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Mathey, Gene

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Using technology to pre-assess candidate interpreters

Gene Mathey

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Abstract

The aim of this research project is to examine the feasibility of using technology such as email and YouTube in pre-assessing potential interpreting students. This research project investigates existing pre-assessment methods and proposes a method for online interpreter pre-assessment.

Pre-assessment for candidate interpreters is essential, but no standard or universal pre-assessment test exists. Scholars agree on several aspects that should be tested for, yet institutions providing interpreter training conduct pre-assessment tests differently. Generally, pre-assessment testing involves a jury or panel interviewing the potential student and observing him/her perform interpreting-related tasks. Pre-assessment by jury assessment presents several logistical and financial challenges for the institution conducting pre-assessment as well as the potential student. In poor regions such as Africa, this could prevent potentially viable interpreting students from attending pre-assessment tests.

This research project investigates current pre-assessment practices in order to determine the skills generally tested for in pre-assessment tests, as well as the methods used for assessing these skills. Based on this investigation, an online delivery method is developed and evaluated in order to determine the extent to which online pre-assessment could be used as an alternative to using a jury for pre-assessment testing.

Wits Language School in Johannesburg, South Africa is used as a pilot study for online interpreter pre-assessment: Interpreting students who applied for study, were given the option of online pre-assessment. After the pre-assessment, students attended a course in interpreting and their performance in the pre-assessment test was compared with their performance in the examination for the course. These results along with interviews and questionnaires provide useful information regarding the feasibility of online interpreter pre-assessment.

Key words: *interpreting, pre-assessment, aptitude testing, selection test, pre-selection testing, online testing,*