

e-Tips Newsletter

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Introduction to Scripts for Court Reporters - Wil Wilcox -



Eclipse has a little-known but wonderful feature that I'm excited to tell you about. It's called scripts.

Scripts were originally incorporated into the software for the benefit of broadcast captioners. Basically, a captioner takes the script from the news being read by the news anchor. Script text can be fed to the screen by the captioner, much like using a teleprompter. This text appears in the captioner's realtime window and it gets sent out with the closed captions.

You can't depend
on your eyes
when your
imagination
is out of focus.

So how does this work for judicial reporters? Jury charges are an example of text that is used over and over in the proceedings that we report. A script file is simply an Eclipse document containing text that is going to be read. Example: You can take the text file of a jury charge and use it as a script.

Unless you already have this text in an Eclipse document, say from an earlier job you did, you may need to first import this text from an ASCII or Word Document into an Eclipse document. If you only have a printed copy of the material you would like to use as script, you can scan it into a text file; but it would be easier if you can obtain an electronic version of the document. Then as the jury charge or other material is being read, if you have your cursor in your script document and press F12, that line of text will appear in your realtime screen and will also be output for the judge and/or attorney screen(s). It's as simple as that.

Please keep in mind that because of the volume of e-mail we receive and the fact that we are volunteering our time for this free newsletter, we can't routinely answer individual questions by phone or e-mail, nor can we consult on individual problems or purchasing decisions.

Any boilerplate language that is used over and over in court for pleas, sentencing, various oaths, etc., could be handled by a script. It's so hard to write things they are reading because they read so darn fast. So the next time an attorney wants to read testimony from a previous deposition into the record all day, see if you can't get them to first give you an ASCII of the testimony to be read, then make yourself a script for it and be ready to rock and roll.

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If you're a deposition reporter, you could use this for the introduction a videographer gives before a deposition. They read lightning fast. Make a script out of it and use and use that at each video depo. Just put your cursor on the text the videographer is reading and press F12 and watch it instantly appear in your realtime window.

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Wil Wilcox (Continued from page 1)

Get creative. See if you can think of ways that you can use scripts in your reporting.

As you know, there may be variations from the written text. No problem. All you have to do is **start writing on the steno machine whenever they deviate from the script**. The realtime translation from your steno machine will instantly appear on your screen just like normal. You can seamlessly go back and forth between pressing F12 to feed the script and writing on the machine.

Keep in mind that you must set up a realtime output of some kind. Even if no one is connected to this output, Eclipse must think it's supposed to send lines of scripted text to your realtime window.

If you don't want to press F12 over and over on your computer keyboard, **create a steno entry for the macro "Press F12."** That macro is part of the default keyboard setup; you just need a dictionary entry that uses it. Then you'll be able to move through the script directly from the steno machine.

You'll need to keep the cursor in the script document, or else the script will stop feeding into your realtime and/or any outputs you have. Also, pressing F12 feeds a line at a time, so you may want to shorten the margins on the script document so that not too much gets sent out all at once.

Think about the possibilities. With a little advance preparation, no matter how fast that jury charge or other material is read, you will have perfect translation, and your fingers will get a wonderful break.

You'll definitely want to practice this on your own before attempting it on the job. I'm sure that if you think about it, you will come up with an ingenious use of this feature in your reporting. It is my sincere hope that you do. In a future article, I'll be reporting to you more on the use of scripts. In the meantime, try it for yourself. It's simple to use and, oh, so powerful. ■

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More on “Translation Magic”

- Keith Vincent -



In e-Tip #66 (June 2007), I gave a general description of how “Translation Magic” works in Total Eclipse 4.2. Now I’d like to offer a bit more information to help you take full advantage of this amazing feature.

You do not have to be a realtime writer to take advantage of Translation Magic. If you want to use it, you do need to go to the “Translate” section of User Settings and make sure there’s a check in the box next to “Translation Magic.” Now, you might ask, “If it’s so good, why is it an option? Won’t everyone want to use it?” Well, there are folks who like to brag about NOT using what their software offers. Go figure.

Also, don’t forget that there’s a number next to “Translation Magic” and you need to find the number that works for you. The default setting is 50, and I suspect that number will be too much for many people. You could work your way down to a lower number, but I think a captioner friend of mine offered excellent advice when she said to start at zero and work your way up.

If the weight is set at zero, then Translation Magic will only kick in if you have at least one untranslate that begs for help. So if you write “I bought a Tom PHAU toe at the store,” Eclipse might figure out you meant “tomato,” but only if PHAU was not in your dictionary. With the Translation Magic weight set at zero, then writing “toe may toe” would never come out as “tomato” because there’s no untranslate that calls for help.

The greater the weight you give for Translation Magic, the more it will kick in. My captioner friend said she got the best results when she used 15 as her Translation Magic weight. I’m currently using 25 or 30.

How will you know when your Translation Magic weight is too great? First, you’ll see unusual or complex words appear in place of simple ones. For instance, you might write “I wrote to Ma to ask for money,” and it might come out as “I wrote tomato ask for money.” Okay, that example’s a bit goofy, but I hope you get the idea. **Second, it will take longer for non-realtime translation.** However, I can tell you that I’ve used 50 as my Translation Magic weight, and it did not slow me down in realtime transcription. Naturally, the speed of your computer is a factor, but that’s no surprise. Once you find your ideal number for Translation Magic, I think you’ll be very happy indeed.

The phonetics table is a very important tool for Translation Magic. Fortunately, you don’t have to create a phonetics table because Eclipse installs one for you automatically. You can certainly customize the phonetics table, but you don’t have to. The default phonetics table has been greatly enhanced in the development of Translation Magic, and this enhancement benefits Global Magic, too. The first time you use Total Eclipse 4.2, the program will check to see that you have at least the basics. For instance, if you have no line that says how steno STK should be understood, then TE 4.2 will add a line for STK. If you already have a line for STK, your line will be left untouched.

In the development of Total Eclipse 4.2, it was my privilege to help Jeremy Thorne with the earliest testing and even to have a behind-the-scenes look at what Eclipse is considering in the Translation Magic process. The logic behind Translation Magic is dazzling, yet the results are often quite subtle.

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“Auto-Brief” in Total Eclipse 4.2

- Keith Vincent -

The Translation Magic in Total Eclipse 4.2 is, in my opinion, the biggest breakthrough in computer-assisted transcription software in at least the past 10 years, but Auto-Brief is more spectacular. Here's how it works.

Go to the “Realtime” section of User Settings and put a check in the box next to “Auto-brief.” You need to do that **BEFORE** you start realtime translation. Thereafter, Eclipse will remember to use Auto-Brief each time you start realtime translation.

In general, the second time it takes you at least three steno strokes to write something not too common, Eclipse will propose a steno shortcut that's ready to use. The steno shortcuts are sensible, easy to write, and you can rest assured that they do not conflict with any entries that are already in your translation dictionaries.

You do NOT have to write exactly the same steno strokes two times before Eclipse offers an Auto-Brief suggestion. Eclipse is looking at the text, how many strokes it took to write, and how common it is. What do I mean by “not too common”? Well, Auto-Brief would not propose a steno shortcut for “in the box.”

If you write a word or name or phrase that takes at least five steno strokes, Eclipse will propose a steno shortcut immediately. You won't have to struggle through that multi-stroker a second time before the help is offered.

You'll love this one. Fingerspellings naturally tend to generate Auto-Brief suggestions. So if I spell UCL in three strokes or P.L.L.C. in four strokes or Louvain in seven strokes, I would immediately get Auto-Brief suggestions for each of these.

The Auto-Brief suggestions appear in a small yellow window in the upper-left corner of your realtime translation screen. If you move your cursor to that part of the screen, the small yellow window will disappear so as not to interfere with your editing. When you move your cursor toward the bottom of the screen, the small yellow window will reappear to show the Auto-Brief suggestions.

Let's say Auto-Brief suggests HRO* = Louvainiste. The next time I need to write “Louvainiste,” I could simply use the steno stroke HRO*. No additional steno strokes needed. Once you actually use an Auto-Brief suggestion, it's automatically placed in your job dictionary so that it's available for future jobs. If you do not use an Auto-Brief suggestion, it's simply discarded at the end of the realtime translation session. So your job dictionary will not contain any unused Auto-Brief suggestions.

The small yellow window has room to display five new suggestions or reminders of earlier ones. Older suggestions disappear from the window as newer ones need to take their place. However, let's say I write “deoxyribonucleic” twice in the first minutes of a realtime translation session and I get an Auto-Brief of TKO*E. After that, it's not mentioned for a long time. I'll probably have forgotten that steno shortcut. No problem. Just write it out again and the same Auto-Brief suggestion will reappear in the small yellow window. Nice reminder!

At times Auto-Brief might not see a word or phrase or name as one where a steno shortcut would be wanted. At other times, I might want to reject an Auto-Brief suggestion so that the steno is free for something else that might come up. With this in mind, I've created several macros that are included

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Translation Magic (Continued from Page 3)

Typically, you'll see a word that appears in the color of an untranslate and it's the right word, but you know it's not in your dictionary. It may be an unusual word that you've never written before. It may be a word that you have written in the past but not with these specific steno strokes.

Translation Magic reaffirms everything I love about Total Eclipse. I love not having to spend much time editing. There's something deeply satisfying about seeing my steno translate perfectly, even on an impossible job. The truth, however, is much simpler. This stuff is fun to use.

Auto-Brief (Continued from Page 4)

in the most recent version of the Total Eclipse Realtime Editing Kit. Here are the names of these macros, along with the steno that I've proposed in the dictionary entries of the RT kit.

Auto-Brief 1 Word - RT = 1-BZ
Auto-Brief 2 Words - RT = 2-BZ
Auto-Brief 3 Words - RT = 3-BZ
Auto-Brief 4 Words - RT = 4-BZ
Auto-Brief 5 Words - RT = 5-BZ
Auto-Brief - Reject Last Suggestion - RT = TPHO*EB (as in "no brief")

Thus, if I've just written a four words and I immediately want a steno shortcut, I can write 4-BZ. I'll then see the Auto-Brief suggestion in the small yellow window in the upper-left corner of my screen.

To download the latest Realtime Editing Kit, go to the "Updates" page of the Eclipse website, www.eclipsecat.com) and look for 4vRTkit.exe. If you just want to import my Auto-Brief macros, I'll make them available at the e-Tips page of my website, www.KVincent.com. Go to the description for e-Tip #67 where it says: "To download macros, right-click here and "Save Target" as a file on your Windows Desktop."

Once you've downloaded the "Auto-Brief" portable macro file from the e-Tips archive, don't forget to go to the "Edit" section of your Eclipse User Settings and select "Macros." You'll then want to "Import" from the macro file. Use the drop-down arrow next to "Look in" and you should find "Auto-Brief.mac" on your Windows Desktop. When you select it and press Okay, six macros will be added to your user settings. Don't forget to go to each of the six macros and use the "Edit" button and then the "Dict entry" button to indicate what steno you want to use for the macro during realtime editing.

Of course, Translation Magic and Auto-Brief work brilliantly together. The other day, the phrase "piezoelectric crystal" came up. It translated perfectly, even though my steno was badly mangled. The second time I wrote it, I immediately got P*EU = piezoelectric crystal.

It's no exaggeration to say that Translation Magic and Auto-Brief have changed the way I work. I now write with a lot less stress, a lot less strokes, and a lot more enjoyment.

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