EXERCISES TO DEVELOP AND TO IMPROVE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING SKILLS

The suggested exercises listed here are based an experiences gained in the training of both conference and court interpreters. Since the various modes of interpretation involve many of the same mental tasks, the exercises recommended in the sight translation and consecutive interpretation sections will contribute to the development of simultaneous interpreting (SI) skills as well. The exercises in the sight translation section that are designed to develop analytical techniques are particularly applicable to SI, as are the memory building exercises outlined in the consecutive section.

The following exercises, designed specifically to build the skills involved in SI, are divided into those that emphasize dual-tasking and those that emphasize input analysis. These exercises should be done in all of the interpreter's working languages, beginning with his native, or more dominant, language. They should be practiced daily, for about a half hour at a time, as SI skills must be acquired over time to allow for maximum routinization.

Dual-Tasking Exercises

1. Have someone record passages from magazines or newspapers on tape, or record radio or television talk shows or interview programs (news broadcasts are not suitable for these exercises, because the pace is too fast and the content is too dense). The subject matter of these passages is irrelevant, but it should not be too technical nor contain too many statistics and proper names. Essays and opinion columns are good sources of texts for recording. As you play back the tape, "shadow" the speaker: repeat everything the speaker says, verbatim. Try to stay further and further behind the speaker, until you are lagging at least one unit of meaning behind

2. Once you feel comfortable talking and listening at the same time and are not leaving out too much, begin performing other tasks while shadowing. First, write the numerals from 1 to 100 on a piece of paper as you are repeating what the speaker says (make sure you are writing and speaking at the same time, not just writing during pauses). When you are able to do that successfully, write the numerals in reverse order, from 100 to 1. Then write them counting by 5's, by 3's and so on. Note what happens whenever numbers appear in the text you are shadowing,

3. When you are able to do exercise 2 with minimal errors, begin writing out words while shadowing. Begin with your name and address, written repeatedly. Then move on to a favorite poem or a passage such as the preamble to the U.S. Constitution (always choose a passage in the same language as that which you are shadowing). When writing this text, you should copy from a piece of paper placed in front of you; do not try to write the passage from memory while shadowing the tape.

3. Using all the techniques you have developed in the preceding exercises, begin interpreting from the source language to the target language. At first, use the tapes you have already recorded and worked on in the other exercises. Then make new tapes specifically for interpreting practice. You may want to choose texts related to law and the courts for this purpose, but do not make them too technical at first. When you feel you are ready, use some actual court proceedings for practice. Court reporting schools are a good source of professionally recorded tapes of law-related texts. Additional exercises and recommendations for improvement can be found in the Federal Court Interpreter Examination Manual (Gonzalez, 1986).