PRACTICE EXERCISES FOR SMALL GROUPS

The activities described below will allow you and your study partners to continue fine-tuning your language, reference and interpreting skills. The feedback you provide each other is the key to learning. An interpreter never stops learning. Words and expressions feed your intellect and enhance your worth.

We suggest that you meet regularly as a group and come prepared to engage in one of the activities listed below. As you get to know each other better, and as your skills improve, you will think of other activities or variations on those we have suggested, please share with us any ideas you have, so that we may pass them on to others. Remember to utilize the notebook you received at the workshop. It is full of good advice and further ideas on enhancing your language and interpreting skills which you should incorporate into your study sessions.

Remember to bring your dictionaries to each meeting, both monolingual and bilingual. Select a group leader for each meeting. This person will make sure you know what to do next time and will keep an eye on people who misbehave or have too much fun!

1. BOOK REPORT I

Each group participant will read a book in the foreign language, preferably one you have not read before. Give the group a five-minute oral report on the book (do not read a prepared written report). The group participants will critique the contents, your pronunciation, grammar, syntax, etc. Did you speak smoothly? Did you sound rushed and nervous? Did you make sense? Was there some confusion about what you said because of your accent? Did you complete your sentences? How was your posture? Did you distract the listeners with the use of your hands when you spoke? Did you have fun?

2. BOOK REPORT II

Each group participant will read a book in English. You may all read the same book, if you wish. Discuss your understanding of the contents. Don't let any group member just sit there and listen. Ask their opinion and get them talking. Look for the same kinds of things as you did in the previous exercise.

3. WHAT'S NEW IN THE NEWSPAPER?

Bring today's local newspaper and the most recent edition of your own language newspaper (you must agree which one to bring ahead of time). Take turns sight translating paragraphs and follow along in your newspaper. Keep track of what is said and critique each other's efforts. Did they use the right word or expression? What would you have said? Was it a particularly clever translation? Now put away your newspapers while one person translates an article or paragraph. Did it make sense? Did you have to ask them to repeat sections so that you could understand them better? Take turns summarizing what they said. Then check the newspaper article to see how well you understood the original speaker.

4. WRITTEN TRANSLATION AND BACK TRANSLATION

Each group participant will select a short magazine article to translate. Bring your translation and the original article to your group meeting. Make enough copies of both your translation and the original article for everyone in the group. The group leader will distribute one of the translations to the whole group. Find a partner and the two of you translate the article back into the original language. When you are finished, compare your "back-translation" with the original text (which your group leader has kept cleverly hidden until this moment). What happened? Where did the text deviate? Why? Do this repeatedly until everyone's translation has been scrutinized in this way.

5. **EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECH --LORDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!**

In this exercise each of you will have selected two topics ahead of time and written each of them on a separate piece of paper. All the papers are folded and one person pulls a topic at random and stands up before the group and makes a two-minute prepared speech on that topic in English. (If you pick your own topic, put it back and try again!)

The group then critiques the content style of delivery, body language, coherence, level of language, etc. The second person then does the same thing but in the foreign language. Each group participant takes turns doing the same thing. Some ideas for topics: "My Home Town," "Why I Became an Interpreter," "The View from My Window," "Why is Conservation of Resources Necessary," "Interpreters Should Be Licensed," "Life Without Computers."

6. INTERPRETING THE NEWS

Practice interpreting the news every evening for 10 days. Keep in mind that each "newsbite" on the network news programs is only approximately 30-45 seconds long. This is good to start with, however, make sure that you select a station with longer reports for ongoing practice. Public radio and public television provide more substantial reports with a greater variety of topics and higher level of language. After 10 days, start recording yourself as you interpret. Play it back. Does it make sense? Bring four of your recorded efforts to your group. Pick partners and allow them to listen to your tape while they attempt to interpret it back. What happened? Did they make sense? Why, or why not?

7. TAPES FOR SIMULTANEOUS PRACTICE

Each group participant prepares two twenty-minute tapes to be used for simultaneous practice. The tapes should be recorded at speeds from 100 to 160 words per minute. Subject matter should include courtroom topics, such as motions, opening or closing arguments, testimony, conditions of probation, etc. all of which may be found-in court transcripts. High level language articles from magazines or newspapers may also be recorded. Enlist friends and family in this project so that different voices are heard.

Make enough copies of your tape so that each group participant receives a copy. During the group meeting. practice interpreting and taking *turns* listening to the tape with headsets while your partner listens to you and critiques you. Start with a two-minute segment and build up to interpreting the whole tape.

8. SPEED PRACTICE, OR HOW LOOSE ARE YOUR LIPS?

Prepare a 10-minute tape at home where you record yourself in English speaking fast, -then faster and faster. Then prepare a similar tape in the foreign language. You may use any text you wish. Bring the tapes to your group meeting and take turns listening to them while you attempt to shadow the speaker by repeating exactly what is being said. This will help you prepare for those speed demons you have to interpret for in court by honing your listening skills and loosening your lips and tongue. Who is the group's speed champion? That person has the privilege of taking everyone else out for coffee!

9. THE CLOZE EXERCISE

At home do the following: Take any newspaper, copy five articles. Put the copies aside. Using a black marker, black out every 10th word in each article, regardless of the length or importance of the word. Now copy the articles where you have blacked out the words and bring them to your group meeting. Take turns reading the articles and filling in the blanks with whatever words you feel are appropriate in the context. The group members will follow along on their copies of the blacked out text while the group leader follows along using the original text. If the words selected distort the original meaning, bring this to the attention of the reader and the group. This exercise will help you to hear and to see language in context and meaning rather than as individual words. Remember, when you interpret, you often "lose" words, and you must be able to recover and keep interpreting without losing the original meaning.

10. ROUND ROBIN FREE ASSOCIATION

Each participant comes prepared with a list of five related words, such as ... “car, truck, motorcycle, ricksha, baby carriage.” The group leader picks one person to recite his words. The next person then takes the last word and says five other words related to it, such as "infant, baby, pacifier, cuddly, blanket." The next person takes the Last word, "blanket" and continues this free association with five words, such as "cover, sheet, paper, book, information." Do you see how "blanket" became "information?" “Sheet" can mean many things and gave rise to the word "paper." Continue in this fashion until the group runs out of words and steam! Then start with a new set of words. Help each other out when you are really stuck.

11. CROSSWORD PUZZLES

Two people are given the task of bringing copies of five crossword puzzles each to the group meeting. Each person will have used a different newspaper from which to copy the puzzles. (Use large daily newspapers, not the TV Guide.) Select a partner.

Distribute one crossword puzzle to each pair and upon a given signal, start solving the puzzle. The pair that finishes first will answer questions from the group and explain how they arrived at their solutions. This exercise helps expand your vocabulary and speeds up your reasoning ability. Continue in this fashion with the rest of the crossword puzzles. You will not be able to finish all of them in one evening. Take the unfinished ones home and continue your work with your partner either by phone or in person. You should attempt to solve the crossword puzzle in your daily newspaper every day. Remember: Dictionaries may be used at any time.