

Technical Committee 2012 Annual Report

*Consortium for
Language Access in the Courts*

April 2012

Voting Members

Chair, Emy López (CO)

Jacque Ring (CA)

Bruno Romero (OH)

Katrin Johnson (WA)

Agustín de la Mora (Professional Member)

Interested Members

Brenda Carrasquillo (NJ)

Pam Sánchez (NM)

Andrea Krlickova (NV)

Sridevi Gadiraju (NY)

Patricia Anda (OR)

Osvaldo Avilés (PA)

Consultant

Robert Joe Lee

Consortium Staff

Wanda Romberger

Interpreter testing is at the core of the Consortium's mission. Providing valid and reliable test inventory, guiding member states in the use of the available testing tools, and pursuing the most efficient and cost effective methods of examination delivery are the charges of the Technical Committee.

The Technical Committee has continued to enjoy the invaluable support and guidance of Wanda Romberger, who serves as staff. Wanda provides the expertise, history and perspective that are greatly needed as the Committee addresses testing issues and concerns, and as it creates testing resources for member states. The Committee is truly grateful for her leadership.

Meetings

Members of the Technical Committee meet by teleconference once a month to work on testing issues of importance to Consortium member states. Throughout the last year several subcommittees were formed to research and provide recommendations to the committee at-large on specific subjects, including the areas of technology, testing for interpreters working in languages for which no certification exam exists, bilingual employee testing, test development policy and additional standards for raters.

Once a year voting members meet at a face-to-face meeting to discuss in depth those issues and projects which are critical to the charges of the Committee. The Committee has chosen to wait until later this year to hold its face-to-face meeting.

Examination Maintenance

Based on exam maintenance needs that were identified through rating, testing activities, rater calibration events, and test construction standards compliance auditing, the Committee requested that the 2011 Budget place priority on oral test maintenance. These activities are a vital aspect to all valid and reliable test instruments.

The Committee prioritized the exams needing revision. The following exams were prioritized for review and revision: Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean and Vietnamese. Robert Joe Lee, former Interpreter Program Manager for the state of New Jersey and Chair of the Technical Committee for 13 years, was contracted to oversee the oral examination maintenance project.

In the last year the following test maintenance has been completed:

Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

Completed

- Recruitment of experts
- Audit of all scripts and recordings in accordance with the Test Construction Manual
- Revision of sight, consecutive and simultaneous scripts
- Revision of the manual "Administering Arabic Court Interpreting Credentialing Exams"

To complete in 2012

- Editorial review of scripts
- Legal review of exam scripts
- Production of exam recording
- Completion of revised scoring dictionary

Levantine Colloquial Arabic

Completed

- Recruitment and training of experts
- Creation of new base text, adaptation of base text to bilingual text, selection of scoring units and formation of scoring unit dictionary
- Audit in accordance with the Test Construction Manual
- Revision of the manual "Administering Arabic Court Interpreting Credentialing Exams"
- Completion of new scoring dictionary

To complete in 2012

- Legal review of exam script
- Final proofreading of script and scoring dictionary
- Production of exam recording

Cantonese

Completed

- Recruitment of experts
- Methodology for word count developed
- Audit in accordance with the Test Construction Manual

To complete in 2012

- Development of framework for testing Chinese languages
- Commence maintenance work

Korean

Completed

- Recruitment of experts
- Audit of all scripts and recordings in accordance with the Test Construction Manual
- Development of methodology for counting Korean words
- Revision of sight and simultaneous scripts
- Initial revision of scoring dictionary for the sight section

To complete in 2012

- Editorial review of scripts
- Revision of the consecutive script
- Additional audit of all scripts in accordance with Test Construction Manual
- Legal review of exam scripts
- Completion of revised scoring dictionary
- Production of exam recording

Mandarin

Completed

- Recruitment of experts
- Methodology for word count

To complete in 2012

- Development of framework for testing Chinese languages
- Commence maintenance work

Vietnamese 2

Completed

- Recruitment of experts
- Development of methodology for counting Korean words
- Audit of all scripts and recordings in accordance with the Test Construction Manual

To complete in 2012

- Revision of sight, consecutive and simultaneous scripts
- Editorial review of scripts
- Legal review of exam scripts
- Production of exam recording
- Completion of revised scoring dictionary

Rater Recruitment

In early 2012 Robert Joe Lee and Agustín de la Mora assisted staff with the recruitment of all but one of the potential raters who would later attend the Rater Calibration Training Event held in Williamsburg, VA in late February. The following steps were taken in the recruitment process:

1. Prepare a notice of recruitment to include what the work entails, who one would work with, rate of compensation, and how to apply.
2. Compile direct recruitment list: This involves the following:
 - (a) obtain names and e-mail addresses of all eligible persons who can be identified as possible experts for a given language on publicly available websites (AIIC, ATA, NAJIT, TAALS, and state judiciaries with court interpreter rosters);
 - (b) ask program managers in states that have large populations of speakers of a given language if they have anyone other than those on their roster (if applicable) to recommend;
 - (c) contact interpreter coordinators at U.S. District Courts in areas with large numbers of speakers of the given language, or large numbers of cases interpreted for that language;
 - (d) contact key persons who have made good, reliable referrals in the past;
 - (e) do on-line searches for experts in the language (e.g., professors at universities who teach the language or are in linguistics departments); and,
 - (f) obtain any referrals Consortium staff may have accumulated.
3. Compile indirect recruitment list: This involves searching for groups to which the recruitment notice can be sent with a request for them to pass it on, or who might provide names and contact information for people to whom the notice can be sent:
 - (a) Bar associations directly or indirectly affiliated with the language;
 - (b) attorneys whose names appear in an on-line search (lawyer + language);
 - (c) social service organizations or other professional associations specializing in or identified with the ethnic/linguistic group;
 - (d) groups that specialize in language policy work (Association of Applied Linguistics, Center for Advanced Study of Language and National Foreign Language Center at the U. of Maryland, Center for Applied Linguistics, Linguistics Society of America, Modern Language Association, and the Translation and Interpretation Committee of the Interagency Language

Roundtable [in D.C.]). Some of these have bulletin boards or other means of posting mini-announcements which then give the search a very broad outreach.

4. Distribute the announcement.
5. Compile applications.
6. Evaluate applications and select subset from which applicants will be selected for interviews.
7. Select applicants to be interviewed.
8. Schedule interviews.
9. Finalize interview questions and format.
10. Conduct interviews.
11. Evaluate and select candidates to offer the work to.
12. Call and finalize offer to selected candidate(s).
13. Notify staff, copy to Chair of TC, of the person(s) selected.
14. Contact all candidates who were not selected.
15. Notify staff and Chair of the TC regarding applicants who may be particularly good candidates for future recruitments (if any).
16. Send complete set of recruitment materials to staff for Consortium's records.

Some lessons learned from this process are the following.

1. Recruitment should be spread out over 2-3 months, if not longer. With more time, the word can reach a broader audience and increase the odds of finding solid people, especially for language groups that are comparatively small in number.
2. All future raters and test developers should undergo the scrutiny inherent to this process.
3. This process builds a lot of confidence in the Consortium, but also raises a lot of awareness in the LEP public about the Consortium.

The languages represented by raters recruited through this first concerted effort are identified on page 9 of this report.

Rater Calibration & Training

In 2009, the Technical Committee made a commitment to focus on the recruitment of new raters in languages for which there are not sufficient numbers of raters and on training and recalibration of existing raters, most of whom had not had any refresher training in several years.

To “calibrate” is to measure precisely against a standard; during new rater calibration, raters are instructed how to use the identified scoring units and the classification of those scoring units to precisely rate oral examinations. The goal of recalibrating existing raters is to remind them of the importance of every rater rating every examination in the same way, using the same standards of measurement.

The faculty that was recruited to present the sessions included:

- Robert Joe Lee, former manager of the language access program in New Jersey (1985 through 2008), one of the founders of the Consortium, and a principal architect of its testing program. Robert Joe continues to serve the Consortium as a subject matter expert and researcher.
- Agustin de la Mora, a nationally known consultant and trainer who has assisted many state court administrative offices to develop a language access program, conducted orientations and other training for interpreters, and is regularly a featured speaker for several national organizations. Agustin serves in various capacities to help the Consortium fulfill its mission, as a lead Spanish rater, rater supervisor for all languages, and test developer.
- Patricia Michelsen-King, a nationally known consultant who has trained interpreters in 32 states, works actively as an interpreter and translator, and has qualified as an expert witness in more than 25 court cases. Patricia is a regular consultant for the Consortium, serving as a subject matter expert, test writer, rater, and rater supervisor.

Two NCSC staff, Wanda Romberger and Carola Green, organize the rater calibration/training sessions, teach some of the sections, and are on site to help with the presentations and to serve as a rater supervisors. In addition, the Chair of the Consortium’s Technical Committee, Emy López, often attends the events to assist in the presentation of the agenda and serve as a rater supervisor.

In 2012, Dr. Carolyn J. Kinney, former Director of the Federal Court Interpreting Program, joined the faculty and was asked to perform evaluations of the various presentations and speakers with the goal of helping to improve the overall conduct and effectiveness of the sessions.

The agenda that was developed in 2009 for the Consortium’s first rater calibration/recalibration event was roughly as follows:

Day 1

- Welcome and introduction of the faculty and instructors.
- Overview of expectations, description of an excellent rater, and review of a test script and scoring dictionary.
- Introduction of attendees.
- Overview of scoring units and the methodology used in the development of examinations.
- Direction for raters to decide whether renditions of scoring units are acceptable or unacceptable; review of distribution of scoring units, categories, and meaning of categories.
- Direction for raters to learn how to research available resources when necessary to make the determination of acceptability or unacceptability of a rendition.
- Review of requirements to become a rater, disclosure forms, processes, and security requirements. Describe general process when contacted by a program manager directly as opposed to NCSC.
- Review of the mechanics of rating – how to mark a script, make notes, progress through an exam efficiently and effectively.
- Short review of paperwork – contractor or temporary off-premise employee of the NCSC; working for NCSC, reporting time, online listing of raters and contact inform; shipping information, and uploading and downloading of materials from a web site.

Days 2 and 3

- Raters break out into language groups and begin to “rate” exams after an initial team-building exercise. The first examination is considered a practice exam and, if it is an actual exam to be rated, will be rotated back for rating at the end of the week.
- A rater supervisor is assigned to every language group. The supervisor ensures proper set-up of the room, enforces the proper mechanics of rating, makes sure raters keep distinct the various scoring unit categories, provides reminders of rules set during plenary, etc.

To date, four events have been hosted:

The first rater calibration/training was held in Des Moines, Iowa and John Goerdt, Deputy State Court Administrator served as host, making plenary and break-out rooms, and refreshments available. The following were represented:

October 2009

Language	Existing Raters	New Raters
Arabic	2	
Korean	2	2
Laotian	2	
Mandarin/Cantonese	1	
Vietnamese		2

In 2010, California, as a result of an in-depth study of the functional equivalence of the Consortium and California oral exams, began administering the Consortium's oral exam forms. Prometric administers California's interpreter testing program and worked closely with Consortium staff to implement the new procedures on behalf of California. In 2011, Prometric collaborated with Consortium staff to host two rater calibration/training sessions in San Francisco. For each of those events, Jacquie Ring, on behalf of the California Court Interpreters Program, served as hostess and provided internet access, plenary and breakout rooms, and morning and afternoon coffee and other refreshments. The following were represented at those events (January and July 2011, respectively):

January 2011

Language	Sponsor	Existing Rater	New Rater (new to the Consortium)
Cantonese/ Mandarin	Prometric		1
Mandarin	Consortium		2
Korean	Prometric	1	1
Russian	Prometric		2
Russian	Consortium	2	
Spanish	Prometric		7
Spanish	Consortium		5
Vietnamese	Prometric		2

July 2011

Language	Sponsor	Existing Rater	New Rater (new to the Consortium)
Armenian	Prometric		3
Khmer	Prometric		3
Mandarin	Prometric		1
Mandarin	Consortium	1	1
Tagalog	Prometric		3
Punjabi*	Consortium		1

*Three Punjabi raters attended and completed rater training; however, following training, there were some issues that led to the new exam being substantially revised and two raters not being added to the active list. Later, an additional Punjabi rater was trained who revised the exam and rated outstanding examinations.

The last rater calibration/training event was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, and hosted by the National Center for State Courts, which provided plenary and breakout rooms, internet access, and morning and afternoon coffee and other refreshments. The following were represented at that event:

February 2012

Language	Existing Raters	New Raters
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian		4
Cantonese/Mandarin		1
Haitian Creole		2
Hmong		2
Russian		2
Somali	2	2
Vietnamese	1	1

Many new raters have been added to the Consortium's list of resources, but over 20 additional raters remain who must be provided the training. The Technical Committee and staff concentrated first on the languages for which few raters were available and Prometric concentrated on raters for the new examinations developed by California in 2010. It is believed that at least two additional rater training sessions will be necessary in order for all existing raters to have undergone the initial face-to-face training and instruction.

Manuals and Handbooks

Through the work of the Committee, the following documents have been edited to continue to clearly address the current needs of the end user:

1. **Test Construction Manual.** The TCM frames the Consortium’s process of developing and maintaining valid and reliable oral performance examinations that member jurisdictions can use to credential all persons who wish to become court interpreters, regardless of when or where they take the examination. The TCM provides a structure for the oral examination development process to ensure that all tests have similar levels of difficulty, both for all test versions within the same language and across all languages.
2. **Test Writing Handbook.** The TWH establishes a solid foundation for the development and rating of oral examinations by:
 - a. Providing a reference for those staff and test writers who identify and edit base texts from which oral performance examinations are developed;
 - b. Giving test writers a structure for selecting an appropriate range of linguistic phenomena that should be tested in a manner that is consistent; and
 - c. Helping raters fully understand what the testing purpose is for each type of scoring unit so that tests are graded appropriately and in a reliable manner across raters and rating teams.
3. **Test Rating Manual.** The TRM is written for raters of oral examinations developed by the Consortium and for program managers who enter into contracts with such raters. It describes the various classifications of raters, addresses potential conflicts of interest for raters, and discusses rating practices, continuing education, and the process for disqualification of raters.
4. **Program Manager’s Manual.** References to the above-mentioned documents as well as the incorporation of new testing materials and delivery methods will be incorporated into a new and improved Program Manager’s Manual. Work on the PMM has begun and will hopefully be completed and made available to the membership this calendar year.

5. **Guidelines for Transitioning to Digital Recording of Oral Examination Performances.** The Technical Committee encourages members to transition from tape recorders and cassette tapes to digital recorders as soon as possible, with the ultimate goal of transitioning to digital recording and the secure online transmission of all test materials (including administration and rating materials and reports to staff) by January 2012.¹

This transition will not only reduce costs to the Consortium and its members, but it will also improve the sound quality of candidates' recordings, enhance the security of exam materials, and lead to easier evaluation of examination performances. While some members have already made this recording transition, these guidelines were developed to assist all members to move from tape recorders and cassette tapes to digital recording.

6. **Oral Examination Administration Manuals**, including the Manuals for the *Whole Exam*, *Simultaneous Only* and *Abbreviated Exam* were revised. These manuals include guidance on issues of security, equipment and supplies, testing rooms, specific administration instructions, guidelines for transitioning to digital recordings, and troubleshooting for test proctors.

All manuals can be found on the Consortium's website at <http://www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/State-Interpreter-Certification/Resources-for-Interpreter-Program-Managers.aspx>. As manuals continue to be revised and approved by the Committee they will be distributed to the membership and made available on the Consortium's website.

Policy for the Development and Modification of Test Inventory

The Technical Committee has finalized the guidance document *Policy for the Development and Modification of Test Inventory* to assist the Technical Committee in making budgetary justifications regarding the ongoing, intermittent, and recurring activities of development and modification of Consortium oral exams.

In determining budget allocations for developing and modifying exams, the Consortium must consider the national needs for the following essential components:

- Developing exams in new languages;
- Developing new versions of exams in languages for which there is already one or more exam; and

¹ The NCSC has developed, on behalf of the Consortium, a SharePoint secure web site, which is currently being tested and piloted. It is expected that program managers will access all the materials necessary for the administration and rating of oral and written examinations from this site. In addition, program managers who contract directly with raters can make rating materials, including recorded examinee performances, available to the raters electronically. Raters can then upload the test scripts and results forms to the site.

- Modifying existing exams based on feedback loops, psychometric assessments, and regular reviews.

Budget allocations for these competing interests must be based on objective data, the needs of the national membership, and available funds. This is the basis on which the Technical Committee will submit its proposed budget at the intervals indicated by the Executive Committee.

Research on Secure File Transfer Protocol Site for Transfer of Confidential Materials

A subcommittee dedicated to issues of technology researched business needs and viewed demonstrations of secure sites offering secure transfer options. In the midst of these activities the NCSC's IT department expressed a renewed commitment to the SharePoint site that was initiated in 2011. The subcommittee has placed its activities on hold and once a site has been established by NCSC, will instead assist in the writing and reviewing of comprehensive instructions for the users of the site. Committee members will assist in the external testing of the site prior to its release to all program managers.

Oral Exam Development Activities

Over the last year and a half, California in partnership with the Consortium developed full bilingual oral interpreting exams in the following languages: Eastern Armenian, Farsi, Punjabi, Khmer, and Tagalog. Additionally, new exam versions have been developed in Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese and two new versions have been developed in Spanish.

It is anticipated that Khmer, Eastern Armenian, Korean 3, Mandarin and Tagalog will be available to the full membership in spring 2012. Spanish 6 and 7, Vietnamese 3, Punjabi, and Farsi should be made available to the full membership later in 2012.

Priorities of the Committee into the Future

The Committee has identified the following areas as needs that must continue into the future as they are of vital concern to the membership:

1. Rater management, including development of additional standards, recruitment and training through calibration events and periodic refresher training events;
2. Oral examination auditing and maintenance;
3. Maintenance of the Written Exam, as well s the development of alternate testing methods;
4. Research and recommendations on qualifying interpreters in languages for which there is no exam;
5. Research and recommendations on bilingual staff evaluation and training;
6. Revisions to manuals.