

Maryland Interpreter



The Maryland Court Interpreter Program is committed to providing the Maryland Judiciary with highly qualified and trained interpreters to ensure equal access to justice to all limited English proficiency individuals who seek it.

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Maryland Court Interpreter Program 2009

The Maryland Court Interpreter Program has had yet another productive and busy year. Here are some of the initiatives we have accomplished in 2009:

- ◇ We administered four introductory court interpreter workshops with 140 participants in attendance.
- ◇ We administered 164 written tests. The written test is the second requirement for candidates after attending the introductory workshop.
- ◇ The English proficiency interview was added to the interpreter eligibility process.
- ◇ Thirty-four 'eligible' interpreters in various languages were added to the Court Interpreter Registry in the spring of 2009.
- ◇ Interpreter certification exams were administered in Spanish, Arabic, French, Haitian-Creole, and Korean. Two Spanish interpreters received their certifications. Additional candidates are expected to become 'certified' or 'eligible' by the end of the year.
- ◇ An 8-session skills building workshop for Spanish interpreters was held in the fall 2008 and spring 2009. Eighteen candidates completed the workshop and received a Certificate of Attendance.
- ◇ We redesigned our website and it now includes additional information on court interpreter training and certification. Feel free to browse our website at: <http://mdcourts.gov/interpreter>
- ◇ The Program staff conducted site visits to various courthouses statewide to learn about the specifics of their interpreter demand and use.

News and Announcements

Spring 2010 Workshops and Testing Dates

- 1-Day Introductory Workshop** - March 20 and 21, 2010
- Written Exam (language neutral)** - April 12 through 15, 2010
- Language Proficiency Interviews** - May, 2010
- 4-Day Skills Building Workshop for Mandarin and Russian Interpreters** - Spring 2010

Visit our site at www.mdcourts.gov/interpreter/ for more information and application

Use of Idiomatic Expressions in the Courtroom

...presents a challenge even for seasoned interpreters because of the abundance of idiomatic expressions in most languages and their unpredictability in spoken speech. An unfamiliar idiomatic expression can throw an interpreter off at any time during a perfectly smooth interpretation, since their meaning cannot be easily deciphered from the actual word components of the phrase. There is nothing more awkward than an interpreter intervening in the middle of an attorney's forceful closing argument just to inquire what he or she meant when they

said: "What goes around, comes around, ladies and gentlemen of the jury."

So, let's grab the tiger by the tail and stay cool as a cucumber when faced with an idiomatic expression in the courtroom. Interpreters **must** develop a large repertoire of English idiomatic expressions and their equivalents in the foreign language. Familiarizing themselves with as many idioms as possible will allow court interpreters to come up with automatic equivalents for the majority of commonly used idioms. Sometimes it is

impossible to find an equivalent for certain culturally-bound idioms. "Hit a home run", based on the literal meaning of the "home run" in baseball may not have an equivalent in those countries unfamiliar with baseball. However, the meaning of this particular idiom is universal: "To succeed at the endeavor".

Interpreters should simply render the meaning of this idiom rather than desperately trying to find an equivalent in their foreign languages which may not even exist.

Sight Translation

Sight translation is the oral rendition of a written text. It requires such skills as fast reading, reading comprehension, textual analysis, and verbal skills. For beginners, sight translation serves as an exercise for getting started in acquiring techniques of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting.

It is an excellent tool for students to learn to react quickly and improve their verbal skills. In this article, we will focus on two major challenges encountered by interpreters when performing sight translation in court:

One of the problems that can easily slow down even a seasoned interpreter during

sight translation is the presence of complex sentence structures. Here are a few tips on how to tackle this challenge:

- Read the whole sentence at least twice. First, analyze the text and determine its style and structure. Your next task is to break the complex sentence into smaller units and determine their grammatical and logical connection with each other. What is the meaning of this sentence?
- Once you understand the meaning of the sentence, examine details such as abbreviations, technical words, or in case of handwritten texts, illegible parts. If faced with an unknown

word, request the Court's permission to look it up in the dictionary.

- Depending on the complexity of the text, the above process may take from a few seconds to several minutes. Upon the initial examination, you should be able to determine whether the text will require extra time to assess the meaning and research unknown words.
- If needed, request the Court's permission to allow extra time to prepare before you begin sight translation. You are obligated to recuse yourself should you realize that the document is beyond your expertise.

Speak Legalese!

In addition to the requirement of being fluent in English and at least one foreign language, court interpreters must be able to understand and interpret another language which has been ruling in the American courtrooms for decades: Legalese.

Legalese is the specialized language of the legal profession and court interpreters are expected to understand and interpret it correctly. Formal spoken legalese closely resembles written legal language and is the most difficult to interpret. Try to understand the following sentence (remember, you must understand the meaning in order to be able to interpret correctly):

Therefore, no error, omission or inaccuracy in Exhibits A or B creates any legal right in either spouse or gives rise to

any legal remedy including, but not limited to, challenging the validity of enforceability of this Agreement. (source: *Anonymous*)

In plain English, the above paragraph says that neither party can rely on Exhibits A or B. It is the convoluted legal language that makes this simple idea sound so difficult to comprehend.

“The history of legal language parallels the history of England, and a variety of powerful historical and cultural forces as well as linguistic elements have left their imprint.”¹ The actual term “legalese” came into use around the turn of the century. Supposedly, lawyers created this cryptic legal language to confuse and preclude ordinary laymen from understanding legal procedures on their own, which, in return, guaranteed lawyers their profession and

place in the court. Another reason for invention of Legalese is to ensure complete coverage of all possible contingencies that usually accompany legal contracts. As redundant as it may seem, Legalese is also noted for its precision and brevity.

So, how can you “learn” Legalese? Start by translating legal forms commonly used in the Maryland courts. It will help you to build your legal vocabulary and understand the logic and style of easy legal texts intended for the public. Next, move on to sight translation of more complex legal speeches, such as Jury Instructions. Keep practicing until you are able to deliver a smooth rendition of the legal text from English into the foreign language while fully preserving the meaning and register.

¹ Gonzalez, Rosanne D, Victoria F. Vásquez and Holly Mikkelsen *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1991.

Appearances Do Count

You may be discussing the weather. You may be giving directions. Maybe you are asking for a mint! However, if the person you



are conversing with happens to be the litigant, witness, or the attorney in the case you are interpreting, it may be considered an impropriety.

The mere appearance of the

court interpreter conversing with a party in a case is troubling to the court.

You may be discussing your native country's

latest elections, but as far as an observer is concerned, you could be discussing the merits of the litigant's case or other sensitive matters. **Canon 3** of the Maryland Code of Conduct for

Court Interpreters mandates that interpreters must avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.

The staff at the Court Interpreter Program recommend that court interpreters politely excuse themselves when approached by parties in the case by indicating that, as court interpreters, they are precluded from conversing with the parties during or upon completion of the official court interpretation.

Newly 'Certified' and 'Eligible' Interpreters in 2009

The Court Interpreter Program would like to welcome newly 'Certified' and 'Eligible' interpreters who became listed in the Court Interpreter Registry in 2009:

Certified Interpreters:

Maria E. Avellaneda - Spanish

Herbert Amos Recinos - Spanish

Eligible Interpreters *(in alphabetical order)*:

Abdeljabbar, Abdelfattah - Arabic

Abeh, Fontengwan - French

Aghalarov, Samid - Azeri, Russian

Alizadeh, Sarah - Farsi

Arnold, John - Mandarin

Biedermariam, Amanuel - Amharic, Tigrigna

Brannigan, Zeljka - Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian

Chouili, Abdelmajid - Arabic

Cruz, Jamie - Spanish

Diker, Vedat - Turkish

Doan, Kirstin - Vietnamese

Donnelly, David - Russian

Duroska-Murray, Regine - French, Haitian-Creole

Ghisas, Nicoleta - Romanian, Italian

Herodier, Patricia - Spanish

Kin, Mya Mya - Burmese

Kharazian, Armen - Armenian, Russian

King, Tiffany - Italian

Lee (Tom) Wei - Mandarin

Madiesse-Nguela, Adelaide - French

Melakehiwot, Dinberu - Amharic

Morgia, Milicent - Tagalog, Cebuano

Naim, Rachid - Arabic, French

Olm, Lily - French

Perucchi, Raquel - Portuguese

Saphilom, Keolattana - Laotian

Slade, Thereza - Portuguese

Sligar, Juliette - French

Souto, Carlos - Portuguese

Tirana, Akil - Albanian, Italian

Wasim, Muhammad - Punjabi and Urdu

Wright, Tatiana - Spanish

Zerihun, Melakeselam - Amharic, Oromo

Newsletter

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You can find our newsletter at:

<http://mdcourts.gov/interpreter/>