

### Self-Reflecting on the ASL to English Consecutive Interpreting Project

For this project I was determined to try to break my pattern of obsessing over “being” the speaker, which caused me to sound like an actor reading a prepared text. To do this I focused on three things. I wanted to avoid vocabulary that sounds more appropriate in a written speech than an informal conversation. Secondly, I wanted to limit the time I spent in the rehearsal stage—I wanted to trust the first English sentence I composed after synthesizing the source rather than practice or enhance the sentence before speaking it. I also wanted to avoid fillers, but use them naturally when necessary as opposed to unnatural pauses. I felt that these three areas of focus would help me achieve my larger goal of sounding less like I was reading a script. Finally, I wanted to challenge myself not to gloss signs, but to invent new equivalent sentences whenever possible.

To ease my mind, going into this project I told myself, “The audience can see the speaker—I don’t need to sound like him or try to *be* him.” Whether or not this will ultimately be true it allowed me to be myself. That being said, it took me the first few sentences to warm up into it. I was very concerned about how to begin so I spent a few too many seconds rehearsing the first half of the first chunk. As a result I sound a bit stilted when I say “Hello, again” and “I have always appreciated the services that they provide.” This is interesting to me because the first sentence is a direct gloss of the source while the latter is a complete translation, but still doesn’t sound totally natural. I think that is because the word choice and phrasing are a bit heightened and belong more in a written text.

That being said, I did have success in my first goal in the first chunk. I liked my use of “come right out off the bat” because it’s very colloquial. I didn’t plan or rehearse it so it didn’t come out quite right (I think “come out right off...” is the correct phrasing), but in its unrehearsed

imperfection it sounds very conversational. The slight hesitation of “I...I think” came about because I knew I wanted to close the chunk cleanly, but didn’t have it scripted. I pulled from another sentence of the source chunk, which worked, and the hesitation doesn’t sound robotic and also doesn’t sound like I’m fumbling because I’m confident.

By the second chunk I was more warmed up and focused on my goals. I thought for a beat about my transition sentence to connect the chunks, but then just went on speaking extemporaneously. I searched for words a few times: “It has to do with...a practice that’s pretty standard,” “If you would like,” and “And...while I understand...” but I don’t think the pauses were too uncomfortable. They could be cleaner, but I think it sounds like something people do when they talk. Again, I was trying to do this without over-rehearsing so “...fines can be quite pricy—those last minute fees” is a self-correction that sounds like one that would occur in natural speech. Additionally, I don’t think any of the vocabulary I chose for this section sounded overly floral.

Ordinarily I would be bothered by the use of run-on sentences, but for this stage of my process I don’t mind because it was the result of following my own impulses. The third chunk, which I think is the longest run-on sentence, was the least rehearsed before I opened my mouth to speak. The segment where I say “with little to no notice in advance” sounds awkward because I was trying to cram too much in, but the use of “...standard amount of time, it’s a fair amount of time” and “I get it... I do understand that” are nice authentic redundancies that occur sometimes in natural speech, but would have been filtered out if I were “reading” from a script in my mind.

My first “umm” didn’t appear until the fourth chunk and it was so brief it doesn’t bother me. But in that chunk and the one that followed I stuttered a bit: “I-I-I-was just shocked” and “I was-I was-just so taken aback.” I could have paused until I had a complete sentence composed, but I was trying to avoid the temptation to over-polish. I was working so hard on being me, and I do sound natural—a person might do that in real life—but I don’t think the speaker in the source

would have at this moment. There wasn't noticeable hesitation in his deliberate signing. While I was focused on my first goal I lost focus on matching his affect here.

That fifth chunk where the source gets most sarcastic or upset was some of my most unscripted-sounding work in this project. I put myself in the situation and used the source's images and came out with a rant that sounds appropriately frustrated and sarcastic. I had benchmarks like 'tell him not to die,' 'freeze the body,' 'talk to god,' and 'be more flexible' that I knew I wanted to hit and I gave myself permission to find my way on my toes motivated by the emotional through-line of the section. I may have gotten carried away with my vocal inflections, but this was a big improvement from my first draft where most of my affect was in my face. If I went too far I can always pull it back. I do stammer, false start, and hesitate a bit, but it doesn't sound like the interpreter trying to figure out what to say, it sounds like the way people talk when they are upset. Maybe this doesn't match the source perfectly, but I'm pleased with the fact that it sounds raw and unedited. There's no fancy vocabulary because I wasn't trying to find the best word, I was just trying to express these feelings that were bursting to get out. In the second half of this chunk my tone and affect simmered down to a more appropriate level and I remembered to focus on the larger task at hand, not just focus on one of my goals.

In terms of my other overarching goal, not to gloss, I think I did well. The consecutive format definitely helps with that because I remember ideas not words or signs. Some particularly good choices included turning "WIFE'S FATHER" into "my father in law," "TALK AGAINST" into "speak ill of," and "OK SO YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL ME..." into "I mean what did they expect me to do...?" I tried not to use the gloss I most commonly associate with a sign whenever possible. For example, when he signed that he thought interpreters should be "MORE FLEXIBLE FOR SPECIAL REASONS" I went out of my way to say "more lenient when there are...extenuating circumstances." I had to be careful to keep my other goal of not using overly formal vocabulary in mind, but I think this was a reasonable balance. I wasn't successful all the time, though. I glossed a few times. For

example I latched onto the word “curious” in the last chunk when I easily could have said, “I want to know” or something like that. I guess it is bound to happen sometimes in any interpreting or paraphrasing situation. On the whole, I don’t think the few instances were detrimental to the integrity of the project because I managed to avoid glossing on the lexical level and was able to translate and create many new sentences that really take into consideration the differences in the two languages (i.e. turning the bit of constructed dialogue with God into a reference to the English phrase “acts of god” often found in policies and contracts as an exception to rules). I will keep working on this so it becomes more instinctive and requires less effort.

Overall I am pleased with the final project. I was able to meet my goals most of the time and I see what I could have done differently in the instances where I did not meet those goals. I have pushed the extreme of limiting rehearsal time and now I think I can settle into a reasonable balance between this and what I was doing before. I’m on my way to sounding more natural and can still continue to focus on how I use pausing to compose thoughts and to add emphasis. I was able to match the tone of the source from start to finish as it changed during the piece. As I said, I may have gone a bit to far at one extreme, but I think I repaired it well when I reiterated the theme in the “...that’s all that I’m saying” section. I’ll continue to pay attention to that and look out for a new pattern I noticed: using the hedge “pretty” as in “pretty much” or “pretty standard.” This may have been an anomaly because I was trying to over-emphasize the calm tone before it went to the more upset section that I knew was coming. I don’t think this is something I usually do, but I’ll keep an ear out. In conclusion, I think this was a step in the right direction. By no means am I done working on these goals, but I am glad that I notice some progress.