

2012

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course: Design, Implementation, Feedback

Jim Hlavac

Monash University, Jim.Hlavac@monash.edu

Marc Orlando

Monash University, marc.orlando@monash.edu

Shani Tobias

Monash University, shani.tobias@monash.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie>



Part of the [Education Commons](#), and the [Sign Languages Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hlavac, Jim; Orlando, Marc; and Tobias, Shani (2012) "Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course: Design, Implementation, Feedback," *International Journal of Interpreter Education*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 4. Available at: <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/ijie/vol4/iss1/4>

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Interpreter Education by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course: Design, Implementation, Feedback

Jim Hlavac, Marc Orlando, & Shani Tobias¹

Monash University

Abstract

This article discusses features of an intake test for potential trainees for short, locally focused training in rural areas of Victoria, Australia. First, the design and choice of test components are discussed, with reference to the testing tools commonly employed in community interpreting training and in light of the fact that testers could not directly test proficiency skills in the language/s other than English (LOTE). The intake test itself elicited information such as level of motivation, knowledge of skills required of interpreters, and educational and occupational experience. Information elicited through the test provided a basis for diagnosis of testees' linguistic level, motivation, and general aptitude for acceptance into a training program and was the basis of a needs analysis upon which subsequent training was based. At the end of the training, both trainers and trainees were asked to provide feedback on the intake test's content. Trainers and trainees both saw the usefulness of these test components: English language level, anecdotal or general knowledge about interpreting, listening and note-taking skills, and communicative pragmatics. Both trainers and trainees identified education level as an important indicator of trainee suitability to training and to a trainee's capacity to engage successfully, more so than employment history. Components such as reading comprehension and written or sight translation were not rated as useful.

Keywords: interpreter testing, interpreter training, community interpreting, intake testing

¹ Correspondence to: jim.hlavac@monash.edu

Hlavac et al.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course: Design, Implementation, Feedback

1. Introduction

This article discusses the contents of an entrance test designed for potential interpreter trainees and assesses the contents of the test on the basis of responses from test-takers and trainers. Construct validity in interpreting testing has been the focus of a number of studies (e.g., Clifford, 2005; Lee, 2008; Eyckmans et al., 2009; Turner et al., 2010) but few studies examine the contents of entrance tests that determine trainee selection. Among the tools available for test evaluation, this article focuses on the psychometric category of *authenticity*, that is, the relationship between test contents and the elicitation of skill performance during the test are those skills that were the focus of post-test training. Responses are gathered not only from test-takers but trainers who were not involved in the test design itself. This article is a contribution to the small but growing body of research on entrance test design (cf. Moser-Mercer, 1985; Bernstein & Barbier, 2000) and in particular to test design for vocationally focused initiatives that target particular potential candidates from less-represented language communities.

The entrance test was designed for selection of candidates for training in an interpreter skills training course. The course was an initiative funded by an Australian state government department, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, that is responsible for multicultural policy and programs that support linguistic diversity. The initiative sought not only to build basic interpreting skills among speakers of new and emerging languages but also to promote interpreting as a career pathway.

The initiative targeted speakers of new and emerging languages (see the Appendix for a list of the targeted languages). However, speakers of other languages could take the entrance test and be considered for inclusion in the training. In most cases, individuals eligible to apply for the training were proficient in at least two spoken languages, but they were not expected to have had experience in interpreting or translation, nor were they required to have specific formal training or a minimum level of education. With no specific prerequisites, the program therefore began with an intake test to assess potential trainees. The test was designed to elicit specific information about testees' educational and occupational profiles and included exercises and questions to diagnose English language level and general aptitude and interest in interpreting. (Language skills could be elicited in English language only—an assessment of testees' proficiency in languages other than English [LOTEs] was not possible.)

Rather than simply document acquisition of linguistic forms or grammatical structures in a manner typical of traditional language tests, this intake test assessed abilities using competency- and function-based approaches (cf. Quinn, 1993). Such functionally focused testing, that is, testing to see if a testee can perform a particular task using any linguistic form appropriate to the task regardless of complexity, is an approach now commonly used in the assessment of language-focused courses in adult vocational education in Australia. Both second-language-acquisition assessment (e.g., the Australian Adult Migrant English Program) and language and literacy teaching for first-language speakers (e.g., adult literacy and basic education courses) have adopted such teaching and testing to a particular situation or context for their curricula and assessment tasks. In the context of training, the

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

value of the intake test lies in how well it elicits individuals' functional abilities. The test's value as an instrument subjected to analysis lies in how easily it can be implemented by testers and used by testees, and whether it relates to skill elicitation that is relevant to subsequent training.

To explore the value of the intake test, we first outline components of existing tests and test materials developed for potential and targeted community interpreting trainees. We then discuss the design of the test used and describe how each subsection was administered to and completed by testees. We examined testees' performance on the test through a needs analysis, and this determined the content and pedagogical approach for the training. Finally, we measured this intake test's "authenticity" or "validity"—its ability to elicit responses relevant to the training of interpreters and to allow diagnosis of capabilities and proficiencies—through evaluative feedback from both trainers and trainees. In the conclusion, we provide a comparison and summary of findings.

2. Entrance Tests for Community Interpreter Training

The testing of potential applicants for community interpreter training has received little attention in the relatively modest body of literature on community interpreter training. Most studies on interpreting training focus on the testing requirements for specialized, high-level courses, many of them 2 years in length and postgraduate, that typically train students for simultaneous or conference interpreting (e.g., Bowen & Bowen, 1989; Clifford, 2005; Gerver, Longley, Long, & Lambert, 1989; Lambert, 1991; Niska, 2005; Pippa & Russo, 2002; Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas, 2008). Lotriet (2002) discussed the selection of elements of an intake test for a group of potential trainees for a 1-month crash course in simultaneous interpreting. This test included diagnostic exercises for both languages but also other features such as the individual's reading activities, personal interests, handling of controversial questions, and self-concept that were thought to be important for the nature and content of future assignments.

The International Council for the Development of Community Interpreting (Critical Link) has recently promoted research into training and entrance testing for community interpreting. Papers from Critical Link conferences have touched on issues relevant to the testing needs we explore in this article. For example, Straker and Watts (2003) discussed training students from refugee backgrounds, many of whom speak languages that are new to their new place of residence; the authors also pointed to the "activist" nature of such training for disadvantaged groups. Michael and Cocchini (1997) also focused on the emancipatory and empowering effects of training young adult bilinguals and placing them as employed interpreters in their local neighborhoods, within language communities that are familiar to them. Penney and Sammons (1997) discussed in detail the experience of training community interpreters in a remote area (of Canada), whereas Valero Garcés (2003) bemoaned the haphazard training of large numbers of community interpreters in a country (Spain) that has only recently experienced large-scale immigration. In Australia, the notion of formal testing for community interpreters is usually discussed in the context of testing competency level for accreditation or formal recognition (e.g., Bell, 1997; Roberts, 2000), rather than as a means of selection for future training.

Few studies have focused on the characteristics of intake testing for community interpreter training. Mikkelsen and Mintz (1997) suggested that asking ethics questions is as important a starting point as testing English-language level. Corsellis (2008) argued that test design for low-level training should elicit macro-skills in both languages as well as prior education and employment and include short role plays, sight translations, brief written translations, and free written compositions in both languages exploring the applicant's motivations. Gentile, Ozolins, and Vasilakos (1996) also suggested a comprehensive list of features, to test general language skills with a focus on the macro-skills of listening and speaking, knowledge of cultural mores within each language community, basic note-taking techniques, memory retention exercises, and professional ethics.

Of course, an entrance test may include other components that a training course may further develop, such as questions and exercises to assess the applicant's knowledge of (cultural- or linguistic-specific) discourse-pragmatic norms, topic- and domain-specific terminology; skill level in voice modulation (i.e., enunciation in the L1, pronunciation in the L2), handling or establishing turn-taking conventions, and whispered simultaneous interpreting; and other elements such as stress-management training, dual-tasking exercises, freelance business

Hlavac et al.

and self-management procedures, and use of audio-recording and playback technology (Hale, 2007). The test design used here seeks to address skills and competencies that are process related, heeding Hatim and Mason's (1997) cautions that interpreting and translating testing run the risk of providing only "once-off" demonstrations of skills that are otherwise process rather than product related.

The small body of research on community interpreting training is due to the unfortunate general lack of training that is either available for or required of interpreters. Pöchhacker (2004) lamented the low remuneration and frequent absence of training for community interpreters, which have commensurate effects on the attention and resources afforded to community interpreting, either from governmental or educational institutions. Hale (2007) identified the lack of recognition and pay for interpreters as a cause of the lack of interest or finances available for training, leading to a low demand for training courses and therefore a general paucity of courses available. Government-funded focused training programs are infrequent but welcome, and this study examines an example of pretraining screening for one such program as a general contribution to an emerging area of interpreting studies research.

Australia has particular challenges in developing appropriate practice models for interpreting. In Australia, provision of interpreting for new and emerging languages (see the Appendix for a list of these languages) includes some languages that have only recently completed a process of codification (i.e., the process of choosing which lexical items and forms, syntactic rules, and orthographical conventions are to be accepted in a language's standard) and standardization (the systematic ordering of rules, conventions, and norms together with the distinction between those forms that the standard includes and those forms that it does not, i.e., "dialectisms"). For some interpreting-training participants, there may be no established standard in their language/s, which makes the development of appropriate practice models for interpreting extremely difficult (cf. Penney & Sammons's [1997] suggestions for trainees about noncodified terminology for Inuktitut). To be sure, this is not to suggest that community interpreting in any way disregards the needs of speakers of nonstandard varieties or regional dialects. As many community interpreters in Australia can attest, (at least passive) proficiency in a variety of dialects or nonstandard varieties is highly desirable, if not essential, for many language groups.

3. Method

To encourage a large number of bilingual speakers of such languages to develop interpreting skills, the Victorian Multicultural Commission's initiative set very few restrictive criteria for its applicants, making the intake test a crucial screening tool. Questions and exercises to assess a number of the elements mentioned above were included in the test design, including: (English) language proficiency, educational and occupational profile, aptitude/motivation, interpreter-specific skills, and writing, reading, and listening (Corsellis, 2008; Gentile et al., 1996; Timarová & Ungoed-Thomas, 2008). The test also asked for a brief written translation (Corsellis, 2008) based on a source text typical of sight translation tasks often performed by interpreters. Questions on ethics (Gentile et al., 1996) and role-relationship—which, in Chesher, Slatyer, Doubine, Jaric, and Lazzari's (2003) study, was rated as a highly important personal quality among a sample of 92 community-based interpreters—were also included. The mix of tasks was congruent with those included in the various test designs developed according to the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (cf. Wylie and Ingram, 1999) that elicit general and specific functional abilities. Other test design models based on conversational or pragmatic performance (e.g. Walters, 2007) or on control of categories of linguistic forms (cf. Carr, 2006) were not considered. The test comprised 10 areas of focus:

1. Educational level and employment experience
2. English language level
3. Language level of LOTE(s)
4. Knowledge of specialist language and terminology
5. Knowledge of interpreting skills, ethics

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

6. General motivation
7. Reading and writing
8. Listening, note-taking, and memorization skills
9. Speaking and communicative pragmatics
10. Translation exercises

The test was administered to 32 potential trainees in Victoria, Australia—21 in Geelong, 11 in Morwell—in late August and early September 2010. Potential trainees were informed that the macro-skills of listening and speaking would be tested specifically and that the entire test would last 2.5 hr. Testees were required to attempt all sections of the test.

None of the program's five trainers was involved in the test design or delivery or in the needs analysis of testees' performance (neither were any of the authors of this article trainers in the program). The first author invited trainers to evaluate the intake test and provide feedback by participating in an anonymous, online SurveyMonkey questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 10 components, with responses graded along a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very important* to *not at all important*. Three of the five trainers completed the questionnaire. Total responses were averaged out to the closest whole number and are discussed below in Section 6.

We also asked accepted applicants to assess the test. Upon completion of the training, all trainees were given a blank copy of the intake test and a letter inviting them to provide feedback, via either a one-page questionnaire addressing the 10 components of the test or an anonymous online survey. Trainees were asked to rate the importance of each of the test's 10 components for admission to training. Responses were graded along a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very important* to *not at all important*. Sixteen of the 25 trainees completed the questionnaire—all opted for the paper version. Total responses were averaged out to the closest whole number and are discussed below in Section 7.

4. Test Content and Delivery

The test was administered by two testers. The first tester, the first author of this article, is a National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)-accredited professional interpreter with experience as a community interpreter in Australia and Europe. Both the first and second testers are trained and experienced testers of the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR, formerly ASLPR) and the National Reporting System for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRSALN), both standard tests used in adult and postsecondary educational settings for ESL and EFL students in Australia. The second tester is also an accredited International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) tester. The tester orally asked the first three questions of the test and wrote down testees' responses verbatim.

1. Personal details

Name	Age	Citizenship	Date of arrival in Australia	Ethnicity/Nationality
------	-----	-------------	------------------------------	-----------------------

2. Languages

What is (or are) your first language(s)?	Other languages learnt in childhood?
Foreign Languages learnt later at school/ in adult life?	

Hlavac et al.**3. Family**

Which language/s did you speak with your parents and other members of family?

Testers also orally asked Questions 14, 15, 17, 20, 25, and 28, (see Sections 4.1 to 4.10). Testees completed all other questions independently—assessing testees' functional literacy skills in reading instructions and writing answers, skills also required for interpreting when completing sight translations, note-taking, and so forth.

The test included exercises that systematically elicited performance in the four macro-skills and note-taking. For a narrative writing exercise, testees had to read two texts together and answer reading comprehension questions. The testers administered two listening tests to evaluate comprehension and note-taking skills. Both listening tasks were played only once, and testees could take notes in the test papers. After listening, testees were invited to use their notes (and memory) to complete listening comprehension exercises: factual questions and responses (listening test 1) and information-gap cloze questions (listening test 2).

4.1 Education Level and Employment Experience

Information was elicited about primary and secondary education, technical or occupational training, university study, and any other courses completed, along with details about the location, period, duration, language of instruction, and content of coursework (where relevant). Testees provided information about their current and previous employment, including formal job title, place of employment, duration, and duties performed. In addition, questions were asked relating to testees' voluntary or unpaid work and their knowledge of and eventual engagement with those language communities in Victoria for whom they could be potential interpreters. Information for this section was gathered from responses to Questions 5–9, 16, 17, and a curriculum vitae that testees were requested to provide.

5. Primary Education

Where? When? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

6. Secondary Education

Where? When? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

7. Further Education / University

Where? When? What studied? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

8. Technical / Occupational Training

Where? When? What learnt? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

9. Other courses

Name of course/s? Where? When? How many years? Language/s of instruction?

16. Employment

Please list previous employment, paid or voluntary. (Last job first)

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

4.2 English Language Level

Information from Questions 5-9 provided a guide to testees' length and intensity of contact with English as a first, second, or subsequent language. Where childhood and adult education occurred outside Australia or not in another Anglophone country, questions were asked about formal instruction in and/or informal contact with the English language (place, time period, duration, level completed or formal qualifications gained) and subsequent contact with English as a formal subject and/or language of instruction in an Australian educational institution. This was elicited in Questions 10–12 and 14–15 and partly from Questions 1-4 (see above Section 4.1).

10. English Language Learning Overseas

Where? When? How many hours per week? How many months/years?

Level completed / Qualification gained:

11. English Courses in Australia

Where? When? How many hours per week? How many months/years?

Level completed / Qualification gained:

12. Certificates/Qualifications of English level

Name of certificate/Qualification: When awarded?

14. What do you find easy to do in English?

15. What do you need to work on most in English?

4.3 LOTE Language Level

For all testees, acquisition of English followed contact and acquisition of one or more LOTEs. For most testees, proficiency levels of LOTEs could not be diagnostically tested or verified; therefore, testers made inferences about testees' formal and informal acquisition of language/s and functional use thereof from information about educational and occupational experience. Further information to more closely ascertain proficiency levels in LOTEs was gained through a variety of other questions. These included questions about informants' first language, language/s of which they consider themselves to be native speakers, any other languages learned in childhood or adulthood, language choice with parents, and language choice with other family members. Questions 4 and 13 below, in addition to Questions 2–3, 5–9 (see above 4.1) focus on self-declared functional proficiency.

4. Personal use

Which language/s do you think in?

Which language/s do you count quickly in?

Which language/s do you speak to yourself in?

Hlavac et al.

When you are angry, which language/s do you speak in?

13. Other language courses:

Where? When? How many hours per week? How many months/years?

Level completed / Qualification gained?

Self-estimations of LOTE proficiency were also elicited through tables in which testees listed functional abilities for each macro-skill from simple to complex abilities. For example, for the macro-skill “speaking,” functional abilities commenced with “use simple greetings,” “small talk,” “talk about your life,” “talk to strangers for 5 minutes” to more complicated oral abilities such as “tell a joke,” “take part in a job interview,” “debate an issue,” and “talk to a group of people for 15 minutes about health/education/law.” Testees were invited to indicate which capabilities they had for each of their languages. Self-declared proficiency for the macro-skills of speaking and listening were elicited in Questions 20 and 21, presented below. Analogous questions were asked for the remaining two macro-skills, reading (Question 22) and writing (Question 23), which are not shown below.

20. Speaking

	English	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3
Use simple greetings				
Small talk, e.g., talk about the weather				
Talk about your life				
Talk to strangers for 5 minutes about your first country				
Make an enquiry about a job				
Tell a joke				
Take part in a job interview				
Debate an issue (e.g., Should smoking be banned in public?)				
Talk to a group of people for 15 minutes about health/education/law				

21. Listening

	English	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3
Can't understand anything				
Follow someone giving directions				

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

Understand weather forecast				
Understand a television drama				
Listen to jokes				
Understand radio interview with a famous person				
Listen to a university lecture				
Listen to a doctor /lawyer/university professor talking about their subject area				

4.4. Knowledge of Specialist Language and Terminology

Testees were invited to provide self-ratings of ability, from *not good* and *fair* to *good* and *excellent* for all languages in relation to specialist areas. Testers generally did not administer this question directly to testees but explained the intention of the question, namely, proficiency in special terms commonly used in these areas and the ability to understand speech and to be able to speak fluently in these subject areas as well.

19. How good is your knowledge of specialist language in English and in your other language/s?

Please rate your knowledge as: *not good* *fair* *good* *excellent*

	English	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3
Medical terms				
Legal terms				
Economics terms				
Political jargon				
Consumer affairs / advertising / marketing				
Literature				

4.5. Knowledge of Interpreting Skills, Ethics Questions, General Motivation

The information flyers for the training did not state that previous interpreting experience was necessary or even advantageous. We anticipated however, that many testees would have experience as formal or informal interpreters. We gauged levels and circumstances of previous interpreting experience through invitations to

Hlavac et al.

provide details (Question 18), knowledge of assumed attributes for an interpreter, (Question 26), and anticipated areas of difficulty (Question 27).

18. Have you ever worked as an interpreter before?

26. What do you need to do to become an interpreter or bilingual language worker?

27. What do you see as the hard things about being an interpreter or bilingual language worker?

Two ethics questions were asked. The first was a “faithfulness to dutifully interpret the source text” versus “faithfulness to the truth” test (Question 28). A question relating to personal management of stress in a difficult situation was also asked (Question 29). A further ethics question dealt with confidentiality (Question 30).

28. You are interpreting for a client in a court. The client says something that you know is untrue. What do you do?

29. You are employed by a government agency to interpret for a person who has personal problems. The person becomes abusive to both you and the government agency for whom you are interpreting. What would you do?

30. A husband and wife are divorced and the wife has custody of the children. She has moved to a different city with the children. You have interpreted for the wife and you know where she now lives. By chance you meet the husband and he asks you to tell him the new address of his former wife and children. What would you do?

Motivation is often measured through apparent and initial displays of behavior such as keenness, degree of seriousness shown to the testing situation, attentiveness, evident or assumed diligence in attempting tasks, and others. But these need not be reliable indicators of a person’s aspirations. Questions about future plans (Question 24) and reasons why a testee wants to work in a chosen field (Question 25) are standard questions in job interviews. Written responses may corroborate demonstrated behavior.

24. What do you plan to do in the next two years?

25. Why do you want to work as an interpreter or bilingual language worker?

4.6. Reading and Writing

Two texts were presented for testees to read through. The first text, “How to Become an Interpreter,” was 350 words long and was an abridged and adapted version of a text from the Web site spanish-translation-help.com

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

(n.d.). The text was modelled to contain a moderate level of difficulty. For example, some sentences contain multiple clauses. The content of the text was specific to matters concerning trainee interpreters only; the text's register is didactic and advisory, typical of that found in the opening pages of training manuals. Five questions related to information contained in the text and checked the testee's comprehension. Questions did not require testees to make extra-textual inferences.

The second reading text was directions of use for medication. The text contained 150 words and was a typical example of a sight translation text. Questions related to information contained in the text. Answers were judged for their content accuracy; grammatically incomplete sentences, spelling mistakes, and poor handwriting were not taken into account. The text was comparable, in content and in linguistic complexity, to texts encountered by community interpreters and to texts used in Certificate II to III level courses in postsecondary ESL courses.

Reading test 2: Medication—Directions of use

Directions of use

This medication is pleasant to take and starts to work quickly because it forms a clear solution and is ready to be absorbed as soon as you drink it.

It provides fast and effective relief from: toothache, migraine, cold & flu symptoms, sore throat, muscular pain.

Dosage: Adults take 4 tablets dissolved in half a glass of warm water every six hours.

Children over 15 years: Take 3 tablets dissolved in half a glass of cold water every twelve hours.

Children under 15 years: Do NOT give to children under 15 years of age.

Do not take this medicine if you suffer from stomach ulcers or asthma, if you are pregnant, or if you have an allergy to non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

Seek the advice of your doctor if you are over 65 years of age and if you take medication regularly.

Questions:

- i. Does this medication start to work as soon as you drink it?
- ii. Name two things that it provides fast relief from:
- iii. How often should adults take the medication?
- iv. How many tablets should children over 15 take in one dosage?
- v. Is this medication recommended for children under 15 years of age?
- vi. Name two conditions or symptoms that prevent you from taking this medication

Literacy skills are not a prerequisite for interpreting, although in the context of interpreter training, literacy skills that enable trainees to not only read but also note and record information are still important. Therefore, although the test focused on oral/aural skills, it included a small written component, designed to elicit testees'

Hlavac et al.

ability to narrate, order, and describe visual stimuli. The writing test was based on the narration of a series of events. Visual stimuli for the events was provided in the form of 10 photographs that sequentially showed a cyclist riding on a road, being knocked over by a car, and being attended to by bystanders. The instructions for the writing test read: "Write a story about what happened in the pictures." Testees were requested to write approximately 80 words over 15 lines, and performance was judged on the accurate replication and the correct sequencing of the visual stimuli in writing. We looked for appropriate past tense forms—past simple, past continuous, present perfect—as well as linking words of sequence. Spelling and handwriting were not taken into account, and the written section was weighted less than the speaking and listening sections of the test. Testees' performance in the reading and writing sections contributed to the information presented about testees' acquisition of English (cf. Questions 10–13).

4.7. *Listening, Note-Taking, and Memorization skills*

There were two listening tests. The first was a conversation between two people, unknown to each other, who engage in casual conversation on the street. Topics of conversation include the weather, daily activities, and a description of the duties of a travel agent. The dialogue was 350 words long and lasted approximately 3 min. We told testees that the listening text would last a few minutes and they were required to take notes, which would enable them to answer questions about the listening text's content. Testees were able to see in advance the questions that they would be asked in relation to the two listening exercises; however, they were actively discouraged from answering the questions while listening to the listening exercises.

Comprehension of the first listening test was tested through eight questions that required short responses of five words or fewer. Responses were judged according to their accuracy. The second listening exercise was a news report of a car accident. The text was a monologue of 310 words which lasted just over 2 min. Both exercises were designed at a level of complexity comparable to that of the tasks that were contained in the training itself.

No guide or instructions were given to testees as to how they were to take notes. Note-taking was primarily assessed by the number of correct responses that testees gave to the questions, that is, the form and content of note-taking was not assessed as such, simply its ability to assist testees in retrieving information required for question-answering. Testees were not expected to produce notes showing the use of symbols, acronyms, abbreviations and/or contractions for particular content-bearing items which are skills taught and acquired in formal training. Where notes demonstrated knowledge of symbols, contractions, and so forth, this was weighted positively. Attempts to capture every word (which were inevitably unsuccessful) were negatively judged. Lastly, Question 17 asked if testees had had a job that required note-taking or memorization skills:

The script and questions for Listening Test 1 follow:

Listening Test 1: Conversation in the street—Transcript

- A. It looks like it's going to rain soon.
- B. Yes, it does.
- A. That's good. We need the rain. The ground is so dry at the moment. It must be very hard for the farmers.
- B. Yes. My brother is a farmer and he said that if it doesn't rain soon, the price of fruit and vegetables will go up.
- A. Oh. Look, it's raining already.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

B. Yes, do you have an umbrella? I don't want to get wet. I'm wearing my best clothes and I have a job interview in about 30 minutes.

A. No, I'm sorry, I don't have an umbrella. Maybe we should go to the bus stop over there. At least there we won't get wet.

B. That's a good idea.

A. So you have a job interview in just half an hour. What job are you applying for?

B. I'm applying to work as a travel agent.

A. Gee, that sounds like a good job. What sort of things do you have to do as a travel agent?

B. You have to help people with enquiries about their travel plans both on the phone and face to face. This means that you have to look up on the computer the possible dates of travel and various ways that a person could travel to a particular destination. You also have to handle questions about accommodation and booking hotels. Another thing is organising insurance for travellers. And, of course, you have to find the best possible travel route at the cheapest possible price for your customer because there is a lot of competition amongst all the travel agencies. People often ring up four or five times to check different prices and routes. So you have to be able to deal with people well, both on the telephone and in person, so you need to have good communication skills.

A. Well, I hope you get the job. It sounds interesting and I wish you the best of luck!

B. Thanks a lot. Oh, look, the rain has stopped. Now, I must go now to be on time for the interview.

Listening Test 1: Conversation in the street—Notes

Please make notes here as you listen:

Read through your notes and answer the following questions with short answers:

- i. Is the ground dry?
- ii. What job does his brother have?
- iii. What is he going to do in half an hour?
- iv. Does he have an umbrella?
- v. Where do they go when it starts raining?
- vi. What job is he going to apply for?
- vii. Name two things that a travel agent does?
- viii. At the end of the conversation, is it still raining?

4.8. *Speaking and Communicative Pragmatics*

The entire test lasted 2 to 2.5 hr. During this time, testees were usually reading, writing, or listening independently, without any interaction with others. There was a brief opportunity for testers to engage with testees before the testing started, and the tester orally asked the first three questions of the test and Questions 14, 15, 17, 20, 25, and 28. There were also numerous other opportunities to test the aural/oral skills of testees in other areas of the test questionnaire. Assessment of speaking skills covered clarity and ease of expression, fluency, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, volume, word-attack skills, and prosody. Pragmatic features such as turn-taking,

Hlavac et al.

comprehension of indirect imperatives (e.g., “It would be good to include as many details as possible”) salutations, and taking leave were also assessed. Features such as eye contact, body language, conventions of personal space, or emotional disposition were not judged.

After the initial salutation, welcome, identity verification, explanation of test format and other ambient small talk, testers filled in numeric responses for each of the nine questions (1, 2, 3, 14, 15, 17, 20, 25, and 28) from the questionnaire that they orally posed to the testees. Testers recorded numeric responses on the ISLPR scale (Wylie & Ingram, 1999) for these questions, and scored other spoken (solicited or unsolicited) responses. Both scores were collated to a total score at the end of the test. A score of 2 on the ISLPR scale for English speaking and listening skills was envisaged as a threshold for admission to training. A score of 2 was applied as the minimum entry level for the nine trainees accepted at Morwell, whereas a higher entry level of 2+ was retrospectively applied for applicants for Geelong, due to the overall higher level of oral/aural skills displayed by applicants at this center.

4.9. Translation Exercises

The test included translation exercises into English. Translation is not a prominent part of interpreting training, and examples of transfer from written sources are usually modelled as sight translation exercises (cf. Corsellis, 2008). However, translation reading and writing exercises have been used in testing for certification in some community interpreting situations (e.g., Beltran Avery, 2003), and because we could not directly test testees’ LOTEs, we included a translation exercise to give us some idea of testees’ transfer abilities from the LOTE to English. We chose materials in LOTEs that had been translated from the same source-language (SL) English texts and that were topical at the time of testing, in August and September 2010, during the Australian federal elections. Materials from Arabic, Croatian, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Persian, Serbian, Spanish, and Turkish were taken from an information page of the Australian Electoral Commission (Australian Electoral Commission [AEC], 2010). We present an example of one of the English SL texts below. Speakers of those languages not covered in the AEC translations were provided with short translations from the same English SL texts from the Department of Human Services of the Victorian Government, which has a Health Translations Directory database (Department of Human Services, 2009). Translations for the following languages were taken from this Web site: Amharic, Burmese, Dari, Dinka, French, Pashtu, Sinhalese, Tamil, and Urdu. We could not test translations from some languages spoken by multilingual testees, such as Ewe, Goun, Kiswahili, Liberian Creole, Mina, Nuer, Shilluk, Twi, and Watchi. We tested these multilingual testees in the translation skills from another of their languages for which there were translation materials.

We checked the translations from the LOTE texts (as back-translations) against the English source texts for content, expression, and grammatical accuracy. The content of the texts: registering to vote, how to vote, and community health information are common topics for community interpreting. Below is an example of an English source language text from the AEC.

Figure 1: Example of English source text. LOTE translations of this text were compared against this ST.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

How to make your vote count

July 2010

On election day you will receive two ballot papers: a green one for the House of Representatives, and a white one for the Senate.

Don't worry if you make a mistake. You can ask for another ballot paper and start again.

Green ballot paper

Number every box

On the green ballot paper, you need to put a '1' in the box beside the candidate who is your first choice, '2' in the box beside your second choice and so on, until you have numbered every box.

You must number every box for your vote to count.

Do not use ticks, crosses or leave boxes blank on this ballot paper or your vote won't count.

BALLOT PAPER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 YOUR STATE
 ELECTORAL DIVISION OF
 YOUR ELECTORATE

Number the boxes from 1 to 8 in the order of your choice.

4	CANDIDATE A POLITICAL PARTY
6	CANDIDATE B INDEPENDENT
3	CANDIDATE C POLITICAL PARTY
1	CANDIDATE D POLITICAL PARTY
5	CANDIDATE E POLITICAL PARTY
8	CANDIDATE F POLITICAL PARTY
2	CANDIDATE G
7	CANDIDATE H POLITICAL PARTY

Remember...number every box to make your vote count.

AEC
 Australian Electoral Commission

SAMPLE

Source: Australian Electoral Commission, 2010.

4.10. Assessment of Test Performances

In a prototypical sense, intake tests seek to ascertain that applicants have minimum levels of ability that conform to a preconceived standard required for subsequent training. In relation to this test, “minimum levels of ability” relate to language level (we elicited this for English, but for the LOTE this was in most cases deduced through biographical and self-reported information) and motivation level.

Hlavac et al.

We weighted other skills and abilities in our assessment, but these were not essential for selection for training. Occupational experience in any country or context demonstrates knowledge of “the world of work” and is a desirable asset that a candidate brings to “the world of interpreting work.” Educational level provides a guide to a testee’s length of contact with formal and focussed training, which can influence his/her readiness to undertake further training. Familiarity with the relevant LOTE community or communities is important so that trainees know how to interact with them in a culturally suitable manner. Knowledge of interpreting skills, whether personal or anecdotal, shows that testees view interpreting as an ability beyond that of simply knowing two languages. Answers to ethics questions indicate whether testees can conceptualize the interpreter’s role as one in which professional as well as moral standards apply.

Additional skills are of less importance as the training presumed no previous knowledge of note-taking or specialist terminology. Although interpreters employ oral/aural skills far more than the macro-skills of reading and writing, community interpreters in Australia are required to acquaint themselves with a great deal of written information in a variety of fields. Even where a testee’s LOTE has no formal orthography or writing system, Australia requires interpreters to have basic writing skills in English for training and employment. In order to model exercises, where possible, we attempted to include at least two speakers for each LOTE, so that trainees could use both languages with another trainee in role-play activities.

In Geelong, 16 of the 21 testees were accepted to the training. As stated, selection was based on demonstrated language level in English and demonstrated as well as inferred level of interest and motivation toward potential training. Nine of the 16 were speakers of new and emerging languages (see Appendix). The Geelong trainees were between 32 and 57 years old (average age = 41), and length of residence in Australia varied from 1 year to entire lifetime (average length of residence = 18 years). Almost all trainees had extensive employment histories, many had been or were currently employed in geriatric care, education, social work, and business and retail. Table 1 below presents the key characteristics of those accepted for training in Geelong.

Table 1. Testees accepted for training—Geelong.

Languages	Age	Length of residence (years)	Education level	Occupation	Previous experience	Note-taking skills	Prof. with terminologies
Turkish	49	34	Dip. Arts, Dip. Ed. Assoc. Dip – IT – Aust.	Casual relief teacher	Informal - family	Yes. Good	Very high
Macedonian. Also Serbian, Croatian	43	23	Yr 12 – Macedonia	Aged care worker	Informal - family	Fair, good	Good
Croatian	52	41	Yr 11 – Aust. Cert. III – Asset management	Accounts clerk	Informal - family	Did well in consec. exercise.	Good
Croatian	54	51 yrs	Yr 11 - Aust	Unemp. aged care worker	Informal - family	Good	Fair
Croatian. Also Serbian	52	50 yrs	Yr 11 – Aust. Cert I, II in Pharmacy	Pharmacy Assistant	Informal - customers, family	Good	Fair
Serbian. Also Croatian	34	Aust. born. Returned to Serbia aged 1 ½. Back to Aust ‘95.	Yr 12 – Serbia. Cert. IV in Nursing	Aged care Worker	Informal - family. Residents at aged care	Very good	Very good
Italian	54	40 yrs	Yr 10 - Aust	House-keeper	Informal - family	Good	Fair
Pushto. Also Dari, Hazargi, Urdu	33	9 yrs	Sec. School – Pakistan, Cert II – Transport & Logistics	Transport, logistics	Informal - family	Very good	Good
Sudanese Arabic, Shilluk	49	6 yrs	Limited primary	Aged care worker	Informal – Sudanese youth	Poor	Fair
Persian, Dari	43	4 yrs	Yr 12 Iran. Nursing degree Iran	Teacher at Aust school	Informal – family. Family teacher	Good	Good

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

Australia ranged from 2 to 6 years (average length = 4 years). Many were tertiary (i.e., university) students, meat packers, or laborers.

Table 2. Testees accepted for training—Morwell.

Language/s	Age	Length of residence in Aust.	Educational level	Occupation	Previous experience	Note-taking skills	Prof. with terminologies
Arabic	21	5 yrs	Yr 12 Aust, Cert IV – Bus. Admin	HR officer	Informal	Good	Good
Dinka, Sudanese Arabic	37	6 yrs	Completing: B Soc. And Comm. Welfare	Multilingual teacher aide	Formal. Schools, Refugee camps.	Fair	Good. Knowledge of limits.
Nuer, Sudanese Arabic, Amharic	36	2 yrs	Yr 10, Cert III Aged care	Student	None	Fair	Fair
Dinka, Sudanese Arabic, Kiswahili	35	4 yrs	Yr 11. Cert II Disability, Comm. works	Multicultural education aide	Formal. Schools	Good	Good
Nuer	35	5 yrs	Yr 11. Cert II, IV	Student	Informal	Not good	Fair
Nuer	18	4 yrs	Currently yr 11	Student	Informal	Fair	Good
Dinka, Sudanese Arabic	37	4 yrs	Yr 9, Cert IV. Disability Services	Meat packer	Informal, formal, kindergarten	Fair	Fair
Nuer, Sudanese Arabic, Amharic	41	6 yrs	Yr 10, Cert IV. Mental Health, Dip. Youth Work	Student support worker	Formal. NGOs, refugee camps	Fair	Fair
Nuer, Amharic, Sudanese Arabic	42	3 yrs	Yr 12, Ethiopia, Hospitality course	Cleaner	Informal	Poor	Good

5. Relation of Test to Training

Section 4 above described how the intake test sought to ascertain minimum capabilities. In regard to training, the test also sought to do the following: first, gauge personal profiles and ability levels to see what applicants could do—allowing for cross-comparison of abilities to see how homogenous a group the selected trainees would be, and second, ascertain strengths and weaknesses, with the intention that the training would particularly address the latter. Third and least important, the intake test aimed to solicit evidence of performance against which exit test performance could be compared.

To structure the training, we used as a basis a course outline (conforming to the overall guidelines for the training set by the Victorian Multicultural Commission) that contained an exhaustive and maximalist list of features. Specifically, training developed skills in the following areas:

- Basic skills in dialogue interpreting, including competence in active listening, memory retention, paraphrasing, summarizing, note-taking, and accurate transfer between English and LOTE (test elements: listening and note-taking, speaking, translation exercises).

Hlavac et al.

- An understanding of the role and responsibilities of an interpreter working in community domains (test elements: knowledge of interpreting skills).
- Skills in researching terminology and preparing for assignments (test elements: knowledge of specialist language and terminology).
- An understanding of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics and of how interpreters should handle ethical dilemmas and intercultural challenges (test elements: ethics questions, knowledge of cultural practices of speakers of LOTE and Australian English, communicative pragmatics).
- Knowledge of pathways for further training and qualifications (test elements: educational level and occupational experiences).

5.1. Delivery of Training

We offered the training course in basic interpreting skills in two regional locations concurrently. Training consisted of 30 hr delivered over five 6-hr blocks on alternating Saturdays from late September to early December 2010. Five different instructors led the training. The curriculum was designed to implement the objectives outlined above and was based on the needs analysis undertaken in light of intake test results. For example, we found that overall English proficiency, particularly literacy levels, were significantly higher among the cohort at one location compared to the other. On average, the length of time living in Australia was also greater for the former cohort, and educational levels were higher. This information was useful for the curriculum designers, who were able to tailor the training package accordingly: For the group of relatively new arrivals, written materials provided in the course workbook were simplified, as was the content of linguistic exercises and the final assessment, and more introductory information on Australian social systems was incorporated. In addition to its importance for curriculum design, the intake test also assisted instructors by providing a profile of the trainees, which enabled them to pitch the content, discussions, and activities at an appropriate level and judge a suitable pace for the training delivery. The information was also used to choose topics and culturally appropriate examples that trainees could relate to, thereby facilitating greater engagement with the training.

The course content delivered in the 30 hr of class time included:

1. Introduction to what interpreters do, the different modes of interpreting, and the situation of community interpreting in Australia/Victoria, including training pathways and accreditation.
2. The role of the interpreter, ethical requirements including the AUSIT Code of Ethics, and ways to deal with ethical challenges.
3. Linguistic exercises to build interpreting skills such as memory training, accurate repetition, listening comprehension, paraphrasing, summarizing, note-taking, and shadowing. These were introduced as monolingual (English) activities and then progressed to activities that involved linguistic transfer (LOTE \leftrightarrow English).
4. Preparing for interpreting assignments by building research skills and creating glossaries.
5. Dialogue-interpreting techniques related to seating, turn-taking, using the first person, eye contact, controlling the pace and flow of the conversation, asking for clarification, the attitude of the interpreter, and cross-cultural communication issues.
6. Role-play activities of dialogues in community settings involving both monolingual memory tasks and bilingual interpreting practice.
7. Sociocultural contexts and challenges of interpreting in community settings in the health care, legal, social security, and other domains. This information was then linked to the role-play activities.

To supplement the face-to-face sessions, trainees were also required to undertake self-study tasks from a course workbook, which were discussed in class the following week. These included building glossaries,

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

researching case studies on community interpreting settings and presenting them in class, answering questions posing ethical dilemmas, practicing interpreting from CDs with bilingual dialogues in (most of) their languages, preparing for role-plays, and reading articles on community interpreting. A variety of written information and links were provided to assist with self-study.

6. Feedback From Trainers About Intake Test Content and Allocation

The intake test was designed by staff persons who are practicing interpreters and who have much experience teaching both interpreting courses at the postgraduate university level and language courses in adult, postsecondary vocational educational institutions. Materials from existing intake tests, however, could be used to a limited extent only, as we could not use exercises such as paraphrasing or examples of written or spoken consecutive interpreting dialogues eliciting responses in both languages. Conversely, the inability to test LOTE skills meant that a significant part of the test needed to elicit detailed information about self-reported functional abilities in the LOTE. Further questions in the intake test also functioned to check self-reported abilities that had been elicited elsewhere. Our intake test also emphasized questions about future plans and motivations—such questions are redundant in intake tests for fee-paying, university-level courses.

Logistic and staffing constraints meant that the intake test and course design were completed by staff persons other than those who delivered the training. Although such an arrangement may be disadvantageous for the cohesion of test and training, this has the advantage of allowing trainers to examine a text, free of the need to defend “their test.” Trainers were presented with a table containing a list of the sections of the test, divided in a way similar to the ordering of Sections 4.1 to 4.10 above, that is, “educational level and occupational experience,” “English language level,” “LOTE language level,” and following. Trainers were asked, “How important were these things for admission to training?” and were invited to provide responses on a 5-point Likert scale that contained the following degrees of quantification: *very important*, *important*, *neither/nor*, *not so important*, and *not at all important*. Table 3 includes comments representing three trainers’ combined and averaged responses. For readability, total averaged responses are allocated to the closest whole response.

Table 3: Responses from trainers about intake test content and training content

Profile / Ability / Skill	Section of entrance test and question nos.	Importance of these elements for admission to training?				
		1	2	3	4	5
Education, Employment	General education: primary, secondary, vocational, tertiary (Q. 5–9)		X			
	Employment experience (Q. 16, 17, 24)				X	
English language	Level of English, including evidence of acquisition in formal settings (Q. 10-13)	X				
	Subjective assessment of strengths / weaknesses in English (Q. 14, 15)			X		
LOTE	Information about LOTE, circumstances of its acquisition and use (Q. 2-4, 20-23)		X			
Terminology	Knowledge of specialist language and terminology (Q. 19, 20-23)			X		

Hlavac et al.

Knowledge of interpreting skills, ethics	Knowledge of interpreting skills (Q. 18, 26, 27)	X				
	Ethics questions (Q. 28-30)			X		
Motivation	Enthusiasm, motivation to become a well-skilled interpreter (Q. 24, 25)		X			
Reading and writing	Reading for specific information (Reading test 1, 2)					X
	Writing a narrative (Writing test 1)					X
Listening, note-taking and memorization	Listening for gist and specific information (Listening test 1, 2)	X				
	Note-taking and memorization (Q. 17, Listening tests 1, 2)		X			
Speaking and communicative pragmatics	Clarity and ease of expression, fluency, pronunciation, volume, etc. (cumulatively assessed throughout spoken interactions)	X				
Translation exercises	LOTE into English translation (Select tests from AEU or DHS Web sites)					X

Note. 1 = very important; 2 = important; 3 = neither/nor; 4 = not so important; 5 = not at all important.

The feedback from the trainers included both expected and unexpected responses. Trainers rated level of English, in particular clear and fluent speaking skills, as well as listening skills and the ability to listen for particular information, very important. These features are generally minimum or “threshold” capabilities that determine admission to the course as well as active and successful participation in training. Trainers also rated knowledge of interpreting skills as a very important feature. This response was unexpected, and it reflects trainers’ assessment that skills specific to interpreting, for example, physical arrangements in a triangle, direct speech versus oblique oration, and speech flow and length are important parts of training. Trainers also listed educational level as important but previous occupational experience as unimportant. It appears that trainees’ aptitude in learning new skills with a pedagogic approach (that may have been unfamiliar to some) was determined more by a higher educational level than by any particular previous work experience.

Although trainers were unable to ascertain trainees’ knowledge and use of LOTE, this rated as an important factor for trainees to be able to attempt interpreting role-play activities or interpret into English texts played to them aurally. Prior subjective assessments about trainees’ strengths and weaknesses in English were of importance only where weaknesses impinged on trainees’ ability to engage successfully in certain activities. However, as trainers explained at the first session, the training was not intended to be a means for trainees to improve their English language skills. Building on listening skills, note-taking and the capacity to develop memorization skills were also important—this was one of the activities that was widely practiced in the training. Unsurprisingly, reading and writing as skills elicited in isolation were not rated as important skills before admission. Reasonable literacy skills are presumed, however, for a number of activities, for example, reading about ethics, reading role-play dialogues, glossary compilation, and texts on interpreting health, legal, education, immigration, social security, and other domains.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

7. Feedback From Trainees

The 16 trainees at Geelong and nine at Morwell completed a variety of final assessment tasks and course feedback forms in the last session of the last day of training. Eleven Geelong trainees and five Morwell trainees completed the optional survey about the content of the intake test and its relationship to the training. As outlined above in Section 3, trainees were given a blank paper copy of the intake test to reacquaint themselves with the test content. Trainees were asked to think about the content of the training and to then consider whether each of the 10 components of the test were important for them to commence and undertake the training. The question posed to trainees was “How important were these for admission to the test?” Trainees recorded responses on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*very important*) through 3 (*neither important nor unimportant*) to 5 (*not at all important*). Trainees were not required to give their names, and trainers were not present when trainees completed the survey. Combined and averaged responses to the closest whole number are set out below in Table 4.

Table 4: Responses from trainees about intake test content and training content

Profile / Ability / Skill	Section of entrance test and question nos.	Importance of these elements for admission to training?				
		1	2	3	4	5
Education, Employment	General education: primary, secondary, vocational, tertiary. (Q. 5-9)		X			
	Current and previous employment. (Q. 16, 17, 24)			X		
English Language	My level of English, (Q. 10-13, 14, 15)	X				
LOTE	My level of LOTE (Q. 2-4, 20-23).	X				
Terminology	Knowledge of specialist language and terminology (Q. 19, 20-23)	X				
Knowledge of interpreting skills, ethics.	Knowledge of interpreting skills (Q. 18, 26, 27)		X			
	Ethics questions (Q. 28-30)		X			
Motivation	My attitude and level of motivation. (Q. 24, 25)		X			
Reading and writing	Reading for specific information (Reading test 1, 2)				X	
	Writing a narrative (Writing test 1)				X	
Listening, note-taking and memorization	Listening for gist and specific information (Listening test 1, 2.)	X				
	Note-taking skills and memorization (Q. 17, Listening tests 1, 2).		X			
Speaking and communicative pragmatics	Clarity and ease of expression, fluency, pronunciation, knowing how to communicate clearly with English and LOTE speakers	X				

Hlavac et al.

Translation Exercises	LOTE into English translation (Select tests from AEU (2010) or DHS (2009) websites)					X
-----------------------	---	--	--	--	--	---

Note. 1 = very important; 2 = important; 3 = neither/nor; 4 = not so important; 5 = not at all important.

There is great similarity between trainers' and trainees' responses about the relative importance of various sections of the intake test. Unsurprisingly, trainees rated their LOTE proficiency as just as important as their English proficiency in being accepted for the training—trainers, of course, were unable to ascertain trainees' LOTE levels. Trainees also rated their current or previous employment as being more important for their admission than did trainers. Terminology was also rated more important for trainees than trainers. This is also unsurprising, as trainees may have had little need to consider the particular features of language use in specialist contexts. Listening skills were predictably rated as important, whereas reading and writing skills were considered less so. Written translation exercises did not figure in the training so their importance as a test feature was also not rated highly.

8. Conclusions and Findings

This article examined the design and implementation of an intake test that specifically sought to elicit demonstrations of skill levels and to elicit information indicative of skill levels that could not be directly tested. This led to the design of a sizeable test, containing over 30 questions, tables, and exercises, that required between 2 and 2.5 hr to complete. Often in community interpreter training only one of a trainee's two languages can be systematically tested; trainers usually can monitor performance in simulated or role-play activities in only one language. Therefore, detailed questioning, often using various questions to elicit skill capabilities, is not only justifiable but essential.

The test also contained many questions that sought to elicit answers about testees' understanding of the interpreting profession and questions that contained hypothetical scenarios problematizing the interpreter's role. These questions sought to discover testees' prior knowledge about interpreting and to check, indirectly, if they had attempted to find out any information about it, in the absence of any (formal or informal) interpreting experience. Trainers reported that, at intake level, these questions had little bearing on training content and trainee involvement, as the training itself contained explanation and situation modelling of basic interpreting techniques and concepts so that prior knowledge was neither essential nor expected.

Both trainers and trainees identified education level as an important indicator of trainee suitability to training and to a trainee's capacity to engage successfully; education level was reported by both groups to be more important than employment history.

Overall, in determining the suitability and success of applicants to community interpreter training, skills activities such as reading and reading comprehension, writing, sight translation, and written translation exercises are of limited value. Intake tests for community interpreter training programs should therefore instead take care to solicit applicants' education level, as well as test performance in the key areas of listening, speaking, and communicative pragmatics.

9. References

- Australian Electoral Commission. (2010). *Translated information and telephone interpreter service*. Retrieved from http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Translated_information/
- Bell, S. (1997). The challenges of setting and monitoring the standards of community interpreting. In S. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, & D. Steyn, D. (Eds.), *The Critical Link: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 93–108). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

- Beltran Avery, M. P. (2003). Creating a high-standard, inclusive and authentic certification process. In L. Brunette, G. Bastin, I. Hemlin, & H. Clarke (Eds.), *The Critical Link 3: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 99–112). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Bernstein, J., & Barbier, I. (2000). Design and development parameters for a rapid automatic screening test for prospective simultaneous interpreters. *Interpreting*, 5, 221–238.
- Bowen, D., & Bowen, M., (1989) Aptitude for interpreting. In L. Gran & J. Dodds (Eds.), *The theoretical and practical aspects of teaching conference interpretation* (pp. 109–125) Udine, Italy: Camapanotte.
- Carr, N. (2006) The factor structure of test task characteristics and examinee performance. *Language Testing*, 23, 269–289.
- Chesher, T., Slatyer, H., Doubine, V., Jaric, L., & Lazzari, R. (2003). Community-based interpreting: The interpreters' perspective. In L. Brunette, G., Bastin, I., Hemlin, & H. Clarke (Eds.), *The Critical Link 3: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 273–291). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Clifford, A. (2005) Putting the exam to the test: Psychometric validation and interpreter certification. *Interpreting*, 7(1), 97–131.
- Corsellis, A. (2008) *Public service interpreting: The first steps*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Department of Human Services (DHS), State Government of Victoria. (2009). *Health translations directory*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/>
- Eyckmans, J., Anckaert, P., & Segers, W. (2009). The perks of norm-referenced translation evaluation. In C. Angelelli & H. Jacobson (Eds.), *Testing and assessment in translation and interpreting studies* (pp. 73–94). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Gentile, A., Ozolins, U., & Vasilakakos, M. (1996). *Liaison interpreting*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press.
- Gerver, D. Longley, P., Long, J., & Lambert, S. (1989). Selection tests for trainee conference interpreters. *Meta*, 34, 724–735.
- Hale, S. (2007). *Community interpreting*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1997). *The translator as communicator*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Lambert, S. (1991). Aptitude testing for simultaneous interpretation at the University of Ottawa. *Meta*, 34, 586–594.
- Lascar, E. (1997). Accreditation in Australia. An alternative means. In S. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, & D. Steyn, D. (Eds.), *The Critical Link: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 119–130). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Lee, J. (2008). Rating scales for interpreter performance assessment. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*. 2(2), 165–184.
- Lotriet, A. (2002) Can short interpreter training be effective? The South African truth and reconciliation commission experience. In E. Hung (Ed.), *Teaching translation and interpreting 4* (pp. 83–98). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins
- Michael, S., & Cocchini, M. (1997) Training college students as community interpreters. In S. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, & D. Steyn (Eds.), *The Critical Link: Intepreters in the community* (pp. 237–248). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Mikkelson, H., & Mintz, H. (1997). Orientation workshops for interpreters of all languages: How to strike a balance between the ideal world and reality. In S. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, and D. Steyn (Eds.), *The Critical Link: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 55–64). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Moser-Mercer, B. (1985). Screening potential interpreters. *Meta*, 30, 97–100.
- Niska, H. (2005). Training interpreters: Programmes, curricula, practices. In M. Tennent (Ed.), *Training for the new millennium: Pedagogies for translation and interpreting* (pp. 35–64). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Hlavac et al.

- Penney, C., & Sammons, S. (1997). Training the community interpreter: The Nunavut Arctic College experience. In S. Carr, R. Roberts, A. Dufour, & D. Steyn, D. (Eds.), *The Critical Link: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 65–76). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Pippa, S., & Russo, M. (2002). Aptitude for conference interpreting: A proposal for a testing methodology based on paraphrase. In G. Garzone & M. Viezzi (Eds.), *Interpreting in the 21st century: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 245–256). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Pöchhacker, F. (2004). *Introducing interpreting studies*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Quinn, T. (1993). The competency movement, applied linguistics and language teaching: Some reflections and suggestions for a possible research agenda. *Melbourne Papers in Language Testing*, 2(2), 55–87.
- Roberts, R. (2000) Interpreter assessment tools for different settings. In R. Roberts, S. Carr, D. Abraham, & A. Dufour (Eds.) *The Critical Link 2: Interpreters in the community*. (pp. 103–120). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Spanish-translation-help.com (n.d.). *How to become an interpreter*. Retrieved from <http://www.spanish-translation-help.com/how-to-become-an-interpreter.html>
- Straker, J., & Watts, H. (2003) Interpreter training for students from refugee backgrounds. In L. Brunette, G., Bastin, I. Hemlin, & H. Clarke (Eds.), *The Critical Link 3: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 163–176). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Timarová, Š., & Ungoed-Thomas, H. (2008). Admission testing for interpreting courses. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 2, 29–46.
- Turner, B., Lai, M. & Huang, N. (2010). Error deduction and descriptors: A comparison of two methods of translation test assessment. *Translation and Interpreting*, 2(1), 11–23.
- Valero Garcés, C. (2003). Responding to communication needs: Current issues and challenges in community interpreting and translating in Spain. In L. Brunette, G., Bastin, I., Hemlin, & H. Clarke (Eds.), *The Critical Link 3: Interpreters in the community* (pp. 177–192). Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Walters, F. S. (2007). A conversation-analytic hermeneutic rating protocol to assess L2 oral pragmatic competence. *Language Testing*, 24, 155–183.
- Wylie, E., & Ingram, D. (1999). *International second language proficiency ratings*. Brisbane, Australia: Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages, Griffith University.

Intake Tests for a Short Interpreter-Training Course

Appendix

Information flyer from the Victorian Multicultural Commission for regional interpreter training

VICTORIAN
multicultural
commission

GPO Box 4698, Melbourne VIC 3001
T. 03 9651 0651
F. 03 9651 0612
www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

REGIONAL INTERPRETER SKILLS 2010 TRAINING COURSE

GEELONG

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN INTERPRETING?
THIS COURSE COULD BE THE FIRST STEP TO AN
EXCITING CAREER IN INTERPRETING

STUDY TO BECOME AN INTERPRETER

The Victorian Multicultural Commission is offering Victorians in the regional areas the opportunity to study the basic skills of interpreting and gain a snap-shot of the language services industry through the 2010 Regional Interpreter Skills Course.

WHAT IS AN INTERPRETER?

An interpreter is a person who transfers meaning from one language into another to help people who speak different languages to communicate.

STUDY THE BASIC SKILLS OF INTERPRETING

Successful applicants will undertake a short course which will introduce the basic techniques and skills of interpreting.

Priority languages include:

Acholi	Amharic	Arabic (Sudanese)	Bari	Burmese
Chaldean	Creole	Dari	Dinka	Dzhongka
Eastern Kaya	Ewe	Falam (Chin)	Fanti	Fula
Fur	Gan	Haka (Chin)	Hazaragi	Hmong
Ikbo	Kachin	Kakwa	Kannadai	Karen
Khmer	Kikuyu	Kingoni	Kinyarwanda	Kirundi
Kono	Kpelle	Krio	Kuku	Kurdish (Kurmanji)
Kurdish (Sorani)	Lao	Libenian Pidgin	Lingala	Lisu
Loko	Luo	Madi	Mandingo	Mara (Chin)
Maru	Mende	Mina	Mizo (Chin)	Moru
Nepali	Nuer	Oromo	Pojulu	Rohingya
Sinhalese	Siyim	Sukuma	Susu	Swahili
Tamil	Temne	Tidim (Chin)	Tigre	Tigrinya
Tshiluba	Twi	Uighur	Uzbek	Watchi
Yalunka	Zande	Zomi (Chin)	Zoriot (Chin)	

WHAT LANGUAGES DO I NEED?

The Regional Interpreter Skills Course is not a language specific course. If you are proficient in English and any of the target Languages Other than English (LOTE) you are eligible to apply.

The priority languages for the program are languages which are in recognised by the Victorian Government as being in short supply for interpreting services.

Speakers of other languages are encouraged to apply and will be considered if places are available. Speakers of the nominated languages (below) will be prioritised.