The Interpreting Handbook
Part 1

by
Brian Cerney, Ph.D.

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First Edition

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Preview

This book examines the complex process of interpreting and how people can improve their ability to work within and between languages. Many people who work as interpreters or transliterators have never explored linguistics; they may even feel overwhelmed by the idea of learning about linguistics. This book is designed to be a friendly tour of how languages work and how we can improve our work with languages. It is intended to be a guidebook, something you will keep next to your dictionary and use over and over again as you and your co-workers continue to improve your skills.

Working interpreters and students alike face the challenge of self-analysis and improvement within and outside of training programs. This book was designed to clearly identify the components of successful interpreting and to provide the essential tools needed for self-analysis and professional development. Many working interpreters are uncertain about the requirements of various certification processes and what kinds of performances result in successfully attaining certification. This book addresses these questions and lets working interpreters know how to self-diagnose problems in their interpreting and find solutions. This book is intended to help interpreters do more than achieve certification by continuing to improve their professional skills. The field of professional interpreting is always advancing and this book provides guidance for advancing professional interpreters.

Students of interpreting are rarely ready to attempt certification until they have completed several years of practical interpreting work after graduation; but they also need to have an understanding of the skills required to become professional and certified interpreters. This text provides a plan for continued professional development for students of interpreting: both as students and as graduates.

Dedication

To my wife, Janet, and our children, Tasha, Anna and Alosha; and to the memory of my Gallaudet classmate, June Zimmer, who passed away at the end of 1993 in Manchester, New Hampshire.

The Graph and the River
by Brian Cerney
{Inspired by Theresa B. Smith (1983)}

I read this article the other day
Researched by more than a few
The local river they had defined
Reporting a depth of fifty-two

But what unit of measure had they used?
Was it hands or feet or miles?
Was only a single measurement made?
Or a numerous series of trials?

Another group, too, had studied hard
Proposing a model "complete"
The river was measured from A to B:
A width of eighty-eight feet

A monograph found the river to be
As thick as split pea soup
The author lambasted the careless techniques
Of both the above-mentioned groups

I decided to look for the answer myself
To settle it once and for all
I'd measure the river's depth and width
During a three-week span in the Fall.
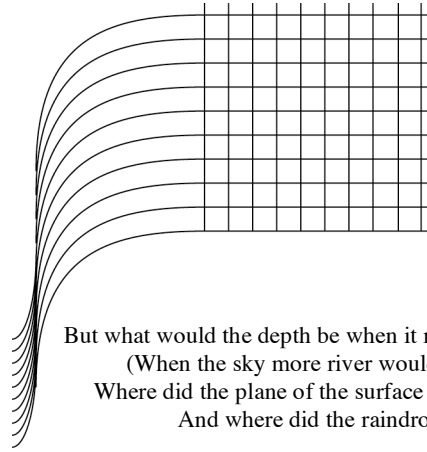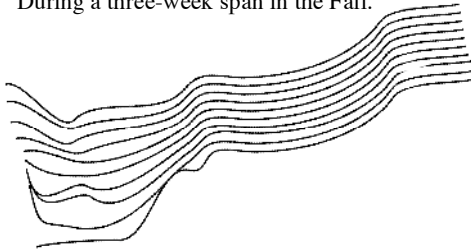
But what would the depth be when it rained?
(When the sky more river would lend)
Where did the plane of the surface begin?
And where did the raindrop end?

"This river is yet but a river"
Such concepts I had failed to catch
While the river defined itself perfectly well
My graphs offered only a scratch

I now realized that we all were right
And all just as equally wrong.
For a river is more than the sum of its parts
And a bird is more than its song

With our grand attempts to describe a thing
No matter abstract or concrete
We must keep in mind one important thing:
Our description never will be complete.

Let us all remember to gain the value we can
Of the work by those from before;
But never stop asking questions and learning
From the new finds just outside our door.

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