

BECOMING AN ARABIC COURT INTERPRETER

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This document was prepared to enable persons who wish to become Arabic court interpreters to understand what the profession of court interpretation entails. It identifies the knowledge, skills and abilities that are required and outlines how Arabic court interpreter certification exams are designed, administered and graded. Finally, specific suggestions for preparing for these exams and hints to keep in mind when taking the exam are provided, including references to resources for improving one's knowledge, skills and abilities.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to study this document thoroughly and invest appropriate effort to prepare before attempting to take the exam. **Study this document carefully in order to be better prepared when taking the certification exams required of Arabic court interpreters.**

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INTRODUCTION

The court systems of the United States are experiencing an increasing need for the services of professional interpreters in many languages, including Arabic. This document has been prepared to help prospective Arabic interpreters understand what the profession of court interpreting entails and how to prepare for its certification exams. Except for the material specific to Arabic, it is also instructive for prospective interpreters in other languages. In this document, you will learn the following:

- The knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that all court interpreters need;
- The special KSAs that Arabic court interpreters must have;
- Some ways you can develop the requisite KSAs to become an Arabic court interpreter;
- How the court interpreter tests are administered and what you should keep in mind when you take the tests; and
- How the court interpreter oral performance tests are graded.

What are the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) that ALL Court Interpreters Need?

Most of the KSAs that are essential for success in the profession of court interpreting are the same for all court interpreters, regardless of the languages in which they work. Court interpretation requires much more than knowing two languages. If you are thinking about becoming an Arabic court interpreter, consider the KSAs you must have by asking yourself the following questions (prospective interpreters of other languages can substitute their own languages for Arabic throughout this section):

Linguistic/communicative sophistication:

- **Have I mastered the written and spoken forms of English and Arabic at the level of a highly educated native speaker of each language?**
- **Do I have a very sophisticated knowledge and mastery of English and Arabic at all levels?**
- **Can I understand and use formal varieties of English and Arabic as well as more informal domains such as slang, colloquialisms, profanity, etc.?**

Legal sophistication:

- **Do I have extensive knowledge of American legal systems and court procedures?**
- **Can I understand and use the range of technical terminology that occurs in courts and other legal contexts (e.g., legal terminology, but also specialized domains such as drugs, weapons, etc.)?**
- **Do I know the Arabic equivalents of English legal terms and the English equivalents of Arabic legal terms?**

Skill sophistication:

- Can I perform all three modes of court interpretation: sight, consecutive and simultaneous?
- Can I perform all three modes accurately and faithfully, no matter what the circumstances might be?

Professional sophistication:

- Do I know the established codes of professional conduct and ethics, and best practices for court interpreters?
- Do I follow those codes of professional conduct and ethics, and best practices, so that I always perform my duties in a professional manner?

Most people who answer these questions honestly will likely say “maybe” or even “no” to one or more of these questions. Now please ask yourself one more question:

- What am I willing and able to do in order to acquire the KSAs of the profession of court interpretation?

The likelihood that you will successfully become an Arabic court interpreter depends on how accurately you make these assessments and the degree to which you are willing to invest the time, resources, and effort in developing the KSAs of this profession. See Appendix A for a more detailed list of court interpreter KSAs.

What Special Skills Does the Arabic Court Interpreter Need?

The Arabic language presents a unique challenge to Arabic court interpreters. The primary feature of that challenge is that Arabic usage is “diglossic.” This means that Arabic speakers use two major different varieties of the language. They may stay in one variety, go back and forth between the two varieties, or use both varieties in a single sentence, depending on circumstances. You are familiar with this situation from your daily life.

One variety is a highly formal variety that we have come to call Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and is also known as “Classical Arabic,” الفصحى *al-fusha*, or “literary Arabic.” It is the type of Arabic used in official or formal circumstances such as schools, courts, and media. This is also the variety of Arabic typically used in written communications. As such it is fairly standardized throughout the Arabic-speaking world. To the degree that speakers of Arabic from various parts of the world can communicate with each other, it is often (but not always) through the use of this variety of Arabic.

The other variety is known as “colloquial Arabic,” العامية *al-‘aamiyya*, الدارجة *al-daarija*, “dialectal Arabic,” “Arabic dialect,” “vernacular Arabic,” “conversational Arabic,” or “the slang,” and has many local variants. This variety of Arabic is spoken in everyday social

situations. Linguists of Arabic recognize four major dialect groups: Arabian Peninsula Colloquial, Egyptian Colloquial, Levantine Colloquial (Mashriqi), and North African Colloquial (Maghribi). Arabic speakers from different parts of the world who attempt to communicate verbally with each other will have many obstacles to overcome if they rely solely on one of the four primary varieties because of wide variations in pronunciation and vocabulary. These varieties of Arabic are essentially oral and are not typically written.

Because of the diglossic nature of Arabic, Arabic court interpreters must possess the following KSAs above and beyond those of court interpreters of other languages. In order to further assess your readiness to take an Arabic court interpreter certification exam, please ask yourself the following additional questions:

1. Can I interpret effectively back and forth between English and MSA?

MSA is as close as there is to a universal means of communicating among Arabic speakers. If a court interpreter cannot handle MSA, there will be a problem communicating with many Arabic speakers who appear in courts as parties or witnesses.

2. Can I effectively and accurately interpret between English and MSA -- rather than a colloquial variety -- when I encounter written materials to be interpreted on sight?

As noted above, written Arabic will almost always be produced in MSA and rarely in a colloquial dialect.

3. Can I effectively and accurately interpret between English and MSA – rather than a colloquial dialect -- when I must deliver simultaneous interpretation from English into Arabic?

Simultaneous interpretation in court is from English into Arabic, except in very rare circumstances. It is largely the interpretation of the speech of judges and attorneys and, to a lesser degree, English-speaking witnesses. The type of discourse that is ordinarily interpreted simultaneously is the formal discourse of highly educated speakers who use language in a very formal, restricted, and trade-specific way unique to the legal environment of the courtroom. Accordingly, the vehicle for that interpretation into Arabic should be MSA for the most part. However, when an English speaker begins to use a more informal, colloquial or slangy style of speech, then the interpreter could use either MSA or the colloquial dialect spoken by the person for whom the interpreter has been contracted.

4. Can I effectively and accurately interpret between English and a colloquial dialect of Arabic in question-and-answer situations with the Arabic-speaking party or witness? Can I perform consecutive interpretation when it is the appropriate mode of interpretation?

When parties or witnesses are answering questions during a court proceeding (e.g., when the court asks questions of an Arabic-speaking defendant during a first appearance in a criminal matter, or when an attorney is conducting an examination of an Arabic-speaking

witness), the Arabic court interpreter will have to understand what that speaker of Arabic is saying, whether in MSA, a colloquial dialect depending on the speaker’s background, or a combination of both. In addition, it will sometimes be appropriate, in the professional judgment of the court interpreter, to use MSA or to use the colloquial dialect of Arabic used by that party or witness. Furthermore, the interpreter may use a variety of strategies that include a combination of both MSA **and** that colloquial dialect.

5. Can I demonstrate my abilities as an Arabic court interpreter in MSA and one of the following Arabic dialect groups: Arabian Peninsula Colloquial, Egyptian Colloquial, Levantine Colloquial (Mashriqi), and North African Colloquial (Maghribi)?

The New Jersey Judiciary and, later, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) have invested considerable effort since April 1995 to understand the special needs of Arabic speakers and the linguistic diversity of the Arabic-speaking world so they can develop appropriate approaches for providing equal access to its courts for Arabic speakers who have limited English proficiency. These efforts are based on the expert advice of scholarly linguists and practicing interpreters. The fact that *Ethnologue*, a preeminent authority on the world’s languages, identifies almost 40 major varieties of Arabic illustrates the nature of the problem. It is simply not feasible to develop court interpreter certification exams in 40 varieties of Arabic or to attempt to match every person needing Arabic interpreting services with an Arabic interpreter from the exact same dialect group.

In order to manage certification of Arabic interpreters as well as the delivery of appropriate Arabic court interpreting services, the following scheme for classifying dialect groups has been adopted:

DIALECT GROUP	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN
Arabian Peninsula Colloquial	Bahrain Iraq Kuwait Oman Qatar Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates Yemen
Egyptian Colloquial	Egypt South Sudan Sudan
Levantine Colloquial (Mashriqi)	Israel (Israeli Arabs) Jordan Lebanon Palestine and Palestinian territories Syria
North African Colloquial (Maghribi)	Algeria Libya Mauritania Morocco Tunisia

6. Can I strike the right balance between MSA and a colloquial dialect of Arabic that is faithful to the source language, the nature of the discourse being interpreted, and the variety of Arabic which can carry the interpretation most faithfully?

There is a presumption that in certain circumstances MSA or the appropriate colloquial dialect will be used for sustained periods of time. It is also true that a speaker may move back and forth between MSA and a colloquial dialect for extended periods of time. Arabic interpreters must be competent in both MSA and one or more dialects and know when and how to move back and forth between the two appropriately and accurately.

What Are Some Recommended Ways to Develop the KSAs to Become an Arabic Court Interpreter?

Develop Broad Knowledge of Both Languages

The first and perhaps most important step of all is to ensure that you have an extensive knowledge of English and Arabic. It is simply not possible to develop interpreting skills without already having a sophisticated mastery of **both** languages. Do the following in Arabic and English:

- **Read a lot and read a wide range of materials, especially in each of the following areas:**
 - literature
 - biography
 - the hard sciences (biology, chemistry, geology, etc.)
 - the social sciences (history, sociology, anthropology, etc.)
 - religion and philosophy (Muslim, Christian, secular, etc.)
 - scholarly journals, books, and other academic sources
 - popular periodicals such as magazines, newspapers, and Internet sources
- **Expose yourself to a wide range of regional and stylistic varieties of Arabic and English through the traditional sources of media, as well as modern-day social media platforms.**
- **Make a conscious effort as you read and listen to learn new vocabulary and update your vocabulary in Arabic and English. Even the most experienced interpreters keep vocabulary lists and glossaries.**
- **Watch or listen to all of the following:**
 - the news
 - talk shows and discussions that deal with a wide range of topics
 - call-in programs (useful for regional variation in Arabic and English)
 - dramas, film and television serials (useful for regional variation in Arabic)

- **Whenever possible, take advanced college or university courses in Arabic and English. Possible areas of study are:**
 - literature
 - advanced grammar and linguistics of Arabic or English
- **Use Arabic and English regularly in an assortment of informal and formal situations, personal as well as professional.**

A list of specific resources that may be useful is provided in Appendix B.

Develop Knowledge of Legal Terminology and Court Procedure

You must learn the terminology you will be hearing from judges, attorneys, and the parties. You also need to understand court procedure. To a lesser degree, you need to understand the legal cultures of the Arabic-speaking world so you know how to select and use terms appropriately when interpreting into Arabic, as well as understand and interpret into English the legal concepts used by Arabic speakers in our courts.

- **Learn the most common legal terms and types of court procedures in English.**
 - Download the document, [*Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology*](#), by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (formerly the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification) and learn the commonly used terms listed.
 - Whenever possible, take courses in law or court procedure at a college or university. You do not have to go to law school. There are many courses in paralegal studies, criminal justice, administration of justice, and related majors and minors that will help you learn what you need.
 - Observe (in person and online) many different types of court proceedings and related events in courthouses. These could also include mediation and hearings presided over by arbitrators and hearing officers. You will, of course, take notes on terminology and procedure.
 - Buy or borrow from a friend, colleague, or library as many as possible of the bilingual, English-Arabic references listed in Appendix B.
 - Download as many bilingual English-Arabic glossaries of legal terms as you can find.
 - Begin compiling your own list of key terms and make sure you learn what they mean.
- **Learn how each of those terms should be rendered in Arabic**
 - Buy or borrow from a friend, colleague, or library as many as possible of the Arabic-language references listed in Appendix B.
 - Download as many bilingual Arabic-English glossaries of legal terms as you can find.
 - Develop equivalents (translations) for each of the terms in the *Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology*. If possible, do this collaboratively as a team effort with peers.

- Use translation (Arabic→English and English→Arabic) of legal documents for practice. If possible, ask someone with legal and/or interpreting experience to review your translations and mentor you on appropriate usage.

Develop Interpreting Skills in the Three Modes of Interpretation

Once you have a solid base in the two languages, then you can start developing the basic skills in sight, consecutive, and simultaneous interpretation. Here are some of the ways you can do this:

- **Take courses in Arabic→English, English→Arabic translation.**

Interpretation, which involves oral or signed communication, and translation, which involves only written documents, are related but separate professions. Still, studying translation provides an excellent foundation for developing skills in interpretation. Some experts even claim that training in translation should precede taking courses in interpretation. Theories and techniques for finding equivalents and understanding the challenges of producing equivalency across languages provide an excellent foundation for interpreters. Following are the courses known to the authors:

- [Kent State University](#), College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Modern and Classical Language Studies, Institute for Applied Linguistics: MA in Arabic Translation; (330) 672-2150, -1792.
- [New York University](#), New York, New York: Professional Diploma in Translating for the Globalized Market (English/Arabic).
- [University of Ottawa](#), Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: (613) 562- 5719; Arabic-English Translation Program.
- [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee](#): (414) 229-5968; Graduate Certificate available in Arabic.

- **Take courses in Arabic→English, English→Arabic interpretation.**

The following are the courses/programs known to the authors (some are online programs):

- [International Medical Interpreters Association](#) (IMIA), Lexington, Massachusetts: (316) 217-0198.
- [Interpreter Education Online](#), Hamtramck, MI: (313) 481-4985.
- [LA Institute of Translation and Interpretation](#), Interpreting School for Prospective Arabic Court Certified Interpreters, Los Angeles, California: (212) 368-0700.
- [Language Connections LLC](#), Boston, MA: (617) 277-1990.
- [York University, Glendon College](#), School of Translation, Toronto, Ontario, Canada: (416) 736-2100, x. 88215; Master of Conference Interpreting.

- **Buy or borrow Arabic-English interpretation materials and practice all the exercises provided.**

One of the best ways to develop skills is to practice with a small group of prospective Arabic interpreters or a mentor so you can receive honest, objective feedback. The only available material known to the authors at this time is the following:

- [Arabic: Two-Tone CDs, English-Arabic](#). This CD contains source material for the interpreter to practice as well a model interpretation of that same material by an expert interpreter. The source material is on the left track of the tape, and the interpretation is on the right track. The source material consists primarily of jury instructions and is available from Acebo.

- **Buy or borrow language-neutral practice materials and practice all their exercises.**

This also is most useful when done with peers or mentors. Following are some available materials:

- Acebo, Inc.: [The Interpreter's Edge](#), Generic Edition. This consists of a paperback book and a set of five one-hour CDs to help develop interpreting skills from English into any other language. It provides English-language source materials designed to provide interpreters and interpreting students with training in all the requisite techniques of court interpreting.
 - Administrative Office of the [New Jersey] Courts, [AOC Simultaneous Interpreting Practice Exercises](#). This is a free kit consisting of a manual and oral exercises.
 - National Center for State Courts, [Practice Examination Kit in English](#).
 - Language Neutral Court Interpreter Program. Live, on-line course available from [De La Mora Interpreter Training](#). Six sessions of 90 minutes each.
 - The National Court Reporters Association has issued numerous CDs at differing speeds to help court reporters build transcription skills. Some are also helpful tools for simultaneous interpreting practice into any language. Look through the Speed Building CDs available through the NCRA Store (under the Resource Center tab).
 - Professional organizations such the [American Translators Association](#) (ATA) and the [National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators](#) (NAJIT) are excellent resources.
- **Use resources such as TV, radio and online platforms to practice simultaneous interpretation.**
 - Radio broadcasts such as news and interviews on National Public Radio and other stations.
 - Television shows with a lot of narrative, especially news broadcasts and documentaries.
 - Actual court trials and other legal proceedings (but probably not appellate arguments) available via “live audio streaming,” live or archived video, and cable television.

What Do the Arabic Court Interpreting Performance Tests Look Like and How Are They Administered? What Should Candidates Keep in Mind When Taking the Tests?

There are three sections to the test, one for each of the modes of interpretation: sight, consecutive and simultaneous. The exams are administered by a trained proctor who is neither an interpreter nor a speaker of Arabic.

Please be aware that states vary in the ways in which they administer court interpreting performance tests. We use New Jersey here as an example. For information about court interpreting performance testing in other states, please visit the [National Center for State Courts website](#).

The testing model followed in New Jersey is based on the principles outlined above providing for—

1. MSA to be the primary form of Arabic to be used in the sight and simultaneous sections of the exam (both for the source language material to be interpreted from and for when interpreting from English into Arabic). Therefore this exam must be taken by every candidate who wishes to work in any colloquial variety of Arabic;

and

2. One of the four colloquial dialects to be the primary language used in the consecutive section (informal English questions should be interpreted into the colloquial dialect and the witness' answers will be provided by native speakers using primarily the colloquial dialect).

New Jersey keeps separate the sections (sight and simultaneous) that focus primarily on MSA from the section (consecutive) that focuses primarily on the four major colloquial varieties of Arabic, treating them as if they were different languages. The sight and simultaneous sections, which, taken together, constitute the exam for MSA, are administered first. Once the MSA exam has been administered, the proctor will administer the consecutive exam in Egyptian Colloquial and/or Levantine Colloquial Arabic, depending on which exam(s) each candidate asks to take. Candidates in New Jersey must apply specifically for each of the exams separately: the MSA exam, the Egyptian Colloquial exam, and/or the Levantine Colloquial exam. At the time of this edition, there is no exam for Arabian Peninsula or North African Colloquial Arabic.

Candidates who wish to work in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic must take that consecutive exam and those who wish to work in Levantine Colloquial Arabic must take that consecutive exam. Candidates who wish to take both the Egyptian Colloquial and Levantine Colloquial tests will ordinarily be scheduled to take these exams on the same day. However, if any candidate would prefer to take the two tests on separate dates, this arrangement will be permitted upon request by the candidate.

Anyone who wants to work only in one or both of the other two varieties of colloquial Arabic (Arabian Peninsula and North African) will take only the MSA exam because there is not yet an exam for either. It is hoped that exams in both will eventually be developed. When exams do become available, anyone who has already registered to work in these

dialects will be required to take the corresponding exam or exams to continue working in the corresponding colloquial dialect(s).

For further information on New Jersey's classification system for those languages which do not have an oral exam, please read "[How These Interpreters are Classified](#)," posted at our website. Please note that the Spoken English Test referred to in that document is not required for Arabic interpreters.

Sight Section

The sight section of the exam has two parts. There are two documents, one written in English and the other in MSA. Each one is less than one page long, double-spaced, and contains 200-225 words.

Each document is a type of document that a court interpreter could encounter in her/his work. The English document, for example, may be from a police report, a presentence report, or any other report written for a judge. The MSA document could be a formal letter written to a judge (such as a character reference letter or victim impact statement submitted for consideration at sentencing) or a legal document originating in an Arabic-speaking country.

The English-to-MSA part is administered first. Once the English-to-MSA exam is finished, the candidate may take a brief break. Then the proctor will proceed to administer the MSA-to-English part.

Candidates will hear the following instructions:

We will begin with the sight translations. The first document is written in English and you will sight interpret it into Modern Standard Arabic. This is also known in English as "Classical Arabic" or, in Arabic, as "al-fus'ha". "Modern Standard Arabic" is the Arabic you use for formal reading and writing, as well as for formal situations like a courtroom trial, a news broadcast, or a lecture. However, when the style of English is informal or colloquial, you may interpret into any dialect of Arabic using the kind of Arabic spoken by ordinary people in their everyday lives instead of Modern Standard Arabic.

Interpret everything you see on the page into Arabic as previously instructed. We recommend that you read through and study the entire document before beginning your interpretation. You will have up to two minutes for that review. I will tell you when half of your review time has passed to help you budget your allotted time. Please do not fold or write on the document, but you may make notes on the pad if you wish. You may start interpreting whenever you like, but if you have not begun interpreting after two minutes, I will ask you to start. You will then have four minutes in which to complete your interpretation of the document. Do you have any questions?

Both parts of the sight section are timed. As the preceding instructions indicate, the candidate has up to two minutes to review the document before starting to interpret. Candidates may begin interpreting at any time, but once two minutes have passed, the proctor will instruct the candidate to commence the interpretation. Four minutes are then allowed for rendering the interpretation of each document from the time the candidate

begins to interpret. The proctor uses a stopwatch to monitor the time. If you have not finished by the end of the time allotted, the proctor will stop you and you may not resume interpreting this part of the exam.

You should interpret the majority of the text of the English part into MSA. Where the English text is informal or colloquial, interpret into the colloquial dialect of Arabic with which you are most familiar (i.e., the type of Arabic spoken by ordinary people in their everyday lives.¹

Here are the actual instructions you will hear when you take the MSA-to-English portion of the sight exam:

This time you will go the other way, from Modern Standard Arabic into English. Again, interpret everything you see on the page into English and please begin as soon as you like. I will tell you to begin interpreting if you do not start after two minutes. You will again have four minutes to interpret the document.

Suggestions to Remember When Taking the Sight Section

- Read all the way through each document BEFORE beginning to interpret.
- Make notes of solutions while reading and refer to them when delivering your interpretation. Keep in mind that once the exam is over, candidates are not allowed to take the notes with them.
- Interpret everything you see on the page; do not leave out anything.
- Deliver the interpretation in a smooth, even pace. A choppy delivery is not professional.
- Do not fill pauses in your interpretation with “ums” or “ahs”. When you need a moment to think, a brief period of silence is more professional.
- Do not speed through your rendition. The time allotted is ample for a competent interpreter. There is no reward for speed. At the same time, strive to avoid long pauses.
- If you need reading glasses, bring them with you to the exam and put them on before you start the sight section.
- If you cannot find the right word or phrase in MSA, it is acceptable to use an appropriate word or phrase in an Arabic dialect and such renderings will not be counted wrong.
- Do not write on or fold the written test document.

¹Dr. Bergman provides the following examples: “Formal English differs from informal English in the same ways the MSA differs from the varieties. That is, the varieties differ in diction, grammar, and vocabulary. The diction of formal English is slower and more precise than that of informal English. Word boundaries are clearer, so that words are not slurred together. The grammar of formal English differs from that of informal English. The most noticeable difference is in contractions (I’d, shouldn’t, etc.). They are common in informal English, where the uncontracted forms (I would, should not) are more common in formal English. The other most noticeable difference is in vocabulary. Formal English has ‘person’ or ‘individual’ where informal English has ‘guy,’ for example.” July 5, 2005 e-mail to Robert Joe Lee.

Simultaneous Section

Let's start with two important points. First, most candidates, regardless of language, experience simultaneous interpretation as the most difficult section of the test. Table One, which was compiled from the court interpreter testing databases maintained by the New Jersey Judiciary, provides the data to support that conclusion. It includes all test outcomes for tests in most languages tested from 1987 through the end of 2016.²

**TABLE ONE
SCORES ON THE THREE SECTIONS OF COURT INTERPRETING EXAMS**

LANGUAGE ³	AVERAGE SCORE AND % OF CANDIDATES SCORING 70 OR HIGHER ON EACH TEST SECTION					
	Sight		Consecutive		Simultaneous	
	Average Score	% at 70%+	Average Score	% at 70%+	Average Score	% at 70%+
Arabic, Modern Standard	58	25	Not applicable		35	5
French	73	58	65	40	42	14
Haitian Creole	70	50	62	28	45	11
Italian	85	95	75	71	50	12
Korean	62	24	66	39	41	7
Mandarin	72	78	65	29	44	9
Polish	83	91	75	78	42	18
Portuguese	79	75	69	54	47	18
Russian	75	74	70	54	48	12
Spanish	61	39	59	29	43	13
Vietnamese	54	12	59	33	31	4

The most obvious implication for candidates is that you really need to focus especially on your simultaneous interpreting skills to prepare for this portion of the exam. Most people can perform sight and consecutive interpretation with some practice. For most candidates, learning to perform simultaneous interpreting takes much more time and effort than mastering the other modes of interpretation.

²This is also borne out in other states as well as the Federal court interpreter certification programs. See Wanda Romberger, *Skills Training for Foreign-Language Court Interpreters: Does It Increase the Number of Qualified Interpreters?* (p. 23).

³New Jersey tests in other languages besides these, but statistics for languages for which there have been fewer than 15 examinees or for which there is only an abbreviated exam (which includes only the simultaneous section), are not reported here.

Second, simultaneous interpretation is indeed possible from English into MSA. Interpreters of many languages, including some Arabic-English interpreters, believe that the differences in syntax and lexicon make simultaneous interpretation impossible. The statistics provided in Table Two, again from New Jersey and for the same time period, show that it is indeed possible to perform simultaneous interpretation from English into very dissimilar languages, although it is also true that there is some evidence that it is easier to perform simultaneous interpretation into some languages than others.

**TABLE TWO
HIGHEST SCORES REACHED ON THE SIMULTANEOUS SECTION
FOR VARIOUS LANGUAGES**

LANGUAGE (Number of Candidates)	HIGHEST SCORE EVER REACHED ON THE SIMULTANEOUS SECTION
Arabic, Modern Standard (109)	78
Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian (16)	97
Cantonese (13)	72
French (73)	91
German (9)	65
Haitian Creole (136)	86
Italian (41)	87
Korean (86)	93
Mandarin (55)	89
Polish (121)	96
Portuguese (168)	90
Russian (132)	91
Spanish (2,537)	96
Turkish (22)	75
Vietnamese (29)	79

The most obvious implication for candidates is that simultaneous interpretation is indeed possible from English into MSA. It requires a considerable amount of sophistication in knowledge of the two languages as well as skill in the performance of this mode of interpretation. Knowledge and skill at this level can ordinarily be attained only through extensive training and practice. Do not allow yourself to believe in or be held back by the suspicion or belief that simultaneous interpretation from English into MSA is impossible - it is possible.

The material in the simultaneous section of the exam is an average, general type of legal proceeding a court interpreter typically encounters. It does not include highly technical material such as testimony by expert witnesses. It could consist of an opening or closing argument in a civil or criminal matter; witness testimony, with both questions and answers (where the witness is a speaker of English), or both.

The simultaneous section of the exam has been prerecorded and is administered via a laptop (some states may still use CD players). The proctor will give you a set of headphones that are plugged into the computer. After the proctor has read all the instructions and you indicate that you are ready to begin, the proctor starts playing the recording.

Here are the actual instructions the proctor will read to you when you take the simultaneous section of the exam:

I will now administer the simultaneous interpreting section. As you know, in simultaneous interpreting, you will interpret only from English into Arabic.

The test has been pre-recorded and you will listen to it through headphones while interpreting aloud so that your interpretation is recorded on the [digital/tape] recorder. Once the test begins, we are not permitted to stop the test. If you ask to have the test stopped, I will encourage you to continue. If you repeat your request to stop the test, I will stop the player and the remainder of the examination will be counted as incorrect.

There is a little more than one minute of introduction and instructions at the beginning of the recording to allow you to adjust the headphones and volume.

Here is the volume control, please adjust it as necessary. You may do so at any time or as many times as you wish.

Interpret what you hear into what we call Modern Standard Arabic and is also known as “Classical Arabic” or “al-fus’Ha” [pronounced al-foos-Hah] as we described it in the sight section of the test. However, when the style of English is informal or colloquial, you should interpret into a dialect of Arabic using the kind of Arabic spoken by ordinary people in their everyday lives instead of Modern Standard Arabic. When you interpret into an Arabic dialect, you may interpret into any dialect you choose.

The first thing you will hear on that recording is an introduction. It lasts about one minute and is not a part of the test. That introduction reminds you of most of the instructions you have already heard from the proctor. It also gives you a chance to adjust the volume before starting, but you may also adjust the volume at any time during the test. You can also make sure there are no problems with the headphones before the test portion of the recording begins.

The introduction is followed by a five-second pause of silence. As soon as you hear someone start speaking after that pause, you should immediately start interpreting simultaneously into MSA everything you hear. One or more persons will be speaking in English for approximately seven minutes. There are no pauses or breaks; English speakers continue on the recording without hesitation or pauses and you need to do your best to keep up. You’ll know when this section of the test is over when you hear, “**The test is over.**”

The recording cannot be stopped while you are taking the simultaneous section of the exam. You have to keep up with the English material. If you stop interpreting and ask the proctor to stop the test, the proctor will confirm that you want to end the exam. If you do stop, the test will be terminated at that point and everything in the balance of the exam will be counted wrong.

The simultaneous section has between 800 and 850 words and is recorded at a speed of approximately 120 words per minute. This is not fast, although it may seem fast when you are taking the exam, given the role nerves and anxiety can play. In fact, it is fairly slow when compared to the average speed with which English is spoken either in ordinary discourse or in the courtroom.

Most of the English material you will hear is formal English, which is characteristic of what you would hear from judges and attorneys in an American courtroom. When the material is that kind of English, you will interpret simultaneously into MSA.

Some of the English may be in an informal or colloquial style. When you hear such informal or colloquial English, you should interpret that into the colloquial dialect of Arabic with which you are most familiar, i.e., the type of Arabic spoken by ordinary people in their everyday lives.

Suggestions to Remember When Taking the Simultaneous Section

- Keep up with the source material as best you can. Maintain the pace.
- Don't let one word throw you off. If you don't know it or don't know how to interpret it, leave it out and keep going.
- If you get lost or fall behind, take a deep breath and resume interpreting as soon as you can. Missing a few words here and there will not cause you to fail the entire exam.
- If it's helpful, take notes to support your interpretation. Keep in mind that once the exam is over, candidates are not allowed to take the notes with them.
- If you cannot find the right word or phrase in MSA, it is acceptable to use an appropriate word or phrase in colloquial Arabic.
- If you know more than one way to interpret a word or expression, use the first one that comes to mind. Do not deliver a string of synonyms or attempt to be overly precise as doing so will result in your falling behind.

Consecutive Section

The consecutive section has also been recorded in digital form. When the recording is produced, native speakers of English play the role of the judge or attorney who is asking the questions. Likewise, native speakers of the pertinent colloquial dialect of Arabic play the role of the witness or defendant who is testifying. The test material has been recorded at an even, consistent pace and is neither particularly slow nor particularly fast.

It does not include highly technical material such as testimony by expert witnesses. It could be from either a civil or a criminal case.

There are 850-950 words total in this section. Most of the material to be interpreted is in one colloquial dialect of Arabic; less than half is in English.

The utterances differ in length, from very short to relatively long. They may be as short as one word and as long as 50 words. The scoring units (see below for how the test is graded) are distributed throughout the consecutive exam according to the length of utterances. The reason for this is to ensure that candidates demonstrate their ability to handle varying lengths of utterances. Here is the distribution of scoring units according to the length of utterances in which they are embedded:

<u>Length of Utterance</u>	<u>Distribution of Scoring Units</u>
1-10 words	10% in each source language
11-20 words	25% in each source language
21-30 words	30% in each source language
31-40 words	25% in each source language
41-50 words	10% in each source language

Here's how the consecutive section is actually administered.

1. The proctor reads instructions (see below for some of the actual text you will hear) about how the consecutive will be administered.
2. The proctor confirms that you are ready and begins the consecutive exam.
3. The proctor will play the first track on the laptop. It is a question or statement in English.
4. The proctor pauses the laptop.
5. You interpret that utterance into the dialect of colloquial Arabic in which the exam has been prepared (see below for more specific guidance).
6. The proctor plays the next track, which is usually the witness answering the question in the appropriate dialect of colloquial Arabic.
7. The proctor pauses the laptop.
8. You interpret that utterance into English.

That is the basic sequence throughout most of the consecutive section. However, there may be some instances when you will hear two consecutive utterances in English or two consecutive utterances by the witness or party.

Finally, keep in mind that **you will be able to ask for two utterances to be repeated**. You will be reminded about this right before the proctor plays the first utterance of the exam. Use the two repetitions wisely, which means for most candidates requesting repeats of longer or more complex utterances.

Specific Guidance for the Egyptian Colloquial Exam

The Arabic-speaking witness you will hear is from Egypt and will be speaking Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. By that we mean the Arabic dialect spoken in Egypt and parts of the Sudan.

Most of the questions are asked in a relatively informal register of English. You should interpret those questions into Egyptian Colloquial Arabic.

Some of the questions are spoken in a more formal register of English. You may interpret those into either MSA or Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. The choice of Arabic is up to you; any accurate and faithful interpretation in **either** will be accepted and you will not be penalized for your choice.

When interpreting the witness's answers into English, interpret testimony given in MSA into formal English. When the witness speaks in an informal, colloquial, or slangy style of Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, use a similarly informal, colloquial, or slangy style of English.

Here are the actual instructions the proctor will read to you when you take the Egyptian Colloquial Arabic exam:

This is an exam for measuring the ability to interpret in the consecutive mode between English and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. The person asking the questions in English is a prosecutor. The witness is a crime victim raised in Egypt who testifies primarily in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. That is the Arabic dialect spoken in Egypt and the Sudan.

Some of the questions are asked in a relatively informal register of English. Interpret those questions into Egyptian Colloquial Arabic.

Other questions are phrased in a more formal style of English. You may interpret them into either Modern Standard Arabic, which is also called "Classical Arabic" or al-fus-Ha, or into Egyptian Colloquial. The choice of Arabic is up to you.

When the witness speaks in an informal, colloquial, or slangy style of Arabic, use an informal, colloquial or slangy style of English. When the witness answers in Modern Standard Arabic, interpret his testimony into formal English.

I will begin the test by playing the first question. Then I will pause the recording for you to interpret. When you have finished interpreting, I will play the witness's answer in Egyptian Colloquial Arabic. Then I will pause the recording for you to interpret. This will continue throughout the test, with you acting as the interpreter.

There are many segments consisting of more than one sentence. Begin your interpretation when the speaker has finished speaking. You may not stop the speaker, or ask for clarification.

You may ask for two repetitions. That is two repetitions during the entire consecutive portion of the exam, not two for each passage. These tent cards will give you a visual reminder of how many repetitions you have left.

You have 18 minutes to complete this exam, so it's in your best interest to maintain the pace. You have a pad and pencils to take notes if you like. Please feel free to use them.

Remember that you are interpreting from English into Egyptian Colloquial Arabic and from Egyptian Colloquial Arabic into English. The first thing you will hear is a question in English. Begin interpreting as soon as the speaker has finished speaking.

Do you have any questions?

Then let's begin.

Specific Guidance for the Levantine Colloquial Exam

The Arabic-speaking witness you will hear is from Lebanon and will be speaking Levantine Colloquial Arabic. This is the Arabic dialect spoken in the “Mashriq,” which is spoken in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria, as well as by Arabs in Israel.

Most of the questions are asked in a relatively informal register of English. You should interpret those questions into Levantine Colloquial/Mashriqi Arabic.

Some of the questions are phrased in a more formal style of English. You may interpret those into either MSA or Levantine Colloquial/Mashriqi Arabic. The choice of Arabic is up to you; in this section of the exam, you will not be penalized for your choice.

When interpreting the witness's answers into English, interpret testimony given in MSA into formal English. When the witness speaks in an informal, colloquial, or slangy style of Levantine Colloquial Arabic, use an informal, colloquial, or slangy style of English.

The instructions the proctor will read to you are identical to the instructions for the Egyptian Colloquial Arabic exam provided above, except you will hear “Levantine Colloquial Arabic” instead of “Egyptian Colloquial Arabic.”

Suggestions to Remember When Taking the Consecutive Section

- Strive to understand when to use formal English or Arabic (MSA) and when to use informal English or Arabic (colloquial Arabic or slang) and interpret accordingly, but do not let this interfere with a fluid rendition of your interpretation.
- Develop a note-taking system before you take the exam. Use your system to take notes during the exam to supplement your short-term memory. Note-taking is an essential skill for performing the consecutive mode professionally and competently. Keep in mind that once the exam is over, candidates are not allowed to take the notes with them.
- Use your repeats, but use them wisely. If you use them early in the exam on short utterances, they won't be available if you struggle with long ones.

What Should I Know about Interpreting English Legal Terms into Arabic?

When interpreting legal terminology from English, you will ordinarily be using equivalents in MSA. You need to exercise caution, however, to make sure that the MSA word or phrase really means the same thing as the English source term. The goal is to find and use equivalent terminology in Arabic for common legal terms used in American courts. However, since the legal systems are different in many key ways, sometimes there is no real equivalent in MSA. When there is no equivalent term or phrase in MSA, you may use a simple descriptive phrase instead that conveys the basic meaning (e.g., “jury” could be something like “the 12 people who decide the case”).

How Are the Arabic Court Interpreting Performance Tests Developed and Graded?

How Are Tests Developed?

All exams, regardless of language or section of the exam, are structured and graded the same way. A very complex process prescribed by the *Test Construction Manual* (the link to this document is provided below) ensures that all exams are constructed the same way, are valid and reliable, and have similar levels of difficulty.

The consecutive and simultaneous sections of exams are based on actual courtroom transcripts. When possible, the base texts for the sight materials are authentic documents from each source language used in court cases.

Teams of trained experts develop the tests, which involves editing the materials selected according to the specifications set forth in the test construction policy document mentioned above. Within the text, the experts select specific words and phrases to be *scoring units*. Candidates taking the test never know what specific words or phrases have been selected as scoring units. A list of the ten categories of scoring units is provided in Appendix C.

To illustrate the concept of scoring units, consider the following simple sentence: “I saw a tall, red-headed man sitting in the driver’s seat of the Toyota Echo.” In theory, any of the words individually and some of the various combinations of words appearing in that text could be a scoring unit as shown in the following examples (scoring units are designated in bold and italics). Note: this is not an exhaustive listing of possible scoring units in the sample sentence.

1. ***I saw*** could be a measure of Grammar in at least two ways:
 - a. Subject/verb agreement; or
 - b. Use of past tense (instead of any other tense).
2. ***Tall*** or ***red-headed*** could be a measure of:
 - a. Markers, Intensifiers, Emphasis and Precision (are the descriptors which provide specific information about the man accurately interpreted?); or
 - b. Either (but not both) ***tall*** or ***red-headed*** could be selected as a scoring unit likely to be left out as they constitute a string of modifiers and interpreters sometimes leave one or the other one out (this is referred to as Embeddings and Position).
3. ***Sitting in*** could be a measure again of Grammar, or it could be, depending on the language being interpreted into, an awkward phrasing that requires some other form in the target language for which one would want to measure the candidate’s ability to avoid Language Interference (including literal interpretation).
4. ***Driver’s seat*** could be General Vocabulary.
5. ***Toyota Echo*** could be a proper name to be tested under the category of Names and Numbers to ensure that it is handled properly (note: proper names are not interpreted into the other language).

Who Grades the Exams?

The raters who grade the exams are selected because of their linguistic expertise, professional experience, and ability to follow the established rating standards. Before they grade any exams, they undergo considerable training. Most raters are practicing, experienced court interpreters; a few are linguistic scholars with advanced degrees (e.g., a Ph.D. in linguistics, with a specialization in the language of the test). When two novice raters are paired to rate a set of exams, they are guided by a rating supervisor. Raters who have reached a certain level of expertise rate exams without a rating supervisor.

For further details about how test writers and raters are selected, trained, and perform their duties, see the following documents, which are available at the [NCSC’s website](#).

- *Test Construction Manual*
- *Test Rating Manual*

How Do the Raters Grade the Exams?

When rating exams, a team of two raters works from recordings of each candidate's exam. The identities of candidates whose exams are being rated are not provided and the raters, therefore, know nothing about the candidates whose exams they are scoring. When possible, raters do not even know which jurisdiction's exams are being rated.

The raters individually listen to the sound recording of the exam and preliminarily mark the incorrectly interpreted scoring units. Then they compare their scoring with each other in what's called a consensus rating session and must agree any time a scoring unit is to be rated as incorrect. The raters make their determinations that individual scoring units are incorrect in accordance with a dictionary of acceptable and unacceptable renderings that was prepared by the test writers and which is periodically updated. When a rendering is provided by a candidate that does not appear in that dictionary, the raters conduct research and make recommendations as to additions to the dictionary.

Each scoring unit is assessed as being correct or incorrect. A scoring unit can be incorrect for many different reasons, but the most common examples of scoring units that are marked wrong are that they are (1) left out in part or altogether or (2) incorrectly interpreted (e.g., \$2,500 is interpreted as \$250).⁴

Scores are calculated by dividing the number of scoring units correctly interpreted by the number of scoring units in that portion of the exam. For example, if a candidate has accurately interpreted 65 of the 75 scoring units in the simultaneous section, the score is calculated as follows: $65 \div 75 = .867$, or 87%.

Please note that raters do not routinely mark scoring units as incorrect when an examinee uses an inappropriate variety of Arabic. However, in the sight and simultaneous portions of the exam, it is generally discouraged to use any form of Arabic other than MSA, except when the register dictates otherwise. The raters may make an exception if the examinee uses an inappropriate variety of Arabic in one or two instances, but will count a rendering incorrect if it is consistently used throughout the exam. For example, the source text may say "he wishes to". The examinee may interpret "he wishes to" into MSA as *yuriidu 'an* or into Egyptian Colloquial Arabic as *'aawiz* or *'aayiz*. Both the MSA and the Egyptian Colloquial Arabic interpretation would be marked correct. If you consistently interpret formal English into a colloquial dialect of Arabic instead of into Modern Standard Arabic, you should be aware, as the raters will be, that your language skills and professionalism need improvement.

⁴ For a fuller discussion of the kinds of mistakes candidates taking court interpreter certification exams tend to make, see [Common Oral Interpreting Exam Performance Deficiencies](#).

What Are the Requirements for Being Approved to Work as an Arabic Court Interpreter in New Jersey and How Are Arabic Court Interpreters Classified?

There are two steps that are shared with interpreters of all other spoken languages. The first step is the [Written Exam](#), on which candidates must score 70% or higher to be able to proceed to the second step.

The next step is to register for and successfully complete the one-day [Orientation Seminar](#).

The final stage of the approval process consists of the [oral exams](#) which test candidates' ability to perform the duties of court interpretation, as described above. For Arabic interpreters who wish to work in either Egyptian Colloquial or Levantine Colloquial Arabic, New Jersey classifies Arabic interpreters on the basis of their scores on three tests: the written test, both of the MSA sections of the oral performance test, and the colloquial dialect section(s) of the oral performance test. Table Three illustrates the various possibilities for interpreters who wish to work in either Egyptian Colloquial or Levantine Colloquial.

**TABLE THREE:
TEST SCORES REQUIRED TO BE
ELIGIBLE TO WORK IN THE NEW JERSEY COURTS
AS AN ARABIC COURT INTERPRETER
AT THE THREE CLASSIFICATION LEVELS AVAILABLE**

CLASSIFICATION LEVEL	SCORES ON TESTS, TEST SECTIONS, AND TEST PARTS				
	Written	Modern Standard Arabic			Egyptian/ Levantine Colloquial
		Sight Section		Simultaneous Section	
		English→MSA Part	MSA→English Part		
Pass—Master	85-100	80-100	80-100	80-100	80-100
Pass— Journeyman	80-84	65+	65+	70+	70+
		And average of 70+ on both			
Fail—Conditionally Approved	70-79	50+	50+	50+	55+
		And average of 55 over all three			

A candidate's final classification is based upon the candidate's lowest score across these three exams. For example, if a candidate fails the written test at the Conditionally-Approved level but passes the MSA and colloquial exam at the Master level, that interpreter will be classified at the Conditionally-Approved level. Similarly, if a candidate scores at the Master level on the written test but at the Conditionally-Approved level on the MSA exam and Journeyman level on the colloquial exam, that interpreter's classification will be Conditionally Approved.

Any candidate who fails any one of the exams at below the Conditionally Approved level will not be invited to register as a contract interpreter and is therefore ineligible to work as a court interpreter in New Jersey.

Arabic interpreters who wish to work in Arabian Peninsula Colloquial Arabic and North African Colloquial Arabic are classified according to their scores on the written test and the MSA test. The same test scores as identified in the preceding table apply, except that the last column is obviously irrelevant at this point since no exam is available for these additional two language groups. NOTE: No Arabic interpreter is listed in the Registry of contract interpreters for MSA because all Arabic court interpreters must be able to interpret MSA and because court interpreting assignments are made on the basis of the dialect spoken by the court customer who requires Arabic interpretation services.

Can I Take the Test Again?

Any candidate who does not reach an outcome level that permits him or her to work as a contract interpreter (see previous section) or wishes to be retested in the hopes of reaching a higher classification may ordinarily be retested after one year has passed. The written test, however, may be taken no more than four times. As to the oral performance tests, candidates who reach the Master level on one of the sections do not have to take that section or those sections again. For example, if a candidate has reached the Master level on the written and MSA exams, but only the Conditionally Approved level on a colloquial Arabic exam, then that candidate does not have to retake either the written or the MSA exam and will retake only the colloquial Arabic exam.

The authors hope that you find this document helpful in guiding you to success in the field of court interpretation. They also welcome any feedback on this document, suggestions on how to improve it, or references to other resources that may help future candidates. Please write us at rjlee@courtinterpretingresearch.com.

APPENDIX A

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES (KSAs) FOR THE PROFESSION OF COURT INTERPRETATION

Another way to consider the KSAs of court interpreters is the comprehensive itemization issued in 2007 by a research report commissioned by the Judicial Council of California.⁵ The KSAs they determined to be “essential for the performance of court interpretation” appear below.⁶ Again, please ask yourself two questions about **each** KSA: (1) Do I currently have this KSA? (2) If not, what am I willing and able to do to develop competency in each of these KSAs?

Linguistic Skills

- Native-like proficiency in all working languages;
- Ability to think and react communicatively in all working languages;
- Knowledge and use of a broad range of vocabulary, including legal terminology, subject-specific terminology, and slang; and
- Knowledge and use of cultural nuances, regional variations, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms in all working languages.

Speaking Skills

- Ability to speak with proper pronunciation, diction, and intonation in all working languages;
- Ability to speak with a neutralized accent in all working languages; and
- Ability to project and/or speak softly.

Listening Comprehension Skills

- Ability to listen to and comprehend different rates of speech in all working languages;
- Ability to listen to and comprehend various regional accents and/or dialect differences in all working languages; and
- Ability to ignore auditory distractions and focus on source speaker.

Reading Comprehension Skills

- Ability to read and comprehend overall meaning and specific details of written text in all working languages.
- Ability to read and recognize various written contexts, including formal and informal text, subject-specific vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms; and
- Ability to read quickly and with little preparation.

Interpreting Skills

- Ability to concentrate and focus;
- Ability to process linguistic information quickly;
- Ability to make quick linguistic decisions regarding word choice or terminology selection;
- Ability to apply short-term memory skills in retaining small units of information;
- Ability to think analytically;

⁵ *Study of California's Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing*, 2007.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

- Ability to utilize predictive thinking skills to anticipate incoming messages;
- Ability to convey meaning;
- Ability to provide transference from one language to another;
- Ability to preserve accuracy;
- Ability to select appropriate equivalents for vocabulary or phrases;
- Ability to accommodate for lack of equivalents in vocabulary or phrases;
- Ability to conserve intent, tone, style, and utterances of all messages;
- Ability to reflect register; and
- Ability to self-monitor and self-correct.

Behavioral Skills

- Ability to practice and follow ethical standards;
- Ability to conduct business in a professional manner;
- Knowledge and awareness of cultural aspects that affect language;
- Ability to work in various settings, situations, or conditions;
- Ability to project self-confidence and self-awareness when interpreting; and
- Knowledge and continued learning of social, technological, and legal changes that affect language.

In his comments on that report to the Judicial Council of California, Robert Joe Lee⁷ identified several additional KSAs that you should also consider as vital to the day-to-day work of an Arabic court interpreter:

- Ability to exercise situational control appropriately (e.g., knowing how to handle impediments to performing court interpreting duties and having the fortitude to do so);
- Ability to switch back and forth among the various modes of interpretation appropriately;
- Ability to use note-taking techniques effectively to supplement short-term memory;
- Ability to work effectively and productively on a team of interpreters (teams of two or more interpreters are important if not essential in proceedings that last two hours or longer);
- Ability to prepare for assignments, including knowing when and how to request appropriate information;
- Ability to use equipment appropriately, especially simultaneous and telephone interpreting devices; and
- Ability to use professional judgment flowing from professional codes of conduct and conform one's practice to the interpreter's role and functions.

⁷ "Comments on the Study of California's Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing," December 14, 2007.

APPENDIX B: DICTIONARIES AND OTHER SOURCES FOR TERMINOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

General Bibliography of Dictionaries

Bibliography of Arabic Dictionaries, compiled by John. E. Hinton. Available at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/data/indiv/Mideast/cuvlm/AraBib>

Comprehensive Monolingual Arabic Dictionary

Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasiit (Arabic-Arabic Lexicon). Cairo: Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah, 1980.

Also useful:

The Hans-Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic.

Editor: J.M. Cowan.

Publisher: Spoken Language Services, Inc., Ithaca, NY

Comprehensive General Bilingual Dictionary

Al-Mawrid (English-Arabic/ Arabic-English dictionary)

ASIN: 1894412974

Publisher: Dar El Ilm Lilmalayin.

Date: March 1998 (or most recent edition)

Al-Mawrid 2002: A Modern English-Arabic Dictionary

ISBN: 9953900426

Publisher: Librairie Du Moyen-Orient

Pub. Date: 2001 (or most recent edition)

Monolingual Legal Dictionaries in Arabic

General legal:

Mawsuu'at al-qadaa' wa-al-fiqh lil-duwal al-'Arabiyya. 3 vols. Cairo: al-Daar al-'Arabiyya lil-Mawsuu'aat al-Qaanuuniyya, 1975-1976.

Criminal law:

Abuu Zayd, Ma'muud. *al-Mu'jam fii 'ilm al-ijraam wa-al-ijtimaa' al-qaanuunii wa-al-'iqaab*. Cairo: Daar Ghariib, 2003.

Shalaalaa, Naziih Na'iim. *al-Qaamuus al-jazaa'ii al-tahlilii = Dictionnaire pénale analytique*. Beirut: Manshuuraat al-Halabii al-huquuqiyya, 2004.

Information in Arabic about Legal Systems

1. [United Nations Development Programme](#) (do search under name of country of interest or “legal systems” or other options);
2. Reference books for Arabic available at www.aramedia.com;
3. Websites of interest:
 - a. [FindLaw – International Law](#),
 - b. [The International Human Rights Law Institute \(IHRLI\)](#),
 - c. Search under “[International Law](#)” and “[Muslim Law](#)” and whatever else you might think of,
 - d. [GloLex](#).
4. Do your own Google search in English or Arabic for websites that publish rules of procedure from Arabic-speaking countries;
5. Locate websites of Ministries of Justice and other government entities related to law and courts in Arabic-speaking countries.

Bilingual Dictionaries and Handbooks of Legal Terms

Arabic-English-Arabic Legal Translation

ISBN: 0415707536

Publisher: Routledge

Pub. Date: December 2014

Arabic-English Faruqi's Law Dictionary, 3rd ed.

ISBN: 0884310728

Publisher: I B D Ltd

Pub. Date: December 1986

(This dictionary is also available in English-Arabic)

Dictionnaire des Termes Juridiques, Français-Anglais-Arabe

Author: Dr. A. Zaki Badaoui

Publisher: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Masri, Cairo, Egypt and Dar Al-Kitab Al-

Lubnani, Beirut, Lebanon

English-Arabic Dictionary for Legal Terms Used in US Courts

Author: Walid Farhoud

Publisher: Middle East International Services, West University Center,
4500 Ninth Avenue NE, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98105; 206-295-4784;

<http://www.arabicspecialists.com/dictionary.asp>

Pub. Date: April 2008

English/Arabic Legal Glossary

Author: Samia Zumout

Publisher: Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento, 720 9th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814; 916-874-6867

Pub. Date: 2005

[Available free](#)

Law Dictionary, English-Arabic, 3rd ed.

Author: Dr. Ibrahim I. Al-Wahab

Publisher: Libraire du Liban, Riad Sol Square, Beirut, Lebanon

Pub. Date: 1988

See also [Proz.com glossary translation](#) and [Word Press legal vocabulary](#).

And please note that an increasing number of specialized legal glossaries (for example, migration and refugee resettlement, health insurance, etc.) can be found online and in print through a Google search, should your future career in legal interpretation and translation require.

APPENDIX C: SCORING UNIT DESCRIPTIONS AND TESTING GOALS⁸

SCORING UNIT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	TESTING GOAL(S)
A: Grammar	“Grammar is a system of principles that govern the way a language works. Grammar describes how words relate to each other, particularly how they function in sentences.” ⁹	Ensure that candidates recognize and, within the limits of the source and target languages, satisfactorily handle the interpretation of grammar, especially verbs.
B: Language Interference	Terms or phrases that may invite misinterpretation due to interference of one language on another (e.g., false cognates, awkward phrasing, terms or phrases susceptible to literal renditions resulting in loss of precise meaning).	1-Measure the ability to keep languages separate, speaking them as an educated native speaker would, with no interference from the other language, and 2-Measure the ability to avoid being constricted unnecessarily by the source language resulting in interpretations that are literal or verbatim.
C: General Vocabulary	Vocabulary that is widely used in ordinary parlance and could be spoken by native speakers appearing in any courtroom.	1-Measure the ability to preserve lexical content of general source language terms when interpreted into the target language, 2-Measure the depth and range of candidate’s vocabulary, and 3-Measure the ability to tap into a deep reservoir of vocabulary without hesitating or stumbling.
D: Legal Terms and Phrases	Any word or phrase of a legal or technical nature, or which is not common in everyday speech, but is commonly used in legal settings.	Measure the candidate’s range of knowledge and recognition of common legal terms and styles of language used in courtrooms and the ability to faithfully interpret them into the target language, going into both languages, but especially from English into the other language.
E: Idioms and Sayings	An <i>idiom</i> is “a speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements” ¹⁰ . <i>Sayings</i> are short expressions such as aphorisms and proverbs that are often repeated and familiar setting forth wisdom and truth.	Determine the candidate’s breadth of knowledge and understanding of a language’s common idioms and sayings, and the ability to interpret the meaning or an equivalent idiom or saying in the target language.

⁸ National Center for State Courts, Court Interpreter Certification, *Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Construction Manual, 2012*.

⁹ DiYanni, Robert, and Pat C. Hoy II. *The Scribner Handbook for Writers*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995, p. 221.

¹⁰ *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, Third Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997, p. 674.

SCORING UNIT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	TESTING GOAL(S)
F: Register	Style of language drawn upon in various social settings; a key element in expressing degrees of formality, including curses, profanity, and taboo words. Register shows, through a pattern of vocabulary and grammar, what a speaker or writer is doing with language at a given moment.	Assess the candidate's ability to preserve the level of language so that others' impression of the speaker is not raised or lowered by the interpreter and assess the candidate's ability to interpret offensive terminology.
G: Numbers and Names	Any number, measurement, or proper name.	Measure the candidate's ability to be precise and accurate with all numbers, maintain weights and measures as stated in the source language without converting them to another system (e.g., from metric to English), preserve names of businesses, streets, etc. without interpreting them (except that "Avenue," "Street," etc. may or may not be interpreted, but the actual name is not to be interpreted), and conserve every letter of a spelled name in the order uttered.
H: Markers, Intensifiers, Emphasis and Precision	Any word or phrase giving emphasis or precision to a description (e.g., adverbs, adjectives) or statement (e.g., can be grammatical in form), including time (e.g., the day after tomorrow, last night, next week).	Ensure that the various ways of marking speech are preserved so the same degree of impact and precision is conveyed to the listener of the interpretation.
I: Embeddings and Position	Words or phrases that may be omitted due to position (at the beginning or middle of a long sentence, second in a string of adjectives or adverbs) or function (tag questions).	Ensure that candidates preserve all elements of the source language, especially those that they may deem to be "unimportant," or forget due to their location or function in the utterance.
J: Slang and Colloquialisms	Slang and colloquialisms are informal, nonstandard words or phrases that are used in informal, ordinary conversation but not in formal speech or writing and are identified in standard dictionaries as "slang," "colloquialism," or "informal" or are listed in published dictionaries of slang and/or colloquialisms or in scholarly articles and books so identifying them. Slang items, which are coined by social groups, may be used in test texts only when they have passed into widespread usage across the US.	Measure the candidate's range of knowledge of nonstandard, informal forms of speech and their ability to interpret the meaning of such words and phrases without being bound to preserve their low register.

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