and have agreed upon the following description of rating criteria for the current performance evaluation for the Certificate of Transliteration.

The three broad categories of variables that raters evaluate have been described: Grammar and Vocabulary, Processing, and Mouth Movement Patterns.

Grammar and Vocabulary

- Use of space for role taking (characterization).
- Use of space for subject-object agreement and verb inflections.
- Conceptually correct sign choices (based on meaning rather than form).
- Some amount of "initialization" but only to the extent that initialization is used by deaf adults (not to the extent of Manual English Codes).
- A successful candidate will produce English which is generally grammatically correct, clearly enunciated, with few annoying habits (such as "um," "er," "you know").

Processing

- Lexical to Phrasal level of processing, e.g., ranges from "word meaning for word meaning" to "more than words, less than sentences."
- Some restructuring or paraphrasing for clearer conveyance of meaning.
- Some additions of ASL signs which enhance the clarity of the visual message (modals such as CAN, classifier constructions, indexing, and listing structures).
- Detailed English morphology (e.g., manual English coding of "ing," "ed," and the copula) which is conveyed on the mouth but not with manual signs.

Mouth Movement Patterns

- Cohesive English sentences are visibly presented on the lips, either as exact words from the original text or as English paraphrasing of the original text.

Finally, overriding all of the above details is the requirement that the target message resulting from the transliteration process remains true and accurate with regard to the source text. There should be no substitutions (missing a concept from the original and replacing it with a different concept) and no significant omissions (all of the main points and nearly all of the supporting details of the source text should be reflected in the target text). The spoken English message will be true to the original signed message with relatively few omissions, substitutions, or other errors.

In order to gain further guidance, the RID raters recommend that candidates for testing read Elizabeth Winston's article (1989) "Transliteration: What's the Message?" The description of transliteration in this article is determined to be an accurate description of the performance of a successful candidate for the Certificate of Transliteration performance examination.

Winston, E. 1989. Transliteration: What's the message? Found in, "The Sociolinguistics of the Deaf Community." C. Lucas. Ed. San Diego, CA: Academic Press. Available through Gallaudet University Bookstore. ∎