PERFORMANCE-BASED SKILLS ENHANCEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR INTERPRETERS

PRESENTED BY:

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Formerly a medical trauma center interpreter services Supervisor & Trainer, and a National Director of Interpreter Quality for a language services provider, she now Directs operations at Lobo Language Access.

Since 2013, Eliana has helped create and host over 30 national webinars on effective medical interpreter training via the NCIHC’s “Home for Trainers” webinar workgroup.

Currently serving as a Commissioner with the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI), and, as a Board member to the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), Eliana was recently elected to the position of Chair, for the Standards and Training Committee of the NCIHC.
This training is for:

- Experienced Interpreters

as well as

- Novice Interpreters
What is the standard?


- The very first standard is **ACCURACY**, and the first two criteria determining accuracy are:
  - The interpreter renders all messages accurately and completely, without adding, omitting, or substituting
  - The interpreter replicates the register, style, and tone of the speaker
What kinds of errors occur most often?

- Adding something that wasn’t present in the original
- Leaving something out from the original utterance
- Distorting the meaning/changing the meaning
- Summarizing
- Editorializing
How do I assess my skills?

We are quite often, our own harshest critics. In order to choose the best exercises to maximize improvement within our skill set, we need to take a good hard look at how we are doing the job in the present moment.

What’s the best way to get an accurate snapshot of our current level of accuracy, fluency and delivery?
Record Yourself!

Where can I find quality training materials?

• For FREE Skill Drills, organized by topic, please visit Eliana Lobo’s InterpreterTrainer page on YouTube:
  • [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCISXnB8-0NiJQ/playlists?view=1&shelf_id=0&sort=dd](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCISXnB8-0NiJQ/playlists?view=1&shelf_id=0&sort=dd)

• For concepts and great training resources, again for FREE, visit NCIHC’s webinar landing page
  • [http://www.ncihc.org/home-for-trainers](http://www.ncihc.org/home-for-trainers)

• For Spanish /English interpreters
  • [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChOp3asnuNBYctTqMp3Bev/videos?app=desktop](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChOp3asnuNBYctTqMp3Bev/videos?app=desktop)
How do I improve my skills?
Listen to recordings of yourself and analyze them

○ Once you have assembled a handful of self recordings (a minimum of six, although ten to twelve would be better), you can begin to track your errors and see if any noticeable patterns emerge.

○ Error types will determine the types of exercises you will need to chose to work with in order to shift your performance to a higher standard.
What do I listen for?  
(when I listen to my recordings)

**Speed**

- Can I keep up with the speaker’s flow?
  - In English?
  - In the language I interpret for?

**Fluidity**

- Am I struggling to find equivalent words and expressions?

**Pronunciation**

- Can the provider understand me well?
- Can I understand the patient, even if they are speaking the target language different than what I’m used to?

**Accuracy**

- Have I used the best equivalents, included everything without omitting anything?
Self-Assessment: What are the steps?

STEP 1
Record your self shadowing an English speaker, then record your self shadowing content in your own language

◦ Can you keep up with the speaker?
  ◦ If yes, proceed to next section
  ◦ If no, you need to practice shadowing FIRST!
Free phone apps: so you can record yourself

These voice recording apps for smart phones also allow you to alter the speed of the recording. You should know what speed is too fast for you to be able to render accurately sounds like to better manage the flow upfront.

**iPhone**

- Best voice recording apps for iPhone and iPad - iDownloadBlog
- Audio Speed Changer Free on the App Store - iTunes - Apple

**Android**

- How to Change the Speed of Audio Playback With these 4 Android Apps
- Speed Changer - Android Apps on Google Play
Step 2
ALWAYS Record Yourself When Doing Drills

◦ Record yourself when you practice your interpreting
  ◦ Play it back and note any mistakes in your delivery

◦ Common aspects of performance where interpreters may need to improve are often
  ◦ Speed
  ◦ Accuracy
  ◦ Memory

◦ With continued practice, this exercise of recording yourself, and listening to the playback with a critical ear will strengthen your confidence when interpreting, as you will have been able to note improvements over time
How Do I Self-Assess My Recording?

◦ Choose a recording to shadow or interpret
  ◦ Pick something (a YouTube video for example), that you can replay as often as you wish, so you can compare your rendering into the second language with the original recording

◦ Listen closely to your rendering. Note any instances of the following error types by making a tick mark for each one of these
  ◦ Additions
  ◦ Deletions/omissions
  ◦ Incorrect word used
Step 3
Identifying Your ERRORS, by Type

Try and pinpoint your most frequently occurring error types

- Identify all additions and omissions
- For the final category of incorrect, count as an error, any error that wasn’t an addition or omission
- Try and determine the source of your error’s sub-type
  - False cognate?
  - Lack of specific vocabulary?
  - Lack of target language equivalent?
  - Couldn’t keep up?
    - Due to speed?
    - Due to memory?
Now that You’ve Recorded Yourself Five Times...
(ten would be better)

Track your errors during review and **record the number for each error type along with the date**

◦ Score your recordings at the end of each practice session

◦ Keep a running tally on excel or word and add to it every week
  ◦ Choose skill drills to strengthen weak areas (categories with the most tick marks) of your performance
  ◦ There is nothing like the feeling you get when you see your numbers improving over time
I don’t always analyze data

But when I do, I prefer a lot of it
## Sample Tracking Table for Your Recordings of Yourself

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Additions</th>
<th>Omissions</th>
<th>Wrong Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1/19</td>
<td>☑️☑️☑️☑️☑️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☑️☑️☐️☐️</td>
<td>Gun instead of rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5/19</td>
<td>☑️☐️☐️☐️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☐️☐️☐️☐️</td>
<td>Vehicle instead of van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9/19</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☒️</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☒️</td>
<td>Him instead of her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/19</td>
<td>☑️☐️☐️☐️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☐️</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/14/19</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☐️☐️</td>
<td>Nurse instead of Nurse Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/19</td>
<td>☑️☐️☐️☐️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☐️</td>
<td>Skull instead of cranium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21/19</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☒️☐️</td>
<td>Headache instead of migraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/19</td>
<td>☑️☒️☐️☐️☐️</td>
<td>☑️☒️☒️☐️☐️</td>
<td>Constipated instead of congested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 4
Now that I know which areas I need to improve, what do I do? How do I do that?

- If most of your errors fall within additions
  - You need to work with conversion exercises
- If most of your errors fall within deletions
  - You need to work with listening exercises
- If most of your errors fall within omissions
  - You need to work with listening and speed exercises
- If most of your errors fall within incorrect or wrong conversion
  - Work with exercises that address the error type
Exercises to Improve Your Conversion Skills

Staying within the same language:

- Practice re-stating a simple sentence using different words. Avoid using the words used in the first sentence, (as much as possible) while retaining the same meaning

- For example-
  - I was late to work this morning because of a flat tire.
  - The interpreter was delayed at the beginning of the day, due to a wheel puncture on her vehicle.

- Practice re-stating simple sentences in differing registers (academic, medical, plain language and slang)

  Repeat the two exercise above, converting from English to your target language and back again
Exercises to Improve Your Listening Skills

◦ Practice listening to detailed statements while taking notes
  ◦ http://webtv.un.org

◦ Listen to recordings of speakers of all ages, levels of education and regions for your target language
  ◦ www.YouTube.com

◦ Practice listening to spoken speech at different rates of speed
  ◦ Let’s try one right now!
  ◦ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hC1SXnB8-ONihJQ
SHADOWING at 1.5 SPEED
What Did I Notice About Myself?

◦ Was it too fast for me?
  ◦ Did I hear and understand everything?
  ◦ Was I able to reproduce the same words?
  ◦ Did I get stressed? Anxious?

◦ How long did I last before I was no longer able to keep up?
  ◦ 5 seconds?
  ◦ 15 seconds?
  ◦ 30 seconds?
SHADOWING at 1.0, or NORMAL SPEED
How Different Did THAT Feel??

- How did it FEEL this time?
  - Could I keep up?
  - Was I able to reproduce the same words and shadow?
  - Did it even feel too slow?

- Was I able to keep up with the speaker throughout the entire announcement?
Let’s Do One More!

- Track how it FEELS this time
  - Could I keep up?
  - Was I able to reproduce the same words and shadow?
  - Did it even feel too slow?

- Was I able to keep up with the speaker throughout the entire announcement?
SHADOWING
at 1.5 SPEED
SHADOWING at 1.0, or NORMAL SPEED
Exercises to enhance your interpreting speed

Interpret using recordings played at different speeds, preferably faster. Practicing shadowing and then interpreting, at faster speeds makes normal speed feel much, much, easier!

◦ Not only will this help you interpret for fast speakers,
◦ It will help you immediately recognize what “too fast for me to interpret accurately” sounds like, so you can manage the flow
  • You may ask the speaker to slow down by saying, “The interpreter asks you to please slow down so that I may capture everything without omitting anything.”
  • You can hold up your hand palm facing the speaker
  • You may ask for a pause to interpret what has been said

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCISXnB8-ONihJQ
Exercises for Memory, Focus & Attention

- Practice listening to detailed statements while taking notes
  - [http://webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org)
- Practice observing detail with memory games
  - Online games via Brain Training Games at
    - [http://www.lumosity.com](http://www.lumosity.com)
- Practice Focus and Attention with
  - Listening to 2 things at the same time and then writing down a detailed summary about each scenario
    - [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCtSb8-ONihJQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCtSb8-ONihJQ)
  - Online games via Games for the Brain
    - [http://www.gamesforthebrain.com](http://www.gamesforthebrain.com)
Incorporate Daily Practice into Your Routine

- Practice when stuck in traffic
  - Find a talk radio station and shadow the conversation
  - Find a talk radio stations and interpret the conversation
    - On an interesting note, interpreting points of view you strongly disagree with, is harder than interpreting regular conversation

- Practice while waiting for public transportation
  - Use your smartphone to access YouTube or another site, and practice shadowing or interpreting

- Practice during your commute on the bus or train
  - Remember not to talk out loud on the bus or train!
  - You can whisper to yourself or just practice mentally
More Ways to Incorporate Practice into Your Day

- While wearing your ear phones, practice interpreting while doing a physical activity
  - While sweeping or vacuuming
  - While raking or mowing
  - While doing yoga or stretches
  - While bouncing a ball
  - While standing on one foot
    - On an interesting note, interpreting while doing a physical activity mimics interpreting under stress, i.e., part of your mind is focused on something else, so it is a way to raise the degree of difficulty

- Practice while copying text in one language, while you listen to audio in another language and interpret
  - Again, interpreting while doing a physical activity mimics interpreting under stress, and in this case, you are stressing your intellectual capacity and as a result, increasing the degree of difficulty
Daily Practice

◦ Daily practice doesn’t have to be onerous. You can find moments to slip in interpreting practice as you take care of daily chores, while walking the dog, while driving, while exercising, while cleaning.

◦ Finding these moments consistently throughout the week, means you are always practicing and keeping your skills sharp and ready to go.
Find a Recording of a Famous Speech and Record YOURSELF as You Interpret It

Print the Speech

◦ Record your interpretation of the speech, while listening to it on headphones

◦ Check your interpretation as you replay it, against the original speech for accuracy and completeness
More Apps for Your Cell Phone

Captioning Conversations with Live Transcribe

https://www.android.com/accessibility/live-transcribe

• Live Transcribe is available in over 70 languages and dialects
• Enables two-way conversation via a type-back keyboard for users who can’t or don’t want to speak
• Connects with external microphones to improve transcription accuracy
The Importance of the Pre-Session

The Pre-Session is a great place to establish the hand signal or method you will use to interrupt the flow so as to ensure accuracy.

Even with providers who do not customarily use a Pre-Session, you can establish many things in just three short sentences:

1. “Hi, I’m Eliana, your Portuguese-English interpreter” (Greeting, Introduction and confirmation of Language)
2. “I encourage you to speak directly to each other in first person. Know that I will interpret everything said and keep it confidential” (1st person, all utterances will be interpreted, and a reminder of confidentiality/HIPAA)
3. “This is the hand signal I will use if I need clarification” (How you as the interpreter, will interrupt the flow if needed)
The Importance of the Pre-Session

- Until you’ve reached your performance stretch goals, it is important to be able to manage expectations on both sides, and the pre-session helps establish boundaries and constraints.
  - It’s also good customer service!

- It is important that the interpreter feels comfortable managing the flow of the encounter
  - establishing that pre-arranged signal or word to do so upfront is always beneficial

- Now that you know what too fast or too long for YOU sounds like, you can step in before you exceed your limits with the help of that pre-arranged signal or word
I have a page on YouTube called, **InterpreterTrainer**:  
- [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCISXnB8-ONihJQ/playlists?view_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJc3-Nq6hCISXnB8-ONihJQ/playlists?view_as=subscriber)
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Used to create this training

• How the human brain works during simultaneous interpretation

• Methods for Practicing Simultaneous Interpreting
  • http://translationexcellence.com/methods-practicing-simultaneous-interpretation
Where Else Can I Find Free Practice Material?

Clinic bulletin boards

Look for written materials in different areas within the clinic or hospital, sometimes you can find them on the back of the exam room door!
Where Else Can I Find Free Practice Material?

Clinic Bulletin Boards & Resource Areas

Public health clinics are a great, and often overlooked resource. Texts covering a wide range of subjects, and often in several languages, are FREE to the public!
Questions?

Feel free to contact me at:

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