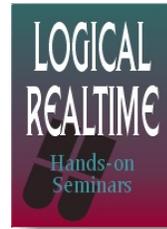


Logical numbers

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*(This article expounds on a method described in
Fashionable Realtime for Steno Writers)*

Artificial intelligence can be unpredictable. Or maybe you use more than one system and can't learn two different proprietary methods. Better you take command over the outcome of your numbers!

If after years of struggling you still haven't completely solved translation problems typical to writing numbers, this method makes you the master and assures beautiful results. It requires exactly 150 dictionary entries, but it's well worth it. It's not a brand new concept. But it is my refinement of many similar methods developed by dozens of enterprising realtime pioneers.

Your CAT system MUST translate multi-stroke outlines that begin with letters *before* it translates those beginning with numbers. (In other words, numbers come last in the translation sequence. You'll determine this by the time you finish step 3 below. Most CAT systems work just fine, but a few older systems may not.)

1. Prepare: Make a backup of your current dictionary, then rid your new dictionary of *all* entries involving numbers. (Those presently overriding your software's normal ability to connect multi-stroke numbers will spoil everything.) Thus if you have a two-stroke entry consisting of 8 /7 that's defined to create "87", get rid of it. Modern software will automatically translate 87 with a space on either side. Dictionaries that have evolved from the handiwork of other well-meaning reporters must be cleansed of every such entry before you begin.
2. Create a family of "marker" briefs for hundred, thousand, million, and billion. I suggest H-Z, TH-Z, M-Z, and B-Z respectively, but any four interrelated outlines will work just fine. In devising these special strokes, they should automatically attach ~00 (uttered as "hundred"), ~,000 (uttered as "thousand" — note the comma), million (uttered as "million"), and billion (uttered as "billion").

When someone says "fifty-two thousand", of course you'd write 5 /2 /TH-Z and translate "52,000". When someone utters "fifty-two million", you'd write 5 /2 /M-Z and translate "52 million", thereby following the literary convention for round numbers in millions or billions. Bear in mind that M-Z, B-Z, and even TR-Z (trillion) could also be your briefs for stand-alone words, but not H-Z and TH-Z. You decide whether any of these family members should have dual duties.

Now you must account for other things that will occur. If someone says “eight hundred and one thousand” and your software responds perfectly when you write 8 /0 /1 TH-Z, then great. But not all CATwares are so obliging, and they’ll give you “80 1,000” or “8 0 1,000” or some similar translation with unwanted spaces. So the strategy continues:

3. Using the suggested outlines, *i.e.*, H-Z, TH-Z, M-Z, and B-Z (or whatever you’ve chosen instead), take the next step and define H-Z /0 (*the number 0, not the letter O!*) as ~0~ so that when someone says “eight hundred and one thousand”, you’ll stroke 8 /H-Z /0 /1 /TH-Z, and you’ll translate “801,000”. You’ll get good at writing H-Z for the word “hundred”. It might be an added stroke for you, but the rewards are worth the effort. Obviously this entry is also necessary for H-Z /2, H-Z /3, H-Z /4, and H-Z /5.
4. If a speaker said “eight hundred and six”, some reporters might write the zero and the six together since the two fall in keyboard order. Thus H-Z /06, H-Z /07, H-Z /08, and H-Z /09 must be defined as ~06, ~07, ~08, and ~09. Now for “eight hundred and six”, you’ll write 8 /H-Z /06 and translate “806”. Likewise, when someone utters “eight hundred and twelve”, you’ll need H-Z /12 through H-Z /19 defined as ~12 through ~19. Ditto if you also write these in one stroke: 23-29, 34-39, 45-49, 56-59, 67-69, 78-79, and 89. Not all softwares handle the round-number combinations, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and 15, 25, 35, and 45, so you’ll also need these 13 additional entries in your makeover.
5. Now repeat step 4 for the “thousands” scenarios. So TH-Z /06 through TH-Z /09 are defined as ~,006 through ~,009. TH-Z /23 becomes ~,023 and so forth for all others in the above paragraph. Now when you write “eight thousand and six”, you’ll write 8 /TH-Z /06 and translate 8,006.

Stay with me. We’re getting close!

6. Next you need to define H-Z /1 through H-Z /9 as ~1~ through ~9~. These will serve you for all out-of-keyboard-order numbers. Thus “eight hundred and eleven” is stroked as 8 /H-Z /1 /1 and should translate as 811. “Eight hundred and eleven thousand”, written 8 /H-Z /1 /1 /TH-Z, obviously will translate as 811,000.

The fact is that for simple three-digit numbers, it may not be necessary to write the H-Z stroke at all, since your software might put all three numbers together anyway. Thus “She called 911,” without uttering the word “hundred”, may translate automatically by your software without including H-Z. Where you must follow the method, however, is when three digits fall at the end of a larger number, such as 24,911. Which raises the final point:

7. You must define the “triplet connectors”, and these are simple: TH-Z /0 through TH-Z /9 become ~,0~ through ~,9~ (note the comma). The identical nine definitions must also be defined for M-Z /0 through M-Z /9, and again, B-Z /0 through B-Z /9.

Now if everything was done right (and your software doesn't mess with perfect sense), "eight hundred and seventy-one million, three hundred and sixty-five thousand, four hundred and two" will work like this:

Stroke: 8 H-Z /7 1 M-Z /3 6 5 TH-Z /4 H-Z /0 2

Result: 8 ~7~ 1 ~,3~ 6 5 ~,4~ ~0~ 2

The result is quite clear. Unlike other methods, this one puts little or no demand on you to visualize the ones-place digits, meaning that for numbers such as "three thousand and six", you write 3 /TH-Z /0 /6 for a result of 3,006. I'm inclined to tell people to visualize the zero for the word "and", but it wouldn't be true if you write 06 in one stroke, that is, 3 /TH-Z /06. Nor would it apply in "three thousand and fifteen", for example, for the same reason. This is explained by #4 above. So if you must, visualize the zero only when it occurs alone in ~01 through ~05 numbers.

I said at the beginning that there were 150 new entries needed. I fibbed. If you decide to put trillion in as well (e.g. TR-Z), it would be 151.

Denis Thievin, author, lecturer

Wanderlust Publishing and Logical Seminars
P.O. Box 522
Quathiaski Cove, BC V0P 1N0

<http://www.anderlust.net>

email: info1@anderlust.net