## Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General Court Interpretation Unit

# Bilingual Court Interpreter Test (BCIT)

**Preparation Manual** 



## BCIT Prep. Module Manual

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You will need two recording devices for the practice sections: one to listen to the pre-recorded exercises and the other to record your performance.

#### **SECTION 1: Understanding the CIT**

#### Introduction

Welcome! The Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) is pleased to make this manual available to qualified candidates, like yourself, to prepare for the Court Interpreting Test. This manual is meant to serve as reference for key sections covered in the BCIT Prep. Module. The elearning material provides detailed explanations so you are encouraged to review the online content first and then revisit it here to reinforce the information.

The BCIT Prep. Module brings you one step closer to becoming a ministry-accredited freelance Court Interpreter or to elevating your current accreditation status. Congratulations and thank you for being here! Whether or not you have experience interpreting in court, the material in this module will help set you up for success on the test.



The role of a Court Interpreter is fundamental in ensuring that justice is administered fairly and comprehensively.

Section 14 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that:

"A party or witness in any proceedings who does not understand or speak the language in which the proceedings are conducted or who is deaf has the right to the assistance of an interpreter."

This right applies to all languages. Having access to quality interpretation supports Section 14 of the Charter and promotes access to justice for participants who do not understand the language of the court.

Court Interpreters are expected to bring a high level of skill and professionalism to their work to be effective in a court setting where a person's liberty could be at stake. The ministry's accreditation process reflects the high standards for interpreting in a court setting.

Bilingual Court Interpreting Test (BCIT)

English Court Interpreter Test (ECIT) First Nations Court Interpreter Test (FNCIT)

The Court Interpreting Test is available in three varieties. Which test you take depends on the language you are pursuing for accreditation.

The Bilingual Court Interpreter Test (BCIT) is available in these 26 languages: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Serbian, Cambodian/Khmer, Cantonese, Somali, Spanish, Farsi/Persian, Filipino-Tagalog, French, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Tamil, Tigrigna, Turkish, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Cree speakers take the First Nations Court Interpreting Test and all other language speakers take the English Court Interpreting Test. The three tests are structured very differently from each other and, therefore, have dedicated test preparation modules.

The BCIT, ECIT and FNCIT all assess a candidate's interpretation skills for each mode of interpretation: simultaneous, consecutive, and sight translation.

The BCIT Prep. Module will provide an overview of each component of the BCIT, as well as practice materials and exercises for you to become familiar with legal terms and interpretation skills that will prepare you for the test. This manual is divided into four sections focusing on the following main areas:

Section 1

- General information about the test.
- Definitions related to the interpretation tasks required during the test.

Section 2

• Legal terminology development.

Section 3

- BCIT components in detail.
- How the BCIT is marked.
- Tips for the day of your BCIT.

Section 4

• Tips to get the most out of your practice.

Whether you already interpret in court, or are interested in becoming a Court Interpreter for the first time, this material can help you develop and maintain court interpretation skills. Thank you for your interest and commitment to providing high quality court interpretation services in Ontario courts. Best of luck as you get started!

#### Common Terms related to Interpretation

Before you get started with the module contents, it is important to go over some of the most common terms in the field of court interpretation. If this is a new area of study for you, these terms will be key for you to understand most concepts.



Download the list of Common Terms related to Interpretation provided in the elearning module.

#### SECTION 2: Preparing for the CIT (Terminology)

#### **Legal Terminology Development**

As you are preparing for your Court Interpreter Test, one of the key tasks you will need to focus on is developing your legal terminology. The terminology presented in the test preparation session is an introduction. Candidates who reach accreditation scores on the test will have plenty of opportunities to further improve their legal terminology.

By consistently engaging in the development of legal terminology, you can enhance your language proficiency in both English and your other language, deepen your understanding of legal concepts, enhance your performance during the court interpreter test, and ultimately improve your professional practice. You are encouraged to get started right away!



Download/Check out the resources provided in the e-learning module, including:

- Two glossaries provided. The first one is short and highlights key legal terms you should become familiar with. The second glossary is longer and provides you with a more comprehensive list of legal concepts.
- External resources, particularly as you are researching equivalents for terms in your other language.
- Deck of digital flashcards with the terms and definitions in the 2 glossaries, to support
  your memorization of terms in your test language. You can access the digital flashcards
  here. You will need to create a FREE account to add the equivalent terms in your test
  language.
- Sign up to receive regular e-mails with exercises including videos and texts highlighting commonly used terms. This will help you stay on track with your legal terminology development and will help you to develop your skills in simultaneous, consecutive and sight translation.

#### **SECTION 3: The BCIT**

#### **BCIT General Overview**

The BCIT is the oral bilingual test for freelance Court Interpreters. The purpose of the test is to evaluate a candidate's interpretation skills and language proficiency.

A Court Interpreter needs a high level of fluency in both languages and a variety of skills to carry out interpretation required in court. Three such skills are a good memory, the ability to take quick notes and to switch from one language to another without hesitation. These three skills are indispensable to perform any one of the interpreting modes that are used in court: Sight translation, Consecutive interpreting, Simultaneous interpreting.

The BCIT is designed to assess your ability to perform the three modes of interpretation mentioned above through the following five exercises:

- Sight translation from English into the test language,
- Sight translation from the test language into English,
- Consecutive interpreting of witness testimony in the test language,
- Simultaneous interpreting of an English monologue into the test language, and
- Simultaneous interpreting of an English dialogue into the test language.

Please also note that the language used in the test includes basic legal, forensic, medical, and firearms-related terminology that most court interpreters routinely handle.

#### Understanding the BCIT Components

#### Sight Translation (ST)

Sight translation is when you render a written message into a spoken message. It involves reading a text silently in the source language, and then conveying it verbally to the target language.

In court, it will likely involve a witness statement or other document written in a language not spoken in court proceedings. The court interpreter is asked to read it in English "for the record," and the translation will be recorded.

When the document is in English, it is usually a court document to be read to the accused. It could be a sentencing order, bail conditions, conditions of probation, etc. It is vital that the court interpreter provide a complete and accurate sight translation of the document so the accused can understand the conditions imposed by the judge.

#### When do you sight translate in court?

You may be required to sight translate documents such as informations, indictments, peace bonds, bail and probation conditions, conditional and suspended sentences, etc. either in court or after court.

#### What will be evaluated on the court interpreter test?

ext for the sight translation exercise is about 250 words long. om a text that is typically used in or by the court, such as an a pre-sentence report or a court form. Illowed 3 minutes to familiarize yourself with the text. When nutes are up, you will be asked to begin sight translating the ch you will be allowed 4 minutes.
ch you will be allowed 4 minutes.
complete this first exercise: 7 minutes.
the sight translation exercise is about 250 words long. It type of texts that are often "read" in English for the record and m's impact statements, a note from a doctor sent from the mer country, etc. Illowed 3 minutes to familiarize yourself with the text. When nutes are up, you will be asked to begin sight translating the ch you will be allowed 4 minutes.
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#### Consecutive Interpretation (CI)



Consecutive interpreting is also known as dialogue interpreting. In this mode, the interpreter listens to the message in one language and interprets it into another language so that both speakers can effectively communicate. Each speaker pauses while the interpreter interprets.

Consecutive interpreting is normally done in court to interpret a non-English speaker's witness testimony. Consecutive interpreting gives the interpreter more time to analyze and convert the message before delivery. However, court proceedings interpreted in the consecutive mode take up to three times longer than proceedings in English or French alone.

When do you interpret consecutively in court?

You will interpret in the consecutive mode when interpreting for a witness at the witness stand. You may also have to interpret in this mode in every court proceeding when the judge or other party poses a question directly to an accused or when the accused addresses the court, as in a sentencing hearing.

What will be tested in Consecutive Interpreting?

Testimony of a non-English speaker who is questioned in English by counsel. About 1,000 words.

You will hear both the English and the test language, and you will be required to interpret the English into the test language and vice versa. Each spoken segment is followed by a silent gap, long enough for you to complete the interpretation. If you are not finished interpreting when a new segment starts, you should pay attention to the new segment. Long questions or answers will be broken up into shorter segments from 10 to 50 words long.

Your interpretation into both languages will be recorded for grading. The consecutive interpreting exercise will take about 20 minutes.

#### Simultaneous Interpretation (SI)



Simultaneous interpretation requires communicating the message in the target language almost at the same time as the speaker is delivering the message in the source language. The speaker does not pause for the interpreter.

Simultaneous interpreting is used in the courtroom primarily to help an accused or other parties understand what other participants in the trial (witnesses, lawyers, judge) are saying in real time. Simultaneous interpreting in the courtroom is almost always from English into the language of the interpretation client.

Simultaneous interpretation used to be delivered by whispering to the client and thus it is often called "whispered interpreting." It is also called "chuchotage" (French for whispering).

In Ontario courts, simultaneous interpretation is increasingly delivered with technology such as headsets and Zoom, using multiple channels so that the court record in English and simultaneous

interpretation in the other language can be heard separately. These improvements also promote the health and safety of interpreters and their clients.

The main advantage of simultaneous interpreting is its speed, as court proceedings may go ahead in English or French with virtually no interruptions. To be proficient in this mode, interpreters need fundamental interpretation skills and substantial practice interpreting simultaneously.

When do you interpret simultaneously in court?

Simultaneous interpreting is generally provided to the client when they are remote, sitting at counsel table or in the prisoner's dock while observing the hearing. Simultaneous is provided in one direction, from the language of the court to the language of the client. When the client interacts with any of the parties in the courtroom, the interpreter switches back to consecutive interpretation for the benefit of everyone in the courtroom.

What will be evaluated in the court interpreting test?

There are two simultaneous interpreting exercises from English into your test language:

- Dialogue (involving 2 or more speakers)
- Monologue (1 speaker speaking at length).

The speakers may be a judge, counsel or witness, including expert witnesses.

You will begin interpreting as soon as the recording starts There will be no pauses for interpretation.

Each of the simultaneous interpreting exercises will take about 10 minutes.

#### Grading of the BCIT

Test performance will be graded in two ways:

1. Global or "holistic" scoring looks at the candidate's overall skills and meaning delivered during the test.

Your performance will be assessed as a whole based on:

- Interpreting skills preservation of meaning, maintenance of the style and register of the original, and fluency in delivery.
- Language skills grammar/structure, general vocabulary, terminology, pronunciation and intonation.

2. "Scoring units" focus on details, such as specific terminology or ways of communicating the message for accuracy.

The test will measure how you dealt with specific, pre-selected words, phrases or sentences in the texts or discourse. These keywords and phrases, called "scoring units" have been chosen to evaluate the following:

- grammar,
- structure,
- general vocabulary,
- specialized terminology,
- idiomatic language,
- register (level of language: formal, informal and neutral),
- numbers and names.
- · words or phrases adding precision or emphasis, and
- words or phrases likely to be omitted due to their position.

There are two accreditation levels based on your scores:

#### **Fully Accredited**

70% minimum in each task.

#### **Conditionally Accredited**

50% minimum in each task, but 70% was not achieved in each.

These thresholds are based on best practices internationally and are the scores required historically by MAG.

#### Tips for the Day of your BCIT

#### **Sight Translation:**

Use the 3 minutes of preparation time wisely. Do not try to translate the entire text. Use this time to get a general idea of the type and content of the text, identify the main points, pinpoint potential problems, and write down any equivalents that come to mind.

- Try to maintain an even pace as you sight translate.
- Avoid long pauses between sentences. You can do this by reading ahead while you are sight translating the previous sentence.

#### **Consecutive Interpreting:**

- You should take note of names, dates and numbers as you listen, as you may not be able to remember them when it is your turn to interpret. However, do not let note-taking interfere with careful listening.
- Your interpretation should reflect the tone and style of the speaker. If the speaker uses familiar language, you should do the same. If the speaker is hesitant, you should also sound hesitant.

#### **Simultaneous Interpreting:**

- While you are expected to interpret at the same time as the speaker is speaking, you have to wait to hear a few words from the speaker before you can start interpreting. You will therefore constantly be a few words behind the speaker.
- You may take note of names, dates and numbers during this exercise. However, please remember that you will have very little time to do so, as you will be interpreting at the same time as the speaker is speaking. You may be better off relying on your memory.

Your interpretation should reflect the tone, style and register of the speaker.

It is also very important for you to be at your best mentally, physically, and emotionally the day of your test. Get enough sleep the night before. And have adequate nutrition and hydration before sitting for your test. This will help you be at your best to focus on the tasks at hand.

#### SECTION 4: Preparing for the BCIT (Practice)

#### **Practicing Sight Translation**

The e-learning module contains six practice texts for sight translation, along with a list of scoring units for two of the texts.

The first three texts are typical texts that may be sight translated from English into the test language in court. The last three are typical texts that may be sight translated from the test language into English, although they are provided to you in English.

To make the most of your practice sessions, please use a recording device to record your sight translations (your phone or a handheld digital recorder can work).

When you practice sight translating, we recommend that you follow seven stages. At first, it may seem daunting to go through so many steps, but the idea is to get you to analyze your work from a certain perspective and to get used to

For additional practice in sight translation from English into the test language, look for short English documents (about 250 words), preferably having to do with a court case. The List of Additional Resources will provide you with many options.

working under test conditions, so please follow the steps. With time, you will take all the steps almost automatically.



#### Stage 1: Preparation for sight translation

Take a maximum of three minutes to read the text. You will not have the time to write down or translate the whole text at this point.

What you should do at this stage is:

- get a general idea of the type and content of the text,
- identify the main points,
- pinpoint potential problem words,
- write down any equivalents that come to mind for key words, and
- try to segment the text into chunks that are large enough for analysis and comprehension, but short enough for oral translation.

The segments can be

- sentences - if they are short and simple,

- clauses if the sentence contains more than one clause, or
- phrases if the sentence contains a number of specific details.

#### Stage 2: Initial sight translation

- Start the voice recorder at the end of three minutes.
- Start translating segment 1 and read ahead to identify segment 2.
- Repeat this step with the following segments, until you come to the last segment.
- Stop the voice recorder and check the time to ensure that you have taken no more than 4 minutes to sight translate 250 words.

#### Stage 3: Comparison of initial sight translation with source text

- With the source text in hand, listen to your recorded sight translation segment by segment.
- Pause the recording after each segment and underline in the source text the words, expressions or entire segments that appear to be wrong. You may repeat these steps as often as you like.

#### Stage 4: Analysis and resolution of problems

- Analyse the words, expressions and segments that you have marked as wrong after Stage
   Try to determine why they caused you problems. Was it because:
  - you did not understand the word or expression?
  - you did not know the equivalent in the target language?
  - you lost track of the beginning of a long sentence?
- Think of ways you can resolve these problems. Conduct basic research if required.

#### **Stage 5: Checking scoring units**

- If you are working on a sight translation text with scoring provided, review the scoring units at this stage. Listen again to your recorded sight translation, paying particular attention to the scoring units. Note the units you got correct. Determine how to correct those you got wrong.
- If you are working on a sight translation text where scoring units are not provided, examine the text and underline words and phrases that could be considered scoring units. Then listen again to your recorded sight translation, paying particular attention to those

words and phrases. Note the units you got correct. Determine how to correct those you got wrong.

#### Stage 6: Final sight translation

• Redo the sight translation - following the steps of Stage 2 - and try to perform a more accurate and smoother sight translation than you did before.

#### Stage 7: Repeat the steps in Stage 3

- Comparison of final sight translation with source text
- Note improvements in comparison with the initial sight translation.
   Tip: you can use the self- assessment tool provided in the materials tab of the E-learning module in all of these stages!



Remember to download the six practice texts for sight translation from the e-learning module.

#### **Practicing Consecutive Interpreting**

The e-learning module contains three pre-recorded practice dialogues for consecutive interpreting with pauses between segments to allow time for your interpretation, along with their written dialogues and a list of scoring units for the first dialogue.

These practice exercises have dialogues that are entirely in English. In court, the witness would of course, be speaking in the test language.

Your initial consecutive interpreting practice, therefore, will be from English into the test language. However, to practice interpreting from the test language into English, record your initial consecutive interpretation into the test language and then interpret that back into English.

To practice you will need:

Two devices during the practice sessions: one to listen to the pre-recorded exercises and the other to record your performance.

If you do not have access to two devices, another person can read the passages aloud and your recording device can record your performance. For additional consecutive interpreting practice, make sure to check out the 'Legal Terminology External Resources' and the list of 'Additional Resources' in the online module. But you may need to find more dialogues, preferably court related.

To practice consecutive interpreting, follow these eight stages:



#### Stage 1: Preparation for consecutive interpreting

- Have a notepad and a pen ready.
- Start the audio file of the source text dialogue. You should listen to the audio file using headphones. If you do not have two recording devices, another person may read the source text aloud.
- Start the voice recorder. You will record your interpretation using this device.

#### Stage 2: Initial consecutive interpreting

- Listen attentively to the first segment. Take any notes you think are necessary for recall names, dates, numbers but do not let note-taking distract you from careful listening.
- When there is a pause in the dialogue, interpret segment 1 into the target language. You may use your notes, if necessary.
- Repeat these steps for each segment, until you complete the last segment.
- Stop the audio file and the voice recorder.

#### Stage 3: Comparison of initial consecutive interpreting with recorded source text dialogue

- Replay the source text dialogue from the beginning. Listen carefully again to the first segment. You may listen to the segment as often as necessary to grasp its meaning and take notes. Stop the audio file before moving on to the following step.
- Play your own voice recording at the beginning. Listen carefully to your interpretation of segment 1 and compare it to the first segment of the source text dialogue. Note all the elements of meaning that you have missed. Also note any poor expression in the target language.
- Repeat these steps for each segment, until you reach the last segment.

#### Stage 4: Comparison of initial consecutive interpreting with written text of dialogue

- Play the voice recorder at the beginning of your interpretation.
- Read the first segment in the written text and compare your interpretation against it.
   Underline in the written text the words, expressions and segments that appear to be wrong.
- Repeat this step until you complete the last segment.
- This stage helps if there are parts of the recorded source text dialogue that you have not heard well.

#### **Stage 5: Analysis and resolution of problems**

• Examine the notes you have taken during Stages 3 and 4 and analyze any words, expressions and segments that you missed, or think are wrong. Try to determine why they caused you problems.

#### Was it because:

- you did not understand the word or expression?
- you did not know the equivalent?
- you did not remember something that was said earlier?
- Think of ways you can correct these mistakes. Do any basic research required.
- Try to understand source language words and expressions using the context (for example, the surrounding text). If a precise word does not spring to mind, try to explain the thoughts using a phrase in the target language.
- While some dictionary research may be required, try to avoid it. You may not have the opportunity to use one in court so do not rely on a dictionary during your practice.

#### **Stage 6: Checking scoring units**

- If you are working on a consecutive dialogue with scoring units provided, review them at this stage. Listen again to your recorded consecutive interpretation, paying particular attention to the scoring units indicated. Note the units you got correct. Determine how to correct those you got wrong.
- If you are working on a consecutive dialogue which does not have scoring units provided, examine the written dialogue and underline words and phrases that could be considered scoring units. Then listen again to your recorded consecutive interpretation, paying particular attention to those words and phrases. Note the units you got correct. Determine how to correct those you got wrong.

#### Stage 7: Final consecutive interpreting

Redo the consecutive interpreting following all the steps of stage 2, and try to deliver a more accurate and smoother interpretation of the dialogue.

#### Stage 8: Comparison of final consecutive interpreting with written text of dialogue

- Repeat all the steps of stage 4. Note improvements in comparison with the initial consecutive interpreting.
- At the end of the exercise, use a dictionary or term bank to find equivalents for key words that you did not know, and you should memorize them for future use.

Tip: you can use the self- assessment tool provided in the materials tab of the e-learning module in all of these stages!



Remember to download the three pre-recorded practice dialogues for consecutive interpreting from the e-learning module.

#### **Practicing Simultaneous Interpreting**

You have been provided with six pre-recorded practice exercises for simultaneous interpretation in the e-learning module - three English dialogues and three English monologues. You are also provided the written texts of the dialogues/monologues and a list of scoring units for the first dialogue and first monologue. You will interpret all of them into the test language.

You will need two recording devices during the practice sessions: one to listen to the pre-recorded exercises and the other to record your performance.

If you do not have access to two recording devices, another person can read the passages aloud and your recording device can record your performance.

To practice simultaneous interpreting, follow the eight stages below.

For additional simultaneous interpreting practice, make sure to check out the Legal Terminology External Resources and the list of Additional Resources in the e-learning module. You may need to find other information as well. You are encouraged to use English dialogues and monologues, preferably court related, and record them without any pauses, prior to practice.





#### Stage 1: Preparation for simultaneous interpreting

- Have a notepad and pen ready.
- Start playing the recorded source text. You should listen to the recording using headphones.
- Start the other recorder. You will record your interpretation using this device.

#### Stage 2: Initial simultaneous interpreting

- Listen attentively to the start of the passage.
- Once you have heard an interpretable segment a phrase, a clause, or a short sentence start interpreting simultaneously. You will continue listening to the speaker's next segment while you interpret the previous segment. While you are allowed to take notes, it is difficult to listen, speak and take notes at the same time; so limit your note-taking to important names, dates and numbers.
- Repeat this step for each segment.
- Stop the audio file and the voice recorder.

### Stage 3: Comparison of initial simultaneous interpreting with recorded source text dialogue/monologue

- Replay the first segment of the source text dialogue/monologue. You may listen to the sentence as often as necessary to grasp its meaning and take notes at this stage. Stop the audio file before moving to the next step.
- Start the interpretation recording from the beginning. Listen carefully to your interpretation of each segment and compare it with the source text dialogue/monologue. Note all the things that you have missed. Also note any poor expression in the target language.
- Repeat these steps for each segment, until you complete the last one.

## Stage 4: Comparison of initial simultaneous interpreting with written text of dialogue/monologue

- Play the voice recorder at the beginning of your interpretation.
- Read the first segment in the written text and compare your interpretation of that segment against it. Underline in the written text the words, expressions and segments that appear wrong.
- Repeat this step for each segment until finished. This stage helps if there are parts of the recorded source text that you have not heard well.

#### Stage 5: Analysis and resolution of problems

• Examine the notes you have taken during Stages 3 and 4 and analyze any words, expressions and segments that you missed, or believe to be wrong. Try to determine why they caused you problems.

#### Was it because:

- you did not understand the word or expression?
- you did not know the equivalent in the target language?
- you did not remember something that was said earlier?
- Think of ways you can correct these mistakes conduct some research
- Try to understand source language words and expressions using the context (for example, the surrounding text). If a precise word does not spring to mind, try to explain the thoughts using a phrase in the target language.
- While some dictionary research may be required, try to avoid it. You may not have the opportunity to use one in court so do not rely on a dictionary during your practice.

#### Stage 6: Checking scoring units

- If you are working on a simultaneous dialogue/monologue with scoring units provided, review the scoring units at this stage. Listen again to your recorded simultaneous interpretation, paying particular attention to the scoring units indicated. Note the units you got correct. Determine how to correct those you got wrong.
- If you are working on a simultaneous dialogue/monologue which does not have scoring units provided, review the written dialogue/monologue and underline words and phrases that could be considered scoring units. Then listen again to your recorded simultaneous interpretation, paying particular attention to those words and phrases. Note the units you got correct. Determine how to correct those you got wrong.

#### Stage 7: Final simultaneous interpreting

• Redo the simultaneous interpreting (following all of the steps in Stage 2). Try to perform a more accurate and smoother interpretation of the dialogue/monologue.

#### Stage 8: Comparison of final simultaneous interpreting with written text of dialogue

- Repeat all the steps of Stage 4.
- Note improvements in comparison with the initial simultaneous interpreting.
- At the end of the exercise, you should use a dictionary or term bank to find equivalents for key words that you did not know. You should memorize them for future use.

Tip: you can use the self- assessment tool provided in the materials tab of the e-learning module in all of these stages!



Remember to download the six pre-recorded practice exercises for simultaneous interpreting from the e-learning module.