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University of the Witwatersrand

Using technology to pre-assess candidate interpreters

Gene Mathey

698369

A research report submitted to the

Faculty of Humanities,

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Translation (Option Interpreting)

Johannesburg, 2017

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,*

Declaration

I, Gene Mathey, declare that this research is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation (Option Interpreting). It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Signature: 

Eugene Carl Gottlieb Mathey

Date: 10 March 2017

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CHAPTER 1 – OVERVIEW

'Begin at the beginning,' the King said gravely, 'and go on till you come to the end: then stop.' - Lewis Carroll

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Proper recruitment of candidate interpreters has been problematic for many years. It is clear that being able to speak more than one language does not necessarily mean one has the ability to become a successful interpreter. Although, just like in any profession, talent plays an important part, so too does training, however, "[p]roblems in the recruitment and training of (…) interpreters have been the frequent subject of debate by members of the profession" (Gerver, et al., 1989: 724). The outrage expressed by not only the Deaf community at the use of a 'fake' sign language interpreter at Nelson Mandela's memorial service in December 2013, as well as the debacle with the interpreters in the Oscar Pistorius trials in March 2014, have led to renewed emphasis on proper recruitment of interpreters in South Africa.

Before admitting student interpreters into a programme, it is important to pre-assess them for the potential to become competent interpreters. Many interpreter training institutions require that applicants be screened by means of a readiness test or admission examination. These tests are also referred to as selection tests, pre-selection tests, pre-assessment tests, entrance examinations, aptitude tests or screening tests. Sawyer (2004) makes a case that "aptitude tests" do not actually test for aptitude, but are in actual fact diagnostic: They only test whether the candidate wishing to undertake a training course already possesses the required skills to perform a task, in other words such tests point out skills that are lacking and indicate a degree of readiness for study. These tests do not predict success in interpreter training, due to the fact that these tests are not objective and are often adjudicated subjectively by assessors.

Bontempo and Napier (2009) argue that since an entrance examination assesses existing skills and not the skills being learnt during the training, the tests cannot predict the chances of successfully learning these skills. The test simply shows what the candidate can and cannot do before commencing studies. Learning skills are dependent on much more than training alone. Bontempo and Napier point out from the literature that various factors can influence the success of learning new skills: motivation, talent, practice, experience and personal interests. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to create a test that would accurately measure these factors, especially given that they could change over time. Still, many academic institutions, insist on some form of a pre-assessment before admitting candidates into an interpreting program.

Candidates who do not meet the requirements are often not admitted to study interpreting courses. However, these tests differ from one institution to the other with regard to how they are administered as well as what is being tested (Moser-Mercer, 1994: 65). Ideally, pre-assessment should be able to shed light on the ability of candidates to perform well in their interpreting studies and ultimately in their career as interpreters. Keiser (1978: 11) states this quite clearly: "Selection and training must be conceived and organized so as to give the future interpreter a maximum of assurance that he will be fully prepared to successfully face the acid test of his first professional assignments."

In this study, terms such as *readiness tests, pre-assessment, aptitude tests, admission examinations, selection tests* etc. are used interchangeably to refer to an examination or test that prospective interpreting students,

especially those who have never interpreted before, must take in order to demonstrate readiness for study before commencing training. While the importance of personality traits in assessing whether or not a student might succeed ultimately in the interpreting profession is important, this aspect is specifically excluded from this study, because testing for this is expensive, time consuming and given that these traits are affected and changed by many different factors. The focus of this study is instead on the more tangible aspects of pre-assessment.

Since interpreting is a practical oral skill, aptitude tests often focus on a candidate's ability to use language in oral skills in two or more languages, rather than on written skills. This is often done by means of an interview and/or an interpreting test (Moser-Mercer, 1994: 63). This intrinsically means that the candidate is evaluated on his ability to speak at least two languages. For this to be evaluated, the candidate and at least one evaluator need to reserve time in order to participate in the selection test. Several institutions, however, do not only use one assessor; often several assessors are used, in the case of a jury or panel. Making arrangements for all the parties to attend can be time-consuming to arrange and the cost for all parties to attend can be quite high, especially if one or more of the candidates are not in the same town, or even in the same country. In the African context, it is often the case that the candidate wishing to be assessed lives far away from the assessment centre. Due to high transport costs in addition to the assessment costs, it may happen that a potentially viable candidate cannot afford to attend the testing opportunity and therefore might be eliminated as a candidate for training – not because of poor skills, but simply because the candidate cannot afford to attend the assessment.

For this reason it may be prudent to consider an alternative method of aptitude testing. Aptitude testing is a stage where an important decision must be made: Does the candidate have the required skills to study interpreting and ultimately become a competent interpreter, or not? An aptitude test, therefore, should not cost the applicant too much. In order to minimise the effect of travel, accommodation and general administration, this study will suggest using technology such as the internet to administer pre-assessment tests and make suggestions as to how aptitude testing could be simplified and reach many more potential candidates by means of an online test or even a mobile application (app). Aptitude testing should focus on the skills needed for interpreting, but considering that each institution has their own test, knowing exactly what competencies or skills needs to be tested needs to be clearly established. Jones (2014, p. 11) suggests some of the skills that an interpreter cannot do without. These include: fluency in at least two languages; the ability to understand what is heard; the ability to memorise what was said; the ability to analyse the message heard along with the text type; the ability to produce a coherent rendering of what was said. These are merely the broad requirements for being a competent interpreter. Each of these skills can be broken down into smaller skills that can be more accurately assessed.

One problems, regarding aptitude testing is the lack of a reliable, standardised test for assessing students on different levels. Also, taking into account the South African and African context, access to interpreting studies is often limited due to geographical distance. This study will examine aptitude testing and selection tests from various educational institutions to establish the current admission criteria for interpreting studies in an effort to establish a standardised aptitude test. It will also focus on the skills and attributes required for being a successful interpreter and how these characteristics can be assessed using technology in an effort to streamline the process of aptitude testing and to diminish the financial impact of travelling (for students and jury members).

Taking into account the importance of aptitude testing when it comes to interpreting studies, it is important to note that there are several problems with many of the current aptitude tests. Firstly, there is very little consistency amongst educational institutions regarding what needs to be assessed and how it should be assessed. Secondly, the organisational effort required for aptitude testing is costly and time consuming. Finally in many cases, feedback to the candidates is vague and does not enable the candidate to use the feedback in order to acquire the necessary skills to retake the aptitude test at a later stage.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In an attempt to design a reliable assessment tool that is also able to ease the financial and administrative burden of aptitude testing, international best practice will be considered to ascertain the optimal skills required and tests administered in aptitude tests. There is clearly a need for a valid and standardised test that is less time consuming and more convenient than current testing methods. Taking into account modern technology, free Wi-Fi access in many towns and cities, and the prevalence of smartphones, it stands to reason that there may be a way to utilise this in aptitude testing. If the internet and smartphones can be used in aptitude testing, it may be possible to cut down on the cost, time and effort involved in aptitude tests and as such it could allow more time for the assessors to be descriptive and more helpful in their reports after an aptitude test. If candidates have clearer reports, the report could be used not only as a feedback tool, but also a learning opportunity.

Currently some research exist on blended learning and teaching interpreting via distance, using technology and this is used very successfully at institutions like Glendon College at York University, Manchester University, University of Portsmouth and several others; however there is very little research available on using technology to administer aptitude tests. Similarly, literature regarding interpreting in the African context exists, but there is a gap as far as aptitude tests in Africa and Southern Africa is concerned. This study aims to address this gap.

1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

- To examine how educational institutions in South Africa administer aptitude tests (selection tests or pre-assessment tests) for interpreting students.
- To examine what kind of learner support is given to learners who are not yet competent at the time of aptitude testing.
- To determine how those institutions, using selection tests, use the tests in determining which students are permitted to enrol in an interpreting course.
- To examine how relevant skills (dealing with stress, memory, analytical thinking, etc.) required for interpreting are tested for in other non-interpreting sectors.
- To develop more objective and measurable selection test for interpreting students to better predict interpreting potential.
- To develop an online aptitude test and evaluate the feasibility of using technology in aptitude testing.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How are selection tests currently administered by various institutions?
- What skills are required for interpreting?
- How are these skills (dealing with stress, memory, analytical thinking, etc.) assessed (or pre-assessed) in interpreting as well as non-interpreting sectors?
- To what extent can these tests be useful in designing different kinds of pre-assessment tools for interpreting studies?
- To what extent can a variety of assessment tools be used in order to enhance the quality and accuracy of pre-assessment tests, taking into account the constraints of different participants?

- Could online testing, or even a mobile application be a viable means of administering a pre-assessment test?

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally interpreting has been defined as a subsection of translation (Roy, 2002). In fact, Kade (1968) in Pöchhacker (2016) defines interpreting as a form of translation where the source text is presented only once, without the opportunity to review it and where the target text is to be rendered under time pressure. This definition does not specifically mention that interpreting is oral, however it is implied, without excluding sight interpreting or signed language interpreting. Pöchhacker (2016: 11) refines this definition to: "Interpreting is a form of translation in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced on the basis of a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language."

Roy mentions several definitions in literature and comments on the fact that most of the 'standard' definitions of interpreting tend to portray interpreters as machines and the process of interpreting is mostly described in a mechanical way. Interpreters have traditionally regarded their role as mechanical. This corresponds with the traditional role of the interpreter: The interpreter was often seen as merely a conduit, a bridge, a telephone and other similar metaphors. These definitions of roles presented the interpreter as an uninvolved party who had no effect on the communication process.

At various stages and in different settings, the role of the interpreter has been defined in many different ways: as **helpers** (who interact on behalf of speakers and as such give the impression that the minority language used cannot function on his own); as **conduits** (who completely deny any personal involvement in the interpreting process); as **communication-facilitators** (persons who help the interaction take place); and **bilingual, bicultural specialists** (where the interpreters also acknowledged the fact that they function in a specific culture and has to convey cultural differences when interpreting) (Roy, 2002).

Kalina (2000) defines an interpreter as someone with "the competence to process texts within the scope of a bi- or multilingual communication situation with the aim of interlingual mediation. It is also the capability of acting and performing in a situation characterised by externally determined constraints, such as the pressure of time, lack of semantic autonomy and the potential interference between closely connected processes of production and comprehension."

Although interpreting can be done in various modes (or combinations thereof) and in a wide variety of settings, in order to describe the role and function of the interpreter, for the purposes of this study, the characteristics of conference interpreting and liaison interpreting will be pointed out to show that these main two kinds of interpreting differ and as such, assessing aptitude for interpreting studies in either field should be differentiated as well.

Conference interpreting

At conferences or meetings, either the consecutive mode of interpreting or the simultaneous mode of interpreting (or both) may be sometimes used depending on the infrastructure of the venue, the level of formality, the number of languages used and several other factors. Simultaneous interpreting is far more common and is used almost exclusively at international organizations. (Phelan, 2001:6)

In simultaneous interpreting, the listener hears the speech in one language and at the same time the interpreter renders the same speech in another language. The interpreter is generally seated in a booth with headphones and a microphone along with another interpreter. The reason for this is that due to the amount of concentration

required, the interpreters can alternate so that they do not lose concentration after interpreting for a long time. The interpreter should have a pleasant voice that does not sound boring. The interpreter should also not speak at a great speed (Phelan, 2001:6, 7). In most cases where simultaneous interpreting is the preferred mode of delivery, the interpreter has very little control over the speaker. The interpreter is forced to cope with a fast speaker, or a speaker with a strong accent or even not hearing what is said due to background noise. The interpreter does not have the ability to stop the speaker and ask for clarification or repetition.

Taking into account the fact that meetings can be on a variety of different subjects, the simultaneous interpreter also needs to have an extensive vocabulary and must be able to cope with a variety of topics. (Phelan, 2001:7) "Simultaneous interpreting (SI), sometimes called conference interpreting, can be argued to be one of the most complex language tasks imaginable because many processes take place at the same time" (De Groot & Christoffels, 2005)

Gile's effort model (1998) confirms that simultaneous interpreting is a complex activity, where the interpreter is required continuously and concurrently perform the following activities under enormous time constraints:

- Listening to a text being uttered
- Memorising what is being said
- Recalling this information and reformulating it into a different language
- Producing the rendered message
- Monitoring and evaluating performance

In the consecutive interpreting mode, the interpreter listens to the speech, takes notes, and afterwards delivers the speech in a different language – in other words, the interpretation follows after the original message has been completed. The interpretation is not a summary; it is a complete rendition of the original speech in another language. Because the interpreter has to deliver a speech it would be helpful if the interpreter has practice in public speaking. Consecutive interpreting is also very useful for question-and-answer sessions. One advantage of consecutive interpreting is that the interpreter can check with the speaker if he is unsure as to what exactly was meant. (Phelan, 2001:9)

Liaison interpreting

This is sometimes also referred to as *ad hoc* interpreting, dialogue interpreting, community interpreting and bilateral interpreting. One interpreter uses two languages to interpret for two or more people (Gentile *et al.* 1996: 17). This type of interpreting is mostly used in informal situations, business meetings and community settings. (Phelan, 2001:12) The interpreter is physically present when the conversation occurs (Ozolins 1995: 153). This allows the interpreter to stop speakers when they are going too fast or have spoken for too long. Liaison interpreting generally allows the interpreter more control over speech and the interpreting event as opposed to conference interpreting. In this type of interpreting, the interpreter is able to stop a speaker when he/she talks for too long; may ask for repetitions and clarifications; and can reach a high level of accuracy without intensive note-taking or memory skills.

As can be seen from the above, conference interpreting is generally a more high-level kind of interpreting with higher demands on the interpreter. This distinction should be considered when selecting candidates for interpreting studies. Although both kinds of interpreting involve the accurate transfer of information from one language to the next, there are differences as well. These differences will be examined in more detail at a later stage. In order to be a successful interpreter, training is necessary and just as there are differences in the kinds of interpreting, so too should there be differences in training and aptitude testing to account for these differences.

Smirnov (1997) summarises the spectrum of simultaneous vs consecutive interpreting quite succinctly: "All genres of interpreting, however, are characterised by a different degree of space and time proximity to interlocutors and

their discourse. It is precisely such temporal proximity between an utterance and its rendition that allows us to distinguish between conference and consecutive interpreting in its various forms."

Therefore, in order to adequately select the candidates applying for interpreting studies it is important to carry out aptitude tests in order to ascertain which of the candidates have the required skills to potentially become competent interpreters (Ungoed-Thomas, 2008) and for which kind/level of interpreting. Although it is a given that in order to be an interpreter, one needs to speak more than one language, however, simply being able to speak at least two languages is not enough to become a competent interpreter. There are certain skills and traits that must be in place before a candidate should even attempt to study interpreting (Moser-Mercer, 1994: 59).

Perceptions regarding the skills needed to be in place, prior to studying interpreting, differs from one researcher to the next. Zannirato (2013) mentions some characteristics that have been considered as indicators for interpreting potential: professional experience, training, excellent knowledge of working languages, good memory, stamina (both physical and psychological), self-confidence, assertiveness, tact, a sense of humour, high concentration, the ability to accept criticism, strong motivation to succeed and several others.

Many researchers have worked on establishing an ideal or perfect aptitude test that will consistently yield similar results ensuring that only the right candidates are allowed into interpreting programmes. Yet, people and their behaviour cannot be as accurately predicted as other phenomena that function on natural laws. Zannirato (2013) points out that the examiner's disposition may influence the candidate's performance. There is also a risk that a "one-shot" examination may exclude a candidate due to the fact that on the day of the examination, a candidate may have received bad news or may be ill, for example. These factors may exclude a potentially good candidate due to the fact that on the scheduled date, the candidate's performance does not reflect actual capabilities. There is also a case to be made for a test that does not involve any physical interaction between candidates and examiners in order to avoid personal bias.

The problem of personal opinions entering into the evaluation of a candidate's aptitude, is something that has been an issue for quite some time. Moser-Mercer (1994: 65) mentions that often, market demand, maximum/minum class size and various other factors can influence the outcome of an aptitude test. She further states that "…subjective evaluation prevails in tests for interpreting aptitude as objective tests are for the most part not available."

In an effort to refine aptitude testing, it is important to be aware of the limitations of currently used assessment methods. Knowing these limitations and finding ways to mitigate the shortcomings of certain assessment methods may prove valuable when designing objective rubrics for aptitude testing.

1.6 PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

In order to develop a standardised online aptitude test for potential interpreting students, it is necessary to first establish how current selection tests operate and to look at the reasons why even after passing selection tests, many interpreting students fail to perform well in their final assessments.

1.6.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This is an exploratory investigation into the methods of selecting and pre-assessing prospective interpreting students. The study will follow a mixed research design. Initially qualitative data will be gathered regarding selection tests of various institutions where interpreters are trained.

Secondly, the skills required for being a successful interpreter will be identified and assessments to test these skills will be compiled.

Once all the data is processed, a preliminary aptitude test will be compiled from the results of the previous steps. Ideally this new aptitude test will be more objective and measurable, by making use of clear and unambiguous rubrics.

After having refined the aptitude test, this test will be administered to participants wishing to enrol for interpreting studies at Wits Language School.

Wits Language School is an institution that functions under the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. Wits Language School (WLS) specialises in short courses in a wide range of language specific fields, including:

- Language training in various African, Asian and European languages
- Language training in South African Sign Language
- Translation training
- Interpreting training (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- Language teacher training
- English writing and speaking skills for various purposes

Wits Language School offers two streams of interpreter training. The first option is an undergraduate Diploma in Legal Interpreting. This diploma consists of nine short courses covering interpreting techniques, coping strategies, intercultural communication, language refinement and a variety of other skills relevant to liaison interpreting. The first short course is "Introduction to Interpreting Skills". This course is presented at first year level and is designed for students who have no interpreting experience.

The second option is a set of three postgraduate short courses in long consecutive interpreting and conference interpreting. These courses are presented at Honours and Masters level and articulate with the formal honours and master's degrees at the University of the Witwatersrand. These courses are designed for students who preferably already have a degree and who have significant interpreting experience.

Historically, the students enrolling for short courses at Wits Language School are required to take a pre-selection test in order to determine the candidate's suitability for a chosen course. Based on the outcome of the pre-selection test, recommendations are made as to whether or not the candidate possesses the required skill set to successfully complete the prospective course.

Owing to the fact that pre-selection testing or aptitude testing is the norm at Wits Language School, it is proposed that the test from this study be introduced as part of the already existing pre-selection tests in order to compare the extent to which this aptitude test can predict the performance of the candidate in their examinations after a course.

Two groups of participants will be identified for this study:

Group 1 would be prospective interpreting students who have no interpreting experience at all. The students to be part of this group will candidates who wish to enrol for the short course *Introduction to Interpreting Skills*, presented at WLS at an undergraduate level. This course is the first of a set of courses that contribute towards an undergraduate diploma in legal interpreting.

Group 2 would be experienced interpreters already working as conference interpreters. The students to be part of this group will be candidates who wish to enrol for the short course *Principles and practice of Interpreting*, presented at WLS at a postgraduate level. This course is the first of a set of courses that contribute towards an Honours degree/ Master's degree in conference interpreting.

All participants will be required to complete the same aptitude test prior to starting with the first lesson and their scores will not be revealed to them. Although all candidates will be completing the same test, the evaluation will be differentiated to accommodate the two different expected levels of competence.

The same test will be administered in two ways:

1. Online, using YouTube and email
2. Face to face

Each prospective student will be informed of the fact that the aptitude test is not exclusionary and they will be given a choice as to which method of testing they would prefer.

Based on these findings, conclusions will be drawn as to the advantages and disadvantages of each testing method. Additionally, the results of the aptitude test will be correlated with the examination marks of the students at the end of the short course they completed to ascertain to what extent the pre-assessment tests can be used as predictors for success.

1.6.2 DATA SOURCES

Data will be gathered in a variety of methods:

A questionnaire will be distributed to various education institutions, asking them and what skills they test for and how these tests are administered when performing selection tests. Depending on the preference of the institution, this questionnaire could be sent via e-mail, fax, regular mail, or it could be completed telephonically. The results of these questionnaires will be consolidated in order to ascertain what current selection tests test for.

Once a preliminary standardised pre-assessment test has been designed, keeping in mind the principles suggested by Clifford (2001), this test will be administered to the different groups of students, as mentioned above.

Focus groups and observation will be used to determine the advantages and disadvantages of each testing method. Extracts from audio recordings will be used when evaluating the testimony of the participants.

1.6.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

A copy of the questionnaire is attached as an addendum at the end of this document.

In the case of interviews based on the questionnaire, an audio record will be made with the permission of the participant.

In the case of the aptitude tests, video recordings of the candidates will be made. These video recordings will be kept confidential and will not be distributed in any way. Video recordings are needed due to the nature of the tests. Aspects like eye-contact, facial expressions and reactions to stress need to be evaluated, thus the need for video recordings rather than simply audio recordings.

1.6.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Confidentiality:

All scores will be kept confidential and will only be communicated to each student individually at the end of the course. Questionnaires will be kept on file and will not be shared. Prospective students will not suffer any prejudice, based on their scores in the aptitude test.

Informed consent:

The purpose of the research will be described to all participants. They will be given the opportunity to ask questions and to clarify matters prior to participating. They will be given consent forms and will be able to withdraw at any time without any penalty.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The first chapter of this research report provides an introduction to the problems regarding pre-assessment tests. The problems regarding standardisation of tests is also investigated. This chapter also gives an overview of how geographical distance and the high costs of transport could negatively impact on the ability for potential candidates to be pre-assessed. It further outlines the aims and rationale of this study. It focusses on why it is necessary to standardise aptitude tests and why it could be useful to conduct tests using the technology already available in order to minimise costs for both the candidates and the institutions conducting pre-assessment tests. It gives an overview of the kinds of technology available and how these could be used to conduct pre-assessment tests more efficiently.

The second chapter of this report constitutes the literature review and focuses on existing research regarding the entry requirements for interpreters, the skills needed to be a competent interpreter, how pre-assessment is currently conducted at various institutions and what characteristics should be kept in mind when crafting a standardised pre-assessment. This section also examines research done on modern teaching methods, including learning and teaching via distance, using the internet and blended learning both internationally and locally.

The third chapter of this report focuses on the current situation regarding pre-assessment tests at educational institutions offering interpreter training in Southern Africa. It reveals the current aptitude testing practices of various educational institutions in Africa.

The fourth chapter of this report gives an outline of the methodology of this study. It discusses how the proposed research is to be done. It gives details on how institutions are approached to collect information regarding their

pre-assessment policies for interpreter training. It also shows how questionnaires are used in order to collect information from institutions. Furthermore, this chapter shows how participants for this study are selected and how they are tested and how their results are processed. Finally shows how focus groups and interviews are conducted In order to determine the participants' views on the aptitude test and methods of delivery

The fifth chapter of this report gives an analysis of the results gathered from interviews, focus groups and standardised tests. These results are collated and presented in such a way that conclusions can be drawn. Graphs and tables are used to show potential correlations between pre-assessment tests and candidates marks for short courses taken. Selected excerpts from focus groups and interviews are used to make inferences regarding the advantages and disadvantages of online methods.

The final chapter of this report gives a summary of what has been achieved and draws conclusions from the research conducted and based on those conclusions, makes recommendations and suggests potential further research.

CHAPTER 2 – APTITUDE TESTING FOR INTERPRETING

"Despite much progress, it is still difficult to select tests that can provide the exact kind of information interpreting trainers need" (Ungoed-Thomas & Timarová, 2014)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter constitutes the literature review and focuses on existing research regarding the entry requirements for interpreters, the skills needed to be a competent interpreter, how pre-assessment is currently conducted at various institutions and what characteristics should be kept in mind when crafting a standardised pre-assessment. This section also examines research done on modern teaching methods, including learning and teaching via distance, using the internet and blended learning.

2.2 A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF APTITUDE TESTING FOR INTERPRETERS

Initially, in the 1940s and 1950s the general assumption was that the ability to be an interpreter was inborn and was an inherent trait in certain individuals. This notion had been challenged extensively since then and the idea of being able to test this predisposition for interpreting ability led to the development of various kinds of aptitude tests. Aptitude, according to Cronbach and Snow (1977) in Russo (2011), is "any characteristic of a person that forecasts his/her probability of success under a given treatment."

In the 1960s the predominant idea was that anyone could become an interpreter, given enough training and time. Keiser (1978) held the idea that there are "gifted" individuals and "ungifted" individuals as far as interpreting is concerned and that a "gifted" person would easily manage to acquire the skills to become a successful interpreter, whereas the "ungifted" person could become a competent interpreter, but only if the person is willing to invest a lot of time and effort.

In 1999, the notion that only natural ability would result in a really good interpreter was challenged by Mackintosh (1999) who argued that focussed training would result in a better interpreter as opposed to mere natural ability. From here academic institutions, offering interpreting training used screening tests to determine which candidates would be suitable for interpreting training. These initial tests were designed by intuition – trainers literally guessed what was needed to be tested for, based on their own experience. At this point a distinction was made between skills that were "teachable" and skills that are supposedly "unteachable". Candidates who performed poorly in the test for "unteachable skills" were dismissed on the premise that these candidates would not achieve success, since the skills they lacked could not be taught (Russo, 2011).

The idea of a selection, or screening test was so important that AIIC only recognised schools who, among others, insist that candidates pass an entrance exam before undergoing training. In 2009 interest was re-awakened in the consequences of ineffective aptitude testing.

The various approaches to aptitude testing have yielded different results. Different tests were used to identify different characteristics in prospective interpreting students (as will be discussed later). Although most researchers have their own reasons for focussing on certain traits above others, the general idea of what an

interpreter should be able to do has been reasonably consistent since the idea of aptitude testing started gaining momentum in the 1970s.

2.3 Skills required for interpreting

As recently as 1973, it was still believed that interpreters are born, not made and that no training is necessary (Harris & Sherwood, 1978), However, that is no longer the prevalent position. "[P]romoting natural talents alone would not justify the fact that interpreting training is offered at university level in most countries. For this to be justified, there has to be a systematic, structured training methodology based on solid theoretical research findings" (Kalina, 2000)

In order to adequately select the candidates applying for interpreting studies it is important to carry out pre-assessment tests in order to ascertain which of the candidates have the required skills to potentially become competent interpreters (Ungoed-Thomas, 2008). "The screening procedures are designed with the simple objective of distinguishing between those applicants who are deemed to have the potential of becoming interpreters, and those who are not." (Ungoed-Thomas & Timarová, 2014)

Although it is a given that in order to be an interpreter, one needs to speak more than one language, however, simply being able to speak at least two languages is not enough to become a competent interpreter. There are certain skills and traits that must be in place before a candidate should even attempt to study interpreting (Moser-Mercer, 1994; Kalina, 2000). Currently, researchers are not in agreement about which skills need to be in place, prior to studying interpreting. "Moreover, the tests do not as yet seem to be sufficiently objective and transparent to be used for decisions that affect the future (chances) of many students" (Kalina, 2000). This study will attempt to provide a means of reaching a more objective test.

As mentioned in the first chapter, Zannirato (2013) mentions some characteristics that have been considered as indicators for interpreting potential: professional experience, training, excellent knowledge of working languages, good memory, stamina (both physical and psychological), self-confidence, assertiveness, tact, a sense of humour, high concentration, the ability to accept criticism, strong motivation to succeed and several others.

Hertog & Reunbrouck (1999) suggest that interpreting and the role of the interpreter should not only be defined by one set of characteristics like "helping", "accuracy" or "involvement", but should rather be a fluid definition where interpreting is seen as an activity which is described in terms of several features. Hertog & Reunbrouck (1999) suggest the following features be taken into account: Accurate transfer of meaning; an awareness of setting; competence in interpreting skills; competence in interpreting modes; very good command of languages involved; required social skills; certain personality traits; the ability to work in varied and difficult conditions; and several other features.

De Pedro Ricoy (2015) is in agreement with Hertog & Reunbrouck, regarding language skills and regards linguistic competence as a top priority as an entry requirement for interpreter training. Given the importance of language skills, Pöchhacker (2004) regards a general education, cultural competence, analytic and memory skills as the main attributes of an interpreter.

Although there is general consensus about the major skills required to be a successful interpreter, there are some significant differences with regard to the skills prioritised by different researchers.

Hearn et al. (1981) propose the following criteria for evaluating interpreter quality:

An interpreter should have a sound knowledge of both languages and cultures of his/her language combination along with good communication skills. Interpreters should be objective and reliable. Personality traits of interpreters should include a sense of responsibility, honesty, politeness and humility.

Lambert (1991: 586) suggests the following, from surveys of academic articles and interviews with professionals in the interpreting field:

- Profound knowledge of active and passive language and cultures.
- Ability to grasp rapidly and convey the essential meaning of what is being said.
- Ability to project information with confidence, coupled with a good voice.
- Wide general knowledge and interests, and a willingness to acquire new information.
- Ability to work as part of a team.

Moser-Mercer (1994) also stresses the importance of language knowledge (both A and B languages) and further states that the elements tested for in an aptitude test should include *inter alia* general knowledge and comprehension. When testing comprehension, Moser-Mercer encourages also testing speed of comprehension.

Bühler (1986) suggests that endurance, poise and a pleasant appearance should be considered as criteria for selecting interpreters. These candidates should also reliable and be able to work in a team.

Ungoed-Thomas & Timarová (2014) conducted a survey among several institutions teaching interpreting. The survey focussed on identifying the skills to be tested for in aptitude tests as well as what tests are most suited to test for said skills. The following list is a summary of the skill categories tested for in aptitude tests in order of importance:

- Language
- Communication
- Comprehension
- Analysis
- General knowledge
- Personality
- Consecutive skills
- Summarising
- Stress
- Memory
- Translation skill
- Thinking
- Problem solving
- Writing
- Processing
- Voice
- Motivation
- Speed

Bontempo *et.al.* (2014) summarise the qualities required of a professional sign language interpreter as follows: A good sign language interpreter should have self-discipline and be flexible in a variety of situations. He/she should have a good attention span and stamina to be able to perform well in interpreting situations. Given that interpreting is an action that involves people, the interpreter needs to have good interpersonal skills, tactfulness and a good sense of humour. The interpreter also needs to have a good sense of judgment to make decisions during an assignment. An interpreter should be mentally and emotionally able to do the task at hand and should possess emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation, empathy, confidence, flexibility,

reliability, self-discipline, resilience and humility. In the same year, Russo (2014: 130) summarises from the literature the following characteristics of an ideal interpreter: Command of source and target languages, mental rapidity, general knowledge, good memory, expressive ability, stamina and the ability to work in a team.

Taking into account Hertog & Reunbrouck's (1999) notion that the place and setting where interpreting takes place is a key factor in deciding the quality of the interpreting done for that specific event, it stands to reason that when measuring the quality of a potential candidate should be measured by a set of criteria specifically designed for the aptitude test and not for an actual interpreting event at a conference. It can also be deduced that if the environment does not feel and look like a real conference, the candidate would not perform at the same level as he/she would at an actual conference.

How interpreting is done and what norms govern it, is largely determined by the physical location of the interpreting event as well as the physical location of the interpreter with regard to those he/she is interpreting for.

However, aptitude tests are exactly that: tests conducted to see if a student is suitable for a specific field of study it examines not if the student has already mastered the skills he/she will be studying, it determines the candidate's aptitude or potential for study. In the case of interpreting, this has important consequences. If the aptitude test feels like a real interpreting situation, the interpreter would respond in a way that might be a more accurate representation of his/her skills.

"Determining aptitude for future skills requires identifying key elements of that skill and testing for the elementary underlying abilities. If the skilled behaviour builds on these elementary abilities, they should be present even in the absence of skilled behaviour, and should be measurable" (Bontempo, et al., 2014).

2.3 Current trends in interpreting pre-selection/aptitude testing

Many researchers have worked on establishing an ideal or perfect aptitude test that will consistently yield similar results, ensuring that only the right candidates are allowed into interpreting programmes. However, given the notion that quality in interpreting is dependent on the setting and the event, and that the expectations for different kinds of interpreting varies, it could be argued that one reason for not being able to create a "perfect" aptitude test, could be due to the fact that there are so many different variables to take into account when devising a test.

"[T]he AIIC Training Committee (2006) acknowledges that there is no reliable aptitude test" (Ungoed-Thomas & Timarová, 2014) However, most interpreting schools still perform aptitude tests. This is done primarily for trainers to be able to select the best or most suitable candidates, and secondly to group students with similar potential together into groups in order to ensure that there are no outliers in a particular group.

As stated in Chapter 1, Zannirato (2013) points out that the examiner's disposition may influence the candidate's performance. It is possible that the examiner is not consistent across all candidates. Should an examiner have to evaluate several candidates in succession on the same day, it is quite possible for the examiner to be more friendly and patient with the first candidate than the last candidate. There is also a risk that a "one-shot" examination may exclude a candidate due to the fact that on the day of the examination, a candidate may have received bad news or may be ill. These factors may exclude a potentially good candidate due to the fact that on the scheduled date, the candidate's performance does not reflect actual capabilities. There is also a case to be made for a test that does not involve any physical interaction between candidates and examiners in order to avoid personal bias.

The dubious reliability of aptitude testing is not a new concept, though. Dodds (1990) reveals a significant error margin in the aptitude testing at Trieste in one specific academic intake: due to the fact that aptitude tests at

Trieste are not eliminatory, each student (whether failing the aptitude test or not) may enrol into an interpreting programme. In this specific intake, 36% of the candidates who "failed" the aptitude test, completed the course and proved to be competent interpreters, while 45% of those who "passed" the aptitude test failed to complete the course. Bontempo *et.al.* (2014) share this sentiment: "…one of the huge dilemmas in interpreter education at present is that a potential interpreting student might succeed against the observational evidence that initially convinces us that they will not. The opposite is also true – candidates expected to do well based on program admission screening results, may not pass a final interpreting examination, for a host of reasons"

Dodds (1990) makes a valid generalisation regarding aptitude testing: "To throw a child into the deep end of a swimming pool to see if he/she will sink or swim and then to say that the one who swims could become a professional while the one who sinks will never learn is (…) total and utter rubbish." Although it would be a sensible decision to allow a candidate who can already interpret into an interpreting programme, it does not make sense at all to eliminate a candidate who cannot. It is not fair to expect a person to perform a task never before attempted and then make a decision on the person's potential, based on said task. Considering that the candidate enrols into an interpreting programme to *learn* how to interpret, requesting a candidate to interpret as part of an aptitude test seems unfair. However, as mentioned before, there are certain skills required for interpreting and these skills can be assessed in an effort to guide the decision-making of the assessors or to provide learning opportunities and feedback for potential interpreting students.

Ungoed-Thomas (2008) gives a list of the most commonly used tasks in aptitude tests at various institutions around the world. These include short consecutive exercises, general knowledge questions, summarising, paraphrasing, oral presentations and an interview.

Etilvia Arjona-Tseng (1994) also mentions using an **aural discrimination** test in order to ascertain the language proficiency of candidates and to be able to identify the kinds of hearing mistakes made by the candidates. She also emphasises the point of using specified rubrics in order to focus the assessor and to ensure consistent results.

In an effort to refine aptitude testing, it is important to be aware of the limitations of currently used assessment methods. Knowing these limitations and finding ways to mitigate the shortcomings of certain assessment methods may prove valuable when designing rubrics for aptitude testing. Dodds (1990) highlights some of the problems experienced at Trieste and how these problems can be addressed in an effort to make the test more objective and useful.

When using **summary writing** as part of an aptitude test. In these tests candidates are required to listen to a semi-improvised speech in their B language and write down a summary of the speech in their A language. In theory this tests for the following skills: understanding of the source text; the ability to distinguish between important and redundant information; to be concise and to express themselves in their A language. However, for this test to actually test what it is supposed to, the candidates need clear instructions on what to do and what is expected. They need to be informed of what exactly a summary is and they should have time to proof-read their work before submitting.

Sight translation is also used as an indicator of interpreting aptitude; however, yet again the candidates need to be adequately informed of what is expected before the test is administered. They should be aware of the difference between "unseen translation" (where a candidate receives an unseen text to translate, with time to consult resources) and "sight interpreting" (where a candidate receives an unseen text to read out aloud in a different language, without time to consult resources). They should be informed of the fact that they are to produce a flowing, continuous speech, without unnatural pauses and awkward sentence construction. Also considering that this is part of an aptitude test (in most cases prior to having had any interpreter training), this basically amounts to asking a candidate to demonstrate aptitude for a task by performing the task. This seems to go against the notion

of aptitude testing in order to receive training: If a candidate can successfully complete the task, clearly training is not required.

Another test often used as part of an aptitude test is a **general knowledge** test. Here the biggest obstacle is the issue of objectivity. Firstly the examiners must be aware of the fact that the experience of world events and general knowledge depends on a variety of factors that must be accounted for in the test: the age of the candidate; the candidate's interests; the likelihood of this information occurring in real interpreting events and consensus on what the answers to general knowledge questions are.

Lambert (1991) mentions that **shadowing** can also be used as part of an aptitude test. The candidate listens to a recorded speech and then simultaneously repeats word-for-word (in the same language) what is heard. Shadowing can be done in two ways: *Phonemic shadowing*, where the candidate tries to keep lag time as short as possible, thus shadowing without needing to be aware of meaning; and *Phrase shadowing*, where the candidate lags a bit more, in order to first grasp meaning, before repeating what is said.

Lambert disputes, though, that phonemic shadowing should be used as a tool to determine whether or not the candidate is able to vocalise at the same time as hearing a text, and that phrase shadowing should rather be used as a training tool and not a selection tool. Shadowing in the candidate's B language can be especially useful, given that previous research indicates that it is very difficult to shadow something if it is not understood. Therefore this can also be used to test the candidates understanding in a B language.

Lambert (1991) further mentions the usefulness of a **cloze test**, or gap fill test. A cloze test can be administered aurally or in written form. The candidate is presented with a text, where certain words are omitted. The candidate is then expected to complete the text by filling in the blanks in such a way that the whole text makes sense. This is a good way to test anticipation or prediction, which is a very useful skill in simultaneous interpreting.

Russo (2011) mentions that the core concept of what is required of a competent interpreter has not changed much over the past 40 years. This clearly shows tacit agreement in the interpreter training community of what is expected of a competent interpreter. From the characteristics of a competent interpreter it should be possible to isolate characteristics required for being admitted into an interpreting programme. Although many of these characteristics are soft and require specialist training to assess, some of these skills can be objectively tested in aptitude tests without expecting candidates to perform the task for which they are doing an aptitude test.

Currently, aptitude tests at many institutions are exclusionary. This means that a candidate cannot study interpreting at all if he/she fails the test. In such cases, the results from the aptitude test should not be a simple "pass" or "fail", but should rather provide the candidate with feedback in order allow him/her to gain the skills required in order to apply again in a successive year. The skills tested for in the test can be broken down into separate parts and feedback given in order to help certain candidates prepare for a successive assessment opportunity (Ungoed-Thomas & Timarová, 2014).

2.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF STANDARDISED TESTS

Pre-assessments act as gatekeepers to ensure that students who do not meet the requirements are not allowed to study interpreting (or in the case where they are already studying, to continue with further studies). To ensure that the pre-assessment tests have value, they should be compiled with strict guidelines in mind. Clifford (2001, p. 374) suggests the following guidelines:

Table 1: Guidelines for creating assessments (Clifford: 2001)

Intention	What is the purpose of the assessment? What is being assessed? This is arguably the most important step, since it guides all others.
Measurement	This step of the cycle includes collection of data (through the administration of an assessment), as well as organization of the data and marking.
Judgement	Judging the value and quality of the data must be done using a common system for interpretation understood by all assessors.
Decision	The fairness of the assessment depends on how rigorous the previous criteria have been adhered to.

To put this in another way, the principles of quality assessment (Clifford, 2001: 374) are:

Table 2: Principles of quality assessment (Clifford: 2001)

Validity	An instrument is valid if it actually measures what it was designed to measure, that is, if it allows the assessor to make inferences about the targeted competency. There are different types of validity: e.g. content, construct, predictive, instructional, consequential (Berger and Simon, 1995, cited in Clifford, 2001: 374).
Reliability	An instrument is reliable if it provides stable results from one administration to another in comparable conditions of use (Berger and Simon, 1995, cited in Clifford, 2001: 374). Reliability may be verified through such techniques as testing and retesting on separate occasions, or using alternate forms of a given assessment (Gipps, 1994, cited in Clifford, 2001: 374).
Equity	Equity is the principle that instructs assessors to be aware of gaps in performance that exist among groups because of differences in familiarity, exposure and motivation on the tasks of interest (Linn, Baker and Dunbar, 1991, cited in Clifford, 2001: 374).
Utility	An assessment may be valid, reliable and equitable, but high cost or unreasonably elaborate procedures may prevent its use. The utility of an instrument is an indication of how practical it is to use it in a given situation.
Comparability	There is comparability in an assessment if it is administered consistently, if there is common understanding of assessment criteria, and if the performance is evaluated fairly (i.e., with the same rubric by all markers; Gipps, 1994, cited in Clifford, 2001: 374). Interpreter assessments need to demonstrate comparability across interpreters with different working languages, across yearly administrations of the assessment, across raters and even between language modes (spoken versus sign language).

Messick (1980) echoes the importance of test design. He asks two very important questions: “First, is the test any good as a measure of the characteristics it is interpreted to assess? Second, should the test be used for the proposed purpose in the proposed way?” Messick argues that in general (not only for the purposes of interpreter aptitude), tests are not good enough and are often not used properly to test what it is supposed to test. Messick cautions that it should be very clear what exactly is being tested and what the result of a given score means. He uses the example of a test which tests for "flexibility versus rigidity", but that is interpreted by an uninformed third party to mean "confusion versus control". Although these two sets of terms seem similar, they are in fact, quite different and can have a significant effect on the selection of the candidates who participate in such a test.

When pre-selecting potential interpreting students, it could be possible for a test with scaled outcomes like the example above to be used. If the assessor (rightly) interprets the results as indicating flexibility as opposed to rigidity, the candidates who scored strongly in the first category would be the preferred ones. However, if the same

candidates are evaluated with the same test, but the assessor interprets the results in terms of confusion and control, the candidates from the second category would be favoured.

Not only does this example clearly illustrate the importance of wording and explanations for the assessors, but also for the candidates participating in the test. If they are not absolutely sure about what is being tested, they might perform badly based on faulty assumptions.

When designing aptitude tests, one should keep the prospective training in mind. (Ungoed-Thomas & Timarová, 2014). There should not be a "one size fits all" test, but rather tests for each specific course presented. They echo Dodds' sentiment that what will be taught in a course should not be tested for in the aptitude tests.

Carroll in Ungoed-Thomas and Timarová (2014) refers to five general criteria for the design of aptitude testing:

- student's aptitude
- student's general intelligence
- student's perseverance (amount of time dedicated to training activities)
- quality of instruction (how much learning support will be provided)
- time provided for learning

The aptitude test should take into account the course content of the proposed course. If the course content will only cover sight interpreting and short consecutive interpreting, there is no reason to assess for simultaneous interpreting as part of the aptitude test for this course. Similarly, one should also keep in mind the duration of the course. In some cases, it is possible to catch up on skills that have not been fully developed during the course, because there is enough time during the course to address suck kinds of problems. Conversely, if a short course is presented with limited time, the aptitude test should reflect those needs. In such a case there are certain skills that need to be in place and no time will be spent on these skills during the course. In such a case it stands to reason that the aptitude tests needs to be much more rigorous. In short, the aptitude tests should allow for those who pass to complete the course in the normal time-frame of the course.

Mocer-Mercer (1994) makes the interesting observation that many interpreting tests in general (aptitude testing included) do not only test one aspect per category. This means that quite often a candidate is given one task, but it is assessed by using more than one category. An example may be where a candidate is required to perform a long consecutive interpreting task. If the candidate does poorly in this task, the following could potentially be reasons for failing:

- The candidate could not hear the speaker.
- The candidate is unfamiliar with the accent of the speaker.
- The candidate could not keep up because the speaker spoke too fast.
- The candidate is unfamiliar with the topic.
- The candidate clearly remembers what was said, but has trouble expressing it.
- The candidate understood what was said, but cannot remember it.

There could also be many more reasons for why the candidate performed poorly, however, if each different aspect is not tested for individually, the general result would be a fail. However when considering that any single one of the points mentioned above could cause a person to do poorly in a long consecutive test, even if the candidate had no trouble with the other aspects. This means that a candidate is dismissed without knowing exactly what the reason for failure was because there is often not a clear link between the skill being tested and the test used to test for the skill in question.

2.5 ONLINE ASSESSMENT METHODS

The face of education has evolved to include new and innovative forms of learning. With the abilities and resources of the internet, education is no longer limited to a group of students and a teacher in one class working from often, outdated textbooks. With the internet, there is a multitude of information available to any prospective student and in many cases this information is completely free. Courses are presented via distance with great ease, given the abilities of applications like e-mail and video conferencing.

Some of the most notable online learning platforms are www.open2study.com, www.futurelearn.com, www.ice.cam.ac.uk, www.ed.ac.uk and www.internationalstudent.com, where several courses from agriculture to world music are available completely online with great success. There are several reputable universities and educational institutions who host complete courses online. As part of the online course, the candidates are assessed, and many (if not all) of these assessments are done online. Given that both formative (generally, homework assignments) and summative assessments (examinations) are done online, it must be possible to also do pre-assessments online.

However, when assessments are not done under absolutely controlled conditions (under supervision, without external help, etc) there is a chance that students may cheat in any assessment. Students may cheat in a summative assessment in order to pass an examination for which they are not prepared. Similarly, a candidate may cheat on an online aptitude test in order to be admitted. For this reason it may be necessary to investigate ways in which students can cheat with an online test and pre-emptively find ways of preventing this from happening.

Rowe (2004) gives examples of possible cheating where candidates get answers from other students; retake tests in order to achieve better marks and get unauthorised help. These methods of cheating are discussed below along with ways to minimise the effect of said cheating.

Problem 1: Getting assessment answers in advance.

When students have the ability to do conduct an assessment at their own time (as is often the case with online courses), there is a possibility of one student completing the assessment and giving the answers to a friend who will be completing the same assessment at a later stage. This is very similar to a class of students who write a test under controlled conditions at a school. When the test is over, they share the questions they can remember with their friends, who will be writing the same test later.

The first obvious solution to this problem is to limit the test taking time to a specific time. This means that all candidates have to complete the same assessment at exactly the same time. Although this solution may work, it is not always practical, given that many people do online courses, specifically in order to progress at their own pace or because they are not available to participate in class at conventional times.

Another solution is to have multiple tests. However, there is a high possibility that one test may be harder than another. To solve this problem, a pool of questions or tasks can be used. The trainer will need to create a pool of questions or tasks so that when the students take the test, they will not get an entirely different test, but will not have all the same questions. In this way it discourages students to try to remember specific questions, because there is a probability that the same question might not be asked in a successive test.

Problem 2: Unfair retaking of assessments or preparation of assignments

In a class, a student takes a test, and it is submitted. The student had one chance to submit the assignment and it is done under controlled circumstances. A teacher would not allow a student to submit an assessment and then

consult with friends and after that return to retake the test. The same principle applies to interpreting assignments, where the student is supposed to give a spontaneous interpretation rather than a translated or rehearsed one.

However, this problem can occur with online assessments. A student can claim that he/she lost power or internet connection during a test and as such needs to retake the test. Also, it is very possible to hack into a server and change information if it is not adequately protected. If an interpreting student has the opportunity to have a long enough time delay between receiving the assignment and delivering the assignment. He/she would be in a position to rehearse or even translate the text before rendering it. Although this is still the student's own work, it is still a form of cheating, because the objective of the assignment is often not to give a perfectly rehearsed rendition, but rather a spontaneous one.

In order to solve this problem, it is important that the online system must firstly be well protected against any irregular use. Also it has to be able to log what happened when there is a disconnection. The system should also be able to record actions prior to disconnection in order to resume an assessment from the point where it was interrupted. Yet again here, it may also be useful to have several back-up tasks available, should there be any doubt of the candidate's honesty

Problem 3: Unauthorized help during the assessment

Under controlled conditions, a teacher would not allow any external or unauthorised help in an assessment. However, this is not as easy to monitor and control when candidates are performing their assessments at a distance. One possible way of ensuring that assessments are fair and have no unauthorised help could be the use of proxy invigilators at satellite locations. This solution does not solve the problem as well as would be expected given the reasons for taking an online course in the first place. Students might have trouble travelling to a location in order to write a test. Also students might not be available at the given time of the assessment.

Forcing a student to video record him/herself while performing the task may discourage dishonest behaviour and serve as a record to be kept for later scrutiny if necessary.

Cizek (1999) in Rowe (2004) suggests several further steps and measures to be taken in an attempt to minimise the effects of cheating on an online platform. These are too numerous to mention here, but these countermeasures as well as others should be kept in mind when designing online pre-assessments.

2.6 Conclusion

Despite the fact that aptitude testing is often the topic of debate among researchers, it is still practised at many educational institutions providing interpreter training. Up to this point, there is no "perfect" aptitude test with clear and accurate results. However, aptitude testing is an important step for both the educational institution as well as the prospective student.

Given that interpreter training is very time and cost intensive, it would benefit a potential student to know before enrolling for a qualification, whether or not they would have a reasonable chance of successfully completing their studies. The most commonly sought after skills are: spoken linguistic ability, memory skills, cultural awareness, analytical skills, comprehension, general knowledge and the ability to make decisions.

In order to safeguard institutions and provide objective tests to candidates, it is important to design tests in such a way that they accurately and objectively test what they claim to test. Although it is clear that no test will be

perfect, it would be prudent to construct tests, using the general principles of validity, reliability, equity, utility and comparability, in an attempt to ensure that the tests fulfil their purpose.

When considering the technology available today, it is already possible to teach and examine students online. Online teaching does come with its own problems, but there may be value in investigating online aptitude testing as an alternative delivery method than the testing methods in use today.

CHAPTER 3 – INSTITUTIONAL APTITUDE TESTING PRACTICES AND ACCESS TO INTERPRETING STUDIES

"Now in my theatre training I showed no aptitude at all." - Jeremy Irons

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the readiness (aptitude) testing practices of educational institutions mainly in South Africa. It further investigates access to interpreting studies in South Africa and the African continent in general. The final part of this chapter compares aptitude testing practices in some international institutions offering interpreting training.

3.2 APTITUDE TESTING PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

South African universities generally have similar admission policies. Students wishing to enrol at a university or other tertiary educational institution in South Africa need to provide a National Senior Certificate with a bachelor's pass and a short Curriculum Vitae regarding their school activities. A National Senior certificate is awarded after 12 years of schooling. In order to gain admission to university, the candidate must have achieved certain marks (depending on what qualification the candidate is applying for). Many universities also require applicants to write general admission tests. If an applicant is admitted based on his/her National Senior Certificate marks and the admission test, further pre-assessment may be required for different fields of study.

For postgraduate studies, applicants are required to have successfully completed a degree (preferably one relating to the chosen field of postgraduate study) and a mark of 65% or higher for the last two years of the degree. Some institutions also require that candidates sit for a promotion examination prior to being admitted. These pre-assessments and promotion examinations differ between institutions.

From telephone calls, and email correspondence, the following is a summary of pre-assessment practices at various educational institutions in South Africa offering training in interpreting. This list excludes purely theory based qualifications, such as qualifications by dissertation only. It also excludes language practice courses where there is no practical interpreting training. In all cases below, the pre-assessment listed is required in addition to a National Senior Certificate, a CV and a general admission test.

Table 3: Pre-assessment practices at South African Tertiary institutions offering interpreter training

Institution	Level of courses	Pre-assessment	Exclusionary or not
North-West University	Degree	None.	N/A
	Postgraduate Degree	None.	A student must have achieved a specific mark for his/her undergraduate studies in order to proceed to postgraduate studies.
Central University of Technology, Free State	Undergraduate Diploma	Written language proficiency test in two languages.	Students marginally failing the written test may be allowed, based on their school marks, otherwise they are excluded.
Durban University of Technology	Undergraduate Diploma	Language proficiency test and interview in two languages.	Students failing the interview are excluded from the programme.
	B. Tech Degree	None.	N/A
University of the Free State	Short course	Interview.	Recommendations are made as to how to improve, but not exclusionary.
	Postgraduate Degree	Interview.	Recommendations are made as to how to improve, but not exclusionary.
Tshwane University of Technology	Diploma	Written language proficiency test in two languages and interview.	Students failing the interview are excluded from the programme.
Stellenbosch University	Postgraduate Diploma	Bilingual written language proficiency test.	Students marginally failing may be admitted based on an oral interview. Students failing, may re-apply in a year
University of South Africa	Certificate in Court interpreting Honours in Translation Degree	None.	N/A
University of the Witwatersrand	Undergraduate Diploma	Oral Interview, sight interpreting, written language proficiency test, summary, consecutive interpreting.	Students marginally failing may be allowed based on outcome of written language proficiency test. Students failing may re-apply in a year.
	Postgraduate Diploma	Written admission test, Oral interview, Language proficiency test.	Students who do not meet the requirements for the Honnours degree in interpreting are often accepted for the Diploma. Students failing may re-apply in a year.
	Postgraduate Degree	Oral Interview, sight interpreting, written language proficiency test, summary, consecutive interpreting.	Students marginally failing may be allowed based on outcome of written language proficiency test. Students failing may re-apply in a year or may apply for the postgraduate Dipoma in interpreting.
University of Limpopo	Postgraduate Degree	Interview and written test.	Students failing the interview are excluded from the programme.
University of Johannesburg	Degree	None	NA
	Postgraduate degree	Bilingual spoken language assessment.	Candidates are not excluded, but they are advised not to continue if they fail.

University of Pretoria	MA in Applied Language Studies, Option: Translation and Interpreting	Written admissions test.	A student must have achieved a specific mark for his/her Honours studies in order to proceed to the MA. Students failing the admissions test are excluded from the programme.
University of Venda	Degree	None.	N/A

As is evident from the table above, aptitude testing for potential interpreting students leaves much to be desired. Of all the institutions mentioned above, several institutions have no selection or pre-assessment practices, other than the standard university admissions requirements. Some of the institutions rely only on written tests to decide whether or not a student gains access to interpreter training or not. Some institutions conduct both written and oral tests. Other institutions only rely on oral tests. From this information it is clear that there is a great need for standardisation of readiness testing in South Africa.

The institutions mentioned above are represented on the following map of South Africa:

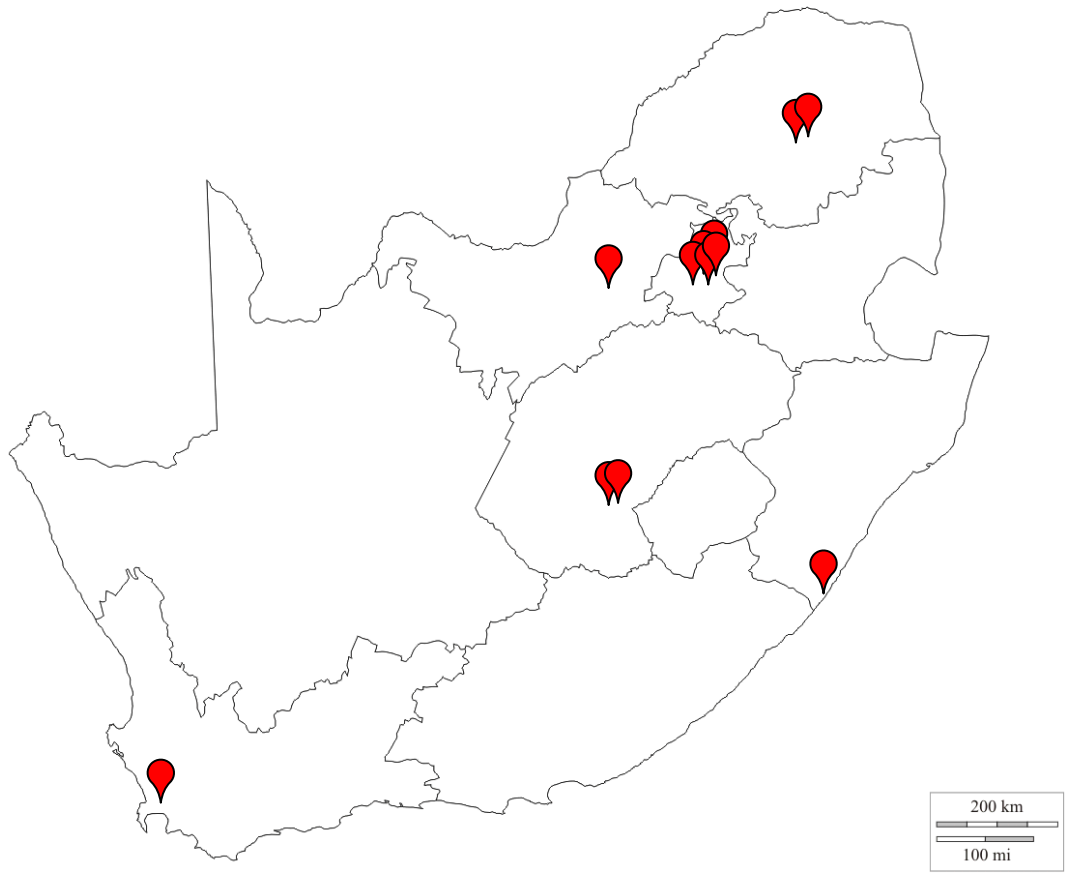


Figure 1: Educational institutions in South Africa offering practical interpreter training

3.3 Cost implications of aptitude testing (or the lack thereof) in South Africa

As can be clearly seen on the map above, access to training centres providing interpreting training is severely hampered in certain areas, due to the great distance required to travel in order to gain access to an institution providing interpreting training.

Considering that travel and accommodation is quite expensive in South Africa, it is conceivable that students may avoid applying at certain institutions due to the great distances they need to travel. Students are expected to travel to a testing centre at a specific date in order to participate in aptitude tests (at certain institutions). This is only to determine whether or not the student would be allowed into the programme. Given that there is a chance that the student might not be accepted into the programme, there is a significant chance that taking part in an aptitude test may yield no results for the student at all. This may not seem like a risk, but when one considers the following hypothetical situation, the cost of failing an aptitude test might be more apparent:

> A candidate who lives 400km from the nearest testing centre would like to enrol for an interpreting course. He/she needs to first take part in an aptitude test and needs to travel to the nearest testing centre for a test. Should the candidate pass this test, he/she would be allowed access to the programme. Should he/she fail the aptitude test, the candidate will not be allowed to enrol for the course and all costs incurred to take the test would have been spent in vain.

Taking into account the current average salary and fuel price in South Africa, along with toll gates, the potential travelling cost alone of taking such a test could be about 6% of that person's gross monthly salary or 8% of that person's net salary. These costs exclude accommodation and it is assumed that the test itself is not charged for.

In the example mentioned above, it is conceivable that potential viable candidates may decide to not even participate in aptitude testing, due to the massive financial risk involved in failing the test.

Should the candidate pass the test or apply at an institution where there is no test, the course fees alone would be 30% of the candidate's gross annual salary or 40% of the candidate's net annual salary. This is assuming that the candidate earns the average salary in South Africa. The financial concern regarding aptitude testing and studying is not only a concern in South Africa, but indeed a worldwide concern. Russo (2011) points out that "selecting interpreting candidates wisely has become … a practical necessity for training institutions confronting human and financial restrictions".

Given that many aptitude tests are not particularly indicative of success, the decision to study interpreting is a risk, because it is very possible that even having studied for three years, students may not be capable of interpreting. This means they will not be able to use the training they received to recover the money spent on training.

3.4 Access to Interpreting training in Africa

If one considers the number of bilingual and multilingual countries in Africa, and the presence of bodies such as the Pan African Parliament and the African Union, it stands to reason that there is a demand for properly trained interpreters on the African continent. Interpreters are needed for social and professionals needs. The following table lists some bilingual and multilingual countries in Africa:

Table 4: Bilingual and multilingual countries in Africa

Country	Main languages spoken
Algeria	Arabic, French
Benin	French, Fon, Songhay
Botswana	English, Setswana
Burundi	French, Kirundi, Swahili
Cameroon	English, French
Cape Verde	Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole
Central African Republic	French, Sango
Chad	Arabic, French
Comores	Arabic, Comorian, French
Democratic Republic of the Congo	French, Lingala, Kongo, Swahili, Tshiluba
Djibouti	Arabic, French
Egypt	Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, English, French
Equatorial Guinea	Spanish, French, Portuguese
Gambia	English, Wolof, Fula
Ghana	English, Akan, Dagaare, Dagbane, Dangme, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, Nzema
Guinea	French, Arabic, Fula, Susu
Kenya	English, Swahili
Lesotho	English, Sesotho
Libya	Arabic, Italian, English
Madagascar	French, Malagasy
Malawi	Chichewa, English
Mauritania	Arabic, Hassaniya, French
Mauritius	English, French, Mauritian Creole, Hindi, Hakka, Bojpoori, Tamil, Urdu, Marathi
Morocco	Arabic, French
Namibia	English, Ovambo, Afrikaans, German, Portuguese
Republic of the Congo	French, Lingala, Kituba
Rwanda	English, French, Kinyarwanda
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	Arabic, Spanish
Seychelles	English, French, Seychellois Creole
Somalia	Somali, Arabic, English
South Africa	Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Swati, Tsonga, Venda, Xhosa, Zulu
Sudan	Arabic, English
Swaziland	English, Siswati
Tanzania	Swahili, English, Gujarati, Portuguese
Togo	French, Ewe, Mina
Tunisia	Arabic, French
Uganda	English, Arabic, Luganda, Swahili
Western Sahara	Hassaniya, Moroccan Arabic, Spanish
Zimbabwe	English, Shona, Ndebele

(Paul, et al., 2016)

It is important to note that the list above only mentions official languages, however the languages listed above are by no means exhaustive: Many other unofficial languages are also spoken in these countries (and other countries in Africa).

Given the many countries with more than one language and the many languages spoken on the African continent, it is fair to assume that interpreting is done in these countries on a daily basis in some form. Many of these

"interpreters" could be trained to be competent community and conference interpreters, however, when one looks at where educational institutions, teaching interpreting, are, it is clear that access to interpreting training on the African continent is quite restricted. The following table shows the major educational institutions where a practical qualification in interpreting is available in Africa:

Table 5: African tertiary institutions offering interpreter training (excluding South African institutions)

Institution	**Country**
Universidade Pedagógica de Moçambique	Mozambique
University of Buea	Cameroon
Ain Shams University, Faculty of Languages	Egypt
Ecole Supérieure Marocaine de Traduction et d'Intrépretariat	Morocco
Al-Alsun University	Eqypt
Al Azhar University, Faculty of Languages	Egypt
Alexandria University	Egypt
The American University	Egypt
University of Nairobi	Nairobi, Kenya
Kenyatta University	Kenya
Eduardo Mondlane University	Mozambique
University of Ghana	Ghana
Pan-African University (Institute for Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences hosted by the University of Yaoundé)	Cameroon

These institutions are represented on the following map of Africa (The map excludes institutions in South Africa):

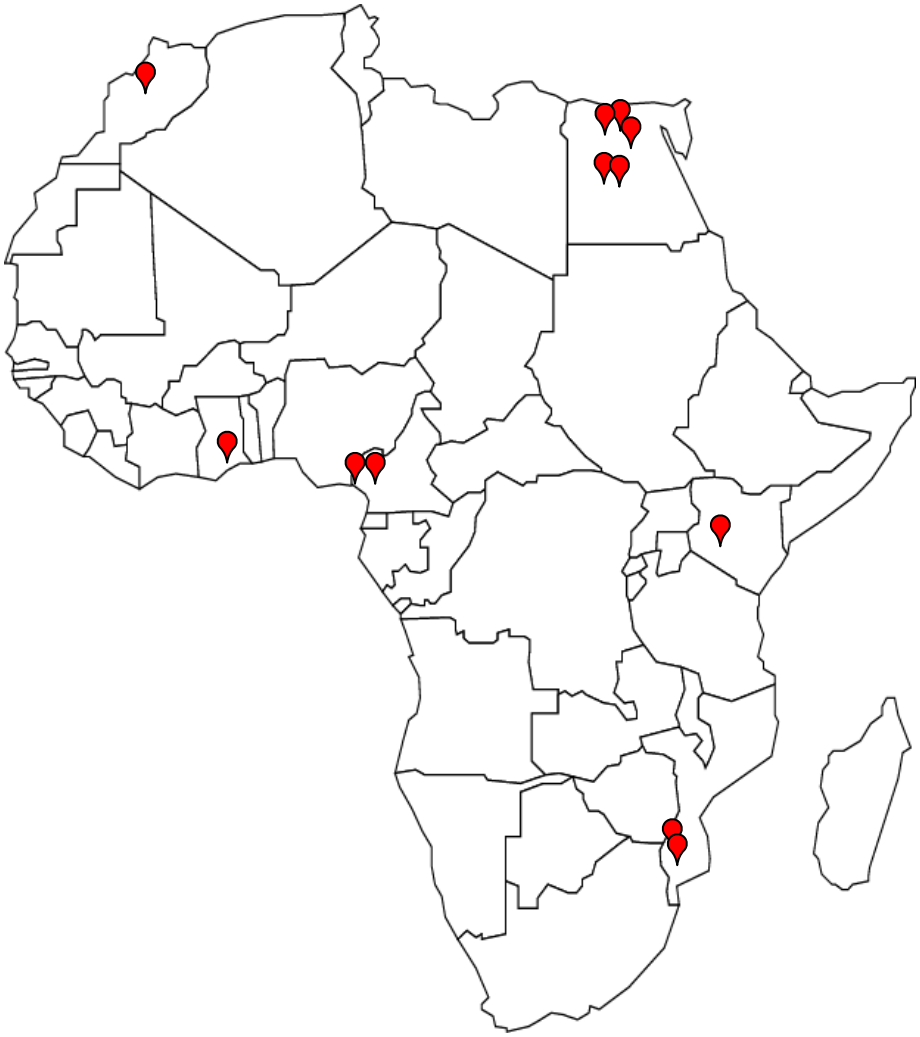


Figure 2: Educational institutions in Africa offering practical interpreter training

As can be seen from the map above, access to interpreting studies on the African continent is even more restricted than in South Africa. Potential candidates need to travel great distances to get to educational institutions. This has significant financial and safety implications for candidates. The following four anecdotal cases from the University of the Witwatersrand illustrate this point:

3.4.1 Student A from Namibia

Student A is a sign language interpreter from Namibia decided to enrol for a Diploma in Legal Interpreting at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She started with her course in 2014 and arrived at the Wits Language School on foot. At this point she hardly spoke any English and the little English she did speak was very difficult to understand. She applied for the Diploma in Legal Interpreting, but did not enrol directly. She was advised to participate in some English improvement courses prior to enrolling for a diploma in interpreting. She completed several English improvement courses during 2014 and re-applied for the Diploma in Legal Interpreting in 2015. She completed the aptitude test at Wits Language School in Johannesburg, South Africa. She showed great potential and an eagerness to learn. She was advised that her English still needed improvement, but that with continued English practice, she would be able to cope with the material in the interpreting courses.

During her diploma studies, there were times when she arrived very late for class. There were times when she arrived at lunch time, when classes started at 09:00 in the morning. The trainers noticed this pattern and fearing that she might be at risk of missing out on information, asked her about it. She then mentioned that she travelled from Namibia to South Africa each time she came to class and that because she could not afford to travel on her own, she was forced to hitch-hike each time she travelled between South Africa and Namibia. At times she mentioned that she had been mugged on her travels and that there were times when she was dropped off next to the road far from any kind of accommodation. There were times that she had to walk through dangerous areas at night. She had trouble at work, because she had to take many days of unpaid leave. The journey from between the two countries took her two days on average per one-way trip. Yet she persisted and with help from the trainers, she did not miss any work and successfully passed the diploma.

She then enrolled for postgraduate interpreter training and completed two postgraduate courses at Wits Language School. In one of these courses, presented by Hans-Werner Mühle (President of AAIC (France) and an international trainer), her trainer commented on the fact that she had done so well in one of her postgraduate courses that she would make a very competent conference interpreter. Currently she has applied to complete a postgraduate diploma in interpreting at the University of the Witwatersrand.

(A, 2016)

Fortunately this story ends in success. Student A was assessed prior to her studies and as result of the aptitude testing, she received sound advice as to how to improve in order to become a viable interpreting student. Now she is a practising court interpreter in Namibia. However, she was forced to expose herself to tremendous personal danger each time she travelled to study. If a reliable online assessment had been available to her at the time, it could have saved her several trips.

Her perseverance and dedication is laudable, but the question arises: How many other potentially viable interpreter candidates in Namibia (and other countries) would never become interpreters, because travelling to attend an aptitude test, is simply too costly or too dangerous to risk?

3.4.2 Student B from Gabon

At the beginning of 2016, Student B applied to enrol for the Diploma in Legal Interpreting at Wits Language School. She works for the Gabonese government and she searched for interpreter training in South Africa, because there is no interpreter training where she is from. Patricia sent an email to Wits Language School and she chose the option of doing the aptitude testing online. After the pre-assessment was completed, she was advised that, although her English was at an acceptable level, she might benefit from some pronunciation lessons. She was also advised that she should focus on improving her academic writing during her training. She took this advice into account and registered for the diploma. Because of the certainty from the readiness test, she was able to confidently make arrangements for travel and accommodation. She has completed most of the courses as part of the diploma, and is due to graduate soon.

(B, 2016)

3.4.3 Student C from Gabon

Student C did not apply via email. She arrived at Wits Language School in 2016, without having had any contact with the school. Upon her arrival, she sat for the readiness test. The test pointed out some significant barriers for studying interpreting. She was advised that she needed to improve her English writing, speaking and

comprehension. She was also advised that her memory skills needed some training as well. She was advised not to study interpreting at the time, since her language skills at the time would have been a barrier to understanding the course material. Her general knowledge was also rather limited.

She opted to proceed with studies despite warnings from two trainers. She completed 30% of the diploma courses with great difficulty and finally dropped out of the course. During training, several interventions were staged in order to assist her in completing the courses successfully. When it was clear that she would not be able to continue, she was asked why she decided to study despite being advised against it. She responded that she had already spent considerable amounts of money for travel and accommodation and she had hoped that she would improve to such an extent that she could keep up.

(C, 2016)

This case clearly shows that time and money had been wasted that could have been completely avoided, had the candidate conducted an online readiness test and heeded the advice from the report.

3.4.4 Student D from Botswana

Student D applied to enrol for the Diploma in Legal Interpreting in 2013. At the time, online readiness testing at Wits Language School was not yet available. Sandra elected to come to Wits Language School, because a qualification would improve her status at work and it was not possible to get an interpreting qualification in her country.

In an attempt to screen her for potential language problems, she was given a document to translate from Tswana to English. From the translation it was evident that she had good language and comprehension skills. After this initial screening process, she was invited for a traditional screening/selection test at Wits Language School. She sat for the selection test and passed it with flying colours. Unfortunately, she could not start with the course immediately, because she had to return home to make travel and accommodation arrangements. However, she enrolled for the Diploma and several other courses and passed with a distinction.

(D, 2013)

If an online pre-assessment had been available to her in 2013, it could have potentially saved her a costly trip to South Africa.

Having examined the practices and access to of pre-assessment for interpreters in South Africa and Africa, it is necessary to examine the practices of some international institutions in order to develop an aptitude test for South Africa which is on par with what is done at these institutions and with what is suggested in the academic literature (see Chapter 2)

3.5 Interpreting institutions around the world

Not all tertiary educational institutions provide interpreter training. Given the great distances required to travel and the very low number of candidates accepted for interpreting programs, it is clear that the majority of candidates who apply for interpreting studies get no return on the money spent to sit for an admissions or aptitude test.

Although this may be regarded as a tool to discourage weaker candidates from applying, it is also a barrier to access for certain candidates.

The following list shows countries where major tertiary educational institutions are located providing interpreter training:

Table 6: Countries (other than South Africa) with Interpreter training available at tertiary level

Austria	Australia	Belgium
Brazil	Canada	Chile
China	Czech Republic	Denmark
Finland	France	Germany
Greece	Hungary	Ireland
Israel	Italy	Japan
Jordan	Lebanon	Netherlands
New Zealand	Norway	Pakistan
Poland	Portugal	Romania
South Korea	Spain	Sweden
Switzerland	Taiwan	Turkey
UK	USA	Uruguay

(AIIC, 2016)

3.6 APTITUDE TESTING AT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Taking into account the many aspects that could be tested for in an interpreter pre-assessment and realising that to test for all the aspects mentioned in Chapter 2 would be a remarkably long, expensive and possibly futile endeavour, it may be wise to examine aptitude testing at some international institutions in order to determine current trends in interpreter pre-assessment in order to develop an aptitude test that would be suitable for both face-to-face and online administration. Based on information available from academic literature, the pre-assessment practices of the following institutions are given:

3.5.1 UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA – CANADA

Lambert (1991) gives detailed information as to how readiness testing is conducted at the University of Ottawa for their graduate diploma in interpreting. This program is presented as a two year part-time course and has an entrance exam as well as a promotion exam. Passing the promotion exam allows the candidate to progress to the second year of study.

The selection (readiness) exam includes the following five tasks:

- Shadowing
- Cloze test (gap fill)
- Sight interpreting
- Memory test
- Interview

In each task, the input rate and stress is increased towards the end in an attempt to evaluate how potential candidates deal with stress and also to see which of the candidates persevere, despite the challenge and who simply give up.

3.5.2 SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE – LONDON

Gerver, et al. (1989) mention that selection (aptitude) tests are conducted at the School of Languages in London to select 25-30 candidates for an intensive 6 month course in simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. The tests are described as follows:

> The informal tests consist of written translation tests in addition to tests of both aural and oral language skills in the candidates' other languages. During the tests, candidates are first asked to repeat texts in the source language (shadowing) before progressing to interpretation of texts from their passive languages into their active language. These texts progress from simple sentences to more complex, albeit non-technical, longer passages. Unusual and unexpected phrases are inserted into the more difficult passages for interpretation in order to assess candidates' skills in coping with the unexpected and with passages which cannot be translated word-for-word. The interviews are designed to assess candidates' general background knowledge and interests, motivation, presentation of self, and general suitability for the profession. Whether or not there is a current market for the candidate's particular language combination is also taken into account at the time of selection. (Gerver, et al., 1989)

3.5.3 TAFE Colleges – Australia

According to Bontempo & Napier (2009), the programs at the TAFE colleges in Australia are reasonably consistent and therefore no specific college is singled out in this description.

Candidates applying for the Diploma in interpreting are firstly required to write an essay about who they are and why they would like to study interpreting as well as to describe how they deal with stress. This essay gives insight as to the attitudes of the potential candidates as well as their English language proficiency. The second task is a shadowing task, where candidates are required to repeat what is said in the language (in this case Australian Sign Language), maintaining the same prosody, and generally matching the source text as closely as possible. The third task involves note taking, memory and analysis. Candidates are to view a recorded text (in Auslan), during which they are allowed to make notes. Afterwards, they are to give a spoken summary of the text in English. The fourth task tests the ability to focus on two separate tasks. Candidates are to listen to an English text, while writing down the numbers 100 – 0 backwards. At the end of the recording, candidates are to render the English text in English as accurately as possible. Finally, candidates were interviewed by a panel of professional interpreters, interpreter trainers and other stakeholders.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the generally cursory tests used in most South African tertiary institutions to determine the candidates' readiness to study interpreting. Most South African Universities' readiness tests are not at all as rigorous as those done by international institutions. However, all but one of those South African universities conducting readiness tests, insist on meeting the candidate face-to-face. Given that not all of the candidates applying will prove ready to study interpreting, many of these candidates are required to spend time and money on an endeavour that will yield nothing. Many potential candidates may not even apply, due to financial constraints and the risk of failure.

This chapter also examined the readiness testing practices of some international interpreter training institutions. Tasks as part of the readiness tests conducted at these institutions, include: shadowing, comprehension tests, sight interpreting, memory tests, interviews and essays. Having determined that there is a need for objective and online readiness tests, the following chapter will provide a discussion of a potential online readiness test.

CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." - Albert Einstein

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodology of this study. Firstly, a description of the process of collecting data on how institutions conduct aptitude testing for interpreter training is given. This is followed by a description of the process followed in selecting participants. Thereafter, the development of the aptitude test for online delivery is discussed. Finally, this chapter shows a comparison between the marks of the aptitude test and the examination results of the students after training.

Although it is clear that developing a "perfect" aptitude test is most likely a futile attempt, there is a need for aptitude testing or pre-assessment and aptitude testing might serve a greater purpose if it could be used as a learning opportunity as well as a means of identifying which candidates have the right skill set to be successful in interpreting studies.

4.2 RESEARCH METHOD

This study is conducted using a grounded theory approach. The substantive area identified is aptitude testing for potential interpreting students. As mentioned previously, the perspectives of participants involved in aptitude testing will be investigated. Therefore the substantive population will comprise:

- Candidates applying for interpreting studies who have participated in aptitude testing.
- Evaluators assessing candidates' aptitude tests.

Based on literature and practices at major interpreter training institutions, an aptitude test will be developed. This aptitude test should adhere to the principles set out by Clifford (See chapter 2). This aptitude test should also be designed in such a way that it can be administered face-to-face as well as online. Objective rubrics will be designed for each task on order to limit any personal bias and subjective assessments.

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected. Quantitative data will be in the form of questionnaires, distributed to evaluators and candidates. Qualitative data in the form of results for aptitude tests as well as examination results will also be used for this study.

Qualitative data in the form of focus groups and semi-structured interviews will be collected to supplement the data collected from the questionnaires. These interviews and focus groups will be video recorded and the recordings will be closely examined, using open coding, in an effort to identify major themes in the discussions as they occur. These themes will be linked and sorted into topics. The information collected will be entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets in order to be processed.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION: APTITUDE TESTING AT VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS

In order to establish how aptitude testing for potential interpreting students is carried out (or not) at various institutions around the world, surveys were conducted, either telephonically or via email (see Chapter 3). Institutions in South Africa offering interpreting training were contacted and asked about their aptitude testing policies. These questions cover what kind of training is offered; whether or not aptitude testing is done; if it is done, how it is done; and what obstacles exist with regard to aptitude testing. Other institutions' selection testing criteria was gleaned from academic articles published by experts in the field as is outlined in Chapter 3.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION: SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Candidates enrolling for undergraduate and postgraduate short courses in interpreting at Wits Language School participated in the study. Candidates who applied to Wits Language School for an interpreting course were provided with relevant information regarding the compulsory aptitude test and details of the study (by email, verbally in person, and on the participant information sheet) and were given the opportunity to choose to participate in the study or not. Candidates were provided with full information about the study and had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any penalty.

When the candidate applied for interpreting courses at Wits Language School, they were given information about the courses and the aptitude test. They were able to make an informed decision, since they were given the following information before choosing how they would like to complete the aptitude test:

> Welcome to Wits Language School!
>
> As part of providing you with high quality training, you are required to complete an aptitude test before the first lesson of the course for which you are enrolled. This test allows the trainers of the course to provide you with feedback as to which skills you need to pay special attention to during the course. It takes 2-3 hours to complete and can be taken in one of two ways:

Online	**Face-to face**
You will be required to register an account on an online learner management platform, called Edmodo. Here you will be given 8 tasks to complete. For some of these tasks, you will need to make video recordings of yourself and upload these to be assessed. You will also be required to upload some MS word documents as part of the assessment. You will be given clear instructions on how to complete each task and how to upload your documents for assessment. You will need a stable internet connection for the duration of this test. As part of this online aptitude test, you will need to produce and upload the following documents: • 3 minute video	You will be required to make an appointment with the short course administrator at the Interpreting unit at Wits Language School for your aptitude test. You will need to sit for the aptitude test before [specific date] You must be at Wits Language School at the agreed time and date. The aptitude test takes 2-3 hours to complete. You can only sit for the test on Mondays to Thursdays between the hours of 09:00 to 15:00 During the test, you will be video recorded for assessment and record keeping purposes. As part of this face-to-face test you will need to do the following: • 3 minute oral presentation

• 3 minute video • 5 minute video • 5 minute video • 3 MS word documents There will also be two online multiple choice tests. (English grammar and general knowledge) You will not need any special equipment for these tasks. Simple video recordings made on your smart phone will be adequate. This test can be done at any time during the day or night, before [specific date]. Should you not be able to complete this test before [specific date], you will not be permitted to join the current intake for this course and will have to join the next intake, later in the year.	• 3 minute oral presentation • 5 minute oral presentation • 5 minute oral presentation • 3 written assignments • Two multiple choice tests (English grammar and general knowledge) You will receive clear instructions during your appointment on how to complete each of the tasks and no preparation beforehand is necessary. Should you not be able to complete this test before [specific date], you will not be permitted to join the current intake for this course and will have to join the next intake, later in the year.

Please inform the course administrator of your language combination and which mode of testing you prefer before [specific date] and make an appointment if you choose to sit for the face-to-face test. If you choose to complete the test online, you will be given instructions on how to register an account on Edmodo and you can complete your test in one 3-hour slot at any time before [specific date]

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Candidates responded to the email sent to them indicating their choice. Of the 26 candidates, only one opted for the face-to-face test.

4.5 DEVELOPING AN APTITUDE TEST AT WITS UNIVERSITY

As already discussed, one of the main reasons for proposing an online aptitude test is to eliminate travel costs for the potential candidates. Another reason for opting for an online aptitude test is to ease the logistical burden on institutions. Ideally the aptitude test should be able to test for the various skills needed to become a successful interpreter and give feedback to candidates.

As mentioned before, there is no significant difference in the accuracy of the testing as a comprehensive test or as individual separate tests, however, the latter model was selected in order to make reporting more clearly defined for the evaluators and to give candidates feedback on individual skills.

In an effort to more clearly identify areas where candidates may experience challenges, a battery of tests is proposed rather than one inclusive test. For example, in an all-inclusive test, the candidate may not be able to interpret a specific speech segment, however, it would be hard to ascertain what the reason for that is. This could be due to mental fatigue, not knowing the equivalent term in the target language, not being familiar with the topic or a variety of other reasons. If the skills are separated into more clearly delineated sections, it is possible to more clearly identify the particular challenges and strengths of each individual candidate. Separating the tasks also allows for more comprehensive and specific reporting, which in turn empowers the student to improve on certain skills.

Another reason for dividing the test into several smaller tasks is to promote objectivity: Different evaluators are able to assess the same task independently from each other. Also, by clearly defining the outcomes of each task and using a rubric with clear descriptors, different assessors are more likely to come to the same conclusions.

Using Microsoft Excel and some basic programming, rubrics were designed to be completed in an excel document. The assessor would then enter marks for each task directly into the excel document. Based on the values of the marks entered, relevant pre-populated comments would be generated for each task. Using the mail merge function in Microsoft Word, the comments for each task, along with any additional comments by the assessor is combined to generate a detailed report of the applicant's performance in the aptitude test as a whole. This report is sent to both the student and the trainer. Reports make recommendations on how to improve skills that are not at the required level. This allows the student to make an informed decision on whether or not to study interpreting at the time. It also enables the trainer to know what skills to focus on during training.

Given that in both cases, online and face-to-face, the tasks are recorded, different tasks could be sent to different evaluators, which saves time and effort. Should an evaluator request to see a task he/she did not receive, these will be made available.

Each task focuses on a specific area/skill required for interpreting studies, is therefore split up into different tests.

The aptitude test is conducted face-to-face, or online, using "Edmodo", a free-to-use online learning management platform. An example of the aptitudetest, used in this study, can be found on Edmodo, by registering an account on Edmodo and joining a group with the code **zkqc2b.**

In an attempt to develop a aptitude test for this study, Clifford's (2001: 374) guidelines were used and the following questions were asked in order to develop this aptitude test:

Intention	What is the purpose of the assessment?	The overarching purpose is to determine whether or not a candidate has the required skills to successfully complete an interpreting training program.
	What is being assessed?	The following skills are assessed: • General knowledge • Spoken language proficiency in two languages • The ability to identify important parts of a text • The ability to remember a short oral presentation • The ability to convert written text in one language into spoken text in another • The ability to make reasoned assumptions • Application of proper grammar in both languages • Academic writing skills (appropriate to the level of study
Measurement	How will the assessment answers given by the candidates be measured?	Using rubrics with very specific criteria will allow for concrete measurement of task response.

Judgement	How will different assessors be able to come to the same conclusions, based on the same evidence?	Using rubrics with specific criteria as well as guidelines as to how this criteria should be interpreted should allow different assessors to come to similar conclusions based on the same evidence.
Decision	If the previous guidelines are followed, will the decision to pass/fail a candidate be fair?	In order to determine if this test has any value, it is conducted in addition to current pre-selection tests and is measured against the end results of candidates completing a course.

Given that Interpreting involves two (or more) languages, A and B languages are defined as follows:

> The 'A' language is the interpreter's mother tongue (or its strict equivalent) into which they work from all their other working languages in both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation.
>
> It is the language they speak best, and in which they can easily express even complicated ideas. It is therefore an active language for the interpreter.
>
> A 'B' language is a language in which the interpreter is perfectly fluent, but is not a mother tongue. An interpreter can work into this language from one or several of their other working languages, but may prefer to do so in only one mode of interpretation, either consecutive or simultaneous (often in 'consecutive' because it's not so fast). It is also considered an active language for the interpreter.

(AIIC, 2016)

Drawing from current thinking regarding aptitude testing for interpreting (cf. Chapter 2), the following tasks have been selected to form part of the aptitude test:

- General knowledge quiz (B Language)
- Spoken language proficiency test (English and other language)
- Summarising test (A Language)
- Consecutive interpreting
- Sight translation (B language to A language)
- Gap-fill (B language)
- Grammar test (B Language)
- Academic writing skills

Each task is discussed in more detail below.

4.5.1 General knowledge quiz (English)

According to Lynn et al (2001) a general knowledge test should contain questions to which the answers could be found in non-specialist media. Different kinds of media should be consulted and the content of the questions should be something regarded as relevant to many people.

A set of 20 multiple-choice questions were selected to form part of the test. Each question has four possible answers, with one being correct and the other three, incorrect. Five questions from four broad categories were included in the test: World politics; Current affairs; World Geography and General knowledge. The questions are graded for different levels of test takers, yet the topics remain the same. The candidate has 10 minutes to complete the test. Given that an interpreter has to be able to make quick decisions, this test has a very tight time limit. The candidate only has 30 seconds for each question (this includes the time spent reading the question). This leaves the candidate with enough time to answer the question, but not enough time to look up an answer.

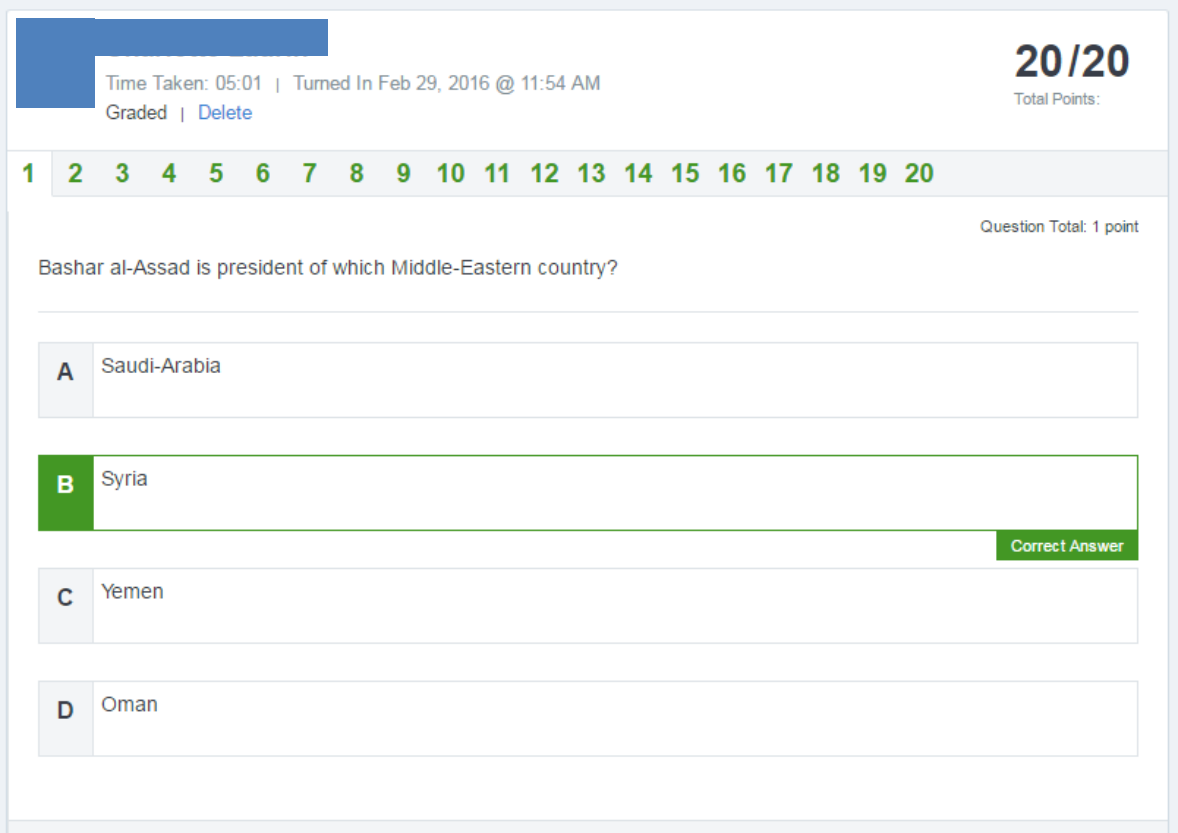


Figure 3: Screenshot of a question from the online aptitude test: General knowledge quiz

4.5.2 Spoken language proficiency test (English and other language)

Candidates are required to give a 2-3 minute impromptu presentation where they introduce themselves. This presentation is to be done in both of the working languages of the candidate. The candidate is given guidance as to what should be part of the presentation:

- Name and surname
- Age
- Personal background
- Working languages
- How their languages were acquired
- Interpreting experience (if any)
- Why an interest in interpreting studies?

The purpose of this task is to evaluate the candidate's spoken English. This task is specifically generic in order to assess what kind of habits the candidate may have that may have an impact when interpreting as well as to evaluate the extent to which the candidate can give an unprepared presentation. A rubric is used to evaluate and give feedback to the candidate. Candidates have 10 minutes for this task.

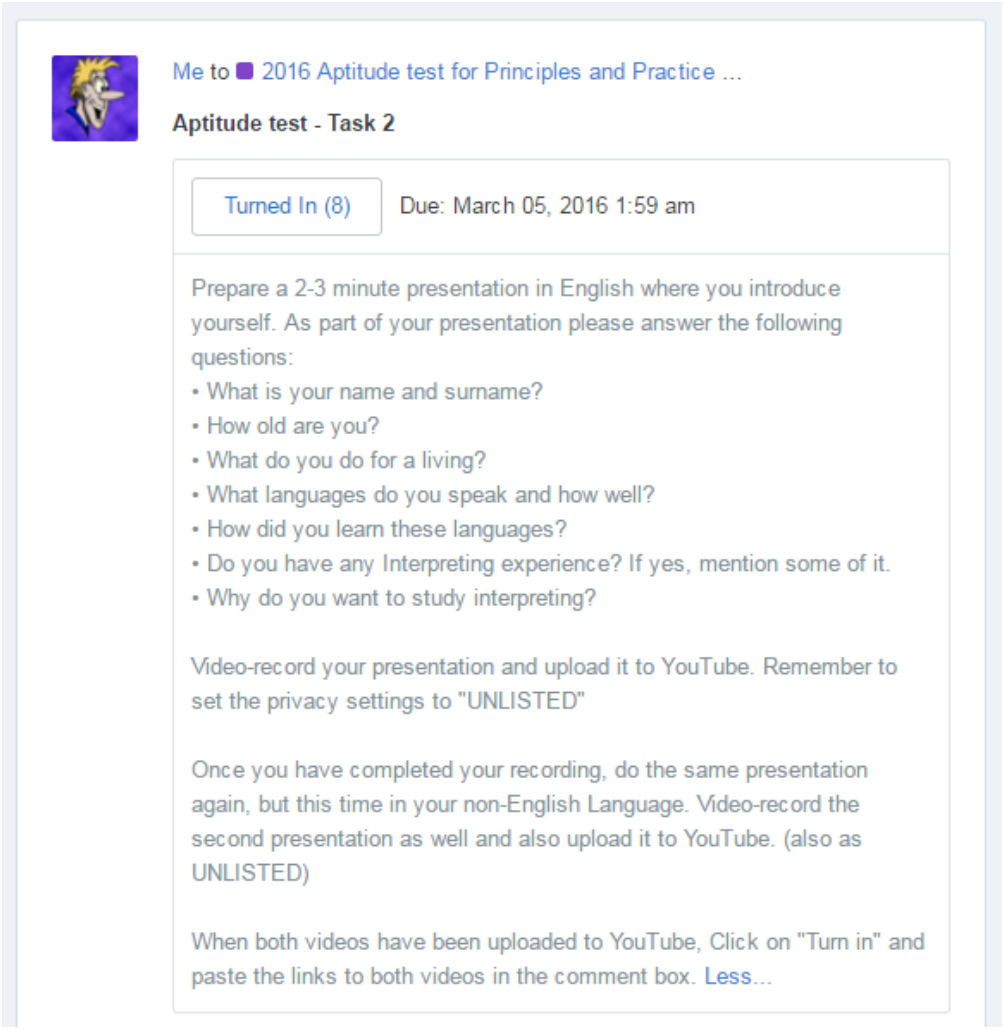


Figure 4: Screenshot of the instructions for the spoken language proficiency test

4.5.3 Summarising test (A Language)

Candidates are required to read a general text of about 600 words in their A language and summarise it in their A language. The summarised version should be no more than 200 words. This text is general with very few technical terms. Candidates are required to submit this test in written form for two reasons: firstly, submitting a text document is less data intensive than a video. Candidates are already required to send videos of themselves where this is considered to be absolutely necessary, however, in this instance, submitting a written document lowers the cost of data as compared to using video. The second reason for submitting a summary in written form is to make it easier for the assessors to quickly assess the task. The focus of this task is to identify the important parts of the text. Given that this is a written assignment and that candidates have access to spelling and grammar checkers, this eliminates the possibility of poor grammar or spelling influencing the mark. This in turn allows the assessor to accurately report on the candidate's ability to summarise a long text.

The objective of this task is for candidates to show that they are able to identify the important parts of a text and condense these into a coherent whole. Candidates have 30 minutes for this task.

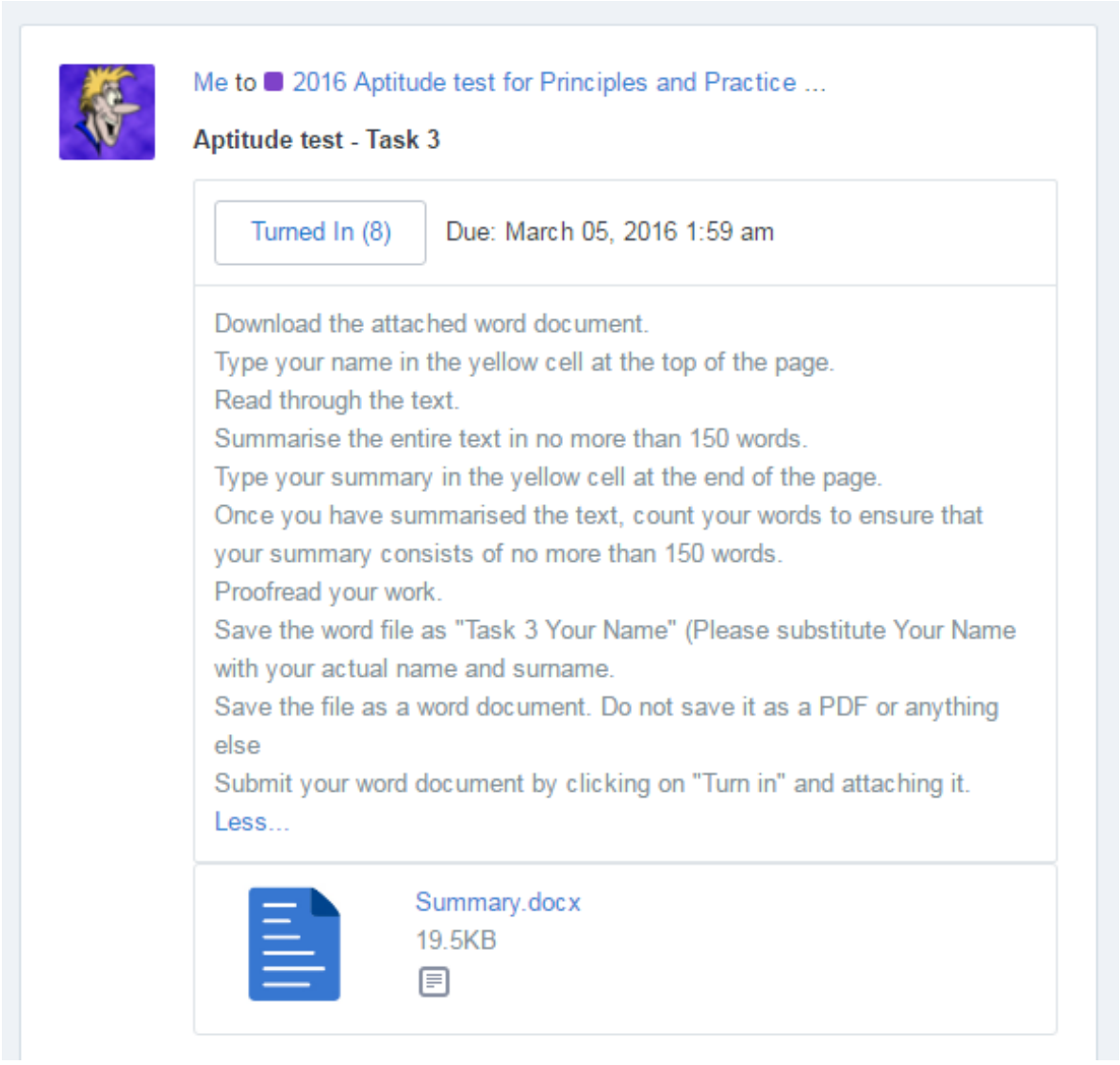


Figure 5: Screenshot of the instructions for the summary task

4.5.4 Consecutive interpreting

Given that this is an aptitude test, designed to determine whether or not the student will be able to cope with the content of the course, and not an examination, candidates are required to render a consecutive interpretation of a spoken text which is approximately 5 minutes long. Even candidates attempting this task with Sign Language are requested to do this task in the consecutive mode. Despite the popular notion that Sign Language should generally be interpreted simultaneously, it is important to bear in mind that this is an aptitude test and the assumption is that the candidate is not yet able to do simultaneous interpreting. The text used in this readiness test is adheres to criteria similar to that of the Canadian certification exam (Clifford, 2005):

Table 7: Comparison of the Canadian Certification Examination and the Wits Language School aptitude test

Canadian Certification Examination (Clifford, 2005)	**Wits Language School aptitude test**
10 minute speech	5 minute speech*
Given by one speaker	Given by one speaker
General (non-technical in nature)	General (non-technical in nature)
Relevant in the Canadian context	Relevant to the context of intended study

* A 5-minute speech is used rather than a 10-minute speech simply to cut down on data costs for downloading/uploading

The purpose of this task is to evaluate whether or not the candidate has the memory skills to remember what was said in the speech. In the case of undergraduate candidates, the assumption is that they have never interpreted before and as such, this would be taken into account when evaluating this task. The same is also true for postgraduate studies. Here it is assumed that the candidate has some interpreting experience and is able to cope with a text five minutes long. This would also be taken into account when evaluating this task.

The candidate has 15 minutes to complete this task.

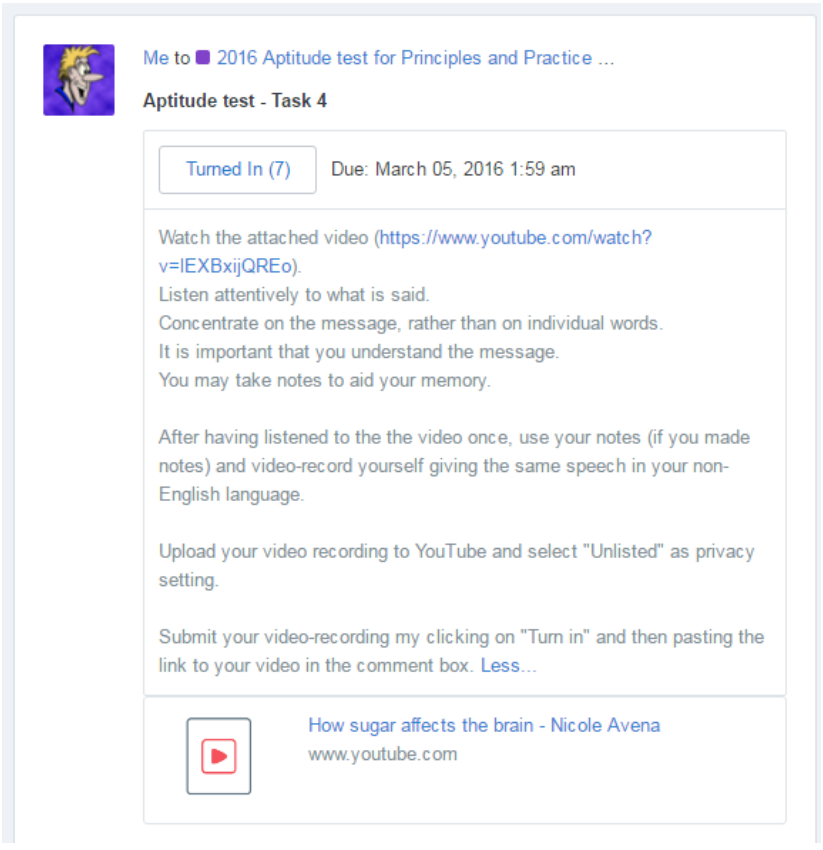


Figure 6: Screenshot of the instructions for the consecutive interpreting task

4.5.5 Sight translation (B language to A language)

The candidate is required to do a sight translation of a 300 word text from their B language to their A language. This text is also general in nature. The candidate has the opportunity to read through the text before attempting to sight translate it. Candidates have 10 minutes to complete this test. The objective of this task is to determine how the candidate copes with a text where he/she is not constrained by the rate of delivery. Here the candidate is in control of the pace of delivery and the results of this task is then compared with the previous one.

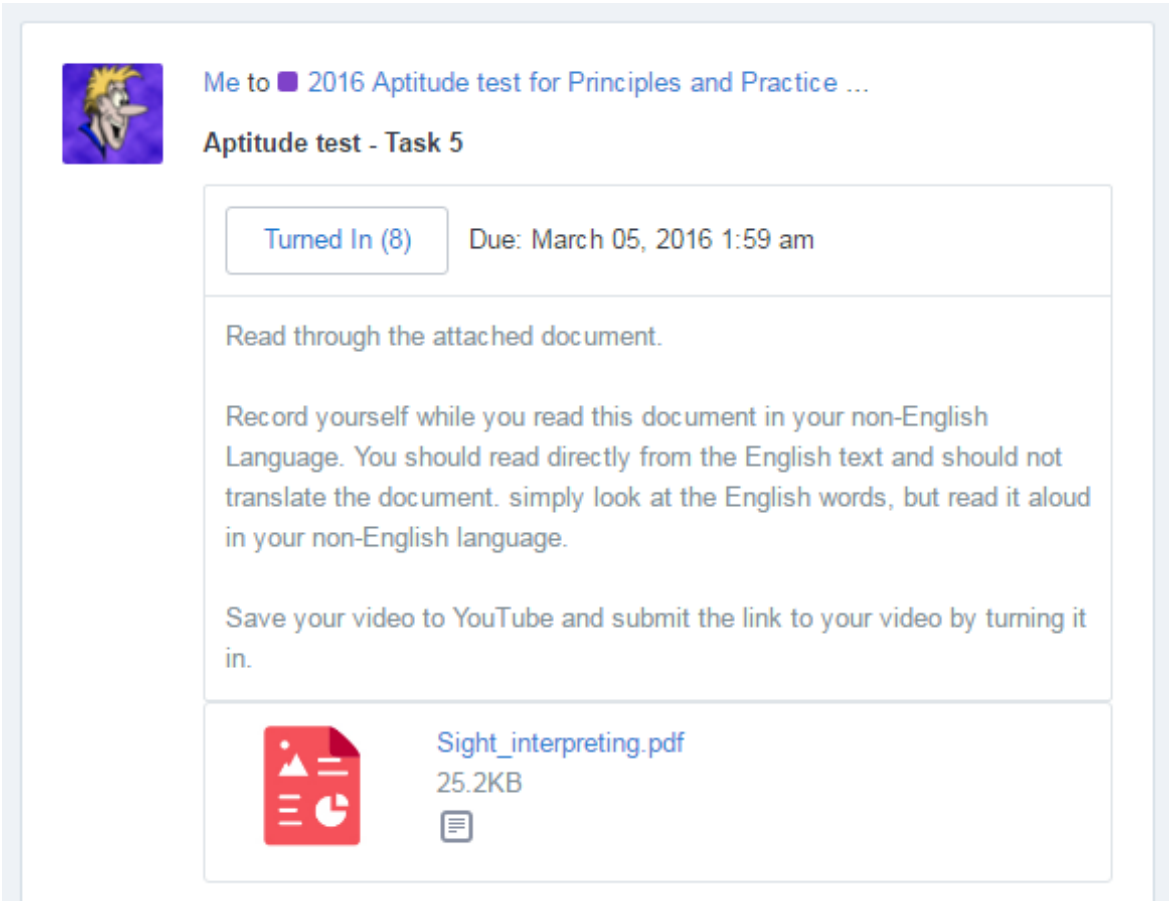


Figure 7: Screenshot of the instructions for the sight interpreting task

4.5.6 GAP-FILL (B LANGUAGE)

Candidates are given a text with 20 words left out. The candidate is expected to complete the text by filling in the correct words. This task evaluates the candidate's ability to reconstruct a text within a certain context. This may reveal how the candidate may fare when there is a need to anticipate or repair a text when interpreting. The candidate has 10 minutes to complete this task.

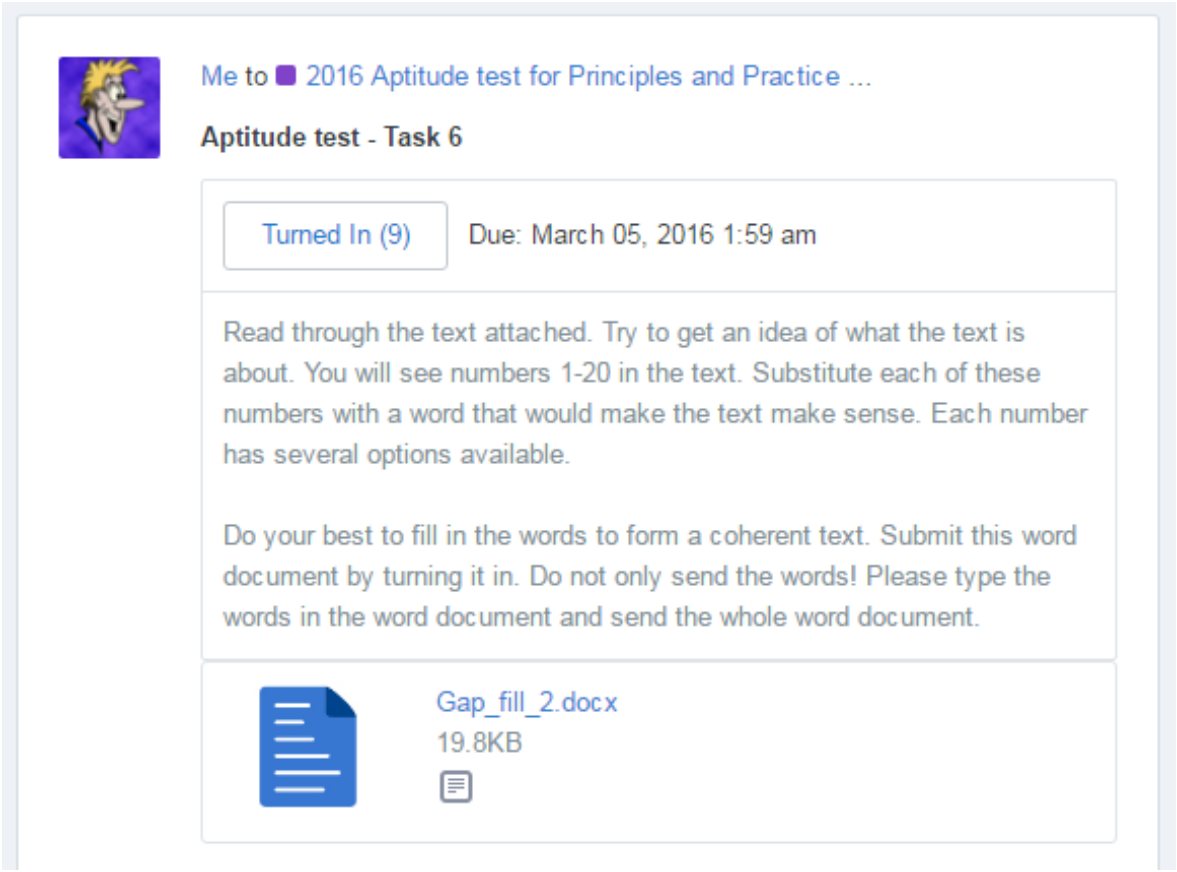


Figure 8: Screenshot of the instructions for the Gap-fill task

4.5.7 Grammar test (B Language)

Candidates are given a set of 30 isolated grammar questions which must be answered in 20 minutes. Yet again there is a very short time allowed for each answer. The candidate is given enough time to answer each question, but not enough time to look up an answer. This gives an indication of the level of command of the language and will help the evaluator give the candidate clear feedback on which features need improvement.

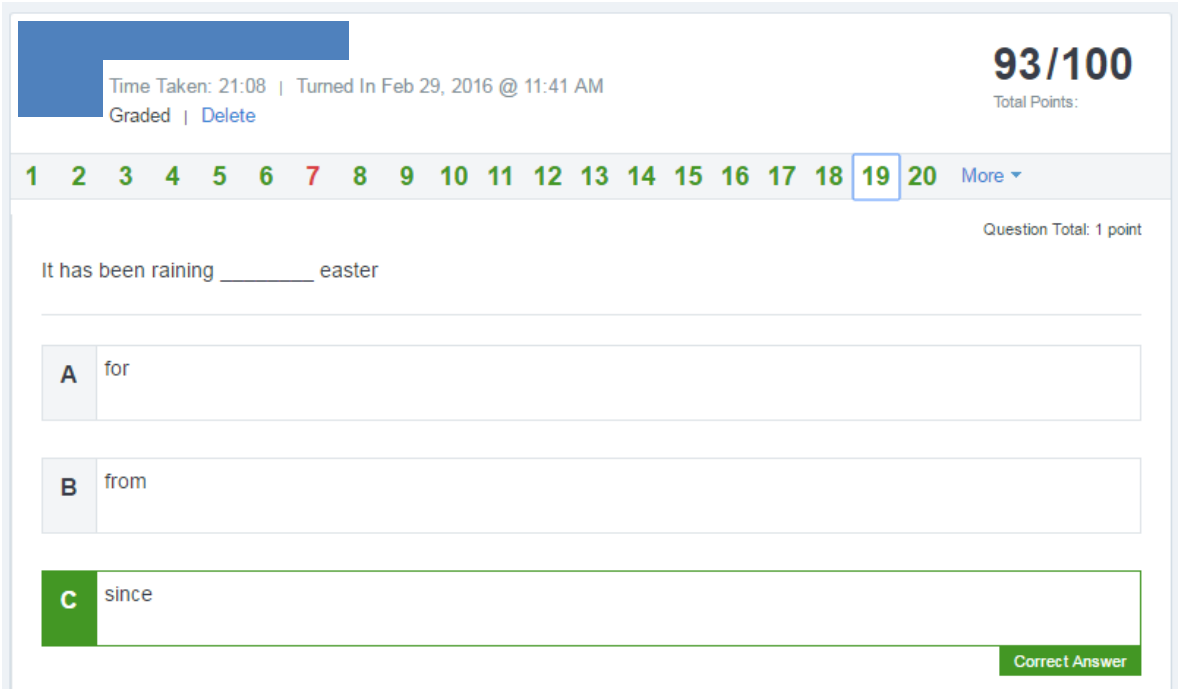


Figure 9: Screenshot of a question from the online grammar quiz

4.5.8 Academic writing skills

Candidates are required to write an academic essay in the language of instruction, namely English (appropriate to the level of study)

In the case where candidates apply for undergraduate study, the candidate is expected to write a 500 word essay about an academic topic related to interpreting. Candidates are encouraged to use any source available to them and declare these sources in any way. Candidates have 24 hours to complete this task.

Candidates applying for postgraduate studies are required to write an academic essay of 1500 words about an academic topic related to interpreting. Candidates are given two academic sources and are expected to use at least three more relevant academic sources in their essay. Candidates are expected to reference their sources according to the Harvard method. Candidates have 48 hours to complete this task.

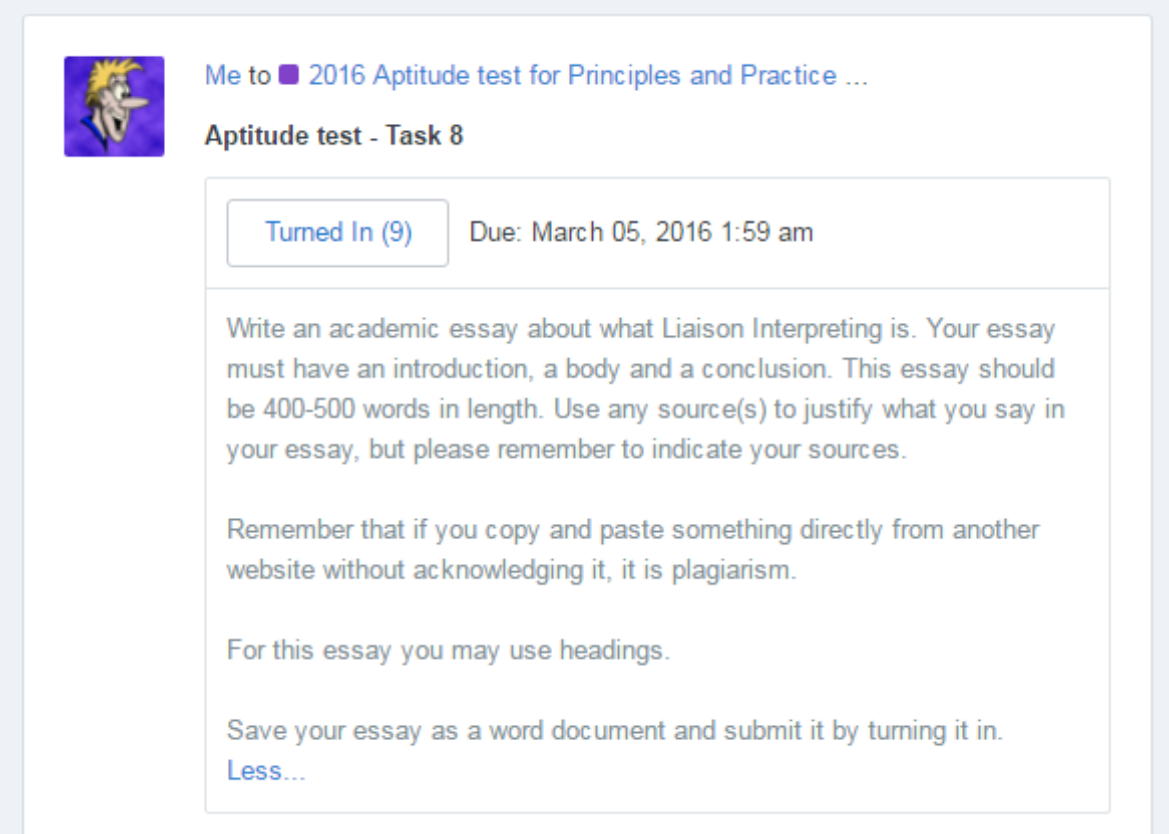


Figure 10: Screenshot of the instructions for the academic essay

The whole test should not take the candidate more than 1hr 45 minutes plus one day (or two days in the case of postgraduate students) for the academic essay. However, by completing each of these tasks, it allows the evaluators to form a more objective impression of the candidate's abilities in the following areas:

- General knowledge
- Spoken language proficiency in Language A
- Spoken Language proficiency in Language B
- Summarising skills
- Consecutive (or simultaneous) interpreting potential
- Sight interpreting potential
- Anticipation potential
- Grammar in the language of instruction

- Academic writing skills
- Attitude towards learning and interpreting

4.6 METHODS OF DELIVERY

Candidates sitting for this pre-assessment will be given the choice of two delivery methods:

1: Candidates sit for a 2-hour session at the Wits Language School at an agreed upon time and date. The entire test (except for the academic essay) is done at the school and each section is video-recorded or a hard copy of the candidate's writing is collected.

2: Candidates log onto Edmodo.com where each section of the test is administered within one platform. The test is timed by Edmodo and it keeps record of student submissions.

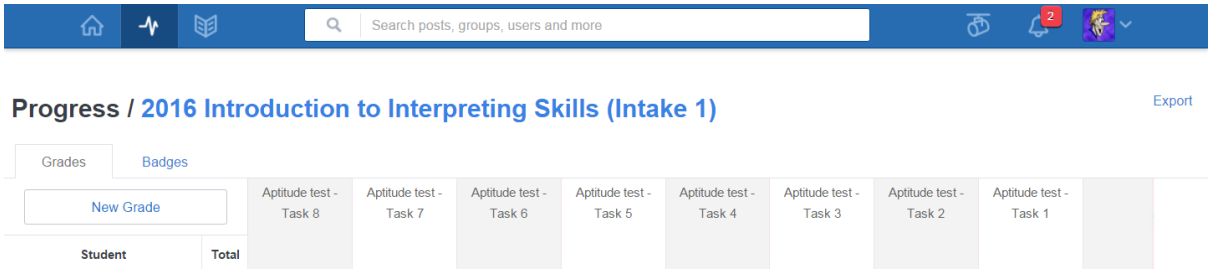


Figure 11: Example of Edmodo record keeping

When attempting a task, students would be presented with information on what is expected and how much time they have for the task as the screenshot below shows:

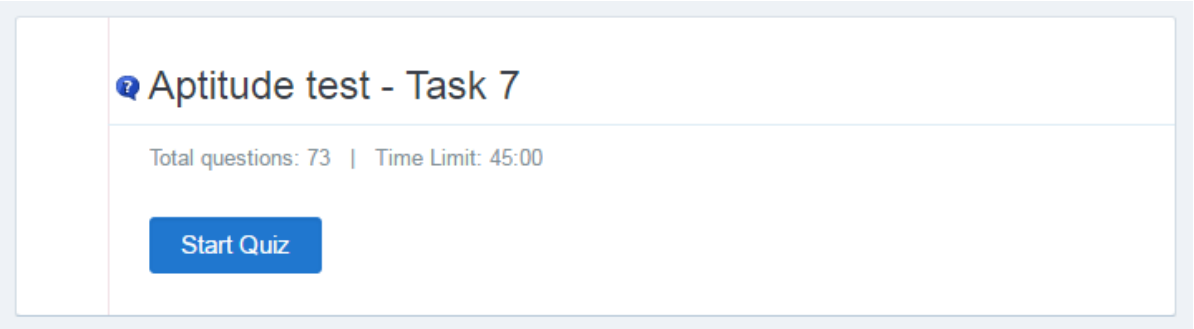


Figure 12: Screenshot of time limit indication on Edmodo

While performing tasks, students would continuously be aware of the time limit for the task. This time limit is shown at the top of the screen while the candidate is answering questions. The screenshot below shows the countdown-timer visible to the student:

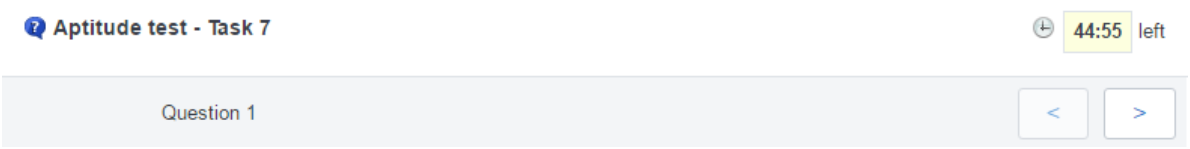


Figure 13: Time left indicated on top-right of screen

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided an outline of the methodology of this study. Educational institutions in South Africa offering interpreter training were contacted in order to establish their practices regarding readiness testing. From this data and from other research published on the topic, a readiness test was compiled to be used at Wits Language School. The test consists of eight parts, taking into account current readiness testing methods as well as the primary goal for each task as part of the readiness test. This readiness test has been designed in such a way that it can be completed in person or be delivered completely online. In the next chapter, the efficacy of this test will be evaluated as a potential alternative to standard face-to-face interview-based readiness tests. The next chapter will evaluate the results of this test when compared to the final marks of the students after training.

CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them. – Galileo Galilei

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter takes a closer look at the data collected from this study. The first section covers the biographical information of the participants: gender, race, age and A Language (B Language is English in all cases).

5.2 DATA COLLECTED

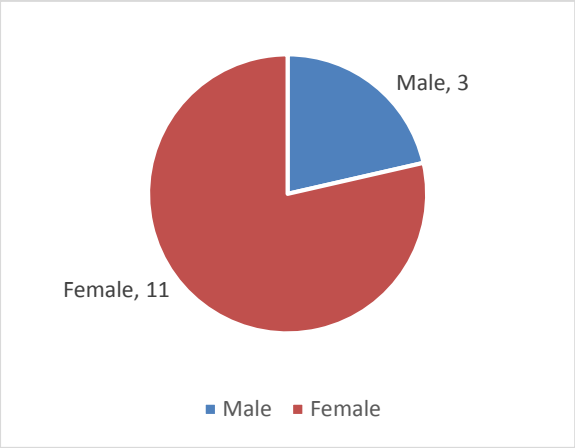
5.2.1 PARTICIPANTS

Participants were selected from two groups: first-year students taking a short course, *Introduction to Interpreting Skills* and postgraduate students taking a short course in *Principles and Practice of Interpreting*.

All of the participants who signed a consent form that they were willing to take part in this study were selected.

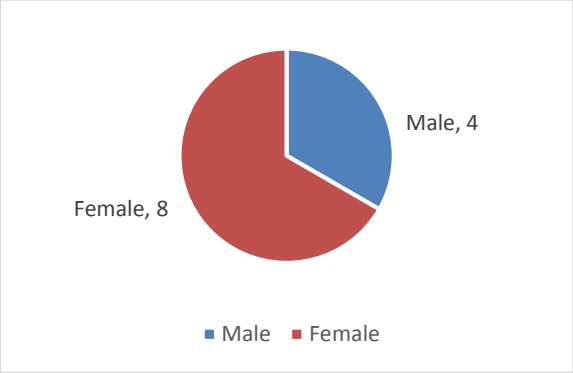
For the first-year group there were 14 students, 3 male and 11 female.

Graph 1: Gender of participants for Introduction to Interpreting Skills



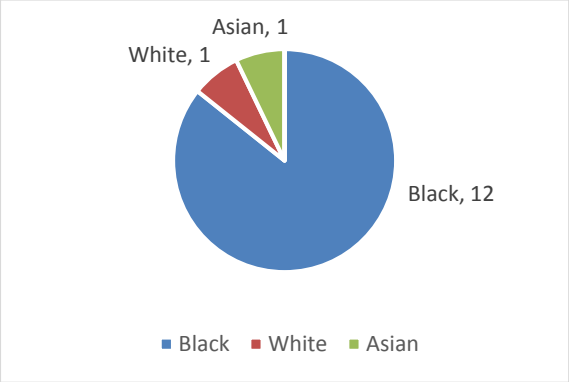
For the postgraduate group there were 12 students, 4 male and 8 female.

Graph 2: Gender of participants for Principles and Practice of Interpreting



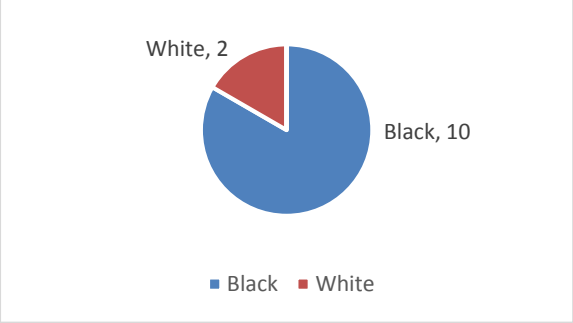
For the first-year group, the following graph represents the race of the participants:

Graph 3: Race of participants for Introduction to Interpreting Skills



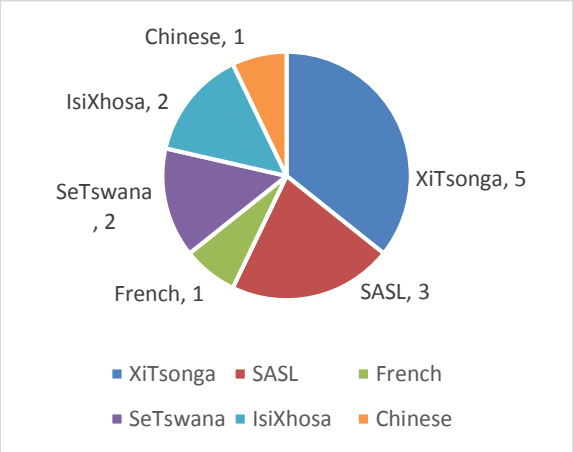
For the postgraduate group, the following graph represents the race of the participants:

Graph 4: Race of participants for Principles and Practice of Interpreting



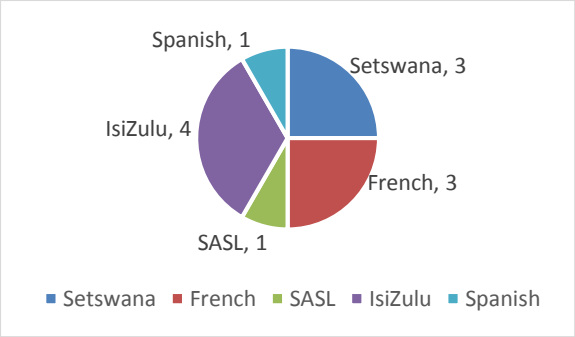
For the first-year group, the following graph represents the A-languages (language with mother tongue fluency) of the participants. In each case, English was the B-language (second language):

Graph 5: A-language of participants for Introduction to Interpreting skills



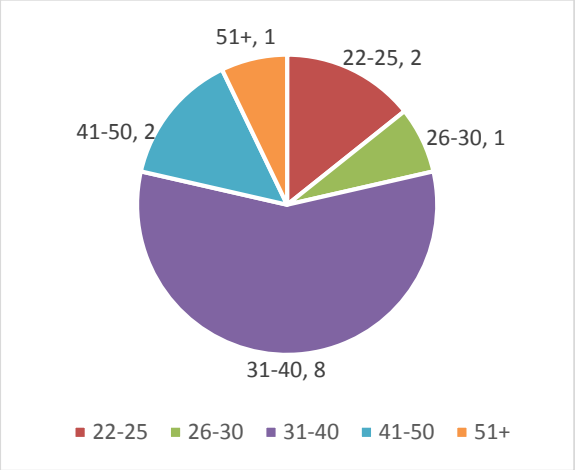
For the postgraduate group, again all of the participants had English as B-Language. The following graph shows the A-languages of the participants:

Graph 6: A-language of participants for Principles and Practice of Interpreting



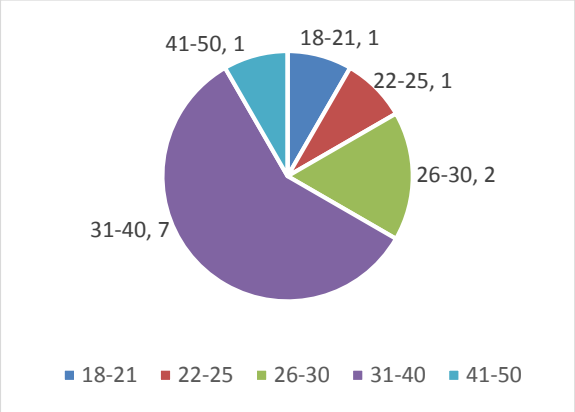
For the first-year group, the following graph represents the age of the participants:

Graph 7: Age of participants for Introduction to Interpreting Skills



For the postgraduate group, the following graph represents the age of the participants:

Graph 8: Age of participants for Principles and Practice of Interpreting



Given that participants had the option of completing the aptitude test online or face-to-face and that only one out of 26 participants chose the face-to-face option, it is clear that the online method was the preferable method of delivery. Taking into account that some of the participants were over the age of 30, it is interesting that the majority of participants elected to do the test online despite the fact that they were generally not very comfortable with using technology. Candidates mentioned in focus groups and in class that they preferred the online delivery method due to the fact that they did not need to travel and that the clear instructions they received along with telephonic support enabled them to successfully complete the online aptitude test without experiencing added stress.

5.2.2 APTITUDE TESTING

Each participant completed an aptitude test prior to training. The aptitude test consisted of 8 tasks, as explained in previous chapters:

1. General knowledge quiz (English)
2. Spoken language proficiency test (English and other language)
3. Summarising test (A Language)
4. Consecutive interpreting (or simultaneous in the case of Sign Language)
5. Sight translation (B language to A language)
6. Gap-fill (B language)
7. Grammar test (B Language)
8. Academic writing skills

Each of these sections was assessed using an objective rubric. Each of the tasks had different totals, but in order to make comparisons, all marks were converted to percentages. The following tables show the results for each of the tasks:

Table 8: Aptitude test results for participants prior to taking Introduction to Interpreting skills (%)

Candidate	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6	Task 7	Task 8	Aggregate
1	75	90	80	72	80	70	88	45	75
2	45	75	80	68	75	60	92	40	67
3	55	80	90	64	80	85	84	50	76
4	65	70	70	68	75	75	84	55	72
5	60	75	70	64	70	75	96	60	71
6	30	60	70	68	70	70	52	40	58
7	35	75	80	60	65	85	92	50	68
8	40	60	60	52	70	55	84	45	58
9	75	85	80	76	85	85	84	50	78
10	30	65	60	60	60	55	96	50	60
11	65	70	70	64	65	100	96	60	74
12	55	65	50	60	65	55	64	50	58
13	15	55	60	56	55	75	92	60	59
14	35	70	60	64	65	80	76	50	63

All 14 participants in the first year group completed all the tasks. Participants 6, 7, 8, 12, 13 and 14 were advised to improve certain skills before starting the course. The following is an excerpt from the report of the pre-assessment for one of the first-year candidates:

> Thank you for your interest in the Diploma in Legal Interpreting. As a potential interpreter, it is important to have a broad general knowledge. It is advised that you keep abreast of local and international news. Reading about topics you do not normally read about could open up new areas of interest. Interpreters are inquisitive by nature and a good general knowledge enables an interpreter to cope with a variety of different contexts. Although writing is not necessarily part of interpreting, you will be required to complete written assignments during the course. It is recommended that you improve your written English in order to gain the skills to convey your thoughts coherently in writing. At this point it is highly recommended that you improve on these areas before starting with the Diploma in Legal Interpreting. Due to the time constraints of the courses in the Diploma, there will not be adequate time to address these aspects and as such you may not be able to complete the courses successfully until these areas have improved.

Although these six participants were advised not to commence with the course, they did start with the course. They also enrolled for additional language courses in order to improve their grammar and writing skills. They completed an English for professional development course concurrently with their interpreting studies. During this

time additional support was given in the form of additional classes and writing tutorials. The students participated in these activities and showed significant improvement.

Table 9: Aptitude test results for participants prior to taking Principles and Practice of Interpreting (%)

Candidate	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6	Task 7	Task 8	Aggregate
1	70	80	80	64	75	80	92	71	77
2	65	90	90	80	80	75	84	80	81
3	65	80	80	76	75	80	84	75	77
4	60	85	70	64	70	65	96	82	74
5	70	85	80	80	75	85	92	75	80
6	80	75	80	64	70	75	84	78	76
7	75	80	80	76	85	90	84	68	80
8	65	90	80	80	65	65	96	70	76
9	65	85	90	80	70	75	88	72	78
10	70	75	70	64	70	85	84	87	76
11	65	70	80	76	75	65	80	85	75
12	60	75	80	80	80	70	80	67	74

The participants in the postgraduate group performed considerably better in the aptitude test than those in the first year group. This is to be expected, given that the tasks were exactly the same as for the first year group, with the exception of task 8. For task 8, candidates in the undergraduate group were required to write an essay of 400-500 words, whereas the postgraduate group were required to write an essay of 1500 - 2000 words.

Although the other tasks were the same for both groups, some tasks were evaluated more strictly (given that the candidates applying for postgraduate studies are expected to have developed more of the skills than the first year group).

The following table shows the average score (%) for each task achieved by the two groups:

Table 10: Average score of aptitude test tasks

Task	**Undergraduate**	**Postgraduate**
General knowledge quiz (English)	48.57	67.50
Spoken language proficiency test (English and other language)	71.07	80.83
Summarising test (A Language)	70.00	80.00
Consecutive interpreting	64.00	73.67
Sight translation (B language to A language)	70.00	74.17
Gap-fill (B language)	73.21	75.83
Grammar test (B Language)	84.29	87.00
Academic writing skills	50.36	75.83

In the aptitude test, the postgraduate group performed better in all tasks when compared with the first-year group. As mentioned before, this is to be expected, since the candidates applying for postgraduate interpreting courses are assumed to have successfully completed a degree and have some interpreting experience.

5.2.3 Questionnaire after aptitude testing

After having completed the aptitude test, participants were asked complete a questionnaire to provide their opinions regarding the ease of taking the test, the online delivery method, the fairness of the test, the reporting and their general opinions of the test. This was partly done in two parts:

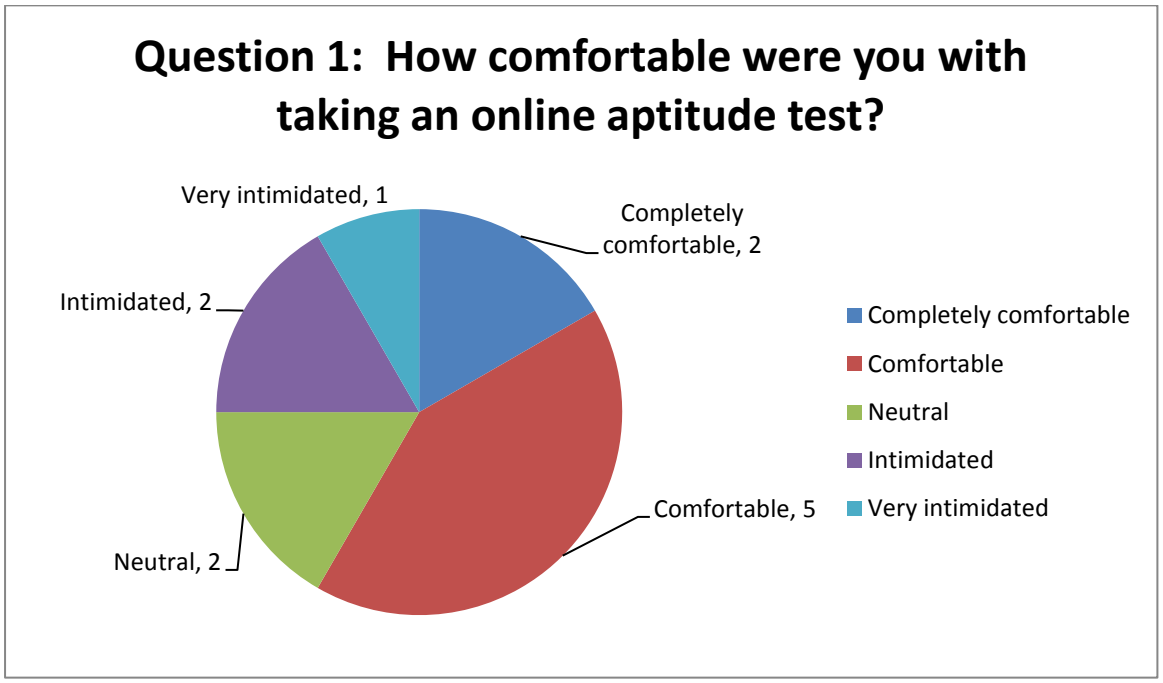
1. By means of a questionnaire distributed to the students, two weeks after completion of the online aptitude test.
2. By means of a focus group discussion after having completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions, using a Likert scale for answers:

1. How comfortable were you with taking an online aptitude test?
2. How easy/hard to follow were the instructions of the online aptitude test?
3. In your experience, how fair was the online aptitude test?
4. How accurately were your skills represented in the report of the online aptitude test?
5. How useful did you find the report in deciding to study interpreting?
6. In your opinion, what are the advantages of online testing?
7. In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of online testing?

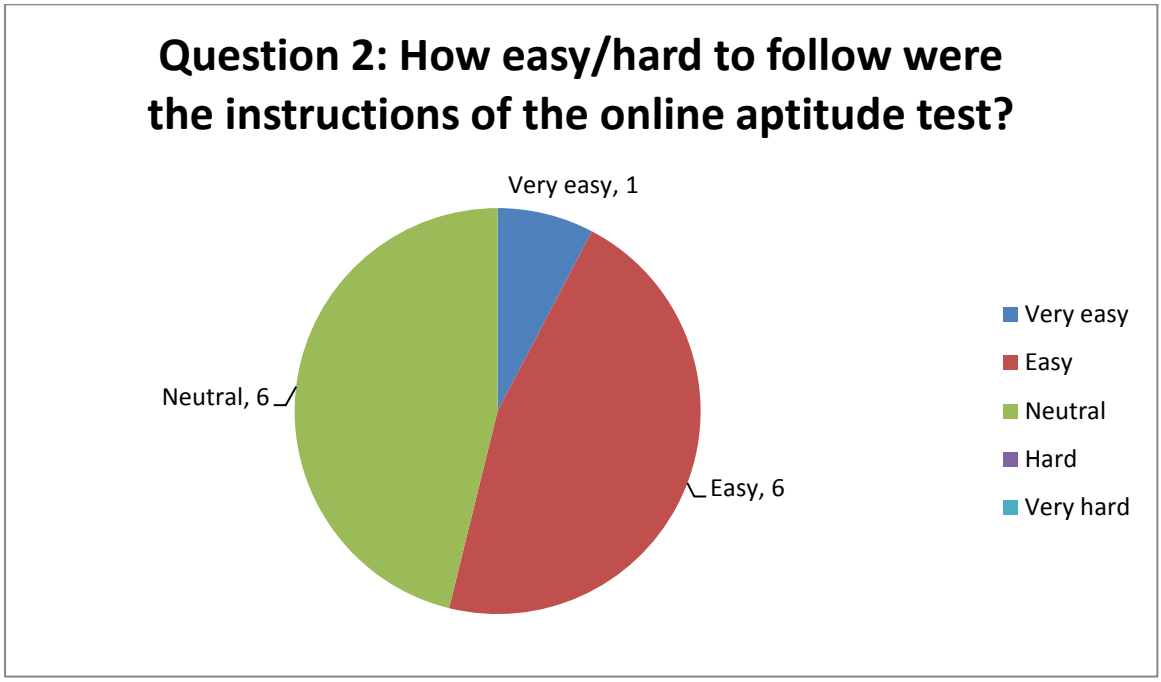
The following graphs represent the first year group's answers to the questions in the questionnaire (The 14th participant did not complete the questionnaire, since she did not do the pre-assessment online.):

Graph 9: First year answers to questionnaire question 1



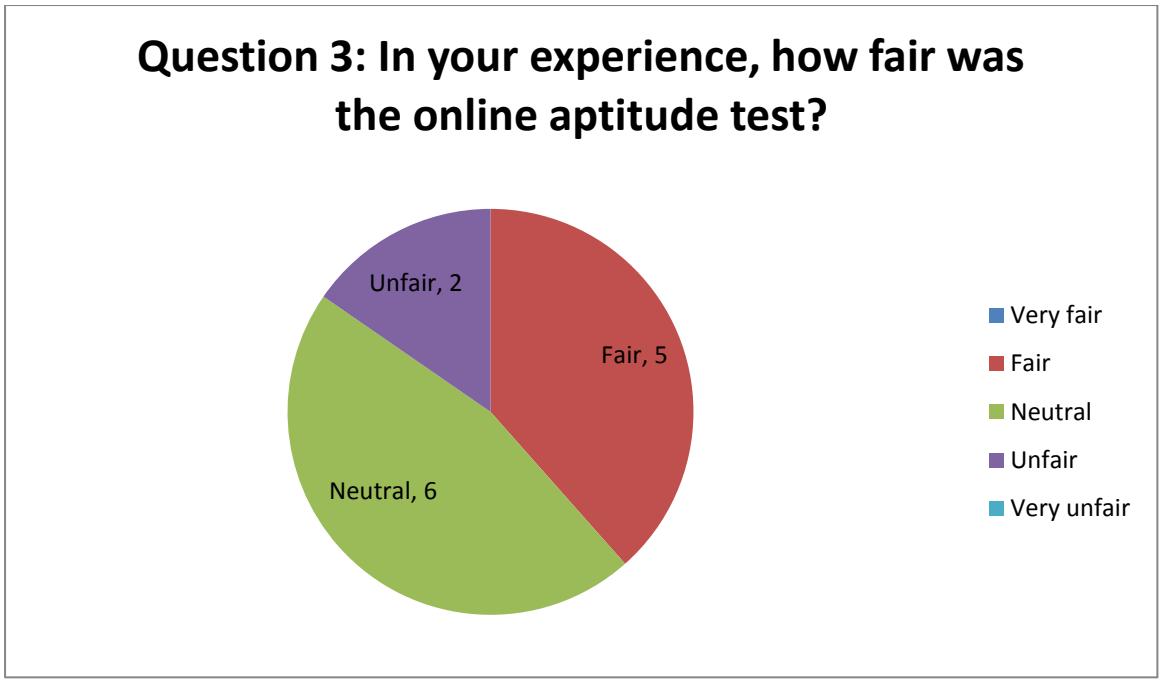
As shown in the graph above, the majority of the first-year group did not find the online aptitude test intimidating. Many of the students seemed apprehensive when they were told that they had the option of doing an online aptitude test, however, they had continuous telephonic support and it is believed that this mitigated the intimidation factor significantly.

Graph 10: First year answers to questionnaire question 2



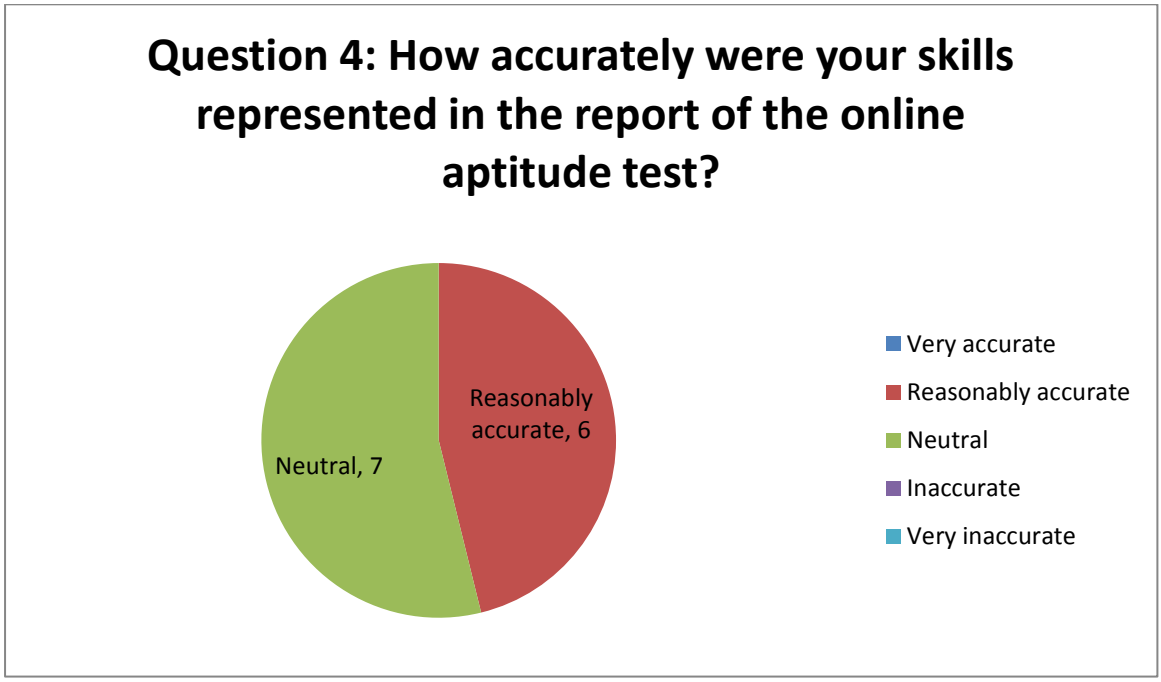
All of the participants from the first year group submitted the tasks correctly; therefore it is fair to assume that the instructions were clear to follow. This is confirmed by the answers given on the questionnaire. Some students communicated with Wits Language School during the assessment to confirm what is expected of them for specific tasks.

Graph 11: First year answers to questionnaire question 3



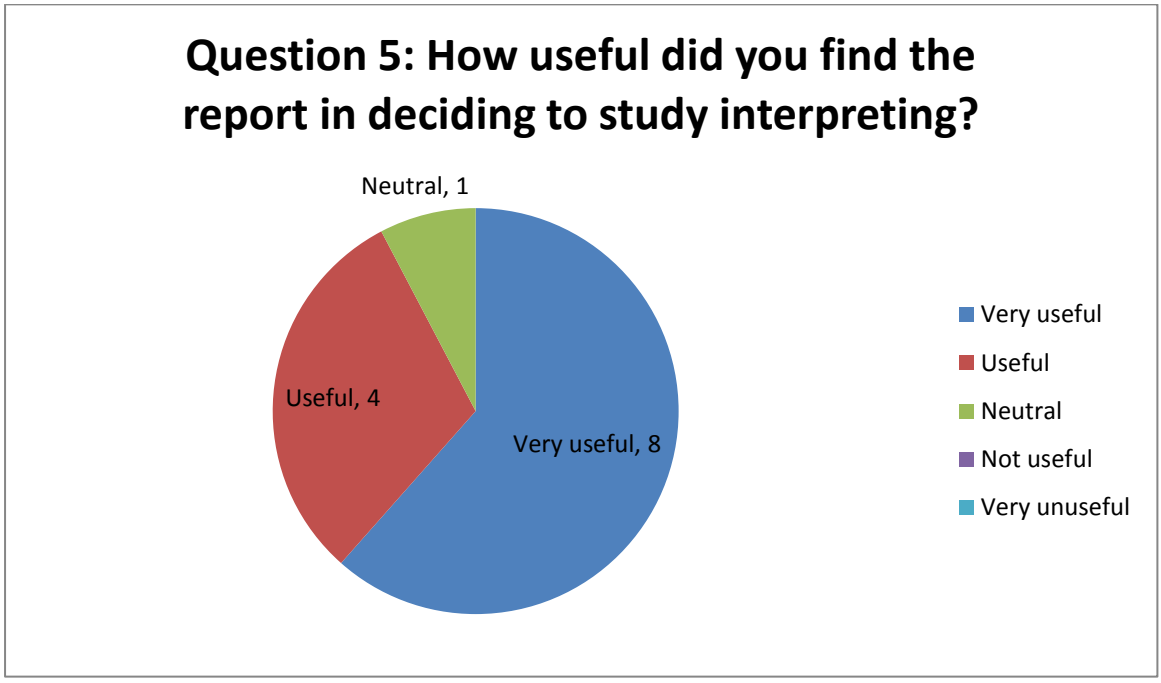
Almost half of the participants did not have a clear opinion as how fair the online aptitude test was. This is most likely due to the fact that the students have never done any online tests before and as such did not have any experience to compare it with.

Graph 12: First year answers to questionnaire question 4



Similar to the previous question, candidates did not seem to have a very clear opinion as to how their skills were represented on the report. This may be due to the fact that they have not been evaluated on these specific skills before and had nothing to compare this experience with.

Graph 13: First year answers to questionnaire question 5



It is very clear that the first year participants found the report useful in making a decision on whether to study interpreting or not. Given that most candidates who apply to study interpreting tend to not have any interpreting experience, it stands to reason that a pre-assessment report would provide guidance.

From the questionnaire from the first year group, it is clear that some of the most significant advantages of online aptitude testing include the fact that it can be done outside of working hours and that students do not need to travel to sit for an aptitude test. Five participants indicated that they did not need to travel for the aptitude test. Seven participants indicated that they could do the test at a time that suits them.

The following are some of the responses given by the first-year group to open-ended question 6: What are the advantages of online testing?

- *"It was easy."*
- *"I did not have to go out for this."*
- *"I could do it in my house."*
- *"I did not have to take leave from work."*

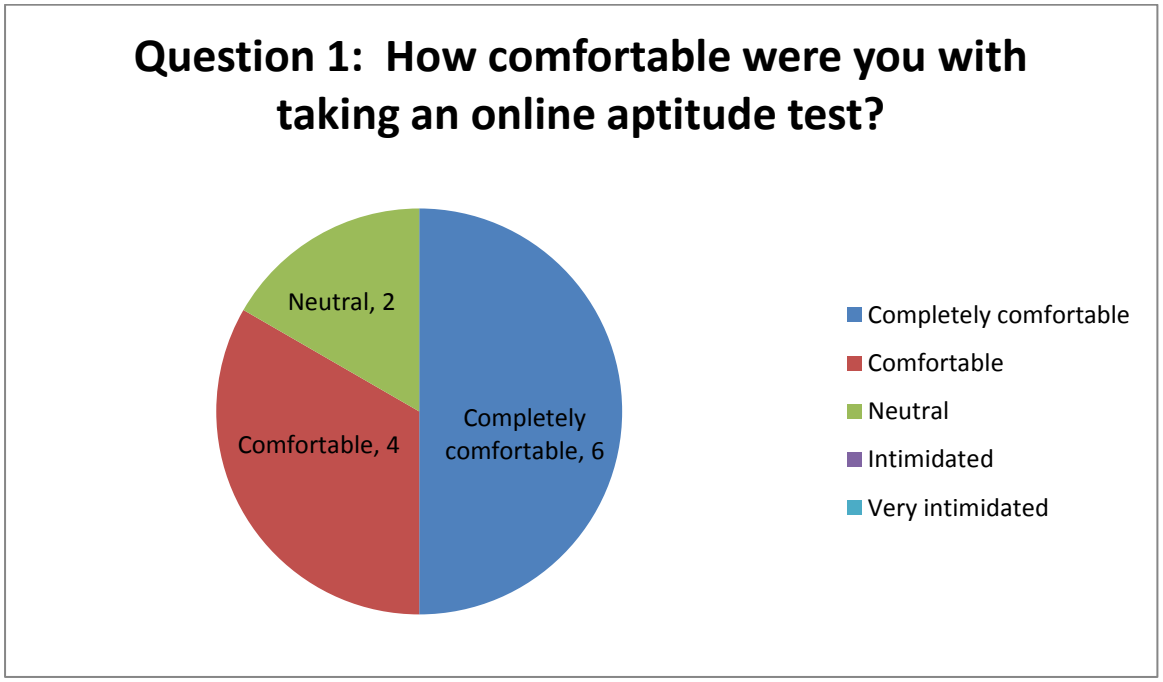
From the questionnaire from the first year group, disadvantages included data costs of uploading videos, fear of power outages and not being able to immediately ask for clarification. Four participants indicated that uploading videos were costly. Three participants indicated that they experienced a power outage and that they were anxious about finishing the test in time. Two participants expressed that they could not call for help after hours.

The following are some of the responses given by the first-year group to open-ended question 7: What are the disadvantages of online testing?

- *"It costs a lot of data."*
- *"When the power went out, I was afraid I would fail."*
- *"I did the test at night and I had to wait until the morning to call for help."*
- *"I had to wait too long for my results."*
- *"I felt lost."*

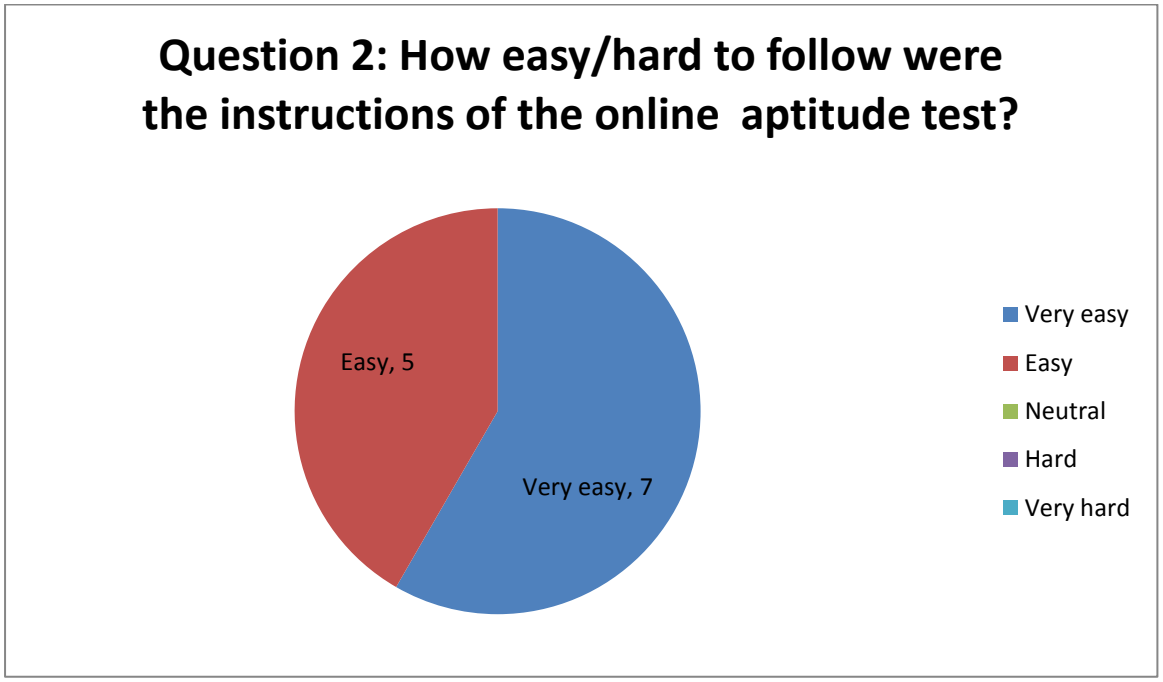
The following graphs represent the postgraduate group's answers to the questions in the questionnaire:

Graph 14: Post graduate answers to questionnaire question 1



As shown in the graph above, the majority of the postgraduate were not intimidated by taking an online aptitude test. This is not surprising, given that may of the participants who enrolled for the postgraduate course had extensive experience with online studies. Yet, even though there were candidates who did not have any experience with online studies, none of the participants indicated that they were intimidated.

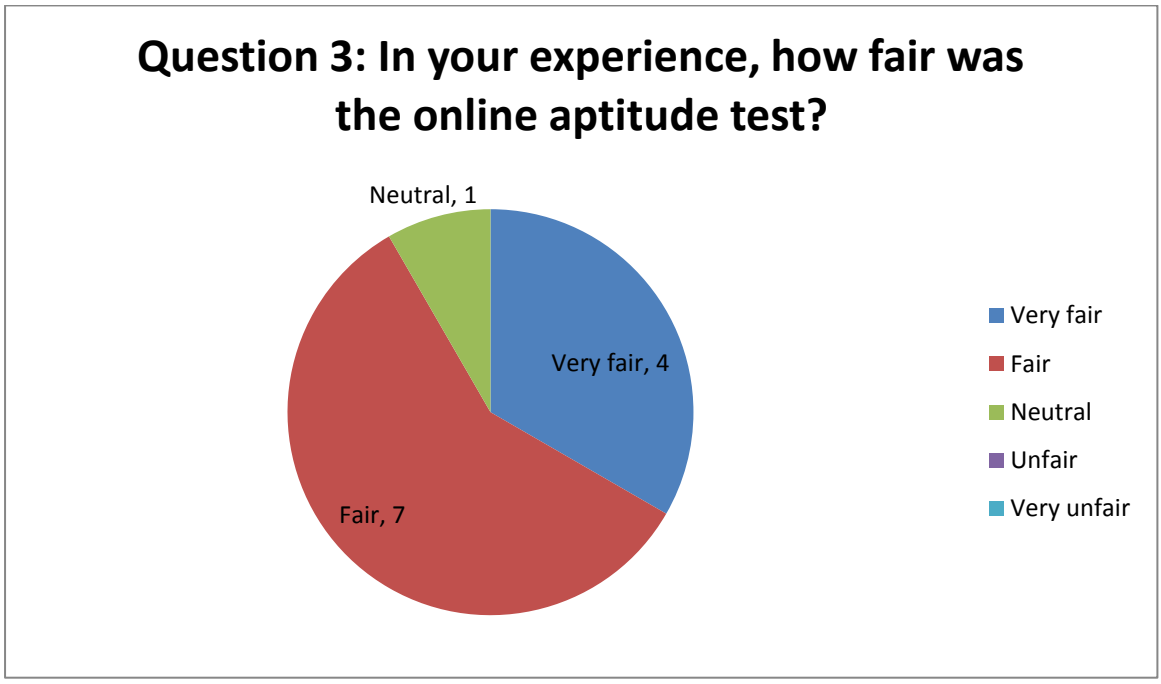
Graph 15: Post graduate answers to questionnaire question 2



All of the participants from the first postgraduate group submitted the tasks correctly. However, the participants from this group did not have as many queries as the first-year group. It may be that the participants in this group

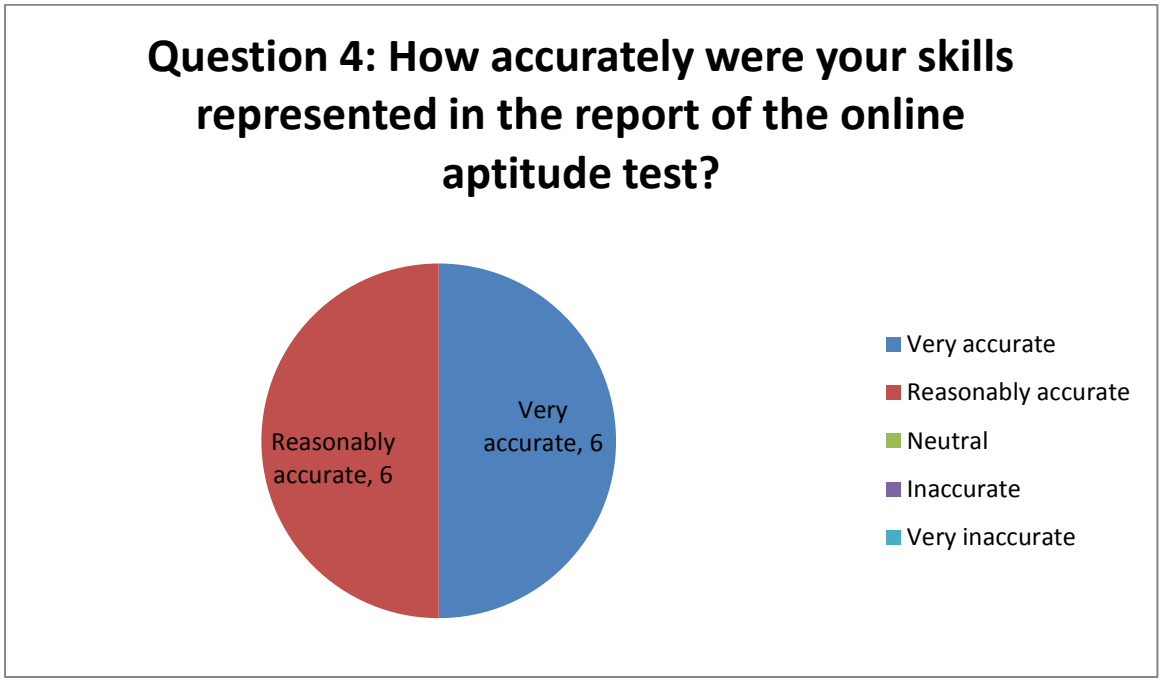
are familiar with terms such as “sight interpreting”, “consecutive interpreting” that they understood the instructions better than the first-year group.

Graph 16: Post graduate answers to questionnaire question 3



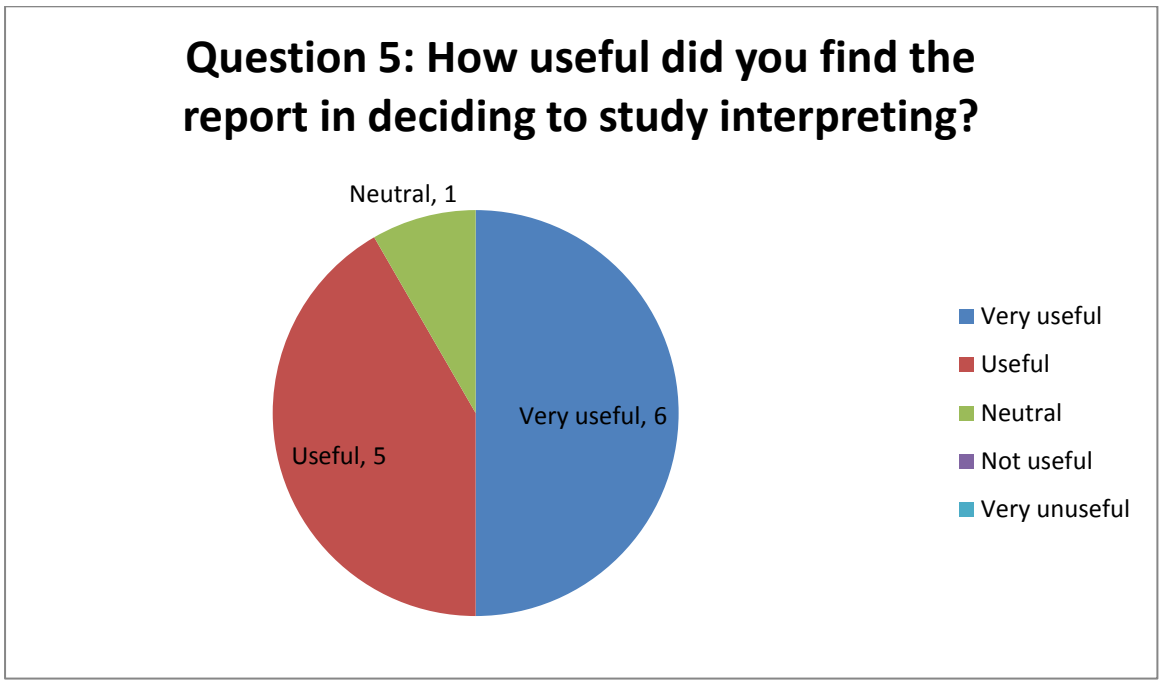
The participants in the postgraduate group had an overwhelmingly positive response regarding the fairness of the online aptitude test.

Graph 17: Post graduate answers to questionnaire question 4



The postgraduate group responded positively regarding the accuracy of the report of the online aptitude test.

Graph 18: Post graduate answers to questionnaire question 5



The postgraduate participants indicated a positive response regarding the usefulness of the report of the online aptitude test in making a decision as to study interpreting. Many of the participants personally expressed gratitude regarding the online aptitude test and the report that they received.

From the questionnaire from the postgraduate group, it is clear that some of the most significant advantages of online aptitude testing include the convenience of doing the test at home, no need to travel and the ability to do the test outside of working hours. Eight participants indicated that it was convenient for them to do the test at their own time. Six participants indicated that they were happy about the fact that they did not have to travel for the test. Two participants indicated that they felt in control of their own test.

The following are some of the responses given by the postgraduate group to open-ended question 6: What are the advantages of online testing?

- *"Convenience - can be done from home."*
- *"I did not have to drive for the test."*
- *"Felt safe in my own environment."*
- *"I did it when I had time to do it."*
- *"I felt in control."*
- *"It is modern."*
- *"I could fix some mistakes."*

From the questionnaire from the postgraduate group, it seems that data costs were seen as a disadvantage along with access to computers and setting aside time for the aptitude test. Six participants mentioned that it was costly to upload videos as part of the assessment. Two participants indicated that it took a long time for videos to upload. Five participants mentioned that they were tired after work, when they did the test. Three participants indicated that they almost did not complete the test in time, because they put it off to the end.

The following are some of the responses given by the postgraduate group to open-ended question 7: What are the disadvantages of online testing?

- *"It takes a lot of data."*
- *"I wish someone could force me to do the test. I never got round to doing it and I just did it quickly to get it in."*
- *"After recording, I had to wait long for the video to upload."*
- *"I had to rush, because I almost forgot about the test."*
- *"I don't think I did well, because I was tired after working the whole day."*
- *"I had to do it at night."*
- *"I don't always have access to a computer."*

5.2.4 FOCUS GROUPS AFTER APTITUDE TESTING

Three weeks after having completed the questionnaire, participants were invited to attend a focus group. Participants met with the trainer of the course in the same class where the course was presented. Due to lack of funding an independent facilitator was not available for the focus groups. Participants were informed that attendance and participation in the focus group was entirely voluntary. Participants were also informed that whether or not they participated in the focus group would have no effect on their marks for the course. Separate focus groups were held for the undergraduate group and for the postgraduate group. A sound recording was made of each focus group meeting.

In the focus group, participants gave more information on the answers from the questionnaire. Participants elaborated on the mode of delivery, stating that doing the aptitude test online would be more cost-effective and convenient, but mentioned that at the time of the aptitude test, they would have wanted more guidance. The participants stated that they were well informed with regard to the instructions of every task, but they were afraid that something would go wrong with the technology and that they would fail the test. Some of the fears associated with online testing included:

- What would happen if the power goes out during the test?
- How can it be assured that the document/video has been properly sent?
- What if the video is too big to send?

Candidates mentioned that the aptitude test was stressful, not because of the questions or the tasks, but because for many of the candidates, it was something that they were not used to and as such, they were nervous about the fact that if something were to go wrong, they would simply be dismissed. However, many of the participants indicated that these fears were allayed when they called Wits Language School for help when they experienced problems.

Participants mentioned that they experienced mixed feelings regarding the online aptitude test. On the one hand, they found it very convenient to be able to do the test at home on their own time. Most candidates said that they were happy about the fact that they did not need to apply for leave or travel for the aptitude test. However, when they actually did the test, some made the point that they would have liked to have been able to use their own interpersonal skills to make an impression or to influence the decision of the evaluator, which they felt was not possible in an online situation. One candidate mentioned that if she had opted for the face-to-face test, she would have been very friendly and would have complemented the evaluator in an attempt to build rapport. This particular participant said: "Normally when I am stressed, uhm, I, you know, flirt a bit."

Participants overwhelmingly expressed their opinion that the test was fair and equal. They felt that they had the opportunity to re-read the instructions as many times as they wanted to without the risk of an examiner getting

impatient. However, some participants mentioned that if they wanted clarification, they found it inconvenient to have to write an email and wait for a response or make a telephone call during the day.

5.2.5 Comparison of aptitude test results with end-of-course results

The results of the aptitude tests were compared to similar sections at the end of the course to identify if (or to what extent) the aptitude test results correlated with the final results of the students after a period of training.

Candidates in the undergraduate group took the *Introduction to interpreting skills* course. This course has a duration of 8 weeks with two days of on-site training every second week. All the candidates received the same training by the same trainer at the same location. At the end of the course, the candidates' results for the course's final examination were compared to the results of their aptitude tests in order to discern to what extent these two results correlated.

The final mark for the course *Introduction to interpreting skills* (first-year group) comprised of two written essays and a practical simulated liaison interpreting session of about 30 minutes. In the practical liaison interpreting session, the students were required to be able to brief clients on the role of the interpreter and interpret in a simulated setting where a client who does not speak English applies for an abridged birth certificate at the department of home affairs where the home affairs official only speaks English. As part of this examination, the candidates had to sight interpret a text of approximately 200 words from English into their A language.

Candidates in the postgraduate group took the *Principles and practice of interpreting* course. This course was presented by a different trainer than the *Introduction to interpreting skills* course. This course also had a duration of 8 weeks, but in this case the first 6 weeks were done online and the last two weeks were done with intensive on-site training. All candidates in this group had the same trainer and underwent the same training over the same period of time.

The final marks for the course *Principles and practice of interpreting* (postgraduate group) comprised of two written essays and four speeches interpreted in the long consecutive mode:

- One generic speech interpreted from A language to B language.
- One technical speech interpreted from A language to B language.
- One generic speech interpreted from B language to A language.
- One technical speech interpreted from B language to A language.

Sight interpreting was not examined as part of the postgraduate course.

The aspects tested for in the aptitude test do not correlate exactly to the aspects they are compared to in the examination, but they could be regarded as predictors. The categories compared were:

Table 11: Comparison of categories in Pre-assessment test and examination

Category in aptitude test	**Category in assessment after training**
General knowledge quiz	Preparedness and social awareness
Spoken language proficiency test	Language fluency
Summarising test	Coherence
Consecutive interpreting	Consecutive interpreting
Sight translation	Sight translation
Gap-fill	Anticipation and coping strategies
Grammar test	Ability to use standard language/ appropriate register
Academic writing skills	Essay writing

In the following table, the green columns represent, by category, the marks achieved by each of the first-year participants in the aptitude test. The blue columns represent, by category, the marks achieved in the examination after completing *Introduction to Interpreting skills.* All marks have been converted to percentages.

Table 12: Comparison of aptitude testing and examination results for Introduction to Interpreting Skills

Participant	General knowledge quiz	Preparedness and social awareness	Spoken language proficiency test	Language fluency	Summarising test	Coherence	Consecutive interpreting	Consecutive interpreting	Sight interpreting	Sight Interpreting	Gap-fill	Anticipation and coping strategies	Grammar test	Language purity	Academic writing skills	Essay writing	Aggregate for aptitude test	Aggregate after training (examination)
1	75	80	90	90	80	80	72	80	80	80	70	80	88	80	45	70	75	80
2	45	65	75	80	80	80	68	72	75	70	60	70	92	90	40	80	67	76
3	55	60	80	80	90	80	64	70	80	75	85	80	95	80	50	60	76	73
4	65	70	70	80	70	80	68	74	75	80	75	80	96	90	55	70	72	78
5	60	70	75	80	70	80	64	70	70	75	75	80	96	90	60	70	71	77
6	30	60	60	70	70	80	68	70	70	80	70	80	52	70	40	60	58	71
7	35	60	75	70	80	80	60	72	65	60	85	90	92	90	50	60	68	73
8	40	65	60	70	60	70	52	60	70	75	55	70	84	80	45	60	58	69
9	75	80	85	70	80	90	76	80	85	80	85	80	84	80	50	60	78	78
10	30	60	65	70	60	70	60	60	60	65	55	60	96	90	50	60	60	67
11	65	70	70	80	70	70	64	70	65	70	95	90	96	90	60	80	74	78
12	55	70	65	70	50	60	60	70	65	70	55	60	64	70	50	60	58	66
13	15	50	55	60	60	60	56	64	55	60	75	80	92	80	60	60	59	64
14	35	65	70	70	60	60	64	72	65	70	80	80	76	70	50	60	63	68
Ag	49	66	71	74	70	74	64	70	70	72	73	77	86	82	50	65	67	73

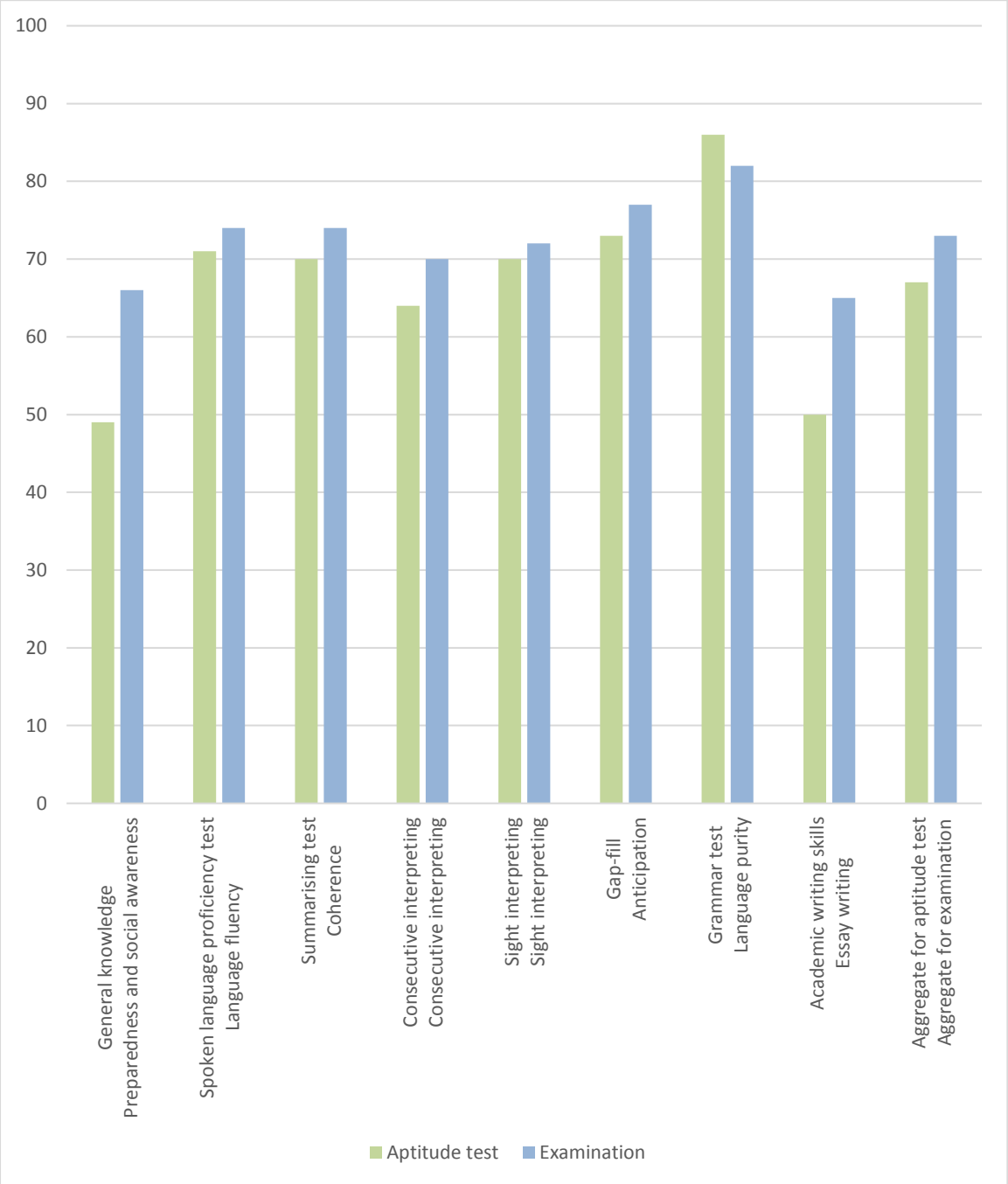
A graph of the aggregates can be seen after the next section. As can be seen from the graph, certain categories of the aptitude test seem to be good predictors for success when compared to the examination marks for the first year group. From the data, the following preliminary conclusions can be drawn:

- The participants' performance in the general knowledge task does not strongly correlate with their performance in the preparedness and social awareness category of the examination. All the participants performed much better in the examination as compared to the general knowledge task in the aptitude

test. This may be due to the fact that generally, first year students do not yet have much world experience and as such their performance in the general knowledge task was reasonably low. However, this does give a good indication as to whether or not the potential candidate is inquisitive, which is a good character trait for an aspiring interpreter.

- The participants' performance in the spoken language proficiency task of the aptitude test is a good predictor for their language fluency in the examination.
- The participants' performance in the summarising task of the aptitude test is a good predictor of their coherence in the examination.
- Assuming that a first year candidate likely has little or no experience in consecutive interpreting and will learn this skill during training, the candidate's performance in the consecutive interpreting task, not necessarily a good predictor for a similar performance in the examination. However, given that all but one participant has shown improvement in this skill, this category in the aptitude test could be used as a benchmark for a minimum expected performance in the examination.
- There seems to be a strong correlation between the participants' ability for sight interpreting in the aptitude test and the examination. As such, the participants' performance in the sight interpreting task in the aptitude test can be seen as a good predictor for the candidate's performance in this skill in the examination.
- There is a close correlation between the performance in the gap-fill task and the ability to anticipate and employ coping strategies in the examination. As such, the participants' performance in the gap-fill task can be seen as a good predictor for their ability to anticipate and cope in a liaison interpreting setting.
- There is a close correlation between the participants' performance in the grammar task and their ability to use grammar correctly under pressure in a liaison interpreting setting. The results of the aptitude test are generally higher than the marks for the examination. This could be due to the fact that in the grammar task of the aptitude test, grammar components are tested for in isolation and the candidate has time to carefully consider his/her answers, whereas in the examination the candidate is under pressure and is expected to produce grammatically correct sentences under real-world conditions.
- The participants' results for the essay writing task in the aptitude test does not show a strong correlation with their marks achieved for the essays written for assessment during the course. This is not surprising, given that this is a first year course and as such, most candidates do not yet have the knowledge academic writing. However, during the course, academic writing skills were taught and most candidates showed significant improvement. This category in the aptitude test could therefore be used as a benchmark for a minimum expected performance in the examination.

Graph 19: Comparison of aggregate marks of aptitude test and examination marks for Introduction to interpreting skills



In the following table, the green columns represent, by category, the marks achieved by each of the postgraduate participants in the aptitude test. The blue columns represent, by category, the marks achieved in the examination after completing *Principles and practice of interpreting.* As stated before, sight interpreting was not evaluated as part of this course. All marks have been converted to percentages.

Table 13: Comparison of aptitude testing and examination results for Principles and practice of interpreting

	General knowledge quiz	Preparedness and social awareness	Spoken language proficiency test	Language fluency	Summarising test	Coherence	Consecutive interpreting	Consecutive interpreting	Sight interpreting	Sight interpreting	Gap-fill	Anticipation and coping strategies	Grammar test	Language purity	Academic writing skills	Essay writing	Aggregate for aptitude	Aggregate after training
1	70	80	80	80	80	70	68	72	75	-	80	80	92	90	71	80	77	79
2	65	70	90	90	90	80	76	72	80	-	75	90	84	80	80	80	81	80
3	65	70	80	80	80	70	76	74	75	-	80	80	84	80	75	70	77	75
4	60	75	85	80	70	70	66	70	70	-	65	70	96	90	82	70	74	75
5	70	70	85	80	80	80	78	76	75	-	85	80	92	80	75	70	80	77
6	80	90	75	80	80	80	67	70	70	-	75	80	84	80	78	80	76	80
7	75	80	80	80	80	90	73	74	85	-	90	80	84	80	68	70	80	79
8	65	75	90	80	80	80	80	76	65	-	65	70	96	90	70	70	76	77
9	65	70	85	90	90	80	77	76	70	-	75	80	88	80	72	70	78	78
10	70	80	75	70	70	80	67	72	70	-	85	90	84	80	87	80	76	79
11	65	70	70	70	80	90	76	74	75	-	65	70	80	80	85	80	75	76
12	60	70	75	70	80	80	80	76	80	-	70	70	80	70	67	70	74	72
Ag	68	75	81	79	80	79	74	74	74	-	76	78	87	81	76	74	77	77

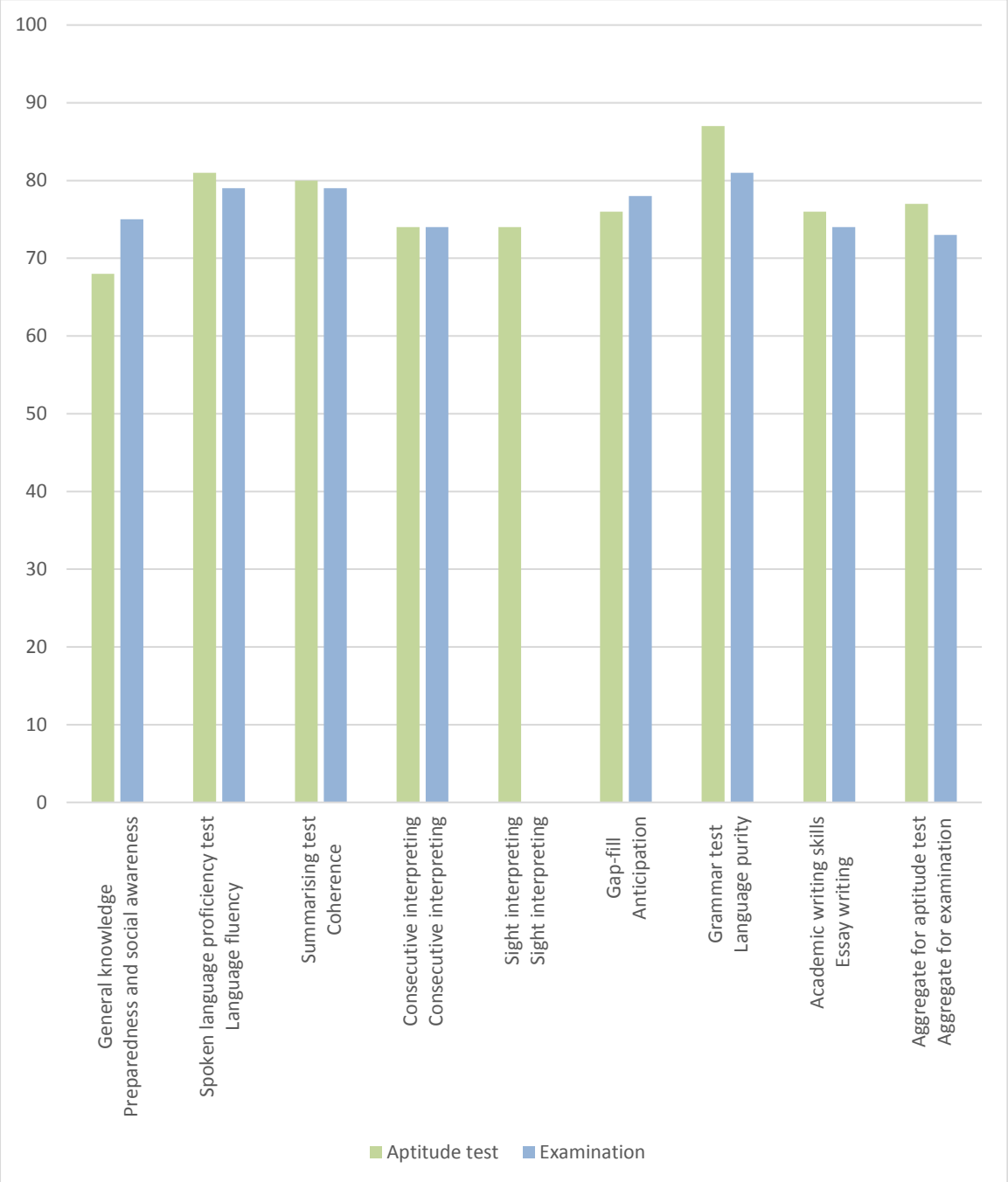
A graph of the aggregates can be seen after the next section. As can be seen from the graph, all categories (except for sight interpreting) of the aptitude test seem to be good predictors for success when compared to the examination marks for the postgraduate group. From the data, the following preliminary conclusions can be drawn:

- There is a much closer correlation between the general knowledge task's result and the preparedness and social awareness category for the postgraduate group when comparing this to the first year group. It can be inferred that at postgraduate level, candidates realise the importance of general knowledge for interpreting. The correlation here is still not very close, but close enough to be of use when evaluating potential interpreting students and their suitability for study.
- There is a very close correlation between the result of the isolated grammar task in the aptitude test and the participants' use of grammar in their practical long consecutive demonstrations in the examination. The close correlation here clearly indicates that the participants' performance in the grammar task could be regarded as a predictor for grammar use in their final interpreting examination.
- The very close correlation between the results of the summarising task and coherence in the examination indicates that the summary task can be used as a predictor for the candidates' coherence when rendering a long consecutive interpretation of a speech.
- The very close correlation between the long consecutive interpreting task in the aptitude test and the examination show that long consecutive interpreting can be used as a predictor for examination success. Given that at postgraduate level, interpreters have most likely been exposed to long consecutive interpreting, this is a fair assumption.
- Although sight interpreting was not evaluated as part of the postgraduate program, it is still useful to have this as part of the aptitude test. Since this project only evaluated the first course of postgraduate studies,

it would seem that testing for sight interpreting in the aptitude test is irrelevant, however, in the rest of the postgraduate program, students are expected to do sight interpreting and this task in the aptitude test gives a very good indication of a candidate's skill level at the beginning of the course.

- The results from the gap-fill task in the aptitude test shows to be a good predictor for using coping strategies in the examination. At postgraduate level it is assumed that students have mastered the ability to "fill in" gaps where they might have missed information when listening to the source text speech. This correlation shows that being able to fill in gaps in the aptitude test is a good predictor for doing so in a real situation.
- The results for the grammar task in the aptitude test, shows to be a clear predictor for the candidates' ability to use language properly when rendering a long consecutive interpretation in an examination setting.
- The participants in the postgraduate group performed much better in the academic writing task of the aptitude test, when compared to the first-year group. Given that by the time a student reaches postgraduate level, he/she has been exposed to academic writing to such an extent that high marks for this task is expected. The clear correlation between the results of the aptitude test and the essays written as part of the course confirms this. This task in the aptitude test can certainly be used as a predictor for examination performance and would be a useful gatekeeping tool in screening prospective students.
- The aggregate marks for the aptitude test and the examination marks show a consistently close correlation. From this data it is clear that the aptitude test could definitely be used as a predictor for success at postgraduate level.

Graph 20: Comparison of aggregate marks of aptitude test and examination marks for principles and practice of interpreting



5.3 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Although this study does not propose an ideal or perfect test, the aptitude test developed as part of this study appears to be useful in ascertaining whether or not prospective students have the skills needed for interpreting studies. As already mentioned, there are many different aspects that could be tested for in any aptitude test, but testing for every possible requirement would, if even possible, be a futile and extremely time-consuming endeavour. The purpose of an aptitude test is to inform the educational institution of the viability of the prospective student and to give guidance to the student in order to make an informed decision.

With the aptitude test, broken down into smaller tasks, each task can be assessed objectively and separately. In order to minimise subjectivity, each task could be assessed by a different assessor, however, if needed, different assessors could also have access to different tasks in order to confirm judgements. By using objective and standardised rubrics to assess performance in each task, it is more likely that different assessors assessing the same task should come to similar conclusions about the performance of the candidate in that particular task. Given that rubrics are written with clear descriptors, giving feedback to students is quick and easy. This minimises the time spent on evaluating tasks and allows assessors to provide students with objective feedback that allow them to make an informed decision regarding their skills before committing time and money on interpreting studies.

By providing the pre-assessment on an online platform prevents students from interaction with assessors and as such ensure that each applicant has a similar pre-assessment experience. In the case of an online aptitude test, where students and assessors do not interact, there is no chance of any external bias. Applicants cannot influence assessors with charm or unsolicited conversation. Applicants have the opportunity to choose the time of day when they feel they are in the best frame of mind to attempt the pre-assessment test and given that the assessors can do the same, there is no risk of an assessor getting tired by the end of a day (as could be the case with a jury or panel, where the assessors see several students performing the same tasks on the same day).

From the comparison of the aptitude test results and the examination results it is clear that to an extent this aptitude test can be a good predictor for success when pre-assessing first-year students. From the comparison between the aptitude tests results and the examinations of the postgraduate group it is very clear that this test could to a high degree serve as a predictor of successful interpreting studies.

Even though several students admitted to never having done an online test before, the instructions are clear enough to provide useful guidance as to what is expected of the students in each task. These clear instructions and telephonic support can allow students to apply for interpreting studies and be pre-assessed at short notice without the additional stress of convening a panel or jury. Even if the educational institution conducts pre-assessment at no charge to the applicant, there are still costs involved. Travelling to an educational institution where interpreting training is offered can be costly. However, online pre-assessment eliminates the need for travel, which means that students who would not be able to attend a pre-assessment due to financial constraints are able to be pre-assessed at a much lower cost. In the questionnaires and focus groups, students raised the point of data costs being high when submitting videos for online assessment, however, when compared to travel costs, these costs are considerably less costly than travelling and accommodation. Online pre-assessment also saves costs and eliminates many logistical obstacles for the educational institution: There is no need to convene a jury and as such, external jury members only need to be paid for the assessment done per task and not for an entire day. Each task can be assessed in under 20 minutes without compromising the integrity of the assessment. No venue needs to be arranged and there is no risk of any participant arriving late and delaying the pre-assessment in any way.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected from this research project. The participants of this study were predominantly female, as is representative of the interpreting profession. Participants ranged from 19 to 52 years of age and was racially and linguistically diverse. The results of the pre-assessment for both the first year and the postgraduate group were compared with their examination results and it was found that given the close correlation between the different aspects assessed that the aptitude test can be used as a predictor for success in interpreting studies. This is especially true for the postgraduate group.

Data from the questionnaires and focus groups revealed that despite some minor challenges regarding data costs, power outages and contact to confirm instructions, the online aptitude test was generally received favourably by the participants and that the reports generated from the aptitude test proved useful for the students and the trainers of the course.

The following chapter concludes this research project, outlines the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story. – Frank Herbert

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes this research report. A summary of the research is presented and followed by a statement of the significance of this study to the field of interpreting. The limitations of this study will be considered and finally this chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

6.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

The first chapter of this research report stated two major challenges regarding pre-assessment for interpreters: The lack of standardised aptitude tests and the costs involved in conduction aptitude tests. A clear description of how these problems could negatively affect the pool of potential interpreting students was given. The aims and rationale for this study was outlined and framed the question of how current pre-assessment practices can be updated to use the technology available to the benefit of applicants and institutions.

The second chapter of this study examined the literature to determine the required skills to be a competent interpreter. It showed that although there is a general consensus among scholars, the perfect standardised test still eludes the interpreting community and will always be an unattainable goal. It also showed that given research done on current aptitude testing practices, online learning and the availability of online tools, online aptitude testing could be a viable alternative to current pre-assessment methods

The third chapter showed how aptitude testing and selection tests are conducted in Africa and specifically South Africa. It showed that despite the efforts of many educational institutions in South Africa, many educational institutions can improve their aptitude testing practices in order to increase the pool of applicants for interpreting studies and to better select the most viable candidates.

The fourth chapter of this report explained the methodology of this research project. It explained how data for this project was collected. It focussed on designing an aptitude test that can be conducted face-to-face and online in order to give students a choice and to minimise the pressure and logistical challenges of aptitude testing. This chapter also presented an aptitude test split up into 8 tasks for ease of delivery and objectivity.

The fifth chapter of this report presented an analysis of the data collected and showed that not only is online aptitude testing possible, but that it also has many benefits for the applicants and educational institutions. Some of the benefits of online aptitude testing that were revealed in this study include:

- There is a clear and well-described rubric for each section. This means that the evaluation can be more objective and different evaluators evaluate the candidate according to standardised criteria and are then more likely to come to a similar conclusion, based on the candidate's evidence.

- Marking time for the evaluators is decreased. Given that there are different sections to the whole test and that not every marker needs to evaluate every section of the test, the markers do not spend time on sections that do not concern them.
- Since the rubric already has descriptors, the evaluators do not need to write reports. The comments on the reports to the candidate are generated from the descriptors on the rubric itself. Evaluators need only add a few additional comments not contained in the rubric, should they wish.
- Evaluators are able to evaluate different sections at their own time in 5-10 minute sections. This means that they can work efficiently and not book a big chunk of time to evaluate.
- Since the rubrics are electronic and pre-populated, the candidate gets comprehensive feedback on their performance. This report enables the candidate to work on skills that are not fully developed yet and allows the trainers to know what sections need additional focus during training.

From questionnaires and focus groups it was clear that even though online aptitude testing is not perfect, the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages of this delivery method.

6.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

While this study acknowledges the efforts of various educational institutions around the world regarding aptitude testing, it is evident that many institutions could benefit from designing targeted aptitude tests for different levels of study. This study recognises that aptitude testing is important and as such is an imperative step in interpreter training. However, this study also shows that aptitude testing for selection or screening purposes is often not a good predictor of success at interpreting studies. Therefore, this study proposes that aptitude testing should be used as a teaching tool and should empower aspiring interpreting students to make an informed decision regarding their potential career choice. Using technology can aid in conducting pre-assessment in a way which is less costly and more efficient than current pre-assessment methods. Given the technology freely available and a world-wide tendency to use technology in a variety of ways, it would be ignorant not to consider using technology in an attempt to improve aptitude testing practices at educational institutions.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study attempted to address a need in Africa: to minimise the cost and alleviate the logistical burden of pre-assessment for aspiring interpreters. However, there are several limitations of this study:

Firstly, this study only examined 26 students. Due to the fact that within the time frame of this study only a small number of applicants were available to participate in this study. Given more time, it is conceivable that more students could be examined. More students could also be examined if this study was to be conducted at other educational institutions.

A second limitation is the fact that most of the participants of this study were from South Africa. Only three of the participants of in this study were from outside the borders of South Africa. It would be interesting to conduct a similar research project in a country where access to interpreting studies is more readily available. Research could be done to find out whether online aptitude testing in areas where transport and date costs are not such a significant consideration.

Thirdly, due to financial constraints, separate facilitators were not available to conduct focus groups. Although all efforts have been made to ensure that participation is voluntary and that there will be no discrimination of any kind regardless of what is said in focus groups, it is possible that some responses may have been different if the facilitator for the focus groups was a different person. However, given that the trainer had an open attitude towards any comments in class, it is also possible that the participants felt comfortable enough with the trainer as facilitator to give honest answers. The responses of the focus groups also generally matched the responses from the questionnaires, so it is very likely that the responses from the focus groups were truthful.

A further limitation of this study is that due to time constraints and lack of funds, psychometric testing could not be done as part of this aptitude test. It is conceivable that adding a psychometric element to this aptitude test would give even more targeted feedback to the trainers and applicants.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this research project, it is clear that there is a correlation between the results of the aptitude test and the examination results after one course. It would be very informative to conduct a more longitudinal study, where applicants complete the pre-assessment prior to any interpreting studies and comparing these results after one year, and again after having finished their undergraduate studies and then again at the end of postgraduate studies. Adding psychometric tests may also yield information regarding the probability of a student completing postgraduate studies. Although much effort is spent on creating settings as close to real life as possible, performance in an examination is not the same as performance in a real situation. Research in predicting actual interpreting success, using aptitude tests, would be highly beneficial to all parties involved in interpreter training.

Further research could also be conducted with regard to developing specific tools for online interpreter assessment. In this research project free, third-party tools like Edmodo, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and YouTube were used. Developing targeted tools for online interpreting assessment where all activities are contained within one tool could be easier to use and could also streamline the assessment process as well as the record-keeping and reporting aspect of it.

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ADDENDUM A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

1	Name of institution:		
2	Do you provide **undergraduate** interpreter training?	YES	NO
	If yes, do you conduct aptitude/pre-assessment tests for applicants?	YES	NO
	If yes, do you charge a fee for the aptitude test?	YES	NO
	If yes, please indicate your fee for the aptitude test:		
3	Do you provide **postgraduate** interpreter training?	YES	NO
	If yes, do you conduct aptitude/pre-assessment tests for applicants?	YES	NO
	If yes, do you charge a fee for the aptitude test?	YES	NO
	If yes, please indicate your fee for the aptitude test:		
4	What skills are required to be a competent interpreter?		
5	If your institution uses aptitude tests, please indicate the skills tested for:		
6	If your institution uses aptitude tests, please indicate the assessment tools used **as part of the aptitude test**:	YES	NO
	Written translation test (A language to B language)		
	Written translation test (B language to A language)		
	Written translation test (C language to A language)		
	Oral interview for language skill		
	Oral interview for general knowledge		
	Sight translation		
	Written language assessment		
	Written general knowledge quiz		

	Paraphrasing (A language to A language)		
	Paraphrasing (B language to B language)		
	Summarising		
	Memory test		
	Oral cloze test (gap fill)		
	Written cloze test (gap fill)		
	Same language shadowing		
	Short consecutive interpreting		
	Long consecutive interpreting (shorter than 5 minutes)		
	Long consecutive interpreting (longer than 5 minutes)		
	Simultaneous interpreting		
	Other (please describe)		
7	Does your institution use a jury or a selection panel for aptitude tests?	YES	NO
	If yes, describe the composition of the panel		
	Why use (or not use) a panel or jury?		
8	Do you believe that pre-assessment is an accurate predictor of interpreting potential?	YES	NO
	Why? (Why not?)		
9	What obstacles exist for pre-assessment to be done specifically at your institution?		

ADDENDUM B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant information sheet

Welcome to Wits Language School!

My name is Eugene Mathey. I am the course coordinator and lecturer for some of the interpreting courses presented at Wits Language School. I am currently doing research on aptitude testing for potential interpreting students .

As a prospective interpreting student I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

The aims of this study are to:

Describe the skills required to be a competent interpreter
Investigate different methods of aptitude testing
Determine the accuracy of aptitude testing
Determine whether online aptitude testing is a viable alternative to face-to-face testing

I aim to determine whether the Wits Language School aptitude testing system could be used to predict academic success for potential interpreting students. This test would be able to give candidates clear feedback on their entry level skills and will allow the student and the lecturer to focus on specific skills as needed. If this test proves usable, it could potentially be used to inform students of their abilities and suitability for an interpreting course and thus allow them to make an informed choice about enrolling or not.

As a prospective interpreting student, Wits Language School requires that you take an aptitude test before being admitted into the course. If you choose to participate in this study, you will allow me to compare your aptitude test marks with your examination marks for the course in order to evaluate the aptitude test. This is the same test you will be required to do by default when applying to study interpreting at Wits Language School, so you will not be required to do any additional test.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please note that there will be no penalty or negative effect of any kind should you opt not to participate in this study. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so at any time without any penalty. Also, should you prefer not to take part in this study, you also have to option of completing the aptitude test in a face-to-face setting.

If you participate in this study, your involvement will be minimal: you will allow me to compare your aptitude test marks with the marks from your examination after training and you will be invited to participate in a short 10 minute interview. This interview could be done during your time at Wits Language School at a time convenient for you.

The findings of this study will be published as part of a research report. Your identity will be kept entirely confidential and there will be no mention of your name in the final research report. Information will be aggregated so that there is no way to identify you from the final research report.

Should you have any questions or queries, or if you would like to be informed of the results of this research project please feel free to contact me at Eugene.Mathey@wits.ac.za.

Eugene Mathey
Researcher
Eugene.Mathey@wits.ac.za

Dr Kim Wallmach
Supervisor
Kim.Wallmach@wits.ac.za

ADDENDUM C: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM





Participant consent form

I, _____ have read the participant information sheet and had the research project explained to me. I was told that my participation in this research project is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point without any prejudice. I was informed of the following regarding participation in this project:

- Should I decide to withdraw or not participate in this project, that it will have no negative effect on my studies at Wits Language School.
- As part of this research project I will be expected to complete an aptitude test consisting of eight separate tasks.
- The outcome of these tasks will be compared to the outcome of my final examination for the course I am applying for.
- I will receive a report on the outcome of the aptitude test giving feedback on my performance in the eight tasks of the aptitude test.
- This research will assist in developing and refining aptitude tests for future interpreting students
- This project may provide an alternative to current aptitude testing methods
- I will not be remunerated in any way for participation in this project.
- I will not be identified in any way in the reporting on this research project

I agree to participate in this research project and consent to the following:

- Participation in the aptitude test
- Completing a questionnaire upon completion of the course
- To participate in an interview about the aptitude test
- To my results for the aptitude test to be compared to the results for the course examination

I am aware that as a compulsory part of the course, I am to submit video recordings of myself to the trainer. I also consent to these submitted videos to be evaluated and used in the course of this research project under the understanding that they will not be made public and that my participation in this project remains anonymous.

Signature of participant: _____

Date:_____

Wits Language School, Professional Development Hub, Gate 6, 92 Empire Road, Braamfontein, Johannesburg
Tel: 011 717 4208 I **Fax:** 086 521 7332 I **Email:** wls@wits.ac.za I **Web:** www.witslanguageschool.com

ADDENDUM D: CANDIDATE'S EXPERIENCE SURVEY

1. How comfortable were you with taking an online aptitude test?	A	Completely comfortable
	B	Comfortable
	C	Neutral
	D	Intimidated
	E	Very intimidated

2. How easy/hard to follow were the instructions of the online aptitude test?	A	Very easy
	B	Easy
	C	Neutral
	D	Hard
	E	Very hard

3. In your experience, how fair was the online aptitude test?	A	Very fair
	B	Fair
	C	Neutral
	D	Unfair
	E	Very unfair

4. How accurately were your skills represented in the report of the online aptitude test?	A	Very accurate
	B	Reasonably accurate
	C	Neutral
	D	Inaccurate
	E	Very inaccurate

5. How useful did you find the report in deciding to study interpreting?	A	Very useful
	B	Useful
	C	Neutral
	D	Not useful
	E	Very unuseful

6. In your opinion, what are the best aspects or advantages of the online aptitude testing method?

7. In your opinion, what are the worst aspects or disadvantages of the online aptitude testing method?

ADDENDUM E: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS



Focus group questions

1. Who did all 8 tasks?
2. Those who did, how long did it take you? (expected answer: 3 hours. If more, ask q3)
3. What happened? Why did it take you that long to complete all 8 tasks? What kind of difficulties did you have?
4. Those who did not do all 8 tasks, why not? What kind of difficulties did you have?
5. Which of the tasks were the most challenging? Why?
6. Which of the tasks were the easiest? Why?
7. Did you feel you knew exactly what to do for each task? Why/Why not?
8. Do you think online pre-assessment (aptitude testing) is a good idea? Why/Why not?
9. If you did the online aptitude test, why did you opt for it?
10. If you did the face-to-face aptitude test, why did you opt for it?
11. Do you feel the aptitude test gave you adequate feedback on your skills?
12. Do you feel the aptitude test allowed you to make an informed decision about studying interpreting? Why/Why not?
13. Do you feel the aptitude test prepared you for the course?
14. Do you feel the aptitude test tested the right kind of skills for this course?
15. What do you think could make the aptitude test better?

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