Example Problems for Analyzing a Meaning-for-Meaning Transcript

Read over each Problem Example, below. See if you can identify the problem *before* you read the explanation below each example.

Problem Example #1

> *Evaporation is the conversion from a gas to a liquid state. If I leave a beaker of water here and we came back day after day, the level of water would go down. It would evaporate. What's happening there?*

Explanation

The first sentence contains a Fact Error. A liquid evaporates into a gas, not vice versa.

The grammar of the sentence is correct, so with a casual glance, that fact error could easily be missed. By reading the transcript deeply for meaning, you'd catch that factual error of that word reversal.

Problem Example #2

> *The competition between cohesive forces and thermal energy determines if something is a solid, a liquid or a gas. If the thermal energy is a lot less than the cohesive forces, you have a*
> *There is only one class of liquid, but there are two classes of solids: crystalline and amorphous.*

Explanation

The first paragraph ends abruptly, with an obvious gap in the information flow. Missing sentence-ending punctuation often make this kind of error easy to spot when reviewing a transcript. However, sometimes the service provider may put a period at the end of an unfinished thought, making it harder to spot. You need to read the transcript for meaning, to consistently spot such unfinished thoughts and gaps in the information flow.

Problem Example #3

> *The cost of medical care is rising uncontrollably in this country. In 2008, the cost of care for children with chronic diseases such as, I missed that example, nearly doubled.*

Explanation

The service provider missed the name of the chronic disease example. That gap in the flow of information is very hard to see when just scanning the sentences, because the words "I missed that example" were used in place of the missing information. But, by reading the content of the sentence, that serious gap jumps out at you! Transcriber comments should always be enclosed in [square brackets.] In this case, the transcriber comment is not appropriate and should have been omitted.

Problem Example #4

> Today we'll be working with sentences one more time. Let's look at the syllabus.
>
> Now we'll talk about periodic structure. Look at syllabus and see that words WIP come up again and again. Each day from now on, bring Works In Progress with you. Shift from works reading and interpretation and writes based on that to works generated by you.

Explanation

What is that last sentence supposed to mean??!! The wording is not clear at all. As you read a transcript, keep in mind that every sentence should make sense, and not just be a string of related words.

Problem Example #5

Professor: If you were in outer space and you had some water and squirted it out, it would float and wiggle first and then it would assume a nice spherical shape. The reason for that is the same as the reason that liquids and solids exist, it's because of something called cohesive forces. Molecules are attracted to each other. They have these cohesive forces. So for water, if you have a whole bunch of molecules, they are attracted to each other, and they'd like to be surrounded by other molecules. It turns out that the sphere is the shape that has the smallest surface area to volume ratio, and what that does is maximizes the number of molecules that have molecules around them in the interior and minimizes the number on molecules on the surface. These are water molecules, for example. The ones in the interior interact with a lot of neighbors, the ones at the surface interact with fewer. So because those are positive interactions because of cohesive forces they will jam up in the middle and the ones on the outside are crowded out, and that's why you get these spheres. Notice that real small drops like on a spiders web are all spherical. The bigger the drop of the water, the more gravity acts on it, and it will change the shape, but in outer space and with less gravity you get spherical shapes.

Explanation

That sample is hard to read and understand, largely because there are no paragraphs for eye relief or topic organization. This is a prime example of poor formatting. There are also many run-on sentences, separated only by commas. That kind of punctuation error contributes to the dense feeling of the information, because no idea ever seems to end. There is just a constant flow of information, with no organization or breaks.