

Legal Interpreting Skill Development Activity: IMPROVING SEMANTIC AWARENESS / VOCABULARY

Activities:

- Engage in text analysis activities of ASL and English texts where you isolate legal concepts that present a unique challenge for the interpretation process. Consider the meaning of the legal concept in context - including looking up the meaning of the term in a legal dictionary (ex: Black's Law Dictionary) and write down a list of all of the possible signs or synonyms for the concept. You can also check the online legal dictionary of signs to see if a signed representation of the term is available for your consideration. Go to <http://www.interpretereducation.org/specialization/legal/terminology/> and access ASL representations of 300 common legal terms.
- Practice interpreting the text inserting the various possibilities for representing the legal concept from your list and evaluate each in terms of its effectiveness in conveying the meaning and intent of the original text. If you are unsure if you have been effective, record it in a journal and seek input from colleagues and/or a Deaf mentor. As you become aware of possible ways in which the concept could be conveyed, record them in the journal for periodic review and discussion.
- Maintain a journal that you can use to record challenging concepts and vocabulary as it arises in your day to day interpreting work. Later, use the journal as the foundation for a study group with other interpreters (who are also maintaining a journal). The study group can explore how the concept would be conveyed differently in a variety of contexts.

Resources:

In the Toolkit there is a folder with sample trial transcripts included. This is an excellent source of texts to review and isolate English legal terms to explore both meaning in context and ways of conveying equivalent meaning in ASL.

Also in the Toolkit, there is a folder with jury instructions. Because jury instructions involve the court advising the jury of what it must decide based on specific legal parameters, there will be a variety of legal terms utilized. Therefore, jury instructions are an excellent source of texts to review and isolate English legal terms to explore both meaning in context and ways of conveying equivalency in ASL.

Once legal terms have been isolated and meaning is determined, you can practice interpreting them by having peers read the transcript by way of role-play. Peers can rotate through roles [interpreter, judge, witness, attorney] so that everyone can practice interpreting.