Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams

Melissa Lou Wallace
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Melissa Wallace
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Directed by Dr. Cynthia Giambruno
Department of Translation and Interpreting

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ABSTRACT

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams

Performance assessment in the realm of interpreting studies is vitally important not only as pertains to the screening of applicants for entry into educational programs, providing feedback for students, or testing their knowledge and skills at the end of a course of study, but most germane to this dissertation, it is essential for qualifying exams such as the certification exams used in the field of court interpreting. In the United States, with 44 out of 50 states holding membership in the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, the court interpreting certification exam administered by this entity holds absolute primacy and is the most important gatekeeper to the profession.

This study seeks to discern whether or not success in one mode of interpreting on Consortium oral certification exams could potentially indicate performance aptitude for the other two modes. To answer this question, a three-pronged approach was used. First, recent scholarship which examines the three modes of interpreting was examined, considering case studies and theoretical models in order to break down each mode into discrete domains of skills and abilities which may or may not predict success on the Consortium certification exam. Following the discussion of relevant theory, a study was carried out during which over 36% of court interpreters in one U.S. state in the Spanish / English language pair at three levels of expertise (as evidenced by differentiated classifications on the state’s official roster of interpreters) articulated their perceptions of the three modes of interpreting in relation to their experiences in testing and
training, their use of the three modes while practicing in court, and perceived levels of difficulty of each mode. The perception study is significant because of its scope and breadth (due to the number of respondents and the amount of data generated), and because it is unique: nothing similar has been done previously, and similar studies have not been replicated on any scale. Most tellingly, practicing professionals’ perceptions did not wholly align with the outcomes one would expect based on theory, making the posing of questions of aptitude on an empirical level more urgent.

Having established a clear need to put theory and perception to the test, officials from the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts became involved in the project by providing almost 6,000 raw exam scores. This enormous Consortium data set spans some fifteen years and consists of the oral exam scores of all member states in the Spanish / English language pair. In sum, the present study teases out the ambiguities that arise upon examining practicing professionals’ perceptions of the three modes as indicators of aptitude in light of current theory, and also with those that arise in comparison with the reality of empirical evidence. By looking candidly both at qualities of interpreters and their own perceptions of their skills and performance, in addition to turning a scrutinizing eye toward the most-used certification exam for court interpreters in the United States, implications of a bifurcated testing model which posits the simultaneous mode as an indicator of aptitude on the Consortium exam are examined statistically. With substantial data supporting the relationship between success in the simultaneous mode and overall success on the Consortium certification exam, the implementation of a bifurcated model could have a very real impact on the
way the Consortium exam is administered, especially for languages of lesser diffusion for which full versions of oral exams do not yet exist.
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0. RESUMEN DEL TRABAJO DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN CASTELLANO

0.1 Introducción general

Este proyecto nace como respuesta a la necesidad de realizar investigaciones críticas y empíricas en el campo de los estudios de la interpretación, sobre todo en lo que respecta a la evaluación del desempeño en el ámbito de los exámenes de certificación que actúan como puertas de acceso a la profesión. El estudio se beneficia de las aportaciones de los estudios de la comunicación, los estudios de traducción, la pragmática, la lingüística, la psicología cognitiva, la psicolingüística y la teoría de las pruebas (testing theory). Este es un proyecto multidisciplinar, como lo son la traducción y la interpretación, que representa la culminación de unas investigaciones cuantitativas y cualitativas, combinando teoría, percepciones de los practicantes y datos empíricos. Los exámenes orales que se utilizan para comprobar que un candidato tenga las destrezas mínimas para trabajar en los tribunales estadounidenses consisten en cuatro pruebas ejercicios: interpretación consecutiva, interpretación simultánea y dos ejercicios de traducción a la vista. Este estudio pretende descubrir si la capacidad de interpretar en uno de los tres modos condiciona o determina la capacidad de interpretar en los otros modos de interpretación.

Para la presente investigación, la totalidad de los datos considerados proviene directamente de las pruebas orales de certificación elaboradas, administradas y evaluadas por el Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (Consortio para el Acceso Lingüístico en los Tribunales). Sin embargo, el aislamiento de un modo predictor fiable tiene amplias implicaciones para una variedad de organismos de certificación y
situaciones de evaluación debido a que el proceso de los exámenes del Consorcio puede compararse a procesos similares, tanto en los Estados Unidos como en otros países, pues se basa en la utilización de unas pruebas que miden la capacidad de los candidatos en los tres modos de interpretación.

El presente estudio y sus resultados se basan en un enfoque tridimensional. En primer lugar, se examina el marco teórico de las tres modalidades de la interpretación, tratando de utilizar estudios de caso y modelos teóricos para definir e identificar las destrezas que contribuyen a un rendimiento con éxito en cada modalidad en el examen de certificación del Consorcio. Después de esta primera parte teórica, se exponen los resultados de un estudio llevado a cabo en Wisconsin, un estado que bien se puede considerar representativo de los Estados Unidos y a su vez de los estados miembros del Consorcio. En dicho estudio más del 36% de los intérpretes jurídicos (inglés/español) de la lista oficial mantenida por el estado articuló su percepción de las tres modalidades en relación con: 1) sus conocimientos previos antes de emprender el proceso de certificación, 2) la capacitación y los exámenes de certificación y 3) el ejercicio profesional en los tribunales. El estudio es importante gracias al elevado número de encuestados y la cantidad de datos generados lo que le otorga un gran alcance y amplitud. Es también único porque no se ha hecho nada comparable anteriormente y tampoco este tipo de estudio ha sido replicado a menor escala. Lo más revelador es que la percepción de los profesionales que ejercen como intérpretes jurídicos no se alinea con los resultados que cabrían esperar si se contemplara únicamente el marco teórico, por lo que el planteamiento de cuestiones del rendimiento exitoso a nivel empírico se hace más urgente.
Al mismo tiempo, los resultados de este estudio ponen de relieve la primacía de los exámenes del Consorcio como el vehículo más importante mediante el cual los intérpretes logran la certificación en el estado de Wisconsin, donde se realizó el estudio, así como a nivel nacional. En los Estados Unidos, 44 de los 50 estados son miembros permanentes del Consorcio, un hecho que añade más importancia a este estudio por las repercusiones que puede tener en numerosos estados que hacen uso de este proceso de certificación. Por lo tanto, debemos examinar los exámenes del Consorcio críticamente a través de la lente de la teoría de las pruebas con el fin de valorar si realmente son o no son de verdad exámenes (1) basados en el rendimiento (performance-based), (2) con referencias de criterio (criterion-referenced), (3) válidos y (4) fiables.

La tercera parte de este proyecto es eminentemente empírica. Teniendo como punto de partida unos resultados, en principio un tanto contradictorios, producto del análisis de los marcos teóricos y las percepciones de los practicantes, se procede a continuación al estudio minucioso de un conjunto importante de datos, unas 6.000 calificaciones en el par lingüístico inglés/español, con el objetivo de identificar un modo predictor de interpretación que sirva para identificar postulantes a la certificación con el potencial de aprobar las pruebas en los tres modos de interpretación. En consecuencia, la combinación de las construcciones teóricas de aptitud interpretativa, las percepciones de los profesionales en ejercicio y los datos de varios estudios de caso así como los que fueron generados a partir de una base de datos enorme del Consorcio se contemplan en su totalidad con el fin de hacer inferencias acerca de si el rendimiento con éxito en un modo de interpretación puede aportar información relevante sobre el rendimiento en los otros dos modos.
0.2 Metodología, hipótesis, y estructura de la tesis

En relación a lo anteriormente expuesto, el presente trabajo tiene el objetivo de contribuir al campo de los estudios de interpretación al dar respuestas a las siguientes preguntas de investigación:

1. ¿Cómo puede delimitarse un perfil de los intérpretes jurídicos que ya ejercen como tal a partir del análisis de encuestas realizadas a dichos intérpretes? ¿Qué relevancia tendría dicho perfil? ¿Puede establecerse algún paralelismo entre las características demográficas básicas y el estatus de los intérpretes en la lista oficial de intérpretes jurídicos del estado? ¿Se puede predecir que un cierto “tipo” de intérprete cuenta con mayor probabilidad de tener éxito en el proceso de certificación?

2. Al llevar a cabo un estudio minucioso sobre las impresiones de un conjunto de intérpretes profesionales y semi-profesionales, ¿qué modos de interpretación se identifican como los más difíciles? Y, ¿qué relación existe entre estas impresiones con los resultados alcanzados en el examen de certificación del Consorcio?

3. ¿Qué modos de interpretación consideran estos intérpretes los más cruciales a la hora de recibir algún tipo de formación académica para superar el examen oral en el proceso de certificación del Consorcio y al mismo tiempo tener un mejor desempeño profesional en sus puestos de trabajo?

4. ¿Son los exámenes del Consorcio válidos, fiables y viables?
5. Al clasificar los tres modos de interpretación en dominios distintos de conocimientos, destrezas y habilidades (*knowledge, skills and abilities*), teniendo como marco de referencia las líneas de investigación actuales, ¿qué conclusiones se pueden extraer sobre las razones del fracaso en las pruebas orales del proceso de certificación en relación con los modos que pueden o que no pueden desempeñar con éxito los candidatos?

6. ¿Pueden los diversos modos de interpretación dividirse en “construcciones latentes” o conjuntos de destrezas inherentes que pueden explicar el éxito o el fracaso en el desempeño de un modo de interpretación determinado?

7. ¿Hay alguna correlación entre el éxito en uno de los modos de interpretación en los exámenes de certificación y el éxito en los demás modos? Si así fuera:
   a. ¿cómo podría la identificación y el aislamiento de este modo de interpretación determinado influir en la predicción, la identificación, la selección y/o la contratación de intérpretes potencialmente competentes para iniciar el proceso de formación y certificación?
   b. ¿cómo podría influir en la formación de intérpretes jurídicos?
   c. ¿cómo podría ayudar en la posible revisión o modificación de los exámenes diseñados y gestionados por el Consorcio?

8. Un posible planteamiento metodológico para analizar los exámenes del proceso de certificación sería utilizar el llamado método bifurcado, es decir, realizar los exámenes de certificación en dos fases, consistiendo la primera fase eliminatoria...
en la superación del modo de interpretación predictivo (por ejemplo, el ejercicio simultáneo). ¿Sería este método bifurcado válido, fiable y viable?

Este estudio conlleva una investigación tanto conceptual como empírica ya que consiste en una combinación de ideas y datos. Esta combinación de investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa representa la contemplación integral de unas construcciones teóricas de la competencia interpretativa junto con los resultados de un amplio estudio basado en una encuesta que incluía preguntas que eran de naturaleza a la vez cuantitativa y cualitativa. La utilización de estas herramientas de investigación ha sido fructífera para generar un perfil de los intérpretes jurídicos profesionales y semi-profesionales en la lista oficial del lugar de estudio, así como para definir sus percepciones y experiencias con los tres modos de interpretación en una variedad de contextos (de evaluación, de formación y profesionales).

El trabajo de investigación en sí, dedicado a la búsqueda de factores predictores de éxito en los exámenes orales de certificación, constará de seis partes o capítulos. El primer capítulo presenta un panorama general del proyecto, plantea preguntas específicas de investigación, y define el alcance del proyecto y la clasificación de la investigación. Además, el primer capítulo explica el significado y la justificación de nuevas incursiones en los estudios empíricos en relación específica a las pruebas de certificación para los intérpretes jurídicos en los Estados Unidos. Así mismo, incluye terminología y conceptos básicos para el lugar del estudio y para la teoría de las pruebas (testing theory), describe la organización de la tesis y revela la motivación de la autora para emprender el proyecto.
El segundo capítulo analiza los marcos teóricos que contemplan los tres modos de interpretación como posibles modos de predicción del éxito. En este capítulo se delinean las funciones comunicativas, estratégicas y evaluadoras de los tres modos, las cuales a su vez se analizan en relación con la carga cognitiva, la retención de información y la profundidad del procesamiento. Se analiza una serie de estudios de caso y modelos teóricos para clasificar los tres modos de interpretación en dominios distintos de conocimientos, destrezas y habilidades que pudieran o no predecir el éxito en el examen de certificación del Consorcio.

El tercer capítulo se basa principalmente en un estudio realizado recientemente y de vital importancia para complementar el inventario teórico y el análisis empírico de una gran cantidad de datos. Titulado “Sight Translation in Wisconsin Courts: Towards a Refined Understanding of Sight Translation’s Relationship to Training and Testing”, el estudio se basó empíricamente en los resultados de una encuesta realizada a los intérpretes jurídicos de la lista oficial que mantiene el Tribunal Supremo de Wisconsin. Esta lista oficial consta de tres grupos: los certified han cumplido con todos los requisitos del estado y han aprobado las tres partes del examen oral; los provisional han aprobado los dos exámenes escritos pero no el oral; y los trainee han aprobado sólo uno de los dos examenes escritos. La encuesta mide y describe el uso de los tres modos de interpretación (con énfasis especial en la traducción a la vista) en los juzgados, así como la experiencia que han tenido estos intérpretes tanto en la formación como en las pruebas de certificación que contenían un apartado dedicado a la traducción a la vista. No existen investigaciones que examinen un grupo de estudio tan extenso como el aquí desarrollado. Un objetivo de la encuesta era utilizar la información obtenida para
construir un perfil del grupo de estudio, con el fin de establecer correlaciones entre el estatus de los participantes en la lista y otros factores como el género, la lengua materna, el nivel de estudios y la participación en organizaciones profesionales. El otro objetivo era examinar una serie de cuestiones relacionadas directamente con la traducción a la vista desde la perspectiva de este grupo de estudio con el fin de ilustrar su experiencia previa con la modalidad, su uso de ella durante el ejercicio profesional en los juzgados, sus opiniones sobre la traducción a la vista en comparación con la consecutiva y la simultánea y su formación. Se ha de mencionar que el estudio también explora las percepciones de los intérpretes sobre la interpretación simultánea y la consecutiva con mucho esmero.

Este estudio trata de las percepciones de los tres modos de interpretación y su relación con la formación y las pruebas de certificación. Sin embargo, basarse únicamente en los recuerdos e impresiones de los encuestados no nos da toda la información que quisiéramos. Por esta razón, la autora se puso en contacto con el Consorcio para solicitar información adicional relacionada con los exámenes al entender que más datos cuantitativos podrían ser de gran utilidad para poder completar el análisis. Carola Green, Coordinadora de los Servicios de Evaluación del National Center for State Courts, proporcionó una serie de datos que consiste en los resultados anónimos desde 1995 de todos los aspirantes que han hecho las tres partes orales a la vez en inglés/español. Las revelaciones del estudio llevado a cabo en Wisconsin son representativas de muchos estados del resto del país, con implicaciones que van mucho más allá de las fronteras de ese estado. Los indicadores de aptitud y competencia interpretativa revelados por los descriptores demográficos y de auto-identificación en el estudio representan un
complemento importante a los hallazgos acerca de los modos específicos como indicadores de aptitud en el examen de certificación del Consorcio.

Después de haber establecido una clara necesidad de poner a prueba tanto la teoría como la percepción, el cuarto capítulo considera importantes aspectos metodológicos del examen del Consorcio a través de la teoría de las pruebas, analizando así la fiabilidad y la validez de dichas pruebas, las condiciones en las que se desarrolla el examen y las versiones del mismo, los protocolos de calificación y otros aspectos de la mencionada *testing theory*, tales como la fiabilidad inter- e intra-correctora, la psicomotricidad, descripciones de las unidades de puntuación (*scoring units*), formación académica de los evaluadores, validez del constructo y la elaboración de rúbricas de calificación. El capítulo analiza también un modelo de pruebas bifurcado que postula el modo simultáneo como predictor de éxito en el examen del Consorcio y termina por revelar los resultados del análisis de las cerca de 6.000 puntuaciones anteriormente mencionadas.

El quinto capítulo consta de un análisis minucioso de los extensos datos del Consorcio, mientras que el sexto capítulo explora las implicaciones, la relevancia y la significancia de los resultados, a la vez que se trazan futuras líneas de investigación. Estos resultados prometen iluminar las pautas de rendimiento de los candidatos que se examinan en el par lingüístico inglés/español, y podrían tener muchas aplicaciones prácticas, como la identificación de una modalidad de interpretación como indicador de aptitud en el examen de certificación del Consorcio. El trabajo de investigación concluye con varios apéndices directamente relacionados con el estudio descrito en el tercer capítulo y con la calificación y el diseño de los exámenes del Consorcio. Asimismo se adjunta una
bibliografía que tiene como objetivo dar a conocer las fuentes que han alimentado y guiado el presente trabajo de investigación.

0.3 Resumen global de los resultados obtenidos

Los resultados del estudio provienen de un análisis teórico de las tres modalidades de la interpretación, en particular en el ámbito de las pruebas de acceso a programas de formación, de los resultados de la encuestada llevada a cabo en el estudio sobre los intérpretes jurídicos de Wisconsin y de una examinación extensa del gran conjunto de datos del Consorcio.

0.3.1 Resultados teóricos

Un detallado estudio del marco teórico de las tres modalidades de la interpretación ha generado los siguientes resultados:

- Existe un amplio consenso entre los investigadores acerca de exactamente qué habilidades se están asesorando en los exámenes de ingreso a programas de formación para intérpretes. Los evaluadores buscan dominios de destrezas específicas con el fin de identificar a los candidatos con el potencial de adquirir la habilidad de interpretar; los exámenes eliminatorios tienen como objetivo identificar a aquellos candidatos que ya poseen dichos dominios de destrezas y que pueden ponerlos inmediatamente al servicio de una situación interpretativa, ya sea en una situación de un examen o bien en un tribunal. Aunque los objetivos de un examen de aptitud para entrar en un curso de formación y un examen selectivo para conseguir una credencial profesional son diferentes, las investigaciones en el ámbito de uno pueden tener implicaciones

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
para el otro. Tanto los intérpretes novatos con aptitud como los intérpretes que ya están ejerciendo con éxito son aquellos que tienen un dominio completo de sus idiomas de trabajo, buena memoria y un alto nivel de estudios y de cultura general. Reaccionan rápidamente, se adaptan a cualquier situación y a todos los temas, además tienen un excelente poder de concentración, resistencia y tolerancia al estrés.

- **Existe un amplio solapamiento entre las modalidades de evaluación utilizadas por los programas de formación de intérpretes para evaluar las habilidades de los candidatos.** La mayoría incluye algún tipo de ejercicio caracterizado por la simultaneidad de escuchar y hablar a la vez como por ejemplo el *shadowing*, la paráfrasis o incluso la interpretación simultánea propiamente dicha. Generalmente, las pruebas incluyen pruebas de descubrimiento de errores, pruebas de comprensión en los que hay que rellenar espacios en blanco, pruebas de memoria, ejercicios de traducción a la vista y entrevistas orales.

- **Los interesados en la interpretación que provienen del mundo académico reconocen la necesidad de disponer de criterios específicos para identificar candidatos aptos y rechazar a los que no lo son, pero siguen expresando su descontento con las opciones disponibles.** Ya sea en contextos eliminatorios como los de certificación o bien dentro de un ámbito educativo con evaluación continua y formativa, los estudiosos y sus respectivas instituciones abogan por enfoques diferentes. Algunos estudios prometen caminos válidos en la selección de candidatos aptos para los programas de estudio al utilizar nuevos enfoques...
que se basan en la paráfrasis, la personalidad, el acceso rápido al léxico y otras mediciones de agilidad cognitiva. A pesar de que en principio todas estas contribuciones nos permitirán profundizar en el campo de las pruebas de aptitud, los investigadores siguen expresando su descontento con la falta de validez predictiva ofrecida por muchas modalidades de evaluación en dichas pruebas.

- **El debate sobre si los intérpretes “nacen o se hacen” sigue estando sorprendentemente vigente.** Dicho debate está todavía más presente en los estudios sobre interpretación simultánea. Hallazgos como los de Dillinger, quien demostró que una media de 8,5 años más de experiencia profesional sólo les dio a los intérpretes analizados una ventaja del 17% en la precisión en comparación con los bilingües no intérpretes analizados, son fascinantes y justifican estudios adicionales que exploren hasta qué punto las destrezas de un intérprete se adquieren mediante la capacitación formal o si bien se adquieren a través de la experiencia directa con la interpretación en sí.

- **La velocidad es importante.** Muchos estudios indican que los intérpretes no pueden trabajar con éxito sin tener la habilidad de acceder rápidamente a recursos léxicos en sus lenguas de trabajo y la habilidad de poder traducir rápidamente a nivel de frase, en especial en la lengua origen durante la interpretación consecutiva y simultánea. La afirmación de Dillinger, que la capacidad de procesamiento de un discurso o texto puede resultar ser más importante que la formación específica, plantea algunas preguntas provocadoras. Muchos estudios indican que los intérpretes más capacitados tienen la habilidad
de procesar información rápidamente, descodificándola y produciendo discursos en la lengua meta sin cambiar el sentido del discurso de la lengua origen, y todo esto con un gran nivel de espontaneidad y flexibilidad cognitiva así como lingüística. En general, muchos estudios hacen referencia clara a la velocidad en cuanto a la memoria, obtención de información, comprensión, análisis, procesamiento intelectual y la cognición.

- **Los estudiosos están de acuerdo sobre los rasgos disposicionales que deben poseer los intérpretes para tener éxito.** Diversas disciplinas, instituciones oficiales, programas de formación de intérpretes y los académicos que trabajan en estudios de interpretación están de acuerdo a la hora de buscar futuros intérpretes que presenten determinadas características como son la tolerancia al estrés, la resistencia, la versatilidad y la capacidad de adaptación. Se considera también que los “buenos intérpretes” deben de ser elocuentes y de mente abierta. En términos de personalidad, el fascinante estudio de Nicholson que se basó en el modelo de tipología de Myers-Briggs indicó que la mayoría de los intérpretes prefieren el análisis impersonal y lógico. En otras palabras, suelen ser “pensadores” y, curiosamente, suelen ser mucho más a menudo hombres en la población general y suelen ser mujeres entre la población de los intérpretes estudiados.

- **Los tres modos de interpretación se consideran fundamentales en los tres exámenes orales de certificación para los intérpretes jurídicos en los Estados Unidos.** De hecho, los tres principales exámenes (a nivel estatal, a nivel
federal, y por medio de la asociación profesional NAJIT) incluyen pruebas de traducción a la vista, interpretación consecutiva e interpretación simultánea.

- **Los teóricos consideran que la traducción a la vista es una modalidad compleja a nivel cognitivo.** Aunque a menudo se considera solamente un ejercicio pedagógico para iniciarse en las técnicas de interpretación consecutiva y simultánea, los docentes están de acuerdo que la traducción a la vista ayuda a los principiantes a reaccionar rápidamente y a mejorar su agilidad lingüística, sus reflejos de traducción y sus destrezas orales y de oratoria. Otros estudios realizados por teóricos como Angelelli, Viezzi y Agrifoglio muestran que la traducción a la vista es un buen indicador de la aptitud interpretativa en general, que tiene menores tasas de retención de información que los otros dos modos de interpretación y que la carga cognitiva de la traducción a la vista es igual a o superior a la de la interpretación simultánea. No obstante, existen muchas oportunidades para llevar a cabo más estudios sobre la traducción a la vista, especialmente a la luz de algunos de los hallazgos más sorprendentes y convincentes relacionados con su complejidad cognitiva.

- **La interpretación consecutiva es la modalidad menos contemplada en lo que se refiere a los constructos teóricos de aptitud y los exámenes que la miden.** De igual manera que la traducción a la vista, la interpretación consecutiva se menciona a menudo como precursora de la interpretación simultánea. Considerado como uno de los modos más importantes en el campo de la interpretación jurídica, estudios recientes sitúan la modalidad consecutiva en un punto intermedio entre la traducción a la vista y la simultánea en términos
de complejidad, aunque el modo consecutivo rara vez se menciona en los estudios relacionados estrictamente con la evaluación y la pruebas de aptitud.

- **Numerosos estudios postulan que el modo simultáneo es el más complejo y por lo tanto el de más difícil desempeño.** Debido al hecho que una interpretación simultánea con éxito requiere un elevado nivel de simultaneidad en lo que se refiere a la percepción, comprensión y producción lingüística, el campo de la psicología cognitiva considera esta tarea como una forma compleja de procesamiento humano de la información en la que intervienen la percepción, el almacenamiento, la obtención, la transformación y la transmisión de información verbal.

### 0.3.2 Resultados del estudio de percepción de los intérpretes jurídicos de Wisconsin

En complemento a las bases teóricas apuntadas anteriormente, la segunda parte del presente trabajo se basa en los resultados de un estudio que revela las percepciones de un grupo de profesionales que ejercen como intérpretes jurídicos. Los resultados preliminares de esta estudio:

- **sientan las bases para estudios posteriores.** El trabajo de investigación contestó la mayoría de las preguntas originales del estudio, produjo otras nuevas y generó una gran cantidad de datos que se prestan a ser analizados con más detalle en una etapa posterior;

- **indican que se necesitan más investigaciones.** Ahora están claras las percepciones de los intérpretes en cuanto a la formación, pero la relación entre
las puntuaciones de la traducción a la vista en el examen de certificación y el número de aprobados puede ser estudiada empíricamente al examinar los datos extensos de puntuaciones del Consorcio;

- sugieren que la traducción a la vista sigue siendo desconocida por buena parte de los intérpretes aspirantes en el estado de Wisconsin. Los datos muestran que el 35% de los intérpretes jurídicos no sabían lo que era la traducción a la vista antes de la orientación obligatoria organizada por el estado, lo que sugiere que esta parte de la población había tenido poca exposición previa a la práctica profesional. Esta exposición podría haber tenido lugar en forma de capacitación formal, lectura relacionada con la profesión, o bien en algún tipo de experiencia personal;

- establecen un vínculo entre la práctica de las destrezas de interpretación y el desempeño en el examen de certificación. Los intérpretes que llegaron a aprobar el examen de certificación se prepararon más que los del grupo que no llegaron a certificarse;

- demuestran que la traducción a vista se percibe como la menos difícil de las tres modalidades en el grupo de estudio. Sin embargo, entre los que aprobaron el examen y obtuvieron la certificación, las tres modalidades se perciben por igual. Es decir, que los encuestados respondieron que obtuvieron "las puntuaciones más bajas" en las tres modalidades en el examen en igual medida;

- muestran que los intérpretes reconocen la importancia de las tres modalidades de interpretación a pesar de que el uso de cada una en su
práctica diaria varía. Especialmente en cuanto a la traducción a la vista, los intérpretes jurídicos de Wisconsin dicen que la usan con poca frecuencia en el trabajo; sin embargo, la mayoría sigue considerando que las tres modalidades son importantes en su ejercicio profesional diario;

- **demuestran que los intérpretes certificados consideran que la traducción a la vista es más importante de lo que el grupo de estudio en general la considera.** Este hecho sugiere que conforme vayan adquiriendo más experiencia, los intérpretes comienzan a reconocer el valor y la complejidad de la traducción a la vista como modo de interpretación y como herramienta;

- **indican que los intérpretes valoran la formación.** Los Intérpretes afirman que la formación y el entrenamiento en las tres modalidades constituyen la mejor manera de prepararse para el examen de certificación, así como la mejor manera de mejorar el rendimiento en el trabajo;

- **indican que los intérpretes necesitan más formación para progresar en la lista oficial.** El segundo obstáculo más significativo fue el haber suspendido ya el examen oral. Es interesante mencionar que el obstáculo principal que impide que los intérpretes progresen en la lista oficial sea el costo de las pruebas; y

- **afirman que los intérpretes tienen un gran deseo de capacitarse.** Tanto para los que quieren obtener la certificación como para aquellos que aún habiéndola conseguido quieren seguir mejorando a través de la formación permanente, el deseo de los intérpretes de identificar y poder participar en oportunidades de formación se expresó de manera clara.
0.3.3 RESULTADOS DEL ANÁLISIS DE LOS DATOS DEL CONSorcio

Un análisis exhaustivo de los datos facilitados por el Consorcio aporta diversas conclusiones:

- **La traducción a la vista es el modo de interpretación más accesible para todas las categorías de candidatos.** Los candidatos que se examinan y obtienen resultados satisfactorios en las tres modalidades realizan la prueba de traducción a la vista con un éxito mayor. De hecho, casi la mitad de todos los candidatos consiguen su mejor puntuación en las pruebas de traducción a la vista. Para un 60,82% de los candidatos que tan sólo podían aprobar ejercicios en uno de los tres modos, fue la traducción a la vista el único modo en el que consiguieron un resultado satisfactorio.

- **Durante los últimos 15 años los candidatos a las pruebas de español/inglés han demostrado una tasa elevada de fracaso en los exámenes.** El aspecto más sobresaliente de la clasificación general de los examinados en todos los formatos de examen y diversas versiones es que muchos candidatos fracasan: es el caso para más de la mitad de los candidatos en el par lingüístico español/inglés. El número total de fracasos es bastante dramático, lo que le otorga mayor credibilidad a los males experimentados en el estado de Nueva Jersey durante la gestión de Robert Joe Lee como director del programa, como se describe en el cuarto capítulo. Precisamente porque la relación costo-beneficio entre gastos de administración del examen y la identificación de intérpretes cualificados que pueden prestar un acceso igualitario a no hablantes de inglés en los juzgados no es tan satisfactoria, la cuestión de mecanismos más eficaces para
identificar futuros intérpretes, que se tratará en profundidad en el capítulo seis, es muy oportuna y merece más atención.

- **Exámenes de extensión diferente presentan resultados también diferentes.** Sólo el 16% de los candidatos que hacen exámenes de 215 puntos aprueban mientras que en las pruebas de 200 puntos hay un 20% de aprobados.

- **Exámenes diferentes muestran niveles de éxito opuestos en los modos consecutivo y simultáneo.** Mientras que casi la mitad de los examinados obtuvieron el mejor resultado en la prueba de traducción a la vista en los dos exámenes diferentes, los candidatos que consiguieron superar con éxito las tres pruebas generaron resultados diferentes en dichos exámenes en el modo consecutivo y en el simultáneo. Así en las versiones del examen más cortas el 30,22% obtuvo el segundo mejor resultado en el modo consecutivo y el 29,12% el tercer mejor resultado en el modo simultáneo. Sin embargo, en las pruebas más largas, el 37,62% obtuvieron el segundo mejor resultado en el modo simultáneo y el 15,59% el tercer mejor resultado en el modo consecutivo. Los exámenes con ejercicios de interpretación consecutiva que tenían quince puntos más mostraron no sólo una inversión en el rendimiento entre consecutiva y simultánea, sino también una disparidad significativamente mayor entre ellos, un 22,03%. Las comparaciones entre versiones de exámenes utilizadas no han demostrado ser concluyentes para explicar el motivo de esta disparidad.

- **El éxito en la prueba del modo simultáneo puede aumentar o disminuir las opciones de los candidatos de superar con éxito el proceso completo de certificación.** A pesar de las discrepancias anteriormente mencionadas, al
examinar a aquellos candidatos que aprobaron alguna de las pruebas para descubrir qué modo realmente causó el fracaso en el proceso, era claramente el modo simultáneo aquel que provocaba que más gente no consiguiera la certificación. La elevada tasa de fracaso en el modo simultáneo es absolutamente incuestionable. Si el 59,41% de todos los participantes que aprobaron dos de los tres modos hubiera gozado de un mejor dominio de las habilidades en el modo simultáneo, habría aprobado el examen de certificación oral y por lo tanto habría obtenido acceso al ejercicio profesional en el sistema judicial.

- **El éxito en el modo simultáneo tiene el más alto nivel de validez predictiva para pronosticar el éxito en los otros dos ejercicios del proceso de certificación con un 69%**. Es curioso que mientras los candidatos que superaron con éxito las tres pruebas del proceso de certificación obtuvieron un resultado más satisfactorio en el modo simultáneo que en el consecutivo, el 69% de todos los candidatos que aprobaron el ejercicio del modo simultáneo pudieron superar con éxito los otros dos también, obteniendo así la certificación. Además, esos candidatos que obtuvieron la certificación y consiguieron la mejor puntuación en el modo simultáneo fueron capaces de lograr puntuaciones similares en las otras dos pruebas, lo que hace pensar que dichos candidatos poseen un arsenal más completo de habilidades para la interpretación.

0.4 DISCUSIÓN DE LOS RESULTADOS Y CONCLUSIONES FINALES

No se debe subestimar la riqueza de la información aportada por el conjunto de datos del Consorcio, sin duda las posibilidades para su análisis son muy amplias. En ese
sentido, el alcance de este estudio se limita a examinar los modos individuales de interpretación como posibles predictores de éxito en el examen de certificación oral, así como a contemplar la posibilidad de utilizar dicha información en el contexto de los procesos de certificación de intérpretes. Los estudios de caso y datos considerados en este estudio, entonces, preparan el camino para extraer diversas conclusiones, generar algunas preguntas aún sin responder y ofrecer vías para futuras investigaciones. El análisis de los datos sugiere que hay varias preguntas clave o áreas de consideración que el mismo Consorcio y otras instituciones a cargo de procesos de certificación pueden considerar oportunas. Estas áreas clave a considerar incluyen:

- la necesidad urgente de identificar candidatos cualificados debido al alto número de fracaso en las pruebas de certificación;
- la importancia de la validez predictiva a la hora de identificar candidatos cualificados;
- la necesidad de recopilar datos de los candidatos para establecer correlaciones entre los niveles de estudios u otros factores y la competencia interpretativa;
- un debate de la situación del método bifurcado y su viabilidad; y
- el impacto potencial del uso del modelo bifurcado a la hora de examinar a candidatos que hablen lenguas minoritarias para que puedan ejercer en el sistema judicial.

Para empezar, el fracaso en los exámenes fue una constante en el estudio de la percepción de Wisconsin, se trata ampliamente en publicaciones del Consorcio, frecuentemente se cuestiona en tratamientos académicos de exámenes de certificación y fue una de las características más sobresalientes del conjunto de datos del consorcio.
El hecho que la prueba en el modo simultáneo es indudablemente el mayor escollo para los candidatos sugiere que más de la mitad de los candidatos que se presentan a estas pruebas carecen de conocimientos clave, habilidades y capacidades inherentes en el ejercicio del modo simultáneo. El acceso rápido al léxico, la rápida traducción secuencial a nivel de la oración, la velocidad de comprensión, la capacidad de síntesis, el análisis y la producción son todas ellas características de los intérpretes que poseen una excelente agilidad lingüística en sus lenguas de trabajo. Con tasas de fracaso que superan la cifra del 50%, ¿existe una manera viable para identificar los candidatos menos cualificados? Y, ¿es posible utilizar de una manera más inteligente los escasos recursos humanos, logísticos y económicos a disposición de los directores de programas a nivel estatal y organizaciones a cargo de procesos de certificación? Una identificación de candidatos más consistente y más rigurosa debería ser un punto de partida lógico y realista para comenzar a equilibrar el costo y el beneficio. Para esto no existe un primer paso más factible que hacer un uso sistemático, coherente, regulado y obligatorio de los ya existentes exámenes escritos utilizados por el Consorcio como un elemento discriminador inicial para identificar a los candidatos.

El Consorcio y otros organismos a cargo de procesos de certificación deberían considerar la necesidad de examinar minuciosamente la validez predictiva de los exámenes escritos ya existentes. Teniendo como objetivo a medio o corto plazo la estandarización de estos tipos de exámenes, deberían imponer su aplicación o considerar otras formas de identificar a candidatos aptos con el fin de evitar una tensión excesiva sobre los recursos de por si limitados para atenuar los efectos de la alta tasa de fracaso en las pruebas. En realidad este proceso podría adoptar un enfoque doble. Para
empezar, los estados que todavía no utilizan los exámenes escritos del Consorcio actualmente en existencia podrían contemplar hacer su uso obligatorio, limitando así la espectacular afluencia de candidatos que no poseen las habilidades lingüísticas ni cognitivas necesarias para tener unas expectativas razonables de éxito en el proceso de certificación.

Además, y de vital importancia para futuras investigaciones en este sentido, sería importante contemplar la posibilidad de realizar comparaciones entre los datos demográficos y las puntuaciones de las pruebas. Si el Consorcio y otros organismos a cargo de procesos de certificación comenzaran a recoger y clasificar importantes elementos identificadores como género, lengua nativa, nivel de estudios, etc., sería esclarecedor en el intento de articular perfiles fiables de intérpretes con las aptitudes necesarias para aprobar el examen oral de certificación. Los datos del candidato se recolectan regularmente como parte del proceso de certificación de la FCICE (Federal Court Interpreting Certification Exam), pero no es el caso a nivel estatal. De hecho, la recopilación de datos realmente fue una de las pocas áreas de mejora identificadas en la auditoría psicométrica descrita en la evaluación del proceso en California que se discute en el cuarto capítulo. El informe identificó “the collection of oral exam statistical data” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 19) como una prioridad para mejorar el análisis del rendimiento de los elementos de las pruebas aunque sostengo, también sería eminentemente útil como complemento a los hallazgos actuales encaminados a predecir resultados exitosos de los candidatos a las pruebas del Consorcio.

Naturalmente, las implicaciones de este estudio se extienden más allá de los confines de arenas institucionales y profesionales en las áreas de educación y formación. Con datos
que confirmen que los intérpretes que poseen las habilidades para superar ejercicios simultáneos tienen estadísticamente mayores posibilidades de superar las pruebas en el modo consecutivo y traducción a la vista, se justificaría el uso de exámenes de ingreso o aptitud que midieran las habilidades inherentes en la interpretación simultánea en instituciones académicas o programas de capacitación.

Las razones de dicha dependencia en el modo simultáneo son convincentes. En primer lugar, la validez predictiva de la utilización de la interpretación simultánea como modo de predicción, entre un 69% y un 81%, es lo suficientemente alta. Si tenemos en cuenta el conjunto de datos del consorcio que mide sólo las puntuaciones en el par español/inglés, incluso si esta población de candidatos tiene características específicas que no pueden ser extrapoladas a los hablantes de otras lenguas, los estados miembros pueden beneficiarse de las ventajas de usar el método bifurcado en la administración de la prueba en español al utilizar el ejercicio de interpretación simultánea primero como un instrumento de selección preliminar de los candidatos.

Por último, y de mayor preocupación entre los estados miembros del Consorcio así como los países de la Unión Europea, los resultados de este estudio deben informar a los interesados que se preocupan por probar y certificar a intérpretes en lenguas de menor difusión. A pesar de que un examen completo puede ser más conveniente, la realidad es que no existen exámenes, ni tan siquiera abreviados, para una gran mayoría de lenguas. Quizás el Consorcio podría considerar la asignación de fondos para la creación de exámenes abreviados, los cuales consistirían en ejercicios en el modo simultáneo en las lenguas con mayor necesidad para las que una versión completa del examen no se ha
realizado todavía, dirigiendo así sus esfuerzos y atención a la elaboración de ejercicios simultáneos en lenguas de menor difusión.

Reconociendo que los recursos destinados a la elaboración de pruebas son escasos, quizás dichos fondos podrían ser usados de una manera más eficiente al invertirlos en exámenes más abreviados. En fin, para una profesión que se enfrenta constantemente a restricciones económicas y humanas, profundizar en el estudio de determinados modos de interpretar como modos de predicción de éxito en el examen de certificación constituye una contribución preliminar pero importante en el campo de la investigación de los exámenes de certificación.

Las preguntas de investigación principales de esta tesis conllevan a examinar construcciones teóricas de la aptitud de los intérpretes, articulando las percepciones de la dificultad y la utilidad de los tres modos de interpretación al basarse en el estudio de percepción de Wisconsin y en la estadística preliminar de los estudios de la validez predictiva de los modos de interpretación llevados a cabo en New Jersey. Finalmente se ha puesto toda esta información a prueba en un nivel empírico. Esta tesis presenta varios puntos fuertes y avances en el campo de los estudios de interpretación en el ámbito de la evaluación de los intérpretes debido a que:

- **El estudio es integral**, ya que cuenta con contribuciones de académicos y teóricos, de funcionarios del Consorcio y de investigadores. Incluye una base sólida arraigada en la teoría pertinente, un estudio originado por encuestas de percepción, el análisis empírico de varias series importantes de datos, comunicaciones personales con los agentes que participan en la esfera del
proceso de certificación y la elaboración de pruebas y una aproximación a los documentos administrativos y planes elaborados por las organizaciones a cargo de las pruebas. Esta combinación de investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa otorga fuerza y complejidad a la actual búsqueda de indicadores de capacidad de los intérpretes. Asimismo, la inclusión notable de documentación de la industria de la evaluación lingüística representa un grado de colaboración innovadora entre el mundo académico y la profesión que rara vez se observa.

- **Esta tesis utiliza una información no estudiada con anterioridad y su análisis hace que este trabajo de investigación sea original.** Los funcionarios del Consorcio han declarado que ellos mismos nunca han analizado la información de las puntuaciones de las pruebas desde un punto de vista estadístico. Es significativo que sea este estudio el primero en analizar los datos de estas pruebas para el par lingüístico español/inglés.

- **Los datos contemplados no están sujetos a una variabilidad de la muestra.** Lo que es de suma importancia es el hecho que este conjunto de datos representa una población entera y por lo tanto no está sujeto a la variabilidad de la muestra. Los números generados en el análisis de esta tesis son valores reales, no extrapolaciones.

- **El trabajo de investigación abre nuevos caminos al abordar directamente las cuestiones de validez predictiva.** Mientras que algunos estudios anteriores (Hewitt y Stansfield) examinaron la validez predictiva de los exámenes escritos del Consorcio, esta tesis se convierte en el primer intento de examinar críticamente la validez predictiva en los exámenes orales de certificación,
tratando de buscar la relación entre el éxito en un modo específico de interpretación y los resultados obtenidos en los otros dos modos de interpretación.

- El estudio logró identificar un modo para predecir el éxito en los otros dos modos de interpretación en el contexto de los exámenes de certificación oral del Consorcio, exámenes que son válidos y fiables.

- La justificación basada en los datos empíricos de utilizar el modo simultáneo como un modo de predicción reivindica algunas prácticas actuales del Consorcio. Es posible que más estados se unan a los otros tres que ya utilizan el modo simultáneo como identificador del potencial de los candidatos antes de administrar las pruebas en el modo consecutivo y de traducción a la vista.

- La racionalización empírica para la utilización del simultáneo como un modo de validez predictiva constituye un descubrimiento que puede ayudar a resolver problemas reales. Como una solución inicial para los estados miembros del Consorcio que soportan la presión de elaborar exámenes orales para lenguas de menor difusión, invertir en la creación de ejercicios en el modo simultáneo constituye una opción que pudiera convertirse en más beneficiosa que las prácticas actuales de la administración de entrevistas orales. Del mismo modo, en la Unión Europea donde la aplicación de normas comunes en la interpretación y traducción jurídicas se está convirtiendo progresivamente en una realidad, la elaboración, justificada por la estadística, de ejercicios en el...
modo simultáneo para la multitud de lenguas de Unión Europea podría constituir un paso positivo para garantizar el acceso igualitario en los juzgados.

Aparentemente todos los interesados en el campo de la interpretación jurídica están motivados por cuestiones de equidad y un deseo de preservar los derechos constitucionales y humanos de los hablantes de todas las lenguas, así como ofrecerles un acceso justo e igualitario al sistema judicial.

El acceso a la justicia es una tarea noble, aun así se debe abordar desde un punto de vista analítico y empírico. Para ello, esta tesis se postula como un intento de afrontar sistemáticamente la identificación de predictores de éxito en el desempeño en los exámenes de certificación oral del Consorcio en los Estados Unidos y de esta manera contribuir al campo de los estudios de interpretación.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

In response to broad consensus regarding the need for critical and empirical research in the field of interpreting studies, most especially in regard to performance assessment in the realm of certification exams which act as gateways to the profession, this project draws generously from theories and scholarship in communication studies, translation studies, pragmatics, linguistics, cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics and testing theory and is multidisciplinary, like translation and interpreting itself. It represents a culmination of research which is both quantitative and qualitative, combining theory, practitioners’ perceptions, and empirical data.

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to explore the three modes of interpreting (simultaneous, consecutive and sight translation) which are used traditionally on oral certification exams, and critically examine whether or not successful interpreting performance in one or more individual modes could serve as a possible predictor of interpreting success on the other two modes. For the purposes at hand, the majority of the data considered herein relates directly to a specific set of exams: the court interpreting certification exams designed, administered and regulated by the U.S. Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. Nonetheless, because the Consortium exams are representative of other gate-keeping exams both within the United States and abroad in that they test all three modes of interpreting, the isolation of a reliable predictor mode has broad implications for a variety of testing organisms and assessment situations.
The present study and its results are informed by a three-pronged approach to the positing of several specific research questions. First, interpreter aptitude is examined as it is contemplated in current scholarship; that is to say, current research in the field of interpreting studies is brought to bear as it relates to the knowledge, skills and abilities that poise one interpreting candidate over others to perform successfully on certification exams such as those administered by the Consortium.

Secondly, an inventory of practitioners’ insights into the three modes of interpreting are explored by means of the largest study done to date on a body of practicing court interpreters. The study is empirically grounded in the results of a survey developed to articulate current perceptions of, usage of, and training in the three modes of interpreting (with special emphasis on sight translation) by certified, provisional and trainee interpreters on the official court interpreter roster in the state of Wisconsin, the study site. Because the results of this survey-based inventory reveal important patterns and information regarding the way court interpreters experience the three modes while in training, on the job, and in the testing cycle, its results will be discussed in significant detail, constituting an important part of this dissertation.

Furthermore, the results of this study highlight the primacy of the Consortium exam as the most important vehicle through which interpreters achieve certification in the state of Wisconsin, where the study was carried out, as well as on a national level. In the United States, currently 44 of 50 states are Consortium members, extending the Consortium’s preeminence. Logically, then, we must briefly examine the Consortium’s
exams critically through the lens of testing theory in order to gauge whether or not they are truly performance-based\(^1\), criterion-referenced, valid and reliable.

The third portion of this project is eminently empirical. On the basis of somewhat conflicting results from theoretical frameworks versus practitioners’ perceptions, a substantial body of raw test scores was closely scrutinized in order to continue the search for a predictor mode of interpreting which could reliably identify certification exam candidates with the potential to pass all three interpreting exercises. Thus, the combination of theoretical constructs of interpreter aptitude, the perceptions of practicing professionals, and data from several small case studies as well as a massive Consortium data set are contemplated in their entirety in order to make inferences as to whether or not success in one mode of interpreting can tell us anything about performance in the other two, why it might matter, and to whom these results can be of benefit.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Ingrid Kurz affirms that “even small, simple projects can contribute significantly to knowledge of interpretation because the field is still largely unexplored” (2001, p. 101). Small, well-designed studies can also produce results and offer insights, especially when coupled with empirical analysis on a larger scale. This study’s objective is to formulate

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\(^1\) “Performance-based exams are ones which determine performance objectives during the elaboration process and employ simulation techniques in test administration. This type of exam requires a candidate to be able to ‘perform’ in a situation that reproduces, as closely as possible in an exam setting, a real-life situation and asks candidates to perform tasks or carry out functions related to a specific profession” (Miguélez, 1999, p. 172).
some clear research questions. Consequently, answers to the following will define its contribution to the field:

1. How can a profile of practicing court interpreters in the study site (which is representative of many other Consortium member states) be constructed by means of a survey-based study? Can any parallels be drawn between basic demographic characteristics and status on the state’s official roster of interpreters? Can a “type” of interpreter who is more poised to succeed in the certification process be predicted?

2. What are the perceptions of a carefully studied body of practicing professional and semi-professional court interpreters (at three levels of expertise) of the level of difficulty of the three modes, and how do these impressions correlate with their performance on the Consortium court interpreter certification exam?

3. In which mode of interpreting do professional and semi-professional court interpreters feel it would be most crucial to receive training as they attempt to pass the Consortium oral certification exam? In which mode do they most highly value training so as to perform better on the job?

4. Are the court interpreter certification exams administered by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts valid, reliable and feasible?

5. By breaking down the three modes into discrete domains of knowledge, skills, and abilities based on an inventory of current theoretical research, can any conclusions be drawn about how and why examinees’ performance begins to decline based on the modes they can or cannot perform?
6. To that end, can the various modes of interpreting be broken down into “latent competencies” or parcels of inherent skills that would explain success or lack of success in the performance of one mode versus another?

7. Is there any correlation between success in one mode of interpreting on certification exams and success in others? If so, how can the identification and the isolation of this mode...

- ... facilitate the identification, selection and recruitment of potentially competent court interpreters to begin the training and testing process?
- ... have an effect on court interpreter training?
- ... influence possible test reform on the Consortium exam?

8. Would a bifurcated approach (carried out in two phases, with the predictive mode being tested first as a screening measure) be valid, reliable and feasible? A bifurcated testing approach is already in use in three member states of the Consortium. Can it be statistically justified?

1.3 Scope of Project and Classification of Research

This study entails both conceptual and empirical research as it encompasses a combination of ideas and data. This mix of quantitative and qualitative research represents the holistic contemplation of theory-based constructions of interpreter competence coupled with the results of a large survey-based study which included questions which were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Basic demographic information was extrapolated from a series of questions aimed at constructing a profile of the practicing court interpreter population in the study site, and then the profile
questions were coupled with open-ended questions meant to gauge perceptions or opinions. This combination has been fruitful in order to paint a picture of the professional and semi-professional interpreters on the study site’s official roster of Spanish / English court interpreters, as well as to define their perceptions of and experiences with the three modes of interpreting in a variety of testing, training and performance contexts.

As regards restricting the scope of this project, in brief, the survey instrument utilized in the second part of this study was administered to nearly everyone with the Spanish / English language pair on the Wisconsin Supreme Court’s roster of court interpreters\(^2\), which is publicly available on the internet\(^3\). The roster lists interpreters at three distinct stages of expertise, as defined in Chapter Three. The study of practicing interpreters had a significant return rate and was deemed representative in terms of its results; however, having noted some significant contradictions between theoretical constructions of interpreter competence in direct relationship to the three modes of interpreting in comparison with the large perception study described previously, the third part of this project became urgent and germane: that of analyzing a large body of data that would confirm (or not) previous theoretical assumptions and practitioners’ opinions. The data set in question, which will be described in detail in Chapter Five, involved the analysis of nearly 6,000 raw certification exam scores in the Spanish / English language pair. The import of these raw exam scores, which spanned some fifteen years and included all member states of the Consortium, is considerable.

\(^2\) Chapter three provides specific information about administration of the survey.

\(^3\) http://www.wicourts.gov/services/interpreter/search.htm.
1.4 Significance and Justification: The Urgency for Reliable Interpreter Assessment

Interpreting studies stakeholders, from practicing professionals to researchers, express broad consensus on the significance of and justification for further inroads into empirical studies focusing on assessment and testing in interpreting studies. Assessment is vitally important not only for the purpose of screening applicants for entry into educational programs, providing feedback for students as they progress in their training, or testing their knowledge and skills at the end of a course of study, but most germane to the present discussion, it is also essential for qualifying exams such as the certification exams used in the field of court interpreting.

Providing competent interpreters in the justice system is not only a moral imperative: it is a constitutionally guaranteed protection. Laura Abel states that

Nearly 25 million people in this country have limited proficiency in English (LEP), meaning that they cannot protect their rights in court without the assistance of an interpreter. At least 13 million of those people live in states that do not require their courts to provide interpreters to LEP individuals in most types of civil cases. Another 6 million live in states that undercut their commitment to provide interpreters by charging for them. And many live in states that do not ensure that the “interpreters” they provide can speak English, speak the language to be interpreted, or know how to interpret in the specialized courtroom setting. Many of those states are violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which requires state courts receiving federal assistance to provide interpreters to people who need them (2009, p.1).

Identifying and certifying competent court interpreters represents one of the cornerstones of due process in the U.S. judicial system. Due process refers to the guarantee that individuals shall not be deprived of life, liberty, or property without notice and an opportunity to defend themselves. Evidently, language access is one of the
foundations of due process, as to understand (and to be understood) by the courts is indispensable to full and active participation in one's own defense. The focus of the present study revolves entirely around the primary objective of taking a critical look at issues of interpreter assessment as related to oral certification exams in the field of court interpreting, precisely with an eye to increasing language access in the judiciary.

One of the main objectives of this dissertation is to understand, quantify and interpret information gleaned from the study revealing how interpreters on the Wisconsin Supreme Court official roster of interpreters have experienced training in and execution of simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and sight translation, both in the certification process and on the job. To my knowledge, and after having done exhaustive research both in the form of a general literature review as well as a close scrutiny of research published by the National Center for State Courts’ Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, no studies exist to this day which examine a significant study cohort of practicing professional and semi-professional court interpreters through the lens of the theory and practice of the three modes of interpreting. Indeed, the survey instrument utilized in this study has revealed patterns in performance for the three modes of interpreting on the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ certification exams, and has succinctly defined the aforementioned study cohort in demographic terms.

Notably, no other attempts have been made to construct a profile of the several hundred people on the interpreting roster in the study site, nor in any other analogous context. The secondary objective of the Wisconsin perception study was, then, to utilize the information obtained through the survey instrument in order to construct a profile of
the study cohort in order to draw correlations between status on the roster and other self-identifiers such as gender, native language, level of education, involvement in professional organizations, etc. Furthermore, in the state of Wisconsin, where a lack of certified and qualified interpreters in the Spanish / English language pair (among others) represents a constant challenge for court staff, revelations about competence-indicating factors could have implications for the training of novice interpreters, as well as specialized training modules for continuing education for more experienced interpreters.

As regards the survey instrument that was designed and implemented for purposes of this research project, at all times the objective has been to devise and execute a study which is carefully planned, systematic, impartial, logical, critical, and most of all, useful and applicable. Indeed, the study contained herein is quite methodologically simple, yet it is very practical in nature, and has many implications, as discussed above.

Barbara Moser-Mercer emphasizes that “the almost total lack of data relating pass/fail results in aptitude tests to pass/fail results in final exams, leaves the evaluation of aptitude for interpreting wide open to criticism” (1994, p. 65). The troubling lack of data to which Moser-Mercer refers is remedied, at least in part, by the contributions wrought by analysis of the Consortium data set. While the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts compiled the data to be analyzed herein and provided it to an outside researcher, Consortium officials have stated that they themselves have never approached their raw test scores from a statistical perspective. The data set analyzed and interpreted in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation work with previously
unexploited data, the analysis of which is being presented in this dissertation as original research.

To be sure, the urgency of continuing to make inroads in interpreting studies in the realm of assessment bears most directly upon entry and credentialing exams, discussed below and further expanded in subsequent chapters.

1.4.1 Entry Exam Screening for Interpreter Training Programs

If indeed the basic aim of an aptitude test is to predict whether an individual will be able to acquire a skill, the predictive validity of entry exam screenings to interpreter training programs “thus becomes the most important feature of aptitude tests. The predicament is how to measure a skill that the individual has not acquired yet” (Timarová & Ungoed-Thomas, 2009, p. 228). This being the most oft-cited complaint against the use of simultaneous interpreting specifically in an entry exam is an objection which, according to Alexieva, “sounds rather strange, coming from scholars and SI (simultaneous interpreting) instructors (who are) advocates of shadowing, summary-writing and sight translation” (Alexieva, 1993, p. 11) considering that the aforementioned activities are as equally novel for the candidates as is simultaneous interpreting. Alexieva acknowledges the sense behind the objection to asking candidates to perform real interpretive tasks, nonetheless affirming that “the best way to see if somebody has a talent for acting is to make him, or her, act, certainly, not make them do Hamlet or Lady Macbeth, but something much simpler...” (Alexieva, 1993, p. 11).

Importantly, recent scholarship has begun to take up the task of looking at the practical, methodological and pedagogical implications of interpreter assessment with regard to
screening and entry exams. Such studies are useful and will be fruitful to consider, especially those which examine interpreter aptitude exams directly in relation to the inherent skills and abilities associated with each of the specific modes of interpreting. An overview of these findings will be discussed in Chapter Two.

1.4.2 CREDENTIALING, CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE: INTERPRETER ASSESSMENTS AS GATEWAYS TO THE PROFESSION

The entire aim (Abbreviated Test Models, 2001, p. 2). Requiring examinees to actually interpret on an entry exam, sometimes being asked to perform a task that they have not necessarily learned to do yet, is a common practice, although it is called into question by several scholars (Timarolvá & Ungood-Thomas, 2009 and Gringiani 1990) who compared aptitude test results with test results administered after a course of training. In Timarolvá's and Ungood-Thomas's 2009 study, a significant number of students who completed training and achieved passing scores on their final examinations scored similarly to those candidates who had previously been identified as better poised from the outset to become skilled interpreters. While Timarolvá and Ungood-Thomas concede that there could be many possible confounding variables that would explain these outcomes, they affirm that "[t]he point here is that these tests failed to have a high predictive validity" (Timarolvá & Ungood-Thomas, 2009, p. 233). Predicting the performance ability of interpreter candidates is as desirable as it is elusive.

Test authenticity and task authenticity, however, require that a summative (versus formative) test functioning as a gateway to the profession examine and assess exactly
those skills which the examinee is expected to perform successfully in the profession for which he or she is being tested. It is no surprise, then, that the three court interpreter certification exams used for spoken-language interpreters in the United States, which are described in Chapter Three, all test the three modes of interpreting, with oral exams consisting of exercises in simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and sight translation.

1.4.3 The Primacy of the Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exam

Whereas traditional aptitude testing mechanisms seek to identify interpreting candidates with the potential to acquire interpreting skills by the end of a course of study, qualifying exams identify candidates who are already able to meet a minimum standard in interpreting performance, acting as a threshold and thus allowing or impeding entry into the profession.

In the United States, court interpreter certification is entirely performance-based, in contrast to some countries in which interpreters are considered qualified to practice in court based solely on success on written exams or completion of specific undergraduate degrees. The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam (FCICE), the National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification (or NJITCE, which is the National Association of Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Association’s certification for Spanish-language court interpreters and translators), as well as the certification exam used at the state level which is administered by the Consortium for Language Access in

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4 Hildegard Vermeiren, Jan Van Gucht and Leentje De Bontridder contrast social interpreter testing in Flanders, Belgium, where candidates are tested strictly on competencies relevant to interpreter performance, with testing in other countries such as Sweden or the United Kingdom, which assess interpreting performance as well as cultural and terminological knowledge (2009, p. 307).
the Courts, all require their candidates to pass exercises in simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting, and sight translation. The Consortium exam is the most commonly required credential in the country as it allows court interpreters to practice in municipal, county and state venues. Currently 44 of 50 U.S. states are members of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts\(^5\) and, as of March 31\(^{st}\), 2010, all but seven of them had certification / qualifying processes in place whereby interpreters were assessed for suitability for court interpreting\(^6\). Undoubtedly, the court interpreting certification exams administered by this entity hold absolute primacy. In the study site of the state of Wisconsin, for example, which is in many ways analogous to other member states, all interpreters but one, who holds federal certification, were certified via the Consortium exam. Understandably, then, the court interpreter certification exams discussed in this dissertation are those which are designed and administered by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, the reason being that it is undoubtedly the most oft-used gateway to the court interpreting profession in the United States.

After having stated the problem as well as the approach with which it shall be analyzed, at this stage it is useful to clearly articulate certain terms and concepts in order to more effectively stake out common ground.

\(^5\) For the most current list of member states as of 21 October 2011, see http://www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/*media/Files/PDF/Education\%20and\%20Careers/State\%20Interpreter\%20Certification/Res_CInte_ConsortMemberStatesPub2011.ashx. In addition to the 43 states listed, according to Wisconsin Court Interpreter Program Manager Carmel Capati, the state of Louisiana has been added as of the updating of this list.

\(^6\) As of March 31\(^{st}\), 2010, the states which are members of the Consortium but which do not have certification processes are Alabama, Alaska, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Vermont. The states which did not belong to the Consortium at all as of April 2012 are Kansas, Montana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Rhode Island and Wyoming.
1.5 RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

The following list of terms and concepts is by no means meant to be exhaustive, but rather focuses on the specific content areas of this study: the three modes of interpreting and their professional, technical, theoretical and practical features, especially as related to interpreter competence and prediction of success on oral certification exams; terminology related to the organisms and operations of the Wisconsin State judicial system, which will facilitate understanding of the third chapter’s discussion of the Wisconsin perception study; and finally, concepts from testing theory which will illuminate the validity and implementation of the Consortium court interpreting exam, thus lending strength to the conclusions drawn from the statistical analysis of data originating from these exams.

By providing concise definitions for the terms that will be used throughout this study for the readers’ consideration, possible misunderstandings, ambiguities and contradictions which might impede full understanding of the study can be avoided. Wisconsin-specific terms will be denoted thus: “(WI)”.

**Aptitude.** In general, aptitude refers to the amount of time necessary for learning a given task or acquiring a given skill. In the context of admissions tests, Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas define aptitude as “the capacity to acquire consecutive and simultaneous interpreting skills to a criterion level within a period of time corresponding to the length of a particular interpreting program, where the criterion is the ability to provide interpreting of a quality acceptable for entry into the profession” (2009, pp. 227-228). Aptitude tests are almost always administered to interpreters in

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7 Additionally, see Appendix A for a list of acronyms used throughout this dissertation.
order to gain entrance into an interpreter training program or as a “gateway” exam for purposes of credentialing or certification. In the context of entry exams, the term “aptitude” refers more to one's potential to develop certain skills; however, it is sometimes used to express an interpreter's ability to perform.

Committee (WI). Formed in 1991 at the behest of the Wisconsin State Supreme Court, The Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts (henceforth to be referred to as the Committee) serves to identify priorities for action, recommend statute and court rule changes, propose budgetary items, suggest judicial and staff education programs, and foster general public and governmental understanding of interpreter issues facing the court system in the state of Wisconsin. “It is an advisory committee that provides policy and guidance on interpretation and translation issues to the Director of State Courts which is the administrative arm of the state court system” (C. Capati, personal communication, May 11, 2010).

Concurrent validity. Concurrent validity allows one to show that a test is valid by comparing it with an already valid test. Defendants of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ state-level Spanish / English exams could argue that the state-level exam has concurrent validity because it is based on the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam (FCICE). See Appendix I for a comparison between the Federal Court Interpreter Certification oral exams and the Consortium oral exams.

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It would be interesting to track the performance of candidates who pass the Consortium exam and then go on to take the federal (FCICE) exam in order to explore concurrent validity between the two of them, although no such tracking exists. Even if it did, different cut-off points for passing between the two exams (70% versus 80% on the Consortium and FCICE exams respectively) would complicate the matter.
**Consecutive interpreting.** In consecutive interpreting (CI), the interpreter waits until the source language speaker has finished the source language message before rendering it into the target language. In court, the consecutive mode is used “primarily for testimony given on the witness stand or in depositions, and for the questioning of the defendant by the judge (at arraignment, sentencing, or similar situations)” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 379).

**Consortium.** Affiliated with the National Center for State Courts, the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (formerly known as the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification, and referred to in this study as CLAC or the Consortium) is a multi-state partnership dedicated to developing court interpreter proficiency tests, making tests available to member states, and regulating the use of the tests. By sharing resources between states, the Consortium addresses resource shortages by defining and implementing standards for identifying proficient, qualified interpreters.

**Construct validity.** Quite challenging to succinctly define, construct validity refers to the extent to which an assessment corresponds to other variables, as predicted by some rationale or theory. Put differently, it refers to an assessment of how one’s (operationalized) ideas or theories have been translated into actual measures. Claudia Angelelli explains that defining the constructs to be assessed by a given measuring device involves formulating

... a clearly spelled out definition of exactly what a test designer understands to be involved in a given skill or ability. This task not only involves naming the ability, knowledge, or behavior that is being assessed but also involves breaking that knowledge, ability or behavior into the elements that form a construct
(Fulcher 2003) and can be captured and measured by a rubric (Angelelli, 2009, p. 13).

**Content validity.** Content validity is concerned with a test’s ability to include or represent all of the content of a particular construct. In other words, it has to do with how well items on a test align with what the test is supposed to measure. There is no easy way to determine content validity aside from relying on expert opinion.

**Face validity.** Face validity has to do with stakeholders’ perception of the validity of an exam. Its importance lies in the fact that if practitioners and society at large do not perceive a tool or instrument as valid, it will not be accepted and its usefulness will be undermined.

**Formative assessment.** Formative assessment is part of the instructional process. When incorporated into classroom practice, it provides the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening, informing both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made, thus helping to ensure that students achieve targeted standards-based learning goals within a set time frame. Formative assessments tend to be low-stakes evaluations for students and instructors, and they are rarely (if ever) used in interpreter certification exams. While examinees receive a minimal amount of feedback regarding their performance on certification exams, such exams rely on **summative** types of assessment.

**Inter-rater reliability.** Inter-rater reliability refers to the degree of consensus between raters of an exam. In other words, an assessment tool with a high rate of inter-rater reliability is one in which all raters of the same assessment arrive at approximately the
same results when evaluating a candidate so that passing does not depend upon who grades a specific exam. If various raters do not agree, either the scale they are using to evaluate their examinees is defective or the raters need to be re-trained.

**Intra-rater reliability.** Similar to but not to be confused with **inter-rater reliability**, intra-rater reliability is the degree of agreement and consistency among multiple repetitions of a diagnostic test performed by a single rater. In other words, a reliable rater will give the same score to the same test at different times, reproducing the same results, and will likewise give the same score to similar performances by different candidates on a consistent basis.

**Latent competency.** In the context of this study, latent competencies are skills or abilities which interpreter examinees possess but which may not be exhibited or fully developed. In reference to the three modes of interpreting, latent competencies are domains of inherent skills which comprise successful performance of said mode.

**LEP** is an acronym in common use in educational, criminal justice and social service contexts in the United States, and it refers to people of “limited English proficiency.” In the court system, LEPs are the consumers of interpreting services. People of limited English proficiency require sign language or oral language interpreters in order to enjoy full and equal access to due process in court proceedings, as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

**Orientation (WI).** Prospective court interpreters in the state of Wisconsin are required to attend a two-day, sixteen-hour workshop (henceforth referred to as **the orientation**) which covers topics such as an overview of the court system in Wisconsin, the
interpreter's role in the courtroom, the interpreter's code of ethics, best professional practices, skills needed for court interpreting, the three modes of interpreting, demonstration of the interpreting modes, resources for further study, small group skills practice in the three modes, criminal terminology and procedure, juvenile, family and CHIPS (WI)\(^9\) terminology, court interpreter roster requirements, the certification process, business practices for interpreters, as well as a model *voir dire*\(^10\) of interpreter qualifications. To view a sample agenda of the orientation used in the study site discussed in Chapter Three, see Appendix F.

**Predictive validity.** Predictive validity is the extent to which a score on a scale or test predicts scores on some criterion measure. For example, the predictive validity of an entry exam for student interpreters (designed to measure their aptitude) is the correlation between entry test scores and, for example, final marks in their program of training or final grades on an exit exam. Tests which have predictive validity of the observed correlations are statistically significant.

**Psychometrics.** The field of study concerned with psychologically measuring human characteristics such as knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and personality traits. Specialists in this field analyze and research the construction and validation of measurement instruments.

\(^9\) CHIPS stands for “children in need of protection and services”. This Wisconsin-specific acronym denotes the section of the legal code that pertains to justice for children.

\(^10\) *Voir dire* refers to the questioning of prospective jurors by a judge and attorneys in court. It is used to determine if any juror is biased and/or cannot deal with the issues fairly, or if there is cause not to allow a juror to serve. By the same token, this questioning mechanism is used by judges to determine a court interpreter’s fitness to serve, and can include questions aimed at determining the interpreter’s professional qualifications, potential biases, acquaintanceship with the parties involved, or other potential conflicts of interest.
Reliability. In testing theory, a reliable measure is one that measures a construct consistently across time, individuals, and situations.

Roster (WI). The Wisconsin Supreme Court maintains a roster, or list, of professional and semi-professional court interpreters at various stages of the training and testing process on the path to certification. This roster is available publicly on the internet, and is used to commission interpreting services in court by court officials as well as by attorneys, law enforcement professionals and others who wish to contract interpreting and translation services. This particular list shall be referred to as the roster for the purposes of this study.

Scoring units. Scoring units are the elements which are assessed on an exam. In the context of oral interpreting exams,

> scoring units represent the special linguistic characteristics that interpreters must be able to render to deliver a complete and accurate interpretation. Operationally, a scoring unit is a preselected portion of the exam material that is underlined in a rater's transcript of the test text (Hewitt, n.d., p.2).

On Consortium court interpreting exams, different types of scoring units include numbers, names, legal terminology, general vocabulary, words used as modifiers and for emphasis, indicators of register or style, and elements of grammar and correct verb usage. See Appendix G for a full description of the scoring units used on Consortium oral examinations.

Sight translation. Sight translation (ST) is one of the three modes of interpreting, and constitutes the act of briefly examining a written document and then rendering an oral translation of its content into another language. In the words of Claudia Angelelli,
The process of sight translation assumes the ability to read and comprehend a source language in written form; an ability to do oral rendition (involving public speaking skills) into the target language; an ability to change from a written input to an oral output instantaneously; and an ability to perform all of the above under pressure with minimal preparation time (1999, p. 27).

Angelelli’s eloquent definition hints at sight translation’s complexity, as it is the only mode which departs from a written source text, rendering it essentially a hybrid mode. Her emphasis on public speaking and delivery skills must be duly noted as well; indeed, a successful sight translation is judged not only on target language accuracy, but also on other prosodic elements such as clarity, loudness, pitch, rhythm, gestures, mouthing, and facial expressions. The hybrid nature of this mode of interpreting is more fully defined by Barbara Moser-Mercer:

Sight translation involves the transfer of a written text in one language into a text delivered orally in another language. As it involves both aural and visual information processing, sight translation could be defined either as a specific type of translation or as a variant of interpretation (1991, p. 159).

**Simultaneous interpreting.** Simultaneous interpreting (SI) is a technique whereby the interpreter speaks at the same time as the source language speaker, with only a small lag time, or décalage, between speakers. According to Dueñas González et al., the simultaneous mode in a court interpreting context is “often used for jury selection, motions and objections by counsel, rulings by the court on such motions and objections, side-bar conferences between attorneys and the judge, arguments before the jury, and jury instructions” (1991, p. 360).

**Summative assessment.** The goal of summative assessment is to measure the level of success or proficiency of an examinee by comparing it against some standard or...
benchmark. Oral certification exams are preeminently summative in nature given that they are of a pass / fail nature, and indicate to the examinee whether he or she meets a minimum standard of competency in the skill areas being tested. The outcome of a summative assessment can be used formatively, however, when students or faculty take the results and use them to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses. Oral certification examinees, for example, can interpret a failing grade on certain interpreting exercises to signify a lack of skills involved in the mode of interpreting on which they did not meet a minimal standard.

**Task authenticity.** Task authenticity assesses a person’s ability to apply standard-driven knowledge and skills to real-world challenges. In other words, the task replicates challenges faced in real professional settings. Oral interpreting certification exams which are considered task authentic ask examinees to perform the three modes of interpreting, as they are expected to use all three modes successfully in a professional context.

**Test authenticity.** Test authenticity is closely related to task authenticity. An authentic test asks examinees to perform a task as opposed to selecting a response; test performance is not contrived or artificial, but can be considered similar to “real-life”. An examinee cannot depend on recall or recognition to succeed on an authentic test, but must be able to apply inherent skills and knowledge. Authentic tests provide direct evidence that a candidate can or cannot perform the tasks that are being assessed.

**Validity.** Validity refers to the degree in which a test or other measuring device is truly measuring what it intends to measure. Five types of validity are generally recognized in
relation to the construction of certification exams. See definitions of **concurrent validity**, **construct validity**, **content validity**, **face validity**, and **predictive validity**.

### 1.6 Organization of the Study

This dissertation’s systematic search for predictors of successful performance on U.S. Consortium oral certification exams is structured as follows:

Chapter One provides an overview of the project, defines its claims, posits specific research questions, and defines the scope of the project and classification of research. Additionally, Chapter One explains the significance of and justification for further inroads into empirical studies focusing on assessment and testing in interpreting studies. While most previous studies have focused on quality in theoretical terms, few researchers have dealt with the problem of assessing interpreting via the implementation of valid, reliable and predictable measures through empirical observation. As previously mentioned, assessment is vitally important in many realms, but it is of especial relevance as it relates to qualifying exams such as the certification exams used in the field of court interpreting in the United States. Chapter One also includes relevant terminology and concepts, describes the organization of the dissertation, and states the author’s motivation for embarking upon the project.

Chapter Two explores current theoretical frameworks which contemplate the three modes of interpreting as potential indicators of aptitude. This chapter delineates the communicative, strategic and evaluative functions of the three modes, discusses them in connection with cognitive load, information retention, and depth of processing, and attempts to use case studies and theoretical models to break down each mode into
discrete domains of skills and abilities which may or may not predict success on the Consortium certification exam.

Chapter Three presents the results of a study in which over 36% of practicing Wisconsin court interpreters in the Spanish / English language pair and at three levels of expertise (as evidenced by differentiated classifications on the state's official roster) articulated their perceptions of the three modes of interpreting in relation to their experiences in testing and training and their use of the three modes while on the job in court. The study discussed in Chapter Three is significant because of its scope and breadth (due to the number of respondents and the amount of data generated), and because it is unique: nothing similar has been done previously, and similar studies have not been replicated on a smaller scale. Most tellingly, practicing professionals’ perceptions did not align wholly with the outcomes one would expect based on theory, making the posing of questions of aptitude on an empirical level more urgent. Furthermore, the study cohort is representative of many U.S. states with three-tiered systems, with implications that potentially reach far beyond Wisconsin. The competence-indicating factors revealed by demographic and self-identification descriptors in the Wisconsin court interpreter study will stand as complements to data-driven findings about specific modes as indicators of aptitude on the Consortium certification exam as revealed by the Consortium data set examined in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four considers important methodological aspects of the Consortium exam such as reliability and validity, exam conditions and exam versions, protocols for rating, and other aspects of testing theory such as inter- and intra-rater reliability, psychometricity, scoring unit descriptions, rater training, and construct definition and rubric
development. The chapter’s main focus, however, is on exploring some previously conducted small studies which serve as precedents for empirically analyzing Consortium oral certification exam scores. This chapter also discusses a bifurcated testing model which posits the simultaneous mode as an indicator of aptitude on the Consortium exam.

At this juncture, with a critical need to put theory, perceptions and previous field studies to the test, Chapter Five reveals the results of an analysis of the almost 6,000 raw exam scores drawn from a very large and complete Consortium data set. Likewise, Chapter Six discusses these results, ties the entire project together with conclusions and implications, and discusses avenues for further inquiry.

1.7 Justification and Motivation

Why are the practicing professional and semi-professional interpreters on the roster of Wisconsin court interpreters worth studying? How can the analysis of raw exam scores which span a nation reveal performance patterns that can actually be utilized by examinees, trainers, policymakers, and testing bodies?

From the macro level, interpreting studies and ensuing empirical research are still in fledgling stages, at least in the United States. As previously mentioned in regard to the Wisconsin perception study, no study has been conducted to date on such a significant number of professional and semi-professional court interpreters, and a profile of these practicing professionals is simply not valid without one. The identification of specific modes of interpreting as predictors of performance on oral certification exams has been the subject of even fewer inquiries; indeed, any light that can be shed on any of the three
modes of interpreting as indicators of successful performance in the other modes or as a training and assessment tool will certainly be a welcome addition to our growing body of knowledge in the field of interpreter training, testing, and performance evaluation. The Consortium for Language Access in the Courts has shown interest in the results of this study, and has asked that its results be made available to them upon its completion.

1.7.1 Personal Motivation

Certainly one’s motivation for engaging in research is academic, professional, sometimes institutional, and of course, personal as well: this is certainly my own case. By way of explanation, I have been a Wisconsin Supreme Court-certified court interpreter since 2005, interpreting roughly four times a month on average in addition to teaching full time at an American four-year comprehensive university. I interpret mainly in rural counties with steadily growing Spanish-speaking immigrant populations, primarily from Mexico and Guatemala.

What may be unique about my experience in comparison to court interpreters from other states is the complete isolation in which I work. I have never interpreted with another interpreter. I have never seen another interpreter at work in court, in any language, except for opening arguments during a high-profile first-degree homicide case. Although two regional professional organizations exist in the Midwest, there is no local association at which to meet other practicing professionals or “talk shop” without having to make a three- to ten-hour drive. There is not another single certified court interpreter in my entire judicial district, comprised of twelve counties. There is no one to learn from, no one to discuss doubts with, and no one with whom to share resources. Examining the study cohort which is the object of the study which forms the basis of the
third chapter provided me with an opportunity to learn about a population with whom I am both connected and disconnected. Reaching out to the professional and semi-professional court interpreters on my state’s roster was one feasible way of connecting with colleagues as yet unmet.

1.7.2 Professional and Academic Motivation

As a practicing court interpreter, I have a sincere desire to understand the theoretical as well as practical and professional world in which my colleagues practice. As a researcher, I strive to gain the insight necessary to establish principles and a critical framework for my own interpreting practice.

As an educator at a university in the United States with no full program for TI training, I have developed two introductory courses (Introduction to Spanish Translation and Introduction to Interpreting Principles, respectively) at my current institution, born out of personal research interests and my formation at the University of Alicante, but also in response to students’ repeated requests. As an academic who finds herself immensely attracted to TI scholarship, I am invested in discovering and articulating training and assessment methods which can be applied both in the university-level classroom (thus attracting potential new interpreters and translators to the field) and at workshops for practicing professionals. Furthermore, close collaboration over the years with the Wisconsin Supreme Court’s Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts has led to two successive appointments as one of the Committee’s interpreter members. By melding policy experience with issues in pedagogy and practice, I hope to continue to engage with academics and practitioners in the ongoing
endeavor of improving language access and ensuring due process for all individuals in the justice system.
CHAPTER TWO: THE THREE MODES OF INTERPRETING AND THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS OF INTERPRETER ABILITY

Before proceeding to describe and analyze the field studies and data sets which form the basis of many of this project’s claims, let us now consider the current state of scholarship of the three modes of interpreting, most especially in relationship to the inherent skills needed to perform them. This chapter’s explorations of theoretical constructs of interpreter ability draw from a combination of recent scholarship in the field of interpreting studies as well as input from professional stakeholders. Its point of departure is the supposition that if the three modes of interpreting can be broken down into their latent competencies, it may be possible to parse out the micro-skills and abilities that are encompassed by each mode. These skill domains can then be compared with the perceived skills and aptitudes necessitated by successful interpreting performance in order to identify which skills and abilities constitute the domain possessed by high-performing court interpreters – information which will provide a key perspective in tandem with perceptions of practicing professionals and empirical analysis of real interpreting performances on CLAC (Consortium for Language Access in the Courts) certification exams.

Much of the recent and relevant scholarship contemplated here falls under the category of current research into interpreter aptitude; however, this chapter aims to create links between what is known about the three modes of interpreting and the latent competencies inherent in the successful performance of each one. Subsequently, the three modes will be considered in light of specific profession-mandated knowledge,
skills, and abilities. Finally, dispositional traits which may be useful in predicting successful interpreting performance will also be explored.

2.1 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF INTERPRETER APTITUDE

To begin, the present discussion of aptitude encompasses two rather related ideas: one refers to *ability*, and the other to a person’s potential for learning a skill which he or she has not yet acquired. In the words of Hanne Skaaden, aptitude is “the ability to reach semantic equivalence under the challenging conditions of the interpreting process in such a manner that the discourse proceeds with a fluency which is not disturbing to the listener” (2007, p. 82). In the realm of psychology, in contrast, aptitude is essentially whatever makes a person ready to learn in a given situation, which is eminently useful for admissions testing. As a forecaster of success with interpreting tasks, the ability to identify apt interpreters is essential for certification exams or other summative assessments which will allow or preclude entry into a given profession.

Furthermore, in discussing latent competencies for interpreting, the present discussion entails isolating and identifying the competencies within the interpreter’s arsenal which he or she brings to bear on an interpreting performance, examining interpreter competencies which traditional interpreter training programs seek to identify and optimize in their entry applicants or in their current students. Because the majority of the current body of scholarship on interpreter ability treats recent studies on selecting apt students for training programs, these studies will form a cornerstone of the present discussion. Indeed, aptitude is closely linked to predictors of successful performance, and examinations of one will inform the other.
To begin, then, it is useful to examine the core characteristics of interpreter aptitude tests and the scholarly justification behind them. The usefulness of surveying what sorts of oft-used aptitude tests are being employed suggests what sorts of performance capabilities are being sought in potential interpreters. Whether they are used to identify talented novices for training programs or to identify those with the skills to function professionally at a minimum level of competence, interpreter aptitude tests tend to be eliminatory in nature (to screen candidates) or they serve as guidance for students and instructors.

Overall, there appears to be broad consensus among scholars regarding exactly what skills are being tested, and this chapter identifies the specific knowledge, skills and abilities which aptitude tests often attempt to capture. Bernstein and Barbier’s 2000 search for a rapid automatic screening test for prospective simultaneous interpreters acknowledged that

[i]t would be convenient if a candidate interested in a career in simultaneous interpreting could take a test that would accurately indicate whether or not that person has the aptitude and skills required to start a course in simultaneous interpreting with a reasonable amount of success (p. 221).

For their admission-to-training exam, although the authors admit that a valid set of potential scores could also be used for monitoring or diagnosing progress throughout training and/or screening for a certification exam, they identify four minimally-required prerequisites for prospective simultaneous interpreters. These include

1. complete mastery of the target language(s)
2. in-depth knowledge of the source language(s)
3. speed of reaction and ability to adapt without delay to speakers, situations, and subjects

4. powers of concentration (Bernstein & Barbier, 2000, p. 224).

Their proposed testing procedure involves three steps: a target language test, a source language test, and translation from source language to target language in direct performance tasks (pp. 224-25). How, though, can prospective simultaneous interpreters demonstrate that they possess such skills, in addition to powers of concentration, and what are the above-referenced “direct performance tasks”?

Essentially, they consist of the following four abilities:

1. ability to closely shadow speech
2. rapid lexical access across languages
3. rapid sequential translation at the sentence level
4. promising skill in the target task itself (Bernstein & Barbier, 2000, p. 234).

While the fourth core ability is not adequately explained, Bernstein and Barbier’s emphasis on cognitive speed and rapid lexical access across languages foreshadows a recurring theme in aptitude studies: that interpreters need to be agile in both processing and production skills.

By way of contrast, in her 1985 article entitled “Screening Potential Interpreters”, Barbara Moser-Mercer approached the selection of students into a graduate conference interpreting program at the Monterrey Institute of International Studies with a ten-week course as opposed to a simple diagnostic exam. After having collected results over

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11 “Close shadowing of speech (the ability to listen and speak simultaneously in the same language in a task of continuous verbatim repetition) is included in this test proposal on the supposition that the inability to do monolingual shadowing may be a reasonable predictor of difficulty with simultaneous interpreting. Empirical data should confirm or disconfirm this limited supposition” (Bernstein & Barbier, 2000, p. 234).
a four-year period, Moser-Mercer found a significant relationship between the type of recommendation issued to students (“recommendation for interpreting”, “qualified recommendation for interpreting”, or “no recommendation for interpreting”) and examination results obtained by them at the end of their first and second (last) years of study. The fully monolingual introductory course was offered in English, and four types of exercises were used in the course: shadowing, dual-task training and memory exercises, paraphrasing, and processing of numbers (Moser-Mercer, 1985, p. 97). Moser-Mercer states that the main criteria utilized for making recommendations to students was “the progress (they) made during the 10-week course towards a level that was considered adequate for beginning simultaneous interpretation courses” (1985, p. 98), but that additional criteria such as command of the English language, pronunciation and enunciation, ability to cope with stress, assertiveness, resilience, and microphone technique (1985, p. 98) also influenced the final recommendation. Moser-Mercer’s adamant conclusion is that

The highly significant results of the study underline the necessity for a comprehensive analysis of a complex skill such as simultaneous interpreting and point to the desirability of observing a student over an extended period of time before issuing a judgment on interpreting potential. Such an extended period of observation not only gives the student a chance to develop according to his own learning abilities, but also allows the teacher/professional to judge the student’s potential with greater accuracy (Moser-Mercer, 1985, p. 100).

While ongoing assessment is probably ideally suited for an educational context, it is unfortunately not an option for high-stakes, summative assessments such as certification exams. Nonetheless, aptitude testing in the area of educational program admissions testing often focuses on determining aptitude for future skills: skills that
candidates have not yet acquired. Timarová and Ungood-Thomas rightly observe that testing candidates on their ability to interpret as a prerequisite for admission into an interpreting program (commonly and frequently done) constitutes a test of current ability, but runs contrary to the idea of aptitude testing for what candidates will be able to do in the future (Timarová & Ungood-Thomas, 2009, p. 229). The authors conclude their discussion of admissions testing by affirming that it would be preferable for researchers to come up with tests that target the appropriate latent constructs (i.e. something inherent in developing a particular interpreting skill) while administering a task that the candidate can be reasonably expected to complete without prior training (pp. 241-42).

If, indeed, experienced interpreters tend to add more information and delete less, process larger quantities of input, give less literal renditions, and function at higher speeds than novice interpreters, how are interpreters with such skills to be identified?

The profound importance of screening candidates was described by Mike Dillinger in a study in which two drastically different populations, consisting of highly experienced conference interpreters and untrained, inexperienced bilinguals were asked to interpret a text and then afterwards to recall elements of it. The difference between years of experience between the two study groups was considerable, with the longer-practicing group having had an average of 8.5 more years of experience. Dillinger’s most surprising finding was that "experience had a weak quantitative effect on interpreting overall, reflecting the fact that the experienced interpreters performed 16.6% more

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12 Interestingly, Etilvia Arjona-Tseng discusses some purely cultural and institutional reasons which can necessitate a highly predictive selection of students. At the Graduate Institute of Translation and Interpreting Studies (GITI) at Fu Jen Catholic University on Taiwan, admission to graduate school implies successful graduation. Here predictive validity serves to preserve a cultural expectation that attrition rates will be very low, in contrast to traditionally high rates in Occidental TI graduate programs. See Arjona-Tseng, 1994.
accurately than the inexperienced bilinguals across the board” (Dillinger, 1994, p. 181).

Dillinger’s findings

provide principled, empirical support for the intuition current in interpreter training programs that selection is of the utmost importance. If interpreting skill is a function more of general text processing ability than of specific training (i.e., the view that “interpreters are born, not made”), then selection is more important than course work. In particular, if 8.5 years’ experience only affords a 17% improvement in accuracy of interpreting, then how much of that is provided by formal training, and how much by experience with the task itself?” (Dillinger, 1994, p. 185).

That selection is of the utmost importance is not polemical, but Dillinger’s assertion that text processing ability (and speed) can trump specific training raises new questions. For certification exams, which aim precisely at identifying individuals who already possess the requisite skills to function professionally, it is even more urgent to foment a body of research which addresses the needs of interpreting stakeholders in all settings to identify candidates with the stamina and the skills to perform in an interpreting context.

While the “nature versus nurture” argument (regarding whether great interpreters are made or whether they are born) is troublesome to some academics, it is interesting to conduct a brief overview of the assessment modalities which are most prevalent in current aptitude tests in order to draw conclusions about what many interpreting stakeholders, especially in the academic community, value. What do they test for, and how do they test? A brief inventory of test types can illuminate such questions, and an exhaustive literature review has shown a remarkable degree of consensus as regards the aforementioned modalities which address areas of knowledge, skills, and personality traits.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
2.2 A Brief Inventory of Aptitude Testing Modalities: Tests, Knowledge, Skills and Dispositional Traits

Predictably, most aptitude assessments for interpreters focus heavily on certain areas of knowledge: most predominantly mastery of one’s mother tongue(s) and foreign language(s). Areas of linguistic knowledge are often assessed by written translation tests and/or oral interviews with the aim of gauging a candidate’s mastery of a range of registers, styles and idioms. General cultural knowledge is also often a focus, although

...In spite of the fact that all trainers agree upon the need for a future interpreter to have a well-rounded education and a keen interest in current affairs, the testing of this parameter usually proves to be extremely difficult and often a candidate fails for not having had enough factual bits at his or her fingertips (Moser-Mercer, 1994, p. 59).

Current events and general knowledge are often tested via interviews or by tests developed for other fields of study such as the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or the GRE (Graduate Record exam). Few institutions have developed oral exams which can test for general culture and knowledge of current affairs.

Likewise, vocabulary is one of the main areas of knowledge often tested, sometimes by means of a cloze test, which requires subjects to restore words omitted from a prepared speech. This type of test is used to evaluate the speed with which candidates make decisions as they measure lexical, syntactic and semantic aspects of language processing (Longley 1989, p. 107). On cloze tests, a candidate has to “perceive the structural and internal relationship of a test and be able to anticipate information, in other words, provide ‘closure’” (Moser-Mercer, 1994, p. 64). Error detection tests, as described by Longley 1989, are often used for similar purposes.
Lexical knowledge as it relates to interpreter aptitude, in fact, is more complex than it may appear at first glance. The 1999 article entitled “Lexical Knowledge and Interpreter Aptitude” by Hanne Skaaden of the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, compared results from screening exams for admission into an interpreter training course at the University of Oslo with students’ final oral exam scores, finding a high correlation between students’ results on a written lexical knowledge test before beginning their course of study and their scores on the final oral exam. When one considers these results in light of Daniel Gile’s Effort Models (which will be introduced further on but which postulate that interpreting requires some sort of mental energy that is only available in a limited supply and that the activity of interpreting may sometimes require more resources than the interpreter has), the results indicate that “those with good lexical knowledge use less energy for lexical access, and thus are left with more resources to handle other aspects of interpreting” (Skaaden, 1999, p. 77). A lighter cognitive load in the interpreter’s brain leads to faster access to lexicon, and less effort retrieving it. This speed and mental agility is a feature of good simultaneous interpreting. While Skaaden readily acknowledges that a high degree of bilingual proficiency constitutes only one possible criterion for examination in interpreter screening tests, the six student interpreters involved in the study were assessed via achievement tests before and after attending a three-and-a-half-month training with tests featuring varied tasks, including a lexical knowledge test designed to test the student’s proficiency in both language directions (in this case, Norwegian and Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian). The basic aim of the entrance exam was to determine the students’ bilingual proficiency skills, although only the lexical knowledge tasks were
considered in the analysis discussed in the article. Skaaden rightly points out that “at the core of every interpreter’s performance there are linguistic units. Therefore, the linguistic aspect should not be ignored in studies on short interval consecutive interpreting” (Skaaden, 1999, p. 81).

Utilizing Barik’s taxonomy (which describes three basic types of shifts between original utterances and their interpreted renditions: namely, additions, omissions and substitutions), students were asked on their entrance exam to translate 50 underlined terms in each of two newspaper articles on public issues with the aim of eliciting their lexical knowledge. Students’ scores on these tasks were rated independently by two bilinguals. With a passing score of 70% on the lexical translation tasks, three students passed (at 88%, 80% and 92% respectively), and three students failed (at 59%, 67% and 48%). Then students’ “frequency of shifts” was also tested in the entry exam, with high and low-achieving divisions remaining the same among the six students. The correlation coefficient between the June oral entry exam and the end-of-course exam, at 0.891, “suggests that the written lexical knowledge test performed in June was a relatively good indicator of these students’ interpreter aptitude as displayed on the oral entrance exam” (Skaaden, 1999, p. 90). Frequency of shifts measurements in both the June and December scores maintained the distribution of three high achievers and three low achievers, with one low achiever not only showing no progress but actually slightly deteriorating.

13 Barik’s taxonomy’s meaning of “shifts” can be likened to the additions, omissions and substitutions leading to substantial distortion between original and interpreted rendering. For entry and end-of-course data used in this study, “the frequency rate ... represents the number of shifts registered for the student for each hundred words of transcribed speaker utterance” (Skaaden, 1999, p. 90). The author adds that “In order to secure scorer reliability, qualitative judgments were carried out independently by two bilinguals who were unfamiliar with the students’ scores on the written lexical knowledge test” (Skaaden, 1999, p. 90).
Skaaden’s study is small but worthy of consideration and replication. For our purposes of discussing interpreter aptitude in relationship to specific skills, Skaaden’s work also contains two other points of merit: first, that high achievers on the semantic equivalence tests also demonstrated better control over extra-semantic variables; and second, that the author found the 70% cut-off rate14, the very same standard cut-off score recommended by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, to be reasonable and appropriate, stating that

the requirement of 70% acceptable answers set as the limit for passing the written pre-test is a relatively good indicator of the students’ interpreter potential. That is to say, those who did not meet this limit also were not able to improve their interpreting performance during this short (14-week) training course to an extent that they reached an acceptable level of interpreting quality (Skaaden, 1999, p. 95).

To be sure, those who administer screening tests wrestle with many challenges when endeavoring to measure even those interpreting skills which are considered to be quite easily quantifiable, such as lexical fluency or speed of comprehension. However, as in the case of the above-mentioned study, occasionally the line between what can be classified as knowledge and what can be labeled as a skill is more nebulous than one would desire. Such is the case with lexical aptitude, tied closely as it is to memory, retrieval and cognition in general.

Beyond general areas of human knowledge, interpreters are asked to prove their level of skill in several key areas which relate directly to their cognitive abilities. The first skill which is absolutely germane is that of comprehension, which combines analysis of content and synthesis of information, and is intimately tied to linguistic competence.

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14 See Chapter Five for a more detailed history of Consortium cut-off scores.
According to Moser-Mercer, it consists of “looking beyond the immediate message and evaluating the communicative setting as a whole” (1994, p. 59). Comprehension is often tested via written exams which test competence in one’s A language, comprehension in one’s B and C languages, and accuracy, analysis and synthesis in general. The speed of an interpreter’s comprehension and production abilities are often tested by increasing the pace and/or complexity of an incoming message, with sight translation frequently being utilized as a vehicle to assess accuracy.

Some institutions rely on memory tests, such as the Wechsler memory scale (Longley 1989, p. 107), to test candidate’s short-term memories. Nonetheless, Moser-Mercer warns that care should be taken in the selection of memory tests, that they should be carefully evaluated for their appropriateness in testing interpreting candidates, and that

> [t]esting memory for complete ideas and logical relations should take precedence over testing memory for isolated facts, although it cannot be denied that interpreters have ample opportunity to process somewhat isolated facts such as numbers and enumerations (1994, p. 60).

Another essential skill which is often evaluated is simultaneity of listening and speaking, tested on a progressive scale of difficulty for interpreting with semantic shadowing (as one cannot shadow what one does not understand) on the lower end of the continuum, followed by paraphrasing, and then simultaneous interpreting itself. Russo and Salvador believe paraphrasing to be “a task as close as possible to actual simultaneous interpreting which involves connected discourse processing” (2004, p. 410).

Finally, novice interpreters are often evaluated on public speaking and delivery skills, participating in oral interviews which allow assessors to gauge aspects of each candidate’s voice, diction, projection, assertiveness and even stress tolerance. Stress
tolerance, in fact, is the dispositional trait which is most often mentioned as being key to an interpreter’s success, often in the context of simultaneous and conference interpreting. While Longley proposed booth tests to gauge how candidates reacted to pitfalls, microphone use, and booth stress in general (1989, p. 107), Moser-Mercer insists that performance under stress must be observed over time and that interpreter candidates must be given a chance to adjust to the stresses involved in interpreting. Indeed, such stresses

... may have multiple origins: the speaker’s speed of delivery and accent, the difficulty of the topic, poor working conditions (sound, lighting, view, ventilation, etc.), the interpreter’s inadequate preparation, his or her physical condition on a particular day, his/her relation with booth- and team-mates, the number of consecutive meetings and the number of hours worked, etc. (1994, p. 61).

There is no debate about the fact that a certain level of resilience is needed in order to manage long-term exposure to strenuous working situations and, in fact, Longley advocates using oral interviews as a means to assess a candidate’s

relaxation under interview stress, receptivity to criticism, aggressivity or passivity, ability to listen, precision and directness in replies or evasiveness and vagueness, ability to bluff, and ... over-confidence or lack of self-confidence (1989, p. 107).

While Moser-Mercer affirms that exercises in sight translation also test for stress tolerance, projection and assertiveness, (1994, p. 63), Bontempo and Napier affirm that most institutions agree that an interview is a vital component (2009, p. 249) due to the multitude of skills which can be assessed.

While much scholarship describing aptitude tests used as entry exams is relevant to any systematic search for a predictor mode of interpreting, one caveat identified by Bontempo and Napier, however, lies in an acknowledgement of the fact that some
scholars express concern about the weak predictive validity of program admission testing, emphasizing the diagnostic nature of tests which are aimed at assessing “readiness” for interpreter training, but which cannot determine a candidate’s probability of success in an interpreter education program (2009, p. 249). Bontempo and Napier, although scholars of sign language interpreting, are fully versed in recent scholarship regarding spoken language interpreting, and they emphasize that while

... there appears to be general agreement about some of the skills needed in a candidate that may be assessable by an ability test at program admission (such as knowledge of working languages), less agreement and substantially less research supports factors of aptitude that may be predictive of interpreter performance. Which personality / affective factors (such as anxiety, motivation, stress-resistance, emotional sensitivity, and confidence, among others) and cognitive abilities (for example, intelligence, memory capacity, processing speed, attention span etc.) are predictive of individual performance...?... How exactly can aptitude for learning the complex skills required in interpreting be assessed in an efficient and effective manner...? (Bontempo & Napier, 2009, p. 251).

How, indeed? While the present discussion has already alluded to stress tolerance as one of the most important personality traits that an interpreter can possess, and relatedly, resilience has been identified as an integral tool in stress management, the fact is that one’s ability to manage long-term exposure to a strenuous and cognitively demanding interpreting situation is an important performance and competence indicator worthy of long-term testing. From the perspective of an evaluator, when subjective or qualitative judgment calls are involved, the challenge of identifying competent interpreters is even greater. It may be even more challenging to measure or empirically evaluate the dispositional traits which could poise an interpreting candidate for success on a criterion-referenced, summative assessment such as a certification exam.
While Dr. David Gerver’s application of various standard personality tests to students at Stirling University resulted in traits that were largely negative, the main common factor being a high level of neuroticism (Longley, 1989, p. 106), there are few systematic and evidence-based studies available which focus on personality traits or dispositional attributes of interpreters. Notwithstanding a handful of informal and non-scientific contemplations of applying Myers-Briggs personality tests or the ancient Enneagram to a given population of interpreters, Nancy Schweda Nicholson’s “Personality Characteristics of Interpreter Trainees: The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)” stands as the only reasonably evidence-based study of its kind, although Nicholson states that the MBTI is not to be viewed as a replacement for traditional screening test, but rather that it could comprise one component of a broader examination system as “it has been demonstrated that particular careers tend to attract certain personality types” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 111). While Nicholson conducted a thorough review of interpretation literature regarding personality, summarizing many observations of the tremendous stress of the job and the need for interpreters to be able to exert strong self-control, other scholars “… have observed that interpreters are… ‘high-strung’, ‘temperamental’, ‘touchy’ and ‘prima donna’ types” (from Henderson 1980, p. 222, in Nicholson, 2005, p. 113). In spite of such unflattering epithets, it is extroversion which is the characteristic mentioned most frequently when talking about interpreters, who are “thought to prefer variety, to be tolerant, versatile, adaptable, and open-minded. As might be surmised, they are expected to be articulate and have a ‘knack for communicating’” (Nicholson, 2005, p. 113.).
In her 2005 study, after a detailed explanation of Myers-Briggs personality types, Nicholson describes a study of her own in which 28 students enrolled in and finished a one-year conference interpretation program at either the University of Delaware or the University of Hawaii. Another study group included trainees who completed a seven-day intensive seminar in primarily simultaneous interpretation at Vancouver Community College, and still other study groups included 19 government trainees who participated in a five-day intensive course in consecutive interpretation and were employed at the time as “language specialists”, nine participants coded as “not finish” trainees who began the one-year program at Hawaii or Delaware but did not complete course of studies, and then finally a group of 56 “Hawaii Applicants” made up of individuals who took a screening exam which includes the MBTI at Hawaii but did not enroll in the program (Nicholson, 2005, p. 118).

Nicholson found that interpretation attracts all personality types and that at least one subject appears in each of the 16 categories, concluding that “it appears that the profession may offer opportunities for all personality types to exercise their preferred ways of interacting, deciding and being” (2005, p. 136). One extremely significant finding compared personality types in the general population to those of the interpreters analyzed. In the general population, approximately 60% of males are “Thinkers” (represented by their arrogance as well as their ability to concentrate, analyze, and to withstand pressure) and 65% of females are “Feelers” (considered to be sensitive, harmony-seeking, and successful at working well as members of a team). However, in the sample studied by Nicholson, females outnumbered males about four to one, yet “Thinking” types predominated. She concludes, then, by saying that
... most of the predominantly female participants in the current study display a preference for impersonal, logical analysis as well as content and ideas ("head") as opposed to focusing on traditional feminine, subjective values and the promotion of group harmony ("heart"). Based on the limited scope of this study, it is interesting to note that the current sample includes a great number of “Thinking” females. This result is not a surprising one, given the demands of the interpretation profession. The fact that there are just about equal numbers of Extraverts\textsuperscript{15} and Introverts goes against conventional wisdom in terms of peoples’ off-the-cuff impressions of interpreter personalities (2005, p. 137).

Nicholson herself affirms that while having the personality profiles of interpreter trainees is of great interest, she is confident that skills such as first and second language abilities are far more important than personality type for screening purposes. Nonetheless, interpreter personality represents a largely unexplored territory with many opportunities for further study as we aim to isolate factors which play a role in professional and personal development over time, as well as effects on processing and organizational behavior.

While dispositional traits and the overall body of knowledge and skills considered to be desirable or necessary by interpreting stakeholders are all essential to any systematic search for predictors of aptitude, the Consortium exam, like most other criterion-referenced, task-authentic assessment tools, relies on the information revealed by performances on the three modes of interpreting in order to identify competent court interpreters. For that reason, each mode of interpreting in turn will be explored in order to learn which latent constructs of interpreter competency are inherent to their successful performances.

\textsuperscript{15} Nicholson acknowledges that the most frequent dictionary spelling of this word is “extrovert”. However, because Jung used the spelling “extavert”, Nicholson says that “most people who work in the field today” have adopted his spelling variant (2005, p. 113).
2.3 SIGHT TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETER ABILITY

With an eye to exploring sight translation in search of what its successful performance can reveal about interpreter aptitude in general, an exhaustive literature review of the mode of sight translation was carried out for the 2010 Wisconsin perception study, providing an overview of the current state of research in the field. The paucity of scholarship on the subject is notable, however. Even in 1991, Barbara Moser-McCoy lamented feeling “not really defeated by the wealth of literature on the subject of sight translation... and... I had to go far afield to unearth a few relevant articles” (1991, p. 159). Some twenty years later, the situation appears not to have changed dramatically. Recent scholarship has begun to explore task definition and the teaching methodology of sight translation, but the modes of simultaneous and consecutive still seem to hold sway.

Sight translation comes in several forms and under a variety of names, but in its most basic definition, it refers to the oral reformulation of a written text into another language for a listener, and it is usually performed with little preparation time. Like other modes of interpreting, the first version is the final version: there is no possibility of subsequent revision.

Holly Mikkelsen sums up sight translation as follows: “The sight translator reads a phrase and grasps its meaning, generates a target-language version, and expresses that version orally while scanning ahead to the next phrase or unit of meaning and beginning the cycle again” (1994, p. 382). This “scanning ahead” hints at the multi-tasking nature of sight translation, which requires intense concentration, specific skills and accuracy. Indeed, sight translation “demands the activation of a complex combination of mental...
operations, in which refined linguistic and cognitive skills, general and specialist knowledge as well as careful attention to contextual rules come into play” (Loreto Sampaio, 2007, p. 65). While the complexity of the task and its cognitive load will be addressed later on in this chapter, let us consider a definition that aligns sight translation somewhat with performance.

In her 1999 article entitled “The Role of Reading in Sight Translation: Implications for Teaching”, Claudia Angelelli draws readers’ attention to sight translation’s objective of sounding as if the interpreter were merely reading a document written in the target language and illustrates this idea thus:

Like accomplished musicians who play an apparently effortless version of a piece they have never laid eyes on, interpreters are actually drawing upon years of training and experience to perform this feat. The end product should be both faithful to the original text and pleasing to the ear (that is, in free-flowing, natural-sounding language) (Angelelli, 1991, p. 27 from González, Vásquez & Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 401).

With sight translation, delivery matters. Public speaking skills come into play, including eye contact, voice projection, clear enunciation, good posture, and smooth pacing. Prosodic features such as tone and hesitation, although certainly important in all three modes of interpreting, present a special challenge to the sight translator who must simultaneously confront potential interference from the written text.

Amparo Jiménez Ivars and Amparo Hurtado Albir, two of the most recent and active scholars to dedicate serious attention to sight translation, consider ST to be “una modalidad híbrida” (Jiménez Ivars & Hurtado Albir, 2003, p. 48), inhabiting a translational purgatory of sorts. It is similar to translation because of the existence of a
written text which serves as the translational action’s point of departure, but it is similar to interpreting because the rendition is oral. The oral rendition must be clear and immediately understood by the listener, constituting a real and immediate communicative act, to be heard, not read... and it is precisely because “[el] traductor-intérprete comparte el contexto temporal y espacial con los participantes en la situación comunicativa y la interacción es inmediata” (Jiménez Ivars & Hurtado Albir, 2003, p. 49) that Jiménez and Hurtado place sight translation closer to interpreting.

Anne Martin has come to the same conclusion. Additionally, she describes the dangers posed by the presence of the written text:

... the original text has all the characteristics of a translation, whereas the final product has the demands of an interpretation, namely instant understanding and reformulation of cognitive content. The added difficulty here is that, whereas in interpreting the stimulus is purely auditive, thus making it easier to grasp the cognitive content, in sight translation, the text remains physically present, and therefore there is a great danger of the structure of the original deforming the final rendering, mainly through linguistic interference (1993, p. 399).

Martin and other scholars feel that the “pull” of the written original represents perhaps the greatest obstacle standing between students, or less experienced interpreters, and a natural-sounding target rendering. In fact, in the study described in her 1991 article “Sight Translation and Human Information Processing”, Barbara Moser-Mercer’s main goal was to compare students and professional interpreters with regard to their approach to sight translation. Based on her results and on her own teaching experience, as well as observations of professional colleagues, Moser-Mercer concludes that

students (beginners in particular) tend to assign a semantic and referential interpretation to each word as soon as possible as the words are encountered.
from left to right. Experienced interpreters would adopt a non-linear approach, gathering semantic information on a subject, predicate and object, for example, before beginning with their translation and supplementing the initial information as they go along. In short, their approach is meaning-driven (Moser-Mercer, 1991, p. 161).

Experienced, professional interpreters are more adept at shifting back and forth between written and oral forms of discourse, while students or novice sight translators still often feel confined by the original written text.

In the classification system proposed by Jiménez and Hurtado, sight translation is essentially broken down into its communicative function and its strategic or utilitarian functions. Its sole communicative function is as one of the three modes of interpreting. In addition to its utilization as one of the three principle modes of interpreting, sight translation is also sometimes a means to an end: a strategy in and of itself, be it translational or pedagogical, representing a sound translational strategy in which the goal is a written text to be read, not the production of an oral text that will be heard at the same moment as the “translation” takes place.

Theorists such as Martin and Agrifoglio concur that for many scholars, sight translation is “just a pedagogical exercise for getting started in the techniques of consecutive interpreting (CI) and simultaneous interpreting (SI), an exercise by which interpreter trainees can learn to react quickly and improve their oral skills” (Agrifoglio, 2004, p. 43). Used as training exercises for simultaneous interpreting, “[l]os estudiantes de interpretación aprenden a leer, analizar, traducir y reformular oralmente a gran velocidad sin pausas para resolver dudas” (Jiménez Ivars & Hurtado Albir, 2003, p. 54).
Wilhelm Weber, in his 1990 article “The Importance of Sight Translation in an Interpreter Training Program”, which focuses on the role of ST in the training of conference interpreters, believes strongly in the use of sight translation for interpreter training. He posits that once student interpreters have researched the conference topic at hand and have compiled the necessary glossaries, sight translation is an excellent tool to help interpreters assimilate technical terms, in this way developing instantaneous translation “reflexes” which allow them to comfortably, quickly and naturally employ them. Additionally, sight translation provides rehearsal opportunities to students, allowing for a “dry run” before the actual conference; and finally, ST helps to develop speed-reading techniques. Mostly, however, Weber sees ST as “an idea tool for teaching students to read their notes smoothly and naturally” (Weber, 1990, p. 47), analyzing and understanding difficult texts and thus helping student interpreters to avoid halting or hesitation in their delivery.

The use of sight translation as a training tool for simultaneous interpreters does come under some scrutiny, however, by Maurizio Viezzi. In a small study measuring information retention after carrying out several tasks such as listening, reading, simultaneous interpreting, and sight translation, Viezzi explores the “depth of processing” theory (advanced by Craik and Lockhart, and later Lambert) “in which greater depth implies a greater degree of semantic and cognitive analysis” (Viezzi, 1990, p. 55)\(^\text{16}\). What Viezzi discovered in this empirical study is that information retention

\(^{16}\) Taking this theory one step further, Viezzi posits the idea that information retention “is inversely proportional to the degree of morphosyntactic transformation rendered necessary by the translation process from one language into the other. The greater degree of transformation required, the lower the information retention (Viezzi, 1990, p. 59). This explains lower information retention between languages from two
rates after sight translation were lower than after simultaneous interpreting, meaning that the sight translator “need not process information very deeply as it remains constantly available to him, while the simultaneous interpreter relies on a deep analysis of the message, which essentially retains a semantic trace with surface structures immediately fading from memory” (Moser-Mercer, 1991, p. 164). Logically, then, one of Viezzi’s main conclusions is that it may not be justifiable to use ST as a training method for the acquisition of simultaneous interpreting techniques, and that different teaching approaches should be used. He makes the case that the more tasks involved in a task performance, the lower the retention rates. In his study, sight translation had the lowest information retention rates: lower than simultaneous interpreting. Viezzi expected these findings to surprise some, who may consider sight translation to be a simpler task. In any case, he has made a strong case for positing that ST and simultaneous are by no means parallel processes, and thus require different pedagogical strategies. Moser-Mercer concurs, speculating that “in contrast to simultaneous interpretation, sight translation operates on a distinct visual (input) and oral (output) channels and that the two are separate enough to prevent interference” (1991, p. 163).

One pervasive sentiment throughout sight translation scholarship, however, is a belief that sight translation does indeed have an important place in TI training programs. Claudia Angelelli (1999) articulated the complexity involved in reading in sight translation, and then called for a reconsideration of the quantity of time allocated to sight translation in the curricula, the quality of instruction provided, and the way it is assessed. She said that more research is needed to demonstrate the benefits of explicit

different families (German and Italian, in the study) and languages from the same family (in this case, the two Romance languages of Spanish and Italian).
and strategy-based instruction in sight translation. Anne Martin of the Escuela Universitaria de Traducción e Interpretación (E.U.T.I.) in Granada teaches ST because she expects graduates to need to be able to perform it in their professional life, but does state that more research is needed as regards a methodology of teaching sight translation.

As regards assessment and aptitude testing, sight translation is utilized frequently as an evaluative tool in two different sorts of circumstances: in aptitude / entrance tests to university-level TI programs, and in certification exams for people seeking formal qualifications. For court interpreting in the United States, all three major examination bodies include sight translation portions. It is used at the state level by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, at the federal level in the FCICE (Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination), and it is tested as well in the process of obtaining the credential offered by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), called the National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification, or NJITCE.

Furthermore, ST is used as an aptitude or entrance test in some university-level TI programs. Claudia Angelelli goes so far as to suggest that “Some even believe that an exam in ST is a better predicting device than any other task they can require from an examinee” for admission to a program (Angelelli, 1999, p. 27). Unfortunately, this fascinating suggestion is not further developed nor is it substantiated by other scholars.

Nonetheless, sight translation, particularly in combination with a previously provided facilitation of a longer text to provide contextualization, “is a very good combination of
short-term memory testing and an assessment of the other aptitudes a simultaneous interpreter must possess” (Alexieva, 1993, n.p.).

Cognitive load, additionally, constitutes an aspect of sight translation which is often ignored or under-examined. Marjorie Agrifoglio carried out an interesting study of the performance of six professional interpreters, comparing their performances in sight translation, simultaneous interpreting and consecutive interpreting with the goal of identifying particular constraints and problems. What she proves very effectively in her 2004 article is that sight translation “emerges as a complex and unique technique, whose cognitive demands on the interpreter are by no means less than those of simultaneous and consecutive” (Agrifoglio, 2004, p. 43).

The cognitive complexity of the interpreting task in general is widely accepted. Daniel Gile, intrigued by observations of professional interpreters who made a surprising number of errors in speech segments containing few or no apparent difficulties, tried to understand the reasons why even seasoned professionals made as many mistakes as they did. To that end, he set out to develop the Effort Model, first applied to simultaneous interpreting. Gile’s Effort Models are some of the most useful and applicable theoretical models when it comes to breaking down the efforts used by interpreters in the carrying out of the interpretative task. One of his preliminary and yet far-reaching acknowledgements is that “one of the most striking and challenging phenomena in interpreting is its fundamental difficulty for the interpreter” (Gile, 1995, p. 159). And yet, how do we explain this difficulty, how can we train novice interpreters to overcome it, and how can we identify people who are already poised to skillfully interpret?
The basis of the model originated in two ideas: namely, that

[i]nterpretation requires some sort of mental 'energy' that is only available in limited supply... (and that) [i]nterpretation takes up almost all of this mental energy, and sometimes requires more than is available, at which times performance deteriorates (Gile, 1995, p. 161).

Performance problems occur not only in fast, informationally dense, or highly technical speeches, but also in clear, slow speech segments in which no particular obstacles can be detected. Moreover, errors and omissions are found not only in students’ interpretations, but also in the work of seasoned professionals.

Within Gile's Effort Models, sight translation consists of a Reading Effort (which replaces the Listening and Analysis Effort present for consecutive and simultaneous) in addition to a Production Effort. The Reading Effort has to be carried out almost instantaneously, under pressure and with minimal preparation time. The Production Effort equates with the output part of interpretation. Additionally, however, Agrifoglio suggests that there is also some Memory Effort involved in sight translation as well, due to overlap with the Production Phase: in other words, the interpreter produces a target language version of one sentence while reading the next. She states:

Although in ST the interpreter can control his/her rhythm of perception, smooth delivery is possible only when s/he starts reformulating while still reading. Moreover, syntactic differences between languages may force the interpreter to store some information in memory until it can be appropriately inserted in the target-language speech (Agrifoglio, 2004, p. 45).

Loreto Sampaio’s additional clarification of the importance of the Memory Effort in sight translation helps to elucidate its complexity. In spite of the fact that the text is right in front of the interpreter’s eyes, he or she cannot resort to “external support” elements such as glossaries, dictionaries, the internet, etc., but rather will be limited to solving
immediate problems by using “internal support” factors, such as “the retrieving of previous information stored in long-term memory, familiarity with terminology and phrasing, an ability to focus on meaning rather than words and... excellent text analysis and reading comprehension skills” (Loreto Sampaio, 2007, p. 66). The main difficulty with ST is not just that the source text is written, but rather lies in the coordination of all the Efforts (R, M and P) while struggling against visual interference.

In addition to explorations of the cognitive complexity, hybrid nature, and Efforts involved in successful sight translation, Roseann Dueñas González, Victoria Vásquez, and Holly Mikkelson, authors of the venerated *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy, and Practice*, indicate that the skills required for the successful performance of sight translation consist of full command of working languages, public speaking skills, and mental agility (1991, p. 407), as seen in Figure 1. While the
aforementioned skills are not mentioned for the other two modes of interpreting, they may have been assumed.

These reflections upon the cognitive complexity of sight translation as well as its myriad functions and uses inspired the Wisconsin perception study detailed in Chapter Three, and there are many aspects of sight translation which can and should be investigated in future studies.

2.4 Consecutive Interpreting and Interpreter Ability

In consecutive interpreting (CI), the interpreter speaks after the source-language speaker has finished speaking, listening and taking notes as the speaker progresses through his or her discourse. When the speaker pauses or finishes speaking, the interpreter then renders the message into the target language. Sometimes classified as either “short CI” or “long CI”, in short CI, the interpreter relies on his or her memory as each segment is brief enough to memorize. It is in long CI that the interpreter takes notes in order to aid in the retention of longer messages. In court interpreting, the consecutive mode is used “primarily for testimony given on the witness stand or in depositions, and for the questioning of the defendant by the judge (at arraignment, sentencing, or similar situations)” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelsen, 1991 p. 379), and it is considered by some theorists to be the most important mode of interpreting in this professional context. Part of the reason lies in the fact that

[while in conference interpreting, some approximation is admissible (such as rendering “at the beginning of November” for “November 2-3”), in a court of law, complete faithfulness to the original and precision in the second language rendition is of the utmost importance. The change in a date or even the hour at which something occurred can be pivotal in a court of law. It is important to
realize that taking notes during oral proceedings adds to the load of cognitive processing being carried out by an interpreter at a given moment in time and is an additional source of distraction from the task of attending completely to the utterance to be transferred into the target language (Giambruno, 1997, p. 295).

According to Daniel Gile, consecutive interpreting is performed in two stages: the listening and note-taking phase, and the speech production phase. Gile’s formula for phase 1 (1995, p. 178) is as follows: Phase 1 = L + N + M + C, the explanations of which are highly illuminating in terms of the latent competencies revealed. To begin, the “L” refers to the Listening and Analysis or Comprehension Effort, defined as consisting of “all comprehension-oriented operations, from the analysis of the sound waves carrying the source-language speech which reach the interpreter’s ears, through the identification of words, to the final decisions about the ‘meaning’ of the utterance” (Gile, 1995, p. 162). The interpreter must expend energy in order to understand the underlying logic of each utterance in order to be able to cope with variability in how words are pronounced from one speaker to another. Gile identifies speech recognition as it occurs in interpreting as a non-automatic process (1995, p. 63), meaning that it is a process that requires attention and cannot be routinized or automated. In contrast to machines, humans have the ability to disambiguate and solve problems that arise from speakers’ “linguistic errors, mistakes in substance, and derivations from standard language and logic” (Gile, 1995, p. 163).

The “N” Effort which takes place in phase 1 of consecutive interpreting refers to note-taking, and is meant to bolster short-term memory deficits. The “M” Effort corresponds to Short-Term Memory Operations Efforts. Gile explains that short-term memory operations, lasting up to a few seconds long, occur throughout an interpretative act
(1995, p. 168). Additionally, he affirms that “clearly, short-term memory operations fall under the category of non-automatic operations because they include the storage of information for later use” (1995, p. 169). In contrast to the Memory Effort used with the simultaneous mode, the Memory Effort in consecutive

is associated with the time between the moment information is heard and the moment it is written down, or between the moment it is heard and the moment the interpreter decides not to write it down, or again between the moment it is heard and the moment it disappears from memory; in simultaneous, it is associated with the time which elapses between the moment it is heard and the moment it is reformulated, deliberately omitted or lost” (Gile, 1995, p. 179).

The “C” (or Coordination) Effort is the effort expended in pulling the other, previous efforts together and managing them. Gile’s formula for Phase 2 of consecutive interpreting looks thus: Phase 2 = Rem + Read + P, with Rem signifying Remembering, the Read Effort referring to note-reading, and the “P” referring to the Production Effort. The Rem component refers to efforts devoted to recalling the successive parts of the original speech, and is therefore different from the short-term M component (1995, p. 179), and the Production Effort

is the name given to the output part of interpretation... In consecutive interpretation, there are two kinds of production. During a first phase, the interpreter listens to the speech and produces notes; during the second phase, he or she produces the target-language speech (Gile, 1995, p. 165).

Indeed, Gile considers speaking to be problem-solving behavior, explaining that an interpreter’s search for lexical units, his or her constant syntactic decision-making, lends the interpreter time to decide “how to steer the sentence at a syntactic junction” (Gile, 1995, p. 165-66).
The authors of *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation* also break down the consecutive mode by latent competencies, creating a construct of interpreter ability in this mode which quite closely mirrors Gile’s. Dueñas González, Vásquez and Mikkelson construe the consecutive to be comprised of listening, prediction, memory, note-taking and situational control. Listening, for the *Fundamentals* authors, is described as “consciously listening to process input selectively... (and is) the most alert, deliberate form of listening” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 380). This extremely attentive, concentrated listening is followed by a process of predicting what is likely to come next, although interpreters are warned to beware of intuitive leaps in order that the source language speaker’s message not become contaminated by “his or her own biases, expectations, and knowledge... (or) distortion can easily result” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 382).

Similar to Gile’s short-term Memory Effort,

... the interpreter stores the SL (source language) message in memory and processes the message for comprehension by activating the relevant modules and schemata. These schemata contain the meanings associated with the SL terms in the message, and probably the appropriate TL (target language) terms as well. Once the interpreter has formulated a proposed TL version of the message, he or she checks it against the SL version originally stored in memory, and if the two versions match, the interpreter utters the TL version, inserting the paralinguistic elements where appropriate (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 383).

The *Fundamentals* explanation of the Memory Effort hints at the complicated cognitive maneuvers involved in information processing and indeed, note-taking is often part and parcel of consecutive interpreting, certainly in court interpreting where accuracy of numbers and dates is crucial. Research findings regarding note-taking are
contradictory, with some studies finding that note-taking may interfere with listening comprehension while others conclude the opposite. Interestingly, speed of delivery may be a deciding factor. The entire object of notes is to supplement memory, and notes can be perceived as external storage mechanisms wherein the interpreter uses notes as a means of reproducing and storing knowledge for later consultation. On the contrary, notes can be examined via the note-taking process itself, where it is seen as an encoding mechanism that facilitates retention (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 387).

Finally, the last major skill described in Fundamentals as being essential for the court interpreter in his or her execution of a successful consecutive rendition involves situational control, sometimes referred to in healthcare interpreting as “controlling the flow” of an encounter. Essentially, although court interpreters are trained in the art of being neutral, impartial, and unobtrusive, even the most experienced interpreter may have occasion to need to interrupt testimony, ask for repetition, or seek clarification of some kind. Such situational management skills are acquired over time, and experienced interpreters know how to implement them with the least possible disruption of the flow of communication. Overall, the Fundamentals authors affirm that “CI (consecutive interpreting) involves complex mental tasks of language perception, storage, retrieval, and generation... Because of this complexity, many interpreters consider CI more difficult than simultaneous interpretation (SI)” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 379).

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17 The court interpreter’s “invisibility” has not begun to be vigorously challenged yet in current scholarship, although such is not the case in the field of medical interpreting as new models for the role(s) of healthcare interpreters begin to emerge.
Like sight translation and the simultaneous mode, all three major examination bodies which credential court interpreters include consecutive interpreting exercises on their assessment instruments. Curiously, though, scholarship which treats current practices for aptitude testing in interpreter training programs barely mentions the consecutive mode while, in contrast, novice candidates are often asked to perform sight translation and/or precursors to simultaneous, such as shadowing or paraphrasing. In fact, some theorists postulate that training in simultaneous should be postponed, asserting that

[0]nce the student can work well in consecutive, they will be able to integrate all the principles they have already learned and transfer them to simultaneous interpretation. The kind of interpreting techniques they will be consolidating during consecutive interpretation training will equip them to work well in the booth. CI interpretation not only trains students in a mode of interpretation: it also prepares them to interpret intelligently in simultaneous” (Seleskovitch & Leder, 1995, in Rejšková, 1999, p. 42).
Rejšková’s study was based on the assumption that skills required for CI may not provide enough diagnostic information about whether or not students will have the “extra” skills need to perform SI, which were identified as acoustic and intellectual in nature. SI skills are classified as acoustic because in the simultaneous mode, output is always speaker-paced, necessitating constant adaptation to external stimuli. Additionally, the simultaneous interpreter has to listen and speak at the same time (1999, p. 43). Because the simultaneous mode boasts such an omnipresent role in discussions of interpreter aptitude, the following discussion will examine this mode’s skill domain as well as place it within the panorama of current explorations of interpreter ability.

2.5 Simultaneous Interpreting and Interpreter Ability

Simultaneous interpreting is considered to have come onto the radar at the end of World War II at the Nuremberg Trials, at which none of the 48 interpreters recruited to cover the four trial languages of English, French, German and Russian had had previous training in its use. In fact, only six of the interpreter candidates had had any sort of interpreter training at all, and upon undergoing an aptitude test of language skills, general cultural knowledge, and mock experiences in the booth, of the 400 some candidates tested, only 5% showed the ability to handle simultaneous interpreting (Mackintosh, 1999, p. 68). Simultaneous interpreting, then, has long been considered to be a highly specialized mode requiring composure, mental agility, excellent passive and active language skills, as well as solid public speaking and delivery skills. In a court of law, it is used “to keep a defendant who is not proficient in the language of the court
abreast of all that is transpiring during the proceedings when he is not actively involved” (Giambruno, 1997, p. 298).

A number of trainers and scholars involved in the selection of interpreter trainees discuss their search for those propensities in candidates which can be developed through training and over time. In her discussion of selection of students for the postgraduate course at the Polytechnic of Central London, Patricia Longley says that

The Conference Interpreter (CI) is neither a freak nor a genius, but an individual who either instinctively or through training uses his or her knowledge of languages in a certain way and whether he does so successfully or not depends on a number of personal characteristics and skills, as is the case in most professions (1989, p. 105).

Be they freaks or geniuses, talented simultaneous interpreters who are “naturals” seem to be quite rare, making it all the more desirable to identify strong candidates, whether in the case of admissions testing or on credentialing exams geared toward entry into one of the specialized fields of interpreting. To that end, Longley and Gerver defined seven aptitudes for conference interpreters:

1) Excellent knowledge of A, B, C languages and cultures.
2) The ability to grasp rapidly and to convey the essential meaning of discourse, irrespective of the language spoken.
3) A memory which recalls the links between logical sequences of discourse.
4) The ability to convey information with confidence, coupled with a pleasant delivery.
5) Broad general knowledge and interests, a curiosity and willingness to acquire new information.

6) The ability to work as (a) member of a team.

7) The ability to work under stress for long periods (1989, p. 106).

Furthermore, in addition to also constituting one of the three modes of interpreting tested on traditional certification exams, Europe’s long-standing tradition of training in conference interpreting explains the way the scales of scholarship tip towards simultaneous when it comes to theory about specific modes. Nonetheless, it is within the annals of simultaneous scholarship that the argument of “nature versus nurture” most often rears its head. Indeed, according to Bernstein and Barbier’s 2000 article entitled “Design and development parameters for a rapid automatic screening test for prospective simultaneous interpreters”, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) Training Committee stated that

There are those who claim that one does not become a conference interpreter, that it is a gift that can be perfected, but, if it is not there, the best training in the world will be of no avail (‘interpreters are born not made’)18” (Bernstein & Barbier, 2000, p. 221).

If one believes this, it would certainly behoove us all to be very concerned with finding a reliable set of criteria by which we may know for whom “it is there” lest time be wasted training those for whom it is not. Nonetheless, Bernstein and Barbier define the “knowledge and attitudes” required for conference (simultaneous) interpreting as follows:

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18 See MacKintosh 1999 for an argument to the contrary.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
1. **Knowledge**
   a. complete mastery of the active (target) language(s), i.e. the language(s) into which the interpreter works
   b. in-depth knowledge of the passive (source) language(s), i.e. the language(s) from which the interpreter works
   c. university degree or equivalent
   d. sound general knowledge and understanding of current affairs

2. **Aptitudes**
   a. ability to analyze and construe facts; intuition
   b. speed of reaction and ability to adapt without delay to speakers, situations and subjects
   c. powers of concentration
   d. above average physical and nervous staying-power
   e. pleasant voice and public-speaking skills
   f. high degree of intellectual curiosity
   g. intellectual integrity
   h. tact and diplomacy (2000, p. 222).

While the supposition that a university degree or equivalent may surprise Americans accustomed to performance-based assessment for interpreters, the AIIC's old list does indeed contemplate the commonly-referenced intellectual, linguistic and fortitude-of-character traits which are so prevalent in discussions of interpreter aptitude. However, while the authors appear to be quite firmly convinced that “it appears that if a candidate does not possess the required aptitudes, no training will enable that person to acquire them” (Bernstein & Barbier, 2000, p. 222), most training programs do not have the luxury of excluding all but the best candidates, instead opting for ways to optimize the human capital at their disposal.
Interestingly, the authors Bernstein and Barbier only address “the two modes of interpreting, consecutive and simultaneous” (2000, p. 223), excluding sight translation completely. They feel no apparent compunction about positing simultaneous as seemingly the most challenging mode. According to the authors, simultaneous interpreting involves a high degree of simultaneity of language perception / comprehension and production. Like other interpreting tasks, SI requires the ability to understand accurately in real time a range of dialects and registers of the source language and to speak the target language fluently and accurately over a range of registers on general and selected specific topics. But in addition, SI requires the ability to perform both components simultaneously. In SI, the interpreter must keep listening to what the speaker says in the source language (SL) while at the same time rendering the speaker’s message in the target language (TL) (Bernstein and Barbier, 2000, pp. 223-24).

For Henri C. Barik, the simultaneous mode represents “a complex form of activity seemingly involving very rapid decoding and encoding operations” (1972, p. 3). Furthermore, Barik’s predictable but nonetheless mentionable finding was that “investigators noted a greater wordage in ST19 than in formal written translation, indicative of the greater looseness of oral style as contrasted with written style” (1972, p. 3). In other words, simultaneous interpreters need to be able to listen, process and talk quickly, producing more “wordage20” than in other written or oral types of interpreting or translation. Barik’s study provides yet another indication that simultaneous’s skill domain does not differ dramatically from that of the other two modes, necessarily, but rather it distinguishes itself for the speed at which the skills

19 For Barik, ST denotes “simultaneous translation” (interpreting), not “sight translation”.

20 Barik measured speech rate (number of syllables uttered per minute of elapsed time) as well as articulation rate (number of syllables uttered per minute of time during which the person is actually engaged in speaking) (1972, p. 5).
must be performed. Emphasis is on rapid lexical access, swift production of “wordage”, and highly expeditious decoding, encoding, comprehension, synthesis and output. In other words, the overlap between skill domains is notable, and those candidates who can rapidly process and retrieve and produce information and semantic units are those who excel at simultaneous interpreting.

Daniel Gile has reflected extensively on the simultaneous mode, especially since it served as part of the inspiration to construe his Effort Models. He conceives of the skill domain of this mode as follows:

From my observation of simultaneous interpretation, I imagined it could probably be modeled as consisting of three main components or Efforts: a listening and analysis component, a speech production component, and a short-term memory component. There may be other significant operations associated with simultaneous interpretation that are not mentioned here, but they are probably marginal with respect to processing capacity requirements, and I have found the explanatory power of the three basic components listed above to be quite good (1995, p. 162).

Gile thus formulates the efforts that comprise the simultaneous interpretative task as follows: SI = L + P + M + C. In other words, the Listening / Analysis Effort is followed by Production which, for Gile, in simultaneous interpreting is defined as “as the set of operations extending from the mental representation of the message to be delivered to speech planning and the performance of the speech plan” (1995, p. 165). Subsequently the Memory Effort is engaged, although the differences between the Memory Effort in simultaneous as opposed to consecutive are succinctly summarized by Giambruno when she affirms that
Interpreters... must have an excellent command of both languages, a great deal of mental agility and great powers of concentration. While memory is not as important in simultaneous interpreting as it is in consecutive, having to simultaneously listen and speak more than equals the difficulty of remembering utterances verbatim” (Giambruno, 1997, p. 299).

Giambruno’s reference to the simultaneity of information processing and synthesized language output sheds light on aptitude test modalities such as paraphrase and shadowing, which aim to identify candidates with such skills.

Finally, after the Memory Effort comes the Coordination Effort, required to coordinate the other three efforts. The complex mental processing required to carry out the interpretative task is never as cut-and-dried as the Efforts formulas might suggest, however, and this is eagerly acknowledged by the founder of the theory when he recognizes that

...processing capacity requirements for each individual Effort are probably determined not only by their individual requirements, but also by their interaction. One reason is possible interference between the two languages in contact, the avoidance of which requires special attention. Indeed, some linguistic interference from source language to target language is often felt in the field, and interpreters are taught to be aware of the danger and fight it, for instance by deliberately avoiding words and sentence structures similar to those used in the source-language speech whenever possible (Gile, 1995, p. 170).

Ample explanation of simultaneous interpreting is also afforded by the authors of Fundamentals, who quite comprehensively explored and defined the constructs of good simultaneous in the following way:

The task is extremely complex: though simultaneous listening and speaking rarely occurs in everyday verbal behavior, simultaneous interpreters manage not only to listen and speak simultaneously for reasonable lengths of time, but also to carry out complex transformations on the source-language message while uttering their translation in the target language. From the point of view of cognitive psychologists the task is a complex form of human information.
processing involving the perception, storage, retrieval, transformation, and transmission of verbal information. Furthermore, linguistic, motivational, situational, and a host of other factors cannot be ignored (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 364).

As depicted in Figure 3, the *Fundamentals* authors identify the series of strategies necessary for successful simultaneous interpreting as comprised of analysis, prediction, numerical information, décalage, queuing, and self-monitoring (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 363-68) with the analysis phase consisting of the interpreter assessing the intent and message inscribed in the communicative act and conveying it rapidly through units of meaning. Indeed, analysis is “so essential to SI that it can be considered an intrinsic part of the process rather than an ancillary tactic” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 363). The act of prediction, or syntactic anticipation, refers to the interpreter’s ability to grasp the intent of a message even before all of the words that comprise it have been uttered (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 364).

Also recognized by Gile’s model as particularly problematic due to their unpredictability, numbers are “of particular import to court interpreters, who must
accurately convey penal code sections, serial numbers, court appearance dates, amounts of fines, years in prison, and other numerical information” (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 366). Décalage, which refers to the interpreter’s task of lagging behind a speaker to a greater or lesser extent in order to gather sufficient information to comprehend, assimilate and analyze the source language message before beginning the rendition, sometimes involves postponing production until parts of speech or units of meaning which are key to the message are heard. In other words, décalage places a burden on the interpreter’s short-term memory. Similarly, queuing refers to the technique of lagging behind in the processing of information during heavy load periods (messages densely packed with information and delivered at a rapid speed) and catching up during periods when the rate of delivery is slower and the content of the message is not as dense (Dueñas González, Vásquez, & Mikkelson, 1991, p. 367).

In other words, court interpreters as well as other types of community interpreters are also cognitively burdened with what is often referred to as “controlling the flow” of an interpreted encounter. Along with close attention to the source language speaker, one’s own speech must be diligently attended to in a constant process of self-monitoring, lest the interpreter produce output with mispronounced words, a stumbling delivery, or erroneous lexical choices. The models and descriptions of the simultaneous interpretative act proffered by Gile and the Fundamentals authors indicate that the very number of cognitive and linguistic processes which are at work during successful simultaneous renditions place the simultaneous mode as that which may burden the interpreter most in terms of mental energy.
Finally, in addition to the theoretical constructs of interpreter ability generated within academia, the profession of court interpreting in the United States refers very frequently to certain domains known as knowledge, skills and abilities, and indeed, KSAs, as they are known, appear frequently in the policy, scholarship and administrative material produced within the profession. In concert with research from conference interpreting studies, the main categories of abilities identified are linguistic skills, speaking skills, listening comprehension skills, reading comprehension skills, and interpreting skills, with several specific examples of each domain specified (see Appendix B to view the entire inventory of KSAs considered fundamental to successful court interpreting). Furthermore, it is important to mention that

[t]he level of performance Consortium tests measure is the minimum acceptable level for entry into the profession of spoken language court interpretation. These exams do not measure other aspects of the knowledge, skills, and abilities one must have to perform the duties of a court interpreter, such as engaging in
appreciate forms of situational control, dressing and conducting oneself in a matter consistent with the dignity of the court, and delivering services via telephone or as a member of a team (Technical Committee, 2010, p.1).

While oral exams do not test for elements such as situational control, stress resistance, pronunciation, delivery\(^{21}\), and professional demeanor, the Consortium acknowledges their importance\(^{22}\). In the interest of maintaining transparent, evidence-driven results upon which raters of certification exams can base their determinations, scoring units must be declared correct by two separate raters in order to be counted as correct, and doubtful renditions are always contemplated at length in the consensus-building process, a procedure which is explored further in Chapter Four.

### 2.6 Conclusions Regarding Theoretical Constructs of the Three Modes and Interpreter Competencies

While the majority of this chapter focuses on interpreter aptitude in relation to specific modes of interpreting, fundamental to the entire discussion is a recognition of the fact that it is fruitful to look for the underlying abilities inherent to the successful performance of each of the modes, especially if one of them is to serve as a predictor of aptitude for the others. There is extensive consensus among interpreting studies scholars such as Gerver, Longley, Moser-Mercer, Barik, and Bernstein and Barbier about latent constructs of interpreter aptitude, and this chapter has also relied heavily on

\(^{21}\) While pronunciation and delivery seem to be inherent to language production in general, they are not evaluated discretely. Consortium oral exams specifically exclude the following KSAs from the “speaking skills” category: ability to speak with proper pronunciation, diction, and intonation in all working languages; ability to speak with a neutralized accent in all working languages; and ability to project and/or speak softly. Even if a candidate grossly mispronounces a word that is considered to be an acceptable rendition according to the scoring dictionary, if both raters understand the examinee and agree that what he or she has said is on the list of acceptable renditions, the examinee receives credit for that scoring unit. See Appendix C.

\(^{22}\) See Appendix C for the KSAs measured specifically by Consortium oral exams.
Daniel Gile’s Effort Models as well as ideas from *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation* as they both address interpreter ability by mode, and their models are most applicable to a mode-based search for predictors of successful performance. Gile’s 1995 *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training* and *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy, and Practice* by Roseann Dueñas González, Victoria Vásquez and Holly Mikkelson are considered canonical texts in the field of interpreting studies, and are still important points of reference.

At the time the Wisconsin perception study was carried out, a study which is introduced in Chapter One and developed in Chapter Three of this dissertation, strong theoretical indications came to light which postulated that sight translation would make a valid indicator of aptitude. This more ample examination of theoretical models and current scholarship, however, has generated other general conclusions about the theoretical underpinnings of successful interpretation and predictors of aptitude by mode and, for this reason, the following global conclusions take into account each mode’s potential for depth of processing, information retention, prevalence in gateway exams to the profession, and speed of synthesis and information retrieval, among other factors. Purely theoretical constructs of interpreter ability, then, lead to the following conclusions:

- **There is broad consensus among scholars regarding exactly what skills are being tested for in interpreter entry exams.** Evaluators examine specific skill domains in order to identify candidates with the potential to acquire interpreting competence; eliminatory exams seek candidates who already possess the same skill domains and who can bring them immediately to bear on an interpreting

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performance both in an examination situation as well as in the courtroom. While their objectives differ, analyses of one inform the other. Interpreting novices with aptitude, as well as interpreters who are already positioned to function professionally, are those who have complete mastery of their working languages, good memories, broad educations, and high levels of general cultural knowledge. They can quickly react and adapt to delays, situations and subjects, and they have excellent powers of concentration, resilience, and tolerance to stress.

- **There is extensive overlap in modalities used to test for interpreter aptitude and ability.** Most include some exercise in dual-tasking (simultaneity of listening and speaking) such as shadowing, paraphrase, or simultaneous interpreting itself. Tests often include error detection tests, cloze tests, memory tests, sight translation exercises, and oral interviews.

- **Academic interpreting stakeholders acknowledge the necessity of screening, but continue to express discontent with the options available.** Whether in high-stakes, eliminatory contexts or in the framework of an ongoing, formative approach such as the one championed by Barbara Moser-Mercer, different scholars advocate different approaches. Some studies have shown significant promise in selecting apt candidates for programs of study, and new approaches are being fielded all the time, which involve assessments based on the ability to paraphrase, personality type, rapid lexical access, and other measures of cognitive agility. All of these contributions will advance the field of aptitude testing. Nonetheless, scholars such as Timarová, Ungoed-Thomas and

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
Skaaden still express discontent with the lack of predictive validity reflected by many aptitude testing modalities.

- **The “nature versus nurture” argument is still surprisingly active.** This is especially true in discussions of simultaneous interpreting. Findings such as those of Dillinger\(^{23}\), in which vastly more experienced interpreters only boasted a marginal advantage over inexperienced bilinguals in terms of accuracy, are fascinating. Such findings justify additional studies which explore the extent to which interpreters' skills are the result of formal training or whether they are acquired through direct experience with the interpreting task itself.

- **Speed matters.** Many studies (i.e. Bernstein & Barbier 2000, Dillinger 1994, Skaaden 1999, and Barik 1972) indicate that without it, especially in the source language speaker-driven modalities of consecutive and simultaneous, interpreters will not be successful without having mastery of rapid lexical access across languages and rapid sequential translation at the sentence level. Dillinger's assertions that text processing ability can trump training raises some provocative questions, but many studies indicate that highly skilled interpreters have the ability to process information quickly, transcoding it and producing substitutions without altering meanings, all with a great deal of cognitive and linguistic spontaneity and flexibility. Even though the *Fundamentals* inventory of latent constructs does not appear to show as much overt skill overlap as Gile's Efforts models do, scholarly references to interpreter aptitude frequently make reference to speed in relation to memory, information retrieval, comprehension,

\(^{23}\) See Dillinger's 1994 article entitled “Comprehension During Interpreting: What do Interpreters Know that Bilinguals Don't?”
analysis, processing, and cognition in general. Simultaneous interpreters, especially, are expected to produce a lot of “wordage”.

- **Scholars agree on the dispositional traits that successful interpreters must possess.** Across disciplines, countries and institutions, interpreter trainers and interpreting studies scholars seek candidates with stress tolerance, resilience, versatility, and adaptability. “Good” interpreters are considered to also be open-minded, well-educated, and articulate. In terms of personality, Nicholson’s study based on Myers-Briggs Type Indicators found that the majority of interpreters prefer impersonal, logical analysis as well as content and ideas. In other words, they are “Thinking” types who, curiously, are much more often males in the general population and much more often female among the populations of interpreters studied.

- **All three modes of interpreting are considered to be fundamental parts of the three oral certification exams for court interpreters in the United States.** For court interpreting in the U.S., all three major examination bodies include exercises in sight translation, consecutive, and simultaneous interpreting. The three modes are tested at the state level by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, at the federal level by the FCICE (Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination), and on the NJITCE (the National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification), the credential offered by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and (NAJIT).

- **Theorists find sight translation to be a cognitively complex mode of interpreting.** Although often considered just a pedagogical exercise for getting
started in the techniques of consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting, trainers agree that ST helps students learn to react quickly and improve their linguistic agility, oral translation reflexes, and delivery skills. Other studies by theorists such as Angelelli (1999), Viezzi (1990) and Agrifoglio (2004) show that sight translation is, by turns, a good indicator of overall interpreter aptitude, that it has lower information retention rates than the other two modes of interpreting, and that ST’s cognitive load is equal or superior to that of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. Nonetheless, more studies on sight translation are warranted, especially in light of some of the more surprising and convincing findings related to its cognitive complexity.

- **Consecutive interpreting is the mode of interpreting which is discussed the least in scholarship related to assessment and aptitude testing.** Like sight translation, consecutive is often talked about as a precursor to simultaneous. Although often considered to be the most important mode in court interpretation, recent studies place consecutive somewhere in between sight translation and simultaneous in terms of complexity. Similarly, mentions of the consecutive mode appear relatively infrequently in scholarship directly related to assessment and aptitude testing, especially in comparison to the simultaneous mode (or related dual-tasking sorts of exercises) or sight translation, which is a popular component of university-level entry exams to interpreting programs.

- **Theorists postulate that the simultaneous mode is the most complex and thus the most difficult.** Due to the fact that successful simultaneous interpreting involves a high degree of simultaneity of language perception, comprehension...
and production, cognitive psychologists consider the task to be a complex form of human information processing involving the perception, storage, retrieval, transformation, and transmission of verbal information.

Indeed, a firm theoretical foundation is absolutely essential in order to contemplate constructs of interpreter ability. To further our understanding as well as to complement current knowledge, the next step in a systematic search for predictors of successful performance on oral certification exams comes from direct input from practicing professionals.
CHAPTER THREE: PRACTITIONERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE THREE MODES: A STUDY OF WISCONSIN COURT INTERPRETERS

Following on the heels of an exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of the three modes of interpreting, Chapter Three of this dissertation relies very heavily on a large study carried out in 2010 and which is described in abbreviated form below. It is important to mention that the results discussed in this dissertation have been quite drastically reduced from those derived from the 2010 study, and the reason is that one of the original study’s primary objectives was to learn very specific information about the use of sight translation by court interpreters. Nonetheless, there are two very salient aspects of the 2010 Wisconsin perception study which bear directly upon the search for predictor modes: a demographic profile of interpreters who have passed the Consortium oral certification exam, and findings which reflect the perceptions of court interpreters regarding aspects of the three modes of interpreting which relate to degree of difficulty, use on the job, and training. For this reason, the study’s origins, structure, implementation and methodology will be discussed in some detail.

Additionally, Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the three most commonly-used “gateway” exams to the court interpreting profession in the United States: the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam (FCICE), the exam administered by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) and, most importantly, the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ (CLAC) state-level interpreting exam. The Consortium exam is that which is examined in the Wisconsin perception study described in this chapter as well as that from which the data analyzed
in Chapters Five and Six are derived. In reiteration of this dissertation’s primary objective, this combination of qualitative and quantitative information contribute to a complete vision of predictors of successful performance on U.S. Consortium oral exams.

3.1 Origins of the Wisconsin Perception Study

According to “The Map: A Beginner’s Guide to Doing Research in Translation”, one very legitimate way of focusing one’s research in interpreting concerns the mode (Williams & Chesterman, 2002, p. 22). While one of the primary goals of the 2010 study was to explore sight translation, one original research question aimed at surveying instructors of translation and interpreting at institutions of higher learning both in Spain and the United States in order to gain insight into their current usage of and pedagogical approaches toward the teaching of this mode of interpreting. The study's original hypothesis hinged on the supposition that professors of sight translation in university-level programs, whether they trained translators or interpreters, did not use sight translation to the frequency or to the extent to which they could when contemplating this interpreting mode as a training and assessment tool. While this aspect of the original study still remains to be explored, it is likely that sight translation has far-reaching implications to trainers of both interpreters and translators. This third interpreting modality is treated all too infrequently in interpreting (and translation) scholarship and, based on the paucity of scholarship that treats it, seems to still elude TI trainers as a valuable training and assessment tool, falling short of its full potential for lack of utilization and poor or incomplete interpretation of its results.

Additionally, current scholarship indicates that sight translation appears to be underexamined as a modality in and of itself, and that it continues to be underused as a
precursor to effective simultaneous interpreting in many university-level programs. Sight translation represents enormous untapped potential as a cutting-edge tool for translator training as well, and with these suppositions in mind, my original intention was to posit specific, refined, and enhanced uses of sight translation for assessment (for both screening and achievement-measuring purposes) as well as for training.

In the beginning phases of refining the topic at hand I believed that through the use of a practical and methodologically sound hybrid rubric combining traditional scoring units as well as holistic elements often not considered, the utilization of simple and inexpensive voice recognition software, as well as the development of a more mindful and empirical analysis of results, that I could offer TI educators a more finely honed tool that could be applied in new and illuminating ways with clearly measurable results.

Still convinced that sight translation represents relatively uncharted territory both in the annals of scholarship as well as in the classroom, it was not the broad scope of the original project which caused me to re-think the direction of my topic. Indeed, it was thanks to the master’s thesis of a Korean scholar that the direction of my original research questions changed dramatically.

In the course of my research, I happened upon a master’s thesis which posed questions about sight translation that I found profoundly more provocative, profoundly more useful, than anything that I had read up until that point. This analysis became a point of departure for drastically re-thinking my study population.
3.2 Anatomy of the Study and Point of Departure

Changmin Kim’s 2001 master’s thesis from California State University in Monterey Bay, California, entitled “Sight Translation in its Own Right,” aimed at exploring sight translation as practiced in and outside of class by student professionals at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, historically one of the most prestigious and well-established institutions of higher learning in the field of translation and interpreting in the United States. Kim’s research aimed at shedding light on the perspective of student translators and interpreters in training. He was, then, focusing on the consumers of TI education, on the users of the modality, as opposed to those imparting interpreter and translator training. Kim was interested in obviating the one-way perspective of TI instructors and their views on sight translation while at the same time bringing to the fore the opinions and reflections of student practitioners.

Kim’s research with real consumers or users of the modality (students of translation and interpreting at the Monterey Institute) produced some fruitful revelations: what students knew about sight translation before beginning a program of formal study at the United States’ premiere TI school coupled with how they learned ST techniques, how they practiced them, how they felt about sight translation, and whether they thought it fit better into coursework on translation or interpreting, as well as which instructional strategies benefitted them the most. Kim’s focus on student practitioners of sight translation led me to shift my focus to a study group that truly fascinated me: practicing court interpreters in the state of Wisconsin.

It became immediately evident to me that Wisconsin’s Supreme Court roster of court interpreters would make an excellent study cohort; indeed, interpreters on the roster...
practice in similar work environments, they have a shared training and testing system, and they could easily be delimited by language pair. Furthermore, the very number of possible participants, several hundred professional and semi-professional interpreters on the Spanish / English roster, opened up possibilities of a high return rate and the potential for a high degree of representativeness when drawing conclusions.

Furthermore, while my own experiences as a court interpreter in rural Wisconsin may not be representative of the majority practicing in the state, especially of those who live in more urban areas, the dearth of communion with other practicing professionals that I described in my introduction had left me with profound questions about the training, experiences and reality of the entire body of practicing court interpreters in my state. To that end, then, this study proposed to take a study of TI students and adapt it to a working population.

Unfortunately, it is often difficult to delineate a study cohort that one can control with parameters that can be applied to all members of said cohort. Furthermore, current TI scholarship reflects a pervading criticism that doing studies on students simply does not tell us much about the profession. Providentially, however, court interpreters in Wisconsin represented a highly accessible study cohort. At the time the study was carried out, the state Supreme Court maintained an online roster of interpreters at three distinct stages in the certification path, all with publicly available contact information24. Kim’s research and its subsequent shift in perception to end-users or consumers of sight

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24 The interpreter roster is still available online, although the categories of interpreter expertise have been modified, as explained in section 3.3.
translation could very viably be transferred to a body of professionals with whom I was, and continue to be, personally intrigued.

Almost immediately, hypotheses began to emerge regarding questions that could be asked and results that could be anticipated, as well as implications for pass rates and training modules, all with the potential to affect the number and quality of certified Spanish/English court interpreters in Wisconsin. The resulting study has since become a cornerstone in my search for a predictor mode which can foretell success on other types of interpreting exercises.

3.3 METHODOLOGY, TARGET STUDY COHORT, CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

In her book chapter entitled “Small Projects in Interpretation Research”, Ingrid Kurz discusses useful approaches for researchers in search of a topic, and discusses the merit of such guiding frameworks as proving or disproving an intuitive impression, the legitimacy in the scientific community of putting other people's theories to the test, re-examining the conclusions of other researchers, repeating or modifying a previous study, or zooming in on a detail in a bigger study and combining it with another question (Kurz, 2001, pp. 104-113). The Wisconsin perception study combines several of these approaches: it aims to test intuitive impressions about the value of the three modes of interpreting for training and assessment purposes at the same time as it modifies a previous study of student ST practitioners while applying similar measures to a working population. As was the case with Changmin Kim, a survey-based method of gathering pointed information from the target population was adopted in this study as well.
For Kim's master's thesis, “[a]n open-ended and multiple-choice questionnaire... was used to examine students' perceptions about sight translation in the context of translation and interpretation pedagogy” (2001, p. 9). The objective of this research project that I was undertaking was, then, to adapt Kim's survey to a working population. The first step was to operationalize the hypothesis: that is to say, reduce it to concrete terms so that it could be tested in practice. For our purposes here, operationalizing provided answers to questions such as:

- How does their level of training and the extent to which interpreters use the three modes on the job relate to their status on the state's official roster of interpreters?
- Is there a link between performance in any one mode of interpreting and pass rates on the Consortium certification exam? In other words, is performance in any of the three modes of interpreting a predictor for success on the oral exam as a whole?
- What are the perceptions of the study cohort regarding aspects of the three modes of interpreting in relation to degree of difficulty, use on the job, and training?
- Do interpreters believe that more or better training in any of the three modes of interpreting would improve pass rates? And similarly, would objective, empirical analyses show that more or better training in any of the three modes leads to higher pass rates?

25 Sections in bold print are consistent with Kim’s original manuscript.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
The study to be described in the following pages focuses on the professional and semi-professional interpreters in the Spanish / English language pair who were eligible to practice in Wisconsin courts in the spring of 2010, when the Wisconsin perception study was originally carried out. The distinction between professional and semi-professional interpreters addresses the reality of the lack of qualified and experienced (let alone certified) Spanish / English interpreters in Wisconsin courts. While the practice of commissioning certified interpreters for all or most interpreting events continues to constitute an uphill battle in some Wisconsin counties, the reality is that at the time the study was carried out, it was suspected that a number of people on the roster may not have professionally self-identified as primarily interpreters, may have been working infrequently as court interpreters, or were working at the provisional or trainee levels, indicating little progress in the testing cycle. The three levels of expertise on the roster will be defined later on in this section.

Nonetheless, the use of the interpreters on the roster as a study cohort promised some intriguing possibilities. After some initial concern that the study might be considered too narrow as it focused only on court interpreters on the Wisconsin roster, I decided to go ahead as planned as I had found no other studies which analyzed a similar number of professionals. The number of possible participants in the study cohort, a total of 233 people\textsuperscript{26}, indicated that significant conclusions could be drawn.

Additionally, the Wisconsin Supreme Court interpreter roster as it existed in the spring of 2010 boasted the advantage of being clearly delineated and defined in the following terms:

\textsuperscript{26} The survey was sent to 60 certified interpreters, 60 provisional interpreters, and 113 trainee interpreters.
• **Similar work environment:** All interpreters on the roster, while they may have been certified to work in other states, were eligible to some degree to interpret in Wisconsin courts;

• **Similar training and testing system:** All interpreters on the roster had to attend a two-day orientation training, sign an oath to abide by the code of ethics for court interpreters and to be subject to discipline from the Director of State Courts Office, meet character and fitness requirements including a criminal background check, and keep a current address on file. The roster indicated that all but one federally certified interpreter gained certification through National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Consortium exams, and this fact was verified through survey results which showed that one member of the roster was federally certified; and

• **Same language pair:** The interpreters on the Wisconsin roster selected for the study were those from the language pair Spanish / English. Interpreters of Hmong, American Sign Language and other languages did not form part of this study.

The roster, when sorted for language pair, provided a list of some 273 interpreters at three different stages of training and testing, representing a useful division with which results could be cross-tabulated. The three levels of expertise reflected in the roster were divided as follows, according to the State of Wisconsin’s Supreme Court web site in the spring of 2010:
• **Certified:** Certified interpreters have met all the Director of State Courts’ requirements in Wisconsin, including passing an oral examination and written test. This level of interpreter should be the first choice for court interpreting.

• **Provisional:** Provisional interpreters have met all the Director of State Courts’ requirements in Wisconsin, and have passed both the multiple choice portion and translation portion of the written test but not the oral examination. Provisional interpreters were eligible to take the oral examination.

• **Trainee:** Trainee interpreters have met all the Director of State Courts’ requirements in Wisconsin, and have passed either\(^{27}\) the multiple choice portion or the translation portion of the written test but not the oral examination. Trainee interpreters are eligible to take the oral examination ("For interpreters - testing and certification," 2009).

Changmin Kim's original “Questionnaire on Sight Translation” (Kim, 2001, pp. 42-43) served as a very useful reference point for most of the main structural pillars of my own survey. The original Wisconsin study goes into a great deal of detail in describing individual sections of the adapted survey instrument and exactly how it was modified in order to be relevant to a working population of Wisconsin court interpreters and is too extensive to include in this dissertation. However, while the original focus of the 2010 Wisconsin perception study was to focus primarily on sight translation, there are two principal aspects of the survey with broader objectives which will be examined in this chapter\(^{28}\). First of all, demographic data as it relates to the generation of an overall profile of the interpreters on the roster will be discussed, and secondly, participants’ perceptions of the use of, training in and testing of the three modes of interpreting will be examined\(^{29}\).

\(^{27}\) Italics were inserted in order to differentiate more clearly between the provisional and trainee categories.

\(^{28}\) To review a copy of the survey administered in the Wisconsin perception study, see Appendix C.

\(^{29}\) Those who wish to read the original study in its entirety are welcome to enquire at mwallace108@gmail.com.
3.4 Survey Implementation, Response Rates and Representativeness

As a vehicle to administer the survey on sight translation and Wisconsin court interpreters, an online tool for creating and publishing custom surveys was chosen. The advantages to this choice were that results could be generated and published in minutes and could be viewed graphically and in real time. Most importantly, filters could be quickly and easily applied to cross-tabulate responses. Before implementation, respondents were pre-notified of the upcoming survey in order to establish a relationship with them, as well as to avoid automatic dismissal of the survey as spam when the active link arrived via email. The survey was piloted to four interpreting colleagues in order to avoid jeopardizing the accuracy of the data produced. In sum, the three basic goals of the pre-test were to evaluate the competency of the questionnaire (i.e., to seek feedback on whether or not the survey's wording and clarity were apparent to all respondents and whether the questions meant the same thing to all of them), to estimate the time needed to complete it, and to determine the quality of the survey overall. Pilot respondents reported that they understood the objective of the survey, felt comfortable answering the questions, that the wording was clear, that the questions did not generate response bias, and that no major questions were overlooked. In light of their many helpful suggestions, however, several questions were improved in terms of clarity and brevity. The estimated survey time based on the pilot was fifteen to twenty minutes. While one pilot respondent said that she felt the survey was too long, the number and nature of questions could not be significantly reduced without compromising the stated project goals and objectives.
As regards implementation, the mail server delivered email messages to each potential respondent, automatically generating a unique link for each which was tied to a specific email address via electronic tags included in the default message. As each person responded, his or her email was accounted for and tracked by status in the survey’s collector mechanism. The survey was designed so that no individual respondent had the ability to forward his or her individually assigned link to others or to use that link to submit multiple responses. Subsequently, it was possible to track who had responded, who had not, who had opted out\textsuperscript{30}, etc.

The study cohort consisted of most interpreters listed on the Wisconsin Supreme Court’s roster of court interpreters as of February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2010 at the certified, provisional and trainee levels. As detailed in Table 1, the online survey was administered only to those court interpreters with an active email address on file with the Wisconsin Supreme Court for three reasons. First, because a lack of email presence indicates relatively infrequent work in the Wisconsin court system as many judicial districts rely on email as a means to contract interpreter services; thus, the presence of an email address is some indicator of readiness and willingness to be contacted to work in Wisconsin courts. Second, the online survey tool could not be utilized without target emails. Third, time constraints made it impossible to contact individual interpreters by phone to request their email addresses. Finally, the potential of reaching 85.7\% of the interpreters on the Spanish / English roster seemed more than acceptable.

\textsuperscript{30} Survey respondents were given the option to “opt out”: that is to say, to have their email addresses removed from the database in order to receive no further emails from the sender. 19 survey recipients opted out.
Of the 85.7% of interpreters at all levels on the roster who received the survey, four emails were returned with an indication that those addresses were inactive, lowering the recipient population to 230; nineteen respondents opted out, and five respondents did not give their consent for their responses to be used in this research project. In sum, 84 out of 230 people participated in the survey, leading to a response rate of 36.52%. While sources disagree about what constitutes a “good” response rate for online surveys, the survey software utilized identifies 30% as an average return rate for this medium (Monkey Team, The, "Smart Survey Design," n.d., p. 22).

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31 61 certified interpreters on the roster had active email addresses, but I, as the author of the study, did not include myself on the list of recipients.
Representativeness of the survey results can be assessed when comparing the overall status of interpreters on the roster at all three levels with the roster status of survey respondents, as depicted in Table 2, below:

**TABLE 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS OF SURVEY RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status on roster</th>
<th>% of roster made up of this category</th>
<th>% of survey respondents in this category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>50.18%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional</td>
<td>26.74%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers used in Table 2 represent the number of people in each of the three interpreter categories as of February 2nd, 2010 when there were 137 trainees, 73 provisional, and 63 certified interpreters. Recall that the number of people actually receiving the online survey is slightly lower, as only those with active email addresses on file with the Wisconsin Supreme Court were invited to participate. As evidenced above, trainees represented fully half of the entire list of interpreters on the roster which was in effect on February 2nd, 2010. While they also constituted the most highly represented group of survey respondents, the breakdown of respondents by category suggests a much more even distribution: practically into neat thirds. While the breakdown depicted in the table does suggest a fair degree of representativeness in the sense that each of the three categories was almost equally represented in survey results, said results indubitably reflect a higher level of participation for certified interpreters as well as provisional interpreters in proportion to their representation on the roster.
While the representativeness of the body of interpreters who participated in the Wisconsin perception survey has already been established, to what extent are its results applicable to other interpreting contexts? Consider the following:

1. Most U.S. states have three-tiered systems for their court interpreters, designating differing levels of expertise and success in the testing process. Some notable exceptions include Georgia, for which two status levels are designated; Kentucky, for which four status levels exist; and Texas, which has one designator: “licensed”, not “certified.” While the names vary between certified, registered, licensed, qualified, and every conceivable combination thereof, it is standard practice to list interpreters on official rosters at varying stages in the certification process, and thus with varying levels of proven performance;

2. Most, if not all U.S. states, are experiencing growth in their LEP populations. Wisconsin is not unique, either, in facing the challenges of recruiting and certifying qualified court interpreters who are speakers of languages of lesser diffusion; and

3. A study done by Nataly Kelly on the entire North American interpreting market, the largest ever prepared in the history of the field, mirrors the demographic results of the Wisconsin perception study. Respondents overwhelmingly identify Spanish / English as their most common language combination among spoken languages, they are predominantly female (at 76% female versus 23.2% male) (Kelly, Stewart & Hedge, 2010, p. 9), and the age “of the professional workforce is

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32 *The Interpreting Marketplace: A Study of Interpreting in North America* by Nataly Kelly, Robert G. Stewart, and Vijayalaxmi Hegde is an absolutely fascinating read for all interpreting stakeholders. Produced for InterpretAmerica, it is available as a free download at http://www.interpretamerica.net/publications.
also an important characteristic of the market. Nearly one-fifth of the interpreters ... (18.24%) fell between the ages of 58 and 67, meaning that they are near or past the traditional retirement age of 65” (Kelly, Stewart & Hedge, 2010, p. 9). Additionally, the vast majority are college-educated, with 78.9% holding a bachelor’s degree or higher (Kelly, Stewart & Hedge, 2010, p. 21).

One very minor challenge that was encountered came in the form of two interpreters who expressed their discomfort with survey questions regarding educational level, membership in professional organizations, and demographic data. These two interpreters regarded questions of such a nature as overly invasive and personal, and expressed that they were uncomfortable with the possibility of being identified in relationship to certain questions. While no discomfort with the questions themselves surfaced during the pilot phase of the survey, and in spite of explaining to both interpreters that demographic questions were entirely standard, both of them had concerns for their privacy that superseded their willingness to participate in the study.

Decidedly, though, the most significant challenge came in the form of the sweeping changes to the roster which were approved at the March 5th, 2010 meeting of the state Supreme Court’s Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts. All trainee interpreters were eliminated; all certified interpreters stayed intact; and only five interpreters remained at the provisional level. According to discussion at the March 5th, 2010 Committee meeting, the provisional category was

33Kelly’s study, which profiles over 1,140 North American interpreters, is not limited to court interpreters nor to people who have passed any sort of credentialing exam.

34 The exact date of the changes to the roster as listed publicly on the state Supreme Court’s website is not clear, although it is estimated to have taken effect at the end of April of 2010.
going to undergo a change both in name and nature, and it was to be called “Qualified”.
In the end the name of the category was not changed, but the definition of it was: as of
the present date, provisional status is obtained by those people earning a 65% or better
on two out of the three parts of the oral certification exam. In any case, the Spanish /
English roster was greatly reduced, from 273 people to only 67. While the justifications
for paring down the roster were surely sound and did indeed end up remedying to some
extent the Committee’s concerns about removing under-qualified Spanish / English
interpreters from the roster, the change to the very basis of this project’s study cohort
was disconcerting at first. However, responders could not have been redefined as the
survey had already been sent and the data collected. The data provide a reliable
snapshot of the Wisconsin roster at the time the survey was administered.

Most significantly, cross-tabulation and filtering functions allowed for cross-
comparisons of the certified-only population to the overall population (all respondents
across all three categories), and these comparative results are discussed in their
respective sections.

3.5 ORIGINS OF THE WISCONSIN COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM

Before discussing survey results and the study site’s eventual relationship to an official
credentialing body, a brief description of the origins of the state’s CIP (Court Interpreter
Program) will help to contextualize the findings discussed further on this chapter.

As relative late-comers on the national scene of organized, state-sanctioned training and
testing, the state of Wisconsin began in earnest to grapple with issues surrounding the
need for consistency, quality and professionalism as regards interpreting services for
non-English speaking participants in Wisconsin courts. The year 2000 marked the first turning point in Wisconsin’s journey to provide equal access to the justice system when “Improving Interpretation in Wisconsin’s Courts”, a report to then-Director of State Courts J. Denis Moran by the Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts, was published and disseminated on the internet. Released in October of 2000, “Improving Interpretation” represented the state’s first collective effort to define the nature of the challenges being faced, recommend statutory changes, propose changes to the rules of court, outline funding and staff needed, posit long-term goals as regards interpreter certification and training, and discuss training for judges and other officers of the court. With Wisconsin’s Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Islander populations having grown by more than 50 percent from 1990 to 1999, the report began by acknowledging Wisconsin’s growing linguistic diversity and the state’s subsequent growing need for interpreter services in the courts. The report stated that:

Interpreter problems are becoming an urgent management issue for many Wisconsin courts, falling into four broad groupings:

1. determining35 the qualifications of interpreter candidates,
2. expanding the pool of qualified interpreters,
3. improving the distribution of interpreters to make them available and affordable, and
4. providing proper oversight of interpreter work in court (Improving Interpretation, 2000, p. 5).

By conceding the fact that using unqualified interpreters or none at all results in the denial of one’s constitutional right to due process, the report recognizes that there is also

35 Use of lowercase letters is consistent with the original report.
... a serious loss of accountability from proceedings with an unqualified interpreter. Communication is poor, testimony is omitted or summarized, the record is incomplete, ethical issues go unnoticed, and unnecessary appeals and dismissals may follow. An incorrect interpretation can make nonsense of an otherwise conscientious court proceeding (Improving Interpretation, 2000, p. 6).

After establishing a need for qualified court interpreters and suggesting a series of recommended statutory changes, the report’s entire third chapter outlines significant changes to the rules of court. This call to action, directed specifically at the Wisconsin Supreme Court, requested four primary changes: first of all, to require the use of certified interpreters whenever available – a challenge for a state which, at the time, offered no certification program. Second, and most relevant to this research project, the report called for the establishment of a court interpreter certification program using standardized tests developed by the National Center for State Courts (the NCSC). The third recommendation was to develop a statewide roster of trained interpreters and the fourth was to implement an interpreter code of ethics.

The report’s fourth chapter specifically addressed the need for funding in order to develop a court interpreter project including a position which would be funded for two years and which would be located in the office of the Director of State Courts, with funding sufficient to conduct statewide training programs. The report goes on to state that if the program turned out to be successful and the workload continued as anticipated, a permanent position would be sought sometime in the future (Improving Interpretation, 2000, p. 25). Fortunately, this is exactly what happened over the first half

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36 The Director of State Courts’ office performs the many non-judicial tasks associated with the operation of the court system, from maintaining a statewide computer system to administering the budget to providing continuing education for judges. The Director’s Office, as it is colloquially referred to, has the authority and responsibility for the overall management of the court system.
of the decade as, in hindsight, it is clear that the recommendations proffered by the Committee were taken seriously and progressively put into action.

On March 17th, 2010, an interview was conducted with Ms. Carmel Capati, who is the Manager for the Court Interpreter Program (CIP) with the Wisconsin Supreme Court’s Director of State Courts office as well as a practicing attorney in a Madison, Wisconsin-based firm. Ms. Capati’s duties include training court interpreters and giving presentations to judges, court staff, clerks of court, attorneys, executive agencies, direct service providers and community advocates on federal and state laws requiring interpreters for the non-English speaking population to ensure equal access. Of some relevance is the fact that Ms. Capati self-identifies as an immigrant from a bilingual household, speaking Tagalog and some Spanish.

In describing how her position came to fruition, Ms. Capati explained that beginning in 1991, the next five biennial budgets for the state of Wisconsin showed increases not only in state-to-county reimbursement rates for interpreting services in court, but also for other crucial measures related to the consolidation of a path towards certification for court interpreters. Each of these budgets included requests for funding for court interpreter training. Finally in 2001, legislation was passed (Act 16) that incorporated the interpreters’ code of ethics into Supreme Court rules. Ms. Capati’s position as the Manager of the Court Interpreting Program, originally a two-year position funded by a grant, was converted into a permanent position in 2003 in response to the recognition of the need for interpreting services in civil, governmental, judicial and social services proceedings across the state. Court interpreter advocates organized testimony from district attorneys, judges, clerks, county supervisors, refugee advocates, and immigrants.
themselves – a broad coalition, which Ms. Capati believes attests to the importance of local grassroots organization (C. Capati, personal communication, March 17, 2010).

The 2005 biennial budget assured the Manager’s position through legislative Act 25 in addition to providing funding for the program. Biennial budgets 2007 and 2009 saw approval to provide interpreters for people who are not indigent, and the state mileage rate for which travelling interpreters could be reimbursed was finally raised after having stayed at twenty cents per mile for decades. These seemingly small and disparate victories, in concert with the creation of the Court Interpreter Program (CIP) and the funding of Ms. Capati’s position, helped to establish an important foundation for Wisconsin’s future as a state that valued equal access for all in its judicial system.

3.6 The Consortium for Language Access in the Courts

Perhaps the recommendation by the Committee with the greatest impact on the professionalization of court interpreting in Wisconsin was that of joining the National Center for State Courts’ Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (heretofore referred to as the Consortium). The decision to join the Consortium was made on the recommendation of the Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts, and continues to be the main vehicle by which interpreters of non-English languages (with the exception of ASL, or American Sign Language) achieve certification in the state of Wisconsin.

Of utmost importance to this entire dissertation is the situation of the Consortium for Language access in the Courts in the panorama of systematized court interpreter testing in the United States. The umbrella organization which houses the Consortium for
Language Access in the Courts is the National Center for State Courts, whose web site very succinctly summarizes the history and mission statement of the organization as follows:

At the **First National Conference of the Judiciary**, held in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1971, Chief Justice Warren Burger called for the creation of a central resource for the state courts—a "national center for state courts." The **National Center for State Courts** began operations that same year at the headquarters of the Federal Judicial Center in Washington, D.C., before moving to its permanent headquarters in Williamsburg in 1978 ("Mission & history," n.d.).

Born out of the NCSC, the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (formerly known as the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification) states that its own mission is "[t]o inspire and enable its members to promote equal access to justice in courts and tribunals by eliminating language barriers for persons with limited English proficiency" ("Mission & history," n.d.). Essentially, the Consortium is a multi-state partnership dedicated to developing court interpreter proficiency tests, making tests available to member states, and regulating the use of the tests. By sharing resources between states, the Consortium addresses resource shortages by defining and implementing standards for identifying proficient, qualified interpreters. Without those standards, state courts risk employing unqualified interpreters, leaving equal access to justice by linguistic minorities an unfulfilled obligation.

The Consortium was officially founded in July 1995 by the states of Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington as a consequence of professional relationships established during research conducted by the National Center for State Courts between 1992 and 1995. Regarding its formation,
The NCSC research showed that establishing an interstate authority with the capacity to coordinate test development efforts and investments on a national scale was both desirable and feasible. In 1994, judicial leaders in Minnesota and Oregon, who were committed to improving interpreter programs in their states, asked the National Center for State Courts for assistance in developing interpreter testing programs of equal quality and effectiveness to those then in existence in New Jersey and Washington (which were studied and documented in the Model Guides publication). Acting on that opportunity, staff of the NCSC invited representatives of those four states to work together with the NCSC to create a voluntary program in which member states could pool financial resources and professional expertise to eliminate duplication of expense and effort, and lower the cost of interpreter test development and administration for all of the member states. Thus, the Consortium was created to counter the high costs of test development and associated proprietary interests by providing a vehicle for exchange of expertise while safeguarding work products (Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification Frequently Asked Questions, 2008).

Currently, 44 U.S. states hold membership in the Consortium and enjoy benefits such as access to oral performance examinations in sixteen languages, a national database of tests and test scores, written examinations, professional conferences, e-mail list-serves, technical assistance, and consultation. For interpreters, the Consortium offers an annual interpreters’ and translators’ conference, a fall interpreters’ workshop, reciprocity with other states, certification exams in sixteen languages, information on the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (FCICE) program, job opportunities, links to resources for interpreters, information on compensation and salaries of interpreters, a testing schedule for interpreters by state, and training materials for written and oral exams.

3.7 PATHS TO CERTIFICATION FOR COURT INTERPRETERS

The study site discussed herein provides access to court interpreter certification in the same three ways which are available to nearly all prospective U.S. court interpreters,
and thus the ensuing discussion regarding paths to certification for Wisconsin court interpreters can be interchanged directly with a discussion regarding access to the profession for all prospective court interpreters in the United States. The only exception would be that Consortium state-level certification may not be recognized in the few states which are not yet members.

Currently, Wisconsin court interpreters seeking certification and inclusion on the Supreme Court’s roster of court interpreters must have passed an NCSC Consortium exam, either in Wisconsin or through reciprocity for exams given by other recognized certifying bodies. Wisconsin grants reciprocity to the following types of certification:

- Certifications from other state courts based on NCSC consortium exams
- The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam (FCICE)
- The RID legal specialist certificate (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) – American Sign Language only
- The NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators) examination

Consortium exams, most germane to the subject site of this research project, will be discussed in more detail below in section 3.8. The RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) will not be discussed herein as the scope of this study is to examine the possibility of certification for interpreters in the spoken language pair Spanish / English.

The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam, or FCICE, also administered under contract from the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts (AO) with the National Center for State Courts, was created and implemented in direct response to the Court Interpreters...
Act of 1978. Signed by President Carter on October 29, 1978, the Court Interpreters Act established the right of any individual involved in federal proceedings to have a certified court interpreter if his/her communication or comprehension capabilities were inhibited because of a language barrier or a hearing or speech impairment. The resulting federal certification examination is a two-phase process, involving a Spanish-English Written Examination (Phase One) and an Oral Examination (Phase Two) administered on a biennial basis with Phase One and Phase Two occurring in alternating years. Interpreters must pass the Written Examination with a score of 75 percent or higher in order to be eligible to sit for the Oral Examination (Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Program, n.d.).

The written exam serves primarily as a screening test for linguistic competence in English and Spanish, and is a four-option, multiple choice test of job-relevant language ability. The written exam tests comprehension of written text, knowledge of vocabulary, idioms, and grammatically correct expression, and the ability to select an appropriate target language rendering of source language text. The oral examination on the federal exam, however, directly measures interpreting skills. Because it fulfills the legal mandate for a criterion-referenced performance examination, the oral examination is the basis for certification to interpret in the federal courts, and consists of five parts: interpreting in the consecutive mode; interpreting a monologue in the simultaneous mode; interpreting a witness examination in the simultaneous mode; sight translation of a document from English into Spanish; and sight translation of a document from
Spanish into English\textsuperscript{37} (see Appendix I). To pass the federal oral examination, candidates must obtain an overall score of 80% or higher.

The NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators) Certification Examination program was created at the request of its membership in response to a survey conducted by its board of directors. NAJIT asserts that its certification exam “is designed to elevate professional standards, enhance individual performance, and offer a credential to those with the knowledge and skills required for the practice of the profession” ("NAJIT's certification program for court and legal interpreters -- The NJITCE certification," n.d.). Although currently offered only for the Spanish / English language pair, the NAJIT exam is accepted for state certification by Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Wisconsin. What makes the NAJIT exam different from other credentials? In their own words:

The NJITCE is the only nationwide certification exam developed exclusively by judiciary interpreters and translators (albeit with the essential psychometric expertise of Measurement Incorporated), who know best the standards required to uphold the integrity of the profession. Its purpose is to create a uniform standard for interpreters and translators working in a wide variety of legal settings, both civil and penal, throughout the United States. It is the first exam that tests both interpreting and translation skills in a legal context. It is the only examination that confers a credential offered by the profession, that belongs to the individual regardless of employment status or geographic location. We believe that every judiciary interpreter and translator in the country, regardless of other credentials, should achieve the NJITCE credential ("NAJIT's certification program for court and legal interpreters -- The NJITCE certification," n.d.).

\textsuperscript{37} Federal court interpreter certification is also available for the Navajo and Haitian Creole languages.
Like the Federal and Consortium exams, the NAJIT exam’s first phase is a written exam, containing antonyms, synonyms, analogies, grammar and syntax, and must be passed before examinees may proceed to the oral exam, which tests examinees in the three modes of interpreting.

Court certification at the state level through the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, however, is the credentialing system which has the most omnipresent role in Wisconsin, as well as in nearly all states in the United States. As it is also the axis around which all analyses in this dissertation revolve, Consortium oral exams are described in detail below.

3.8 Achieving Consortium Certification in Wisconsin: Training, Testing, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court Roster of Court Interpreters

As a result of growth in interpreter performances, public pressure applied by a broad coalition of supporters of a comprehensive interpreter training and testing mechanism, as well as the recommendations made by the Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts, the state of Wisconsin officially launched their relationship with the Consortium by beginning to offer oral testing in March of 2004. In sum, the certification process for Wisconsin courts includes the following requirements:

1. Attendance at an orientation training program offered by the court (16 hours);

2. Passing of a written examination covering English proficiency, ethics, legal terminology and procedure, and translation;
3. Passing of the oral certification exam designed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, formerly known as the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification;

4. Signing of an oath to abide by the code of ethics for court interpreters and be subject to discipline from the Director of State Courts Office;

5. Meeting of character and fitness requirements, including a criminal background check; and


3.8.1 ORIENTATION

The first step for candidates who wish to pursue the certification process for court interpreters in Wisconsin is obligatory attendance at a two-day interpreter orientation which is offered several times a year around the state. The curriculum gives participants an overview of the needs and expectations of the court, with emphasis on ethical conduct, legal terminology, court procedure, and basic legal interpreting skills. It is appropriate for all spoken and sign language interpreters. However, only sign language interpreters who hold at least a Certificate of Interpretation (CI) and Certification of Transliteration (CT) or National Interpreter Certification (NIC) from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) are eligible to attend ("Wisconsin Court System: For Interpreters", 2012).

The two-day, sixteen-hour orientation is mandatory for all aspiring court interpreters in Wisconsin, and covers topics such as an overview of the court system in Wisconsin, the interpreter’s role in the courtroom, the interpreter’s code of ethics, best professional practices, skills needed for court interpreting, the three modes of interpreting, demonstration of the interpreting modes, resources for further study, small group skills
practice in the three modes, criminal terminology and procedure, juvenile and family terminology, court interpreter roster requirements, the certification process, business practices for interpreters, as well as a model voir dire of interpreter qualifications. For the most recent orientation description and agenda, see Appendix F.

State manager of the Court Interpreter Program Carmel Capati provided information about the criteria for acceptance into the orientation program, which is not language specific. Upon inquiry about whether questions on the application were for informational purposes or if anyone is denied entrance into the training and testing path based on their answers to questions on the orientation application, Ms. Capati responded that

No one is turned away. The questions are informational in nature. They have been used in some instances to create small groups at the orientations with the aim of getting a cross-section of experience and skill levels, but have not been particularly helpful, as they have not been good predictors as to which participants seem to have more aptitude as interpreters (C. Capati, personal communication, March 17, 2010).

When asked whether any recruiting efforts had been made to attract novice interpreters to the training and testing cycle in the Spanish / English language pair, Ms. Capati replied that such efforts have not been necessary for Spanish interpreters. The only recruiting efforts mentioned were that training information has been circulated to faculty at four-year colleges, and in some instances at two-year technical colleges with language programs, and that some press releases to major media outlets and to ethnic press have been issued.

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38 The orientation application asks each applicant to provide information about his / her education, relevant experience and certifications, why he or she is interested in training, and about each candidate’s intention to interpret regularly in Wisconsin courts.
3.8.2 Written Examination

After interpreter candidates complete the two-day orientation they are eligible to sit for the written examination, which is offered approximately four weeks afterwards. The written examination, developed by the National Center for State Courts on behalf of the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification (now called the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts), is in English and measures candidates’ knowledge of three areas central to the work of a minimally qualified court interpreter: the first, considered an indispensable component, is a high degree of proficiency in the English language. Accordingly, the written examination assumes a high degree of literacy in the English language and familiarity with a range of language constructions. To that end, the first section of the exam is the general English proficiency exam, testing comprehension of written English vocabulary and idioms, synonyms, and antonyms.

The second area of knowledge considered essential to successful performance on the written exam is a section on court-related terms and usage, aimed at measuring familiarity with terminology and procedures of the court system. The written examination also measures recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary, especially in the area of criminal courts. Finally, ethics and professional conduct constitute the third area of knowledge encompassed in the written test. These skills are measured by asking candidates to choose the best answer in professional conduct questions as well as in different specific scenarios. In total, this multiple choice portion is comprised of 135 questions.

Finally, the written language assessment of the exam involves the translation of ten items, which are each two to three sentences long, using language typical of lay witness
testimony. The time allotted for the written translation section is one hour, and is scored on a pass/fail basis. The time allotted for the entire written exam is two hours and 15 minutes, with a passing score of 80%. Again, access to the written exam is available only to interpreters who have attended the orientation program.

In a personal email communication with Carmel Capati, inquiry was made about the practice of language proficiency assessment solely in English, the language of the court, in the written portion of the certification exam. In an effort to ascertain whether or not there existed an underlying assumption that most candidates are native speakers of the B language (in this case, Spanish), or if there was an underlying assumption that their level of usage in the language is sufficient for court interpreting purposes, Capati was queried as to why the Consortium does not test B-language proficiency to the extent that it does English-language proficiency before the oral exam stage. Capati replied,

There are some states that don’t even use a bilingual assessment, each state does things a bit differently with regard to screening for eligibility to take the oral examination. The Consortium currently does not have any set policy in place regarding pre-or oral test screening and in fact some states do not believe that the written language assessment we use is any predictor of how an interpreter would perform on the oral test (C. Capati, personal communication, May 11, 2010).

In any case, many member states of the Consortium rely on the English-language written exam as a necessary first step before candidates are allowed to sit for the oral examination, although the Wisconsin Court System’s web page entitled “Testing and certification process” advises candidates that “[d]oing well on the written examination does not indicate that a person is a certified interpreter, as certification is granted by the courts of a state only after an interpreter passes an oral performance test” (“For
interpreters - testing and certification," 2009). Hence, although the non-English language is not assessed in the written examination phase, the Consortium written exams were designed to test for substantive knowledge and not just proficiency in the language of record of the court.

3.8.3 ORAL EXAMINATION

The oral certification examination, fundamental to the certification process, is offered in Wisconsin by the Director of State Courts several times per year and is available to candidates who have completed the two-day orientation and written testing. The Wisconsin Court System states:

To pass the oral exam, interpreters must possess a mastery of the English language and the target language at the level of a highly educated native speaker, and have a thorough understanding of legal concepts in both languages. In addition, interpreters must be extremely proficient in specialized cognitive skills required to interpret in sight, consecutive, and simultaneous modes, and be able to convey messages accurately, completely and promptly ("Wisconsin Court System: For Interpreters," 2012).

The Wisconsin Court System’s “For interpreters: Testing and certification: oral examination” web page gives a detailed description of the Consortium’s oral exam, including descriptions of the exercises in sight translation, consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, as follows:

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39 Currently, the Consortium offers oral testing in Arabic, Cantonese, French, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese, with the proviso that “other languages may be available by request”. The cost of the exam for Wisconsin residents is $225.00.


41 Also see Appendix C for oral exam scoring unit distributions.
1. **Sight translation:** For this part of the exam, the candidate is asked to read a document written in English, while interpreting it aloud into the target language, and to read a document written in the target language, while interpreting it aloud in English. Each document is approximately 225 words in length. The candidate is given 6 minutes per document to review the content and perform the sight translation while being recorded.

2. **Consecutive:** During this segment of the exam, the candidate listens to a recording of an English-speaking attorney who is questioning a non-English speaking witness. The candidate must interpret aloud the English questions into the target language and the witness’ answers into English while being recorded. The questions and answers are of various lengths ranging from one word to a maximum of 50 words. The candidate is given 22 minutes to complete this portion of the test.

3. **Simultaneous:** With this part of the exam, the candidate listens to a recording in English of an attorney’s opening or closing statements to a jury or judge. This passage is recorded at a speed of 120 words per minute and is approximately 900 words in length. The speech continues for about 7 to 10 minutes without stopping. While listening through headphones, the candidate simultaneously interprets aloud all statements into the target language while being recorded. This segment takes about 12 minutes total including instructions and equipment preparation.

The description above is applicable to tests in all languages for which the Consortium offers a full oral exam.
3.9 Demographic and Self-Identifying Results of the Wisconsin Perception Study

While several psychometric properties and administration conditions of Consortium oral exams will be discussed in Chapter Four, a return to the Wisconsin perception study is now warranted in order to continue to examine results which shed light on potential indicators of successful performance on Consortium oral exams. Although some of the results of the Wisconsin perception study are beyond the scope of this dissertation’s immediate objective of defining practicing professionals’ perceptions of the three modes of interpreting, two very important aspects of the study will be reproduced and analyzed herein due to their direct bearing on this study’s search for indicators of interpreting aptitude. The results to be discussed include a profile of Wisconsin court interpreters on the Supreme Court roster, a profile which includes basic demographic information as well as ways in which the respondents self-identify professionally. Additionally, participants’ responses relating directly to their perceptions of the three modes of interpreting are discussed, followed by implications and conclusions which weigh the importance of the results in relation to this study’s stated objectives.

The Wisconsin perception study’s cross-tabulation and filtering functions allowed a clear picture to emerge of the interpreters on the official roster who passed the oral certification exam, thus shedding light on some non-empirical indicators of interpreting aptitude. Results from the entire study cohort (including interpreters at all three roster levels) will be presented for consideration when it is deemed useful to contrast their results with those interpreters who achieved certification.
3.9.1 Gender, Age, Level of Education, and Native Language

Self-identification and demographic questions have a primary function in the Wisconsin study, which sought to explore the possible existence of correlations between gender, age, and level of education with status on the roster. Questions about people’s native or “A” language may serve to illuminate any possible advantages for native speakers of either Spanish or English when it comes to obtaining higher levels on the roster. Furthermore, the survey sought to discover whether participants considered translation and / or interpreting their primary profession, or whether they did it “on the side”. Additionally, in the scope of their TI professional experience, did they identify primarily as translators or as interpreters? As mentioned previously, the Wisconsin state Supreme Court roster of interpreters was comprised of individuals who had pursued testing in and who had at least some exposure to interpreting; however, court professionals use the roster to engage translation professionals as well.

The gender of all consenting certified respondents, as represented in Figure 5, can be broken down as follows: 35% of respondents were male, and 65% were female. No respondents identified as transgender\(^{42}\), gender queer\(^{43}\), intersex\(^{44}\), or other.

\(^{42}\) Transgender is the state of one’s self-identified gender identity when it does not match one’s "assigned sex" (identification by others as male or female based on physical or genetic sex). Transgenderedness does not imply any specific sexual orientation.

\(^{43}\) People who identify as gender queer may think of themselves as being both man and woman, as being neither man nor woman, or as falling completely outside the gender binary.

\(^{44}\) The term “intersex” refers to a usually congenital atypical combination of physical features that distinguishes males from females (i.e. genital ambiguity, sex development differences, or having biological characteristics of both the male and female sexes. The term has also been adopted by intersex activists who criticize traditional medical approaches to sex assignment.
The age breakdown by decades for all respondents across all levels of expertise on the roster shows that the most highly represented age group is the 30-40 year range at the Gender of Certified Interpreters.
30.8%, followed by the 50-60 year-old group at 26.2%. Standing in some contrast, Figure 6 filters data to provide a profile of only the certified respondents: those who practice most often in Wisconsin courts and who have demonstrated higher levels of performance. With this subset, we see a slight shift: interpreters who are 30-40 and 40-50 years of age each constitute 30% of respondents, followed at 25% by those aged 50-60.

Next, survey participants were asked to indicate the highest level of education that they had attained. The table below contrasts results from the entire study cohort at all three levels with just those interpreters who are certified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>% Respondents (all 3 levels)</th>
<th>% Certified respondents only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's degree</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some undergraduate work beyond an undergraduate degree</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some coursework beyond a master's degree</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked whether the interpreters surveyed considered Spanish or English to be their “A” or native language, the certified interpreters on the roster identified as follows:

---

45 An associate’s degree is an undergraduate academic degree awarded by community colleges, junior colleges, technical colleges and some four-year bachelor’s degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States upon completion of a course of study usually lasting two years. In the United States, an associate’s degree is equivalent to the first two years of a four-year college or university degree. It is the lowest in the hierarchy of post-secondary academic degrees offered.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
25% as native Spanish speakers, 50% as native English speakers, and 30% as fully bilingual. The chart below renders a graphic depiction:

**FIGURE 7 NATIVE LANGUAGES OF CERTIFIED INTERPRETERS**

**TABLE 4 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ALL RESPONDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% of overall respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico(^{46})</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela / Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{46}\) Puerto Rico is actually a self-governing, unincorporated territory of the United States. However, I have opted to leave it as an identified “country” of origin in order to best reflect survey responses.
One respondent also indicated German as a native language. No others were identified. Additionally, 64 respondents across the entire study cohort were willing to identify their country of origin, as depicted in Table Four. Nearly half of the respondents identified as US-born, followed by 28.13% Mexican-born.

3.9.2 **Professional Self-Identification**

In addition to standard demographic identifiers, the survey implemented in this study placed great importance on compiling professional self-identifying information from the interpreters on the Wisconsin roster. The broadest and first question in this sequence asked simply, “How do you best describe your professional life?”

**FIGURE 8 PROFESSIONAL LIFE: ALL RESPONDENTS**
With responses depicted in Figure 8, the question aimed at creating the first level of distinction between primarily TI practitioners and people who located the majority of their professional life outside the realm of translation and interpreting. 50.8% of the survey’s respondents, depicted in orange, identified as working primarily in another field, and doing translation and/or interpreting “on the side”.

Contrasting quite notably, Figure 9 depicts certified interpreters’ answers to the same question. The number of roster interpreters who describe their professional life in TI as being “on the side” shrinks quite dramatically to 20%, with 80% (in blue) of respondents selecting the “Most or all of my professional work is in the field of translation and/or interpreting” option.
The next survey question was meant to ascertain how many people on the roster identified primarily as an interpreter, as a translator, or both. For the “all respondents” study cohort, at all three levels of progress along the certification continuum, 33.8% consider themselves primarily an interpreter; 7.7% consider themselves primarily a translator, and 58.5% consider themselves to be both translators and interpreters.

In contrast, however, when filtering responses by certified-only participants, the balance is shifted in favor of significantly higher levels of self-identification as an interpreter, at 55%. Not a single respondent in the certified category identified as primarily a translator, and 45% consider themselves both translators and interpreters.
A question aimed at certified interpreters only asked how they attained certification. Nineteen out of twenty respondents, or 95%, passed a National Consortium for Language Access in the Courts exam, lending credence to the suspicion that the Consortium path to certification is of eminent importance in Wisconsin. Only one interpreter attained certification by other means: in this case, the interpreter was federally certified.

Membership in professional organizations at both the regional and national levels, an indicator of commitment to growth and professional development, is represented in Table 5, below. Survey respondents were able to indicate membership in more than one organization. Note the sharply contrasting rates of membership for certified interpreters versus non-certified:
TABLE 5 MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional organization</th>
<th>% of all respondents who are members</th>
<th>% of certified-only respondents who are members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAJIT(^{47})</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATA(^{48})</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATI(^{49})</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMTIA(^{50})</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not belong to any professional TI organization</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAJIT and ATA, both national-level organizations, are clearly the most highly represented professional organizations to which Wisconsin court interpreters belong, but it cannot escape one’s notice that the great majority of people on the roster do not participate in the networking, training and professional development opportunities offered by regional and national-level TI organizations. As Holly Mikkelson states,

A professional organization is a necessary ingredient in the formula to further the professional standing of court interpreters. Such an organization can provide continuing education, professional growth and solidarity. It allows interpreters to communicate with colleagues in their languages and to explore mutual concerns. In addition, a professional organization serves with the as a means for interpreters to communicate and negotiate with the users of their services (Mikkelson, 1997, p. 63).

\(^{47}\) NAJIT stands for the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators and, as the name implies, is a professional organization that functions at the national level.

\(^{48}\) ATA stands for the American Translators Association, the most prominent national-level professional organization for TI practitioners.

\(^{49}\) MATI stands for the Midwest Association of Translations and Interpreters. This regional professional organization serves translators and interpreters in the states of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin.

\(^{50}\) UMTIA, or the Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association is, like MATI, a chapter of the American Translators Association. This regional association serves TI practitioners primarily from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota.
The notable lack of participation in such organizations by Wisconsin court interpreters represented a surprising finding, and one which bears further scrutiny in relationship to successful interpreting performance. It was not assumed, however, that respondents belonged to or benefitted only from specifically TI-related professional organizations, and for that reason survey participants were able to add other organizations related to their practice besides those mentioned above. While the certified-only group belonged only to obviously TI-related organizations, participants at all three roster levels indicated membership as well in the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, SWITS (Southern Wisconsin Interpreting and Translation Services: a private agency, not a professional association) and the NCIHC (National Council of Interpreting in Healthcare).

3.10 PERCEPTIONS OF AND INSIGHTS ON THE THREE MODES OF INTERPRETATING

This section provides the results of those parts of the Wisconsin perception study that have to do directly with practitioners’ perceptions of the three modes of interpreting, with data reflecting practitioners’ use of the three modes on the job, the study cohort’s perception of the difficulty and utility of the three modes of interpreting, challenges in their professional practice, training concerns, and finally, the place of the three modes within the certification process. Recall that all questions and data related to prompts focused solely on sight translation have not been included in this dissertation.

To begin, respondents were asked to rank the importance / frequency of use of the three modes of interpreting. The exact phrasing of the question was “Please rank the following modes of interpretation in their order of importance / frequency of use. Write a number 1 for the most important, a 2 for the second most important, and a 3 for the
least important.” It should be noted that the survey allowed respondents to rank more than one mode with the same level of importance: that is, a respondent could potentially have awarded “#1” status to more than one mode of interpreting. The picture that emerged was that the simultaneous mode was considered most important and / or most frequent, followed by the consecutive mode, and then sight translation. In fact, 43 out of 59 respondents in the general study cohort and 16 out of 20 among the certified-only group ranked sight translation in third place in terms of importance and frequency of use, as seen in Table 6:

### Table 6 Three Modes Ranked in Order of Importance / Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Times ranked as #1</th>
<th>Times ranked as #2</th>
<th>Times ranked as #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All respondents at all 3 levels (total number of 60 responses)(^{51})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified-only respondents (total number of 20 responses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In its aim to compile a description of the relationship between the three modes of interpreting and certain aspects of the certification process, the first question on this section of the survey was stated as follows: “If you have taken the final oral certification exam, whether you passed it or not, in which mode of interpreting do you believe that novice or prospective interpreters should train? In other words, which kind of training would help them the most in order to pass the oral exam?”

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\(^{51}\) Total responses for the “all respondents” group add up to 59 instead of 60, as one respondent consistently wrote in a mode instead of a ranking, rendering responses that could not be incorporated into results.
While the majority of respondents in the main study cohort had not even attempted the oral exam yet, they expressed a clear opinion that training in all three modes of interpreting would be equally useful in passing the oral exam. As seen in Figure 13, certified interpreters, all of whom had actually taken the oral exam and thus were best positioned to comment about which sort of training would be most useful, concurred (at 81.3%) with the general study cohort in the utility of training in all three modes of interpreting as best preparation for the final oral exam. None of the certified interpreters identified training exclusively in sight translation as the most useful training option for novice interpreters.
Similarly, respondents were asked to contemplate which sort of training (in which mode of interpreting) would most benefit professional performance. The question was phrased exactly as follows: “In your work as a Wisconsin court interpreter, which kind of further training would help you the most in order to perform better on the job? Please rank these answers by placing numbers next to them, with a "1" being the most important and a "4" being the least important.” What is depicted in the table below is the number of mentions that all respondents gave:

![Figure 13: Type of Training Most Useful to Pass: Certified Interpreters](image-url)

*FIGURE 13 TYPE OF TRAINING MOST USEFUL TO PASS: CERTIFIED INTERPRETERS*
Participants were then asked which exercise, or mode of interpreting, on the oral exam was the most difficult, in their option. Figure 14 gauges the level of perceived difficulty of each of the parts of the oral certification exam for those who had attempted it: exactly 50% of respondents in the general study cohort. Conversely, exactly 50% of all respondents in the main study cohort had not attempted to take the oral exam at all. For those who had, 22.2% thought the simultaneous part was hardest; 13% found the consecutive part hardest; 9.3% found the sight translation part hardest, and 5.6% did not remember.

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52 Forty five instead of forty six respondents ranked the consecutive mode.

53 Sixteen respondents addressed this question, although not all of them answered all ranking questions, leading to inconsistencies in the totals of respondents for each mode of interpreting.
As depicted in Figure 15 certified interpreters, all of whom had taken the exam and thus spoke from experience, agreed with the general study cohort at 43.8% that the simultaneous part was most challenging, followed by the consecutive part at 25%, and sight translation at 18.8%. 12.5% of certified respondents did not remember. As an explanation as to why the simultaneous mode was the most challenging, one interpreter glibly commented "... because once it started there was no stopping, just one brain freeze could do you under" (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 4, comment 3).
In total, nineteen people provided written comments about what they perceived to be the most difficult mode of interpreting tested on the oral exam, and why. One interpreter who also identified the simultaneous mode as the most challenging commented,

I found the simultaneous part to be extremely difficult. It was very difficult to not lose track of what was being said next when I struggled with a word or phrase. Also I found figures and spelling to be difficult to rendered simultaneously. I also think is all brain power, with simultaneous interpretation you have no chance to jot anything down that will help you along. I think I did

*A wealth of information is available from Appendix E, which details the non-quantifiable, written responses from survey participants. Errors and misspellings in quoted written responses are reproduced exactly as they were submitted in the survey.*

54 A wealth of information is available from Appendix E, which details the non-quantifiable, written responses from survey participants. Errors and misspellings in quoted written responses are reproduced exactly as they were submitted in the survey.
not know the legal terminology in my native language as well as needed for simultaneous interpretation (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 4, comment 5).

Another interpreter stated that he or she found the consecutive mode to be the most challenging “because I tend to have a hard time remembering every word and phrase, and when I took notes, I was writing so fast that I couldn’t read my own writing afterward” (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 4, comment 7). For another, sight translation posed the greatest challenge “because it was what I had the least amount of practice with and I tended to be too literal and tied to the words instead of focusing on the meaning” (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 4, comment 13). This illuminating comment is the only one which hints at the danger of being “pulled in” by the written text, previously identified by Martin and Moser-Mercer as one of the major obstacles to effective sight translation. Another comment speaks to the oft-expressed struggle with technical vocabulary experienced by sight readers in Wisconsin courts. One respondent wrote: “I think the hardest was the sight translation. I always get very nervous about not being able to understand the terminology and translating the meaning correctly” (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 4, comment 2).

As for the part of the oral exam perceived to be easiest, consider the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8 EASIEST SECTION OF THE ORAL EXAM</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Certified only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not attempted to take the oral exam</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not remember</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting to note that simultaneous was ranked first both in difficulty (by the general study cohort and the certified-only group) and in ease. While seemingly contradictory, this result can be partially explained by the fact that those respondents in the previous section who did not state that simultaneous was the most difficult were the ones who might have identified it as easiest. Some light can be shed as to the reason for this paradox upon examining the prose comments provided by those twenty one people who wrote about why certain sections were easiest. In sum, it appears that many respondents identified simultaneous as the mode most often used: hence, they practiced it very often. Consecutive was easiest for those who indicated in the survey’s written response that they had good short term memories, and sight translation, as per several comments, could be done at one’s own pace, thus giving one time to think.

**FIGURE 16 MODE OF HIGHEST SCORE: ALL RESPONDENTS**
In addition to perceived difficulty of various parts of the oral exam, participants were asked to recall the section on which they scored highest. What is striking about these results (see Figures 16 and 17) is the number of people who do not remember which part they scored highest on (27.8% in the entire group, and 56.3% for certified interpreters). As shown in Table 9, for those in the main study cohort who had taken the exam and did remember which section they scored the highest on, 13% indicated that their highest score was on the sight translation exercise. For the certified-only group, not a single respondent indicated that they scored highest on the consecutive exercise; simultaneous was their highest score at 25%, followed by sight translation at 18.8%.
TABLE 9 MODE IN WHICH RESPONDENTS SCORED HIGHEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise on oral exam</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Certified only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not taken the exam</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked the mode on which they scored the *lowest* on the oral exam, 68.5% of the general study cohort either had not taken the oral exam yet or didn’t remember it. The simultaneous mode was identified as the exercise they scored the lowest on.

In contrast, for those participants from the certified-only group who did remember their scores, all three modes of interpreting tied exactly at 18.8% each as the exercise they scored the lowest on. The pattern which emerges seems to be a higher level of appreciation for the difficulty of sight translation among certified, more experienced interpreters. In the words of one respondent, “Sight translation is not just ‘reading’ even though this is the belief of many in the courts. Just because it is done with ease, as a professional should do it, doesn’t mean it is easy to do” (Appendix E, survey page 6, question 2, comment 9).

TABLE 10 MODE IN WHICH RESPONDENTS SCORED LOWEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise on oral exam</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Certified only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t remember</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not taken the exam</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subsequently, it was explained to participants that one of the study’s objectives was to see if there was a correlation between overall pass rates on the oral exam and scores on particular exercises. Lamentably, most individuals did not remember their exam scores, even if they were willing to report them. From the data available, however, several interesting patterns emerge. Of those who indicated a mode on which they scored highest, nearly half of these respondents (13%) expressed that sight translation was easier for them than the two other modes combined (3.7% indicated the consecutive mode and 7.4% indicated simultaneous). In contrast, however, data suggests that among certified respondents – those who had passed the exam – all three modes were rated exactly the same in terms of lowest score. In other words, we find conflicting perceptions about the difficulty of sight translation between the general study cohort and the certified-only group, potentially explaining the gap between the complexities of sight translation as represented in current scholarship and its perception as the easiest, least important mode among the court interpreters in the study cohort.

Additionally, the responses of those interpreters who did provide written comments about their scores on each of the three modes have been reproduced in Appendix E; however, these written comments proved to be less than illuminating, for several reasons. First of all, only eight respondents commented; several of those that did could not remember their exact scores or did not have them available at the time they were taking the survey.

The question of correlation between pass rates on the certification exam and scores on individual exercises constituted one of the main objectives of this study. However, preliminary data was too inconclusive to indicate a relationship between performance...
on any specific mode of interpreting on the exam; indeed, it may be more accurate to affirm that more data is needed in order to come to any firm conclusion regarding the relationship between these two elements. In other words, the survey tool was useful in illuminating *perceptions* of difficulty of the three modes, but the need for further empirical data to explore specific modes of interpreting as indicators of overall aptitude on the Consortium oral certification exam was warranted, especially because no link between performance and perception of difficulty could be established without concrete exam scores.

**FIGURE 18 OBSTACLES TO PROGRESSION**

Finally, as delineated in the figure above, provisional and trainee respondents on the roster were asked to identify which obstacles they had faced in progressing to fully...
certified status. Respondents were once again allowed to check all options that applied. While the expense of the oral exam constituted the main obstacle for 37% of survey participants, failure of the exam by 25.9% of respondents represented the second most significant impediment to certification. Indeed, high rates of exam failure on Consortium oral exams is explored in more detail in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

**TABLE 11 OBSTACLES TO PROGRESSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am certified. This question does not apply to me</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The expense of the exams is an obstacle.</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I still get called to interpret in court, so I am not motivated to progress on the roster</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have taken certain parts of the exam and have failed</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty one written comments, available in Appendix E, shed more light on these and other obstacles to progression. The most common comment was that it was hard to get enough practice in the real world, either because of not ever being called to interpret in court or due to other life and time pressures. One interpreter commented,

I have heard so many horror stories about the passing rate for the oral exam that I feel I have to study everything and anything and it's very hard to do with family and work obligations (I do work in the field though). Since the exam is expensive, I don't want to take it unless I feel I am sufficiently prepared. I have used the prep material but I wish there were more guidelines so I can at least limit my studies a bit more. I have to explain that I am a very conscientious student so I feel overwhelmed by what I should be prepared for (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 12, comment 16).

Several simply lost interest or decided to pursue other career options.55

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55 One person, frustrated with the “difficult field” of interpreting, even remarked that s/he had decided to pursue acting instead! (Appendix E, survey page 8, question 13, comment 6).
3.11 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The data provided in this chapter paint a picture of the overall study cohort of certified, provisional and trainee interpreters on the Wisconsin roster until very recently. As previously mentioned, this profile represents the only study done on such a large body of court interpreters in a primarily rural state court system, and the implications of such a profile, especially in combination with self-identifying information, lend themselves to both a clearer idea of who is practicing in court in addition to which populations could potentially be targeted for recruitment.

Basic demographic markers embedded in the survey have allowed a fairly clear picture of the Wisconsin court interpreter roster to emerge. Around three fourths (3/4) of all respondents were female; when filtered for certified-only respondents, two thirds (2/3) were female.

As regards age by decade, the 30-60 year-old age group dominated for both groups. This solid representation of mid-life professionals is consistent with the expectation that individuals with more life experience perform better as interpreters. Indeed, in comparison, the certified-only group had a higher showing of individuals in the 40-50 year age group and fewer in the 20-30 year age group. There appears to be a slight correlation between age and performance, with more interpreters in the 70-80 year age group who are certified rather than not certified.

In terms of level of formal education, 30.8% (for all respondents across all three categories) to 40% (certified only) of interpreters hold an undergraduate (also known
as a bachelor’s) degree, making this level of education the most highly represented across both groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT: Population 25 years and over</td>
<td>3,475,878</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9th grade</td>
<td>186,125</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th to 12th grade, no diploma</td>
<td>332,292</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</td>
<td>1,201,813</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>715,664</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>260,711</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>530,268</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate or professional degree</td>
<td>249,005</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent high school graduate or higher</td>
<td>224,100</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent bachelor’s degree or higher</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


If we compare Wisconsin court interpreters to the population of Wisconsin as a whole in terms of educational attainment (as in the table above), the study cohort is well above the norm; indeed, certified court interpreters hold bachelor’s degrees at nearly double the rate of the state’s general population. For those survey respondents having completed high school or a further level of education, Wisconsin court interpreters, at 86.7% (for respondents at all three levels) to 85% (certified only) have obtained education at or beyond the completion of high school, correlating nearly exactly to the 85.1% of Wisconsin residents as a whole who identifies as a high school graduate or higher. In sum, certified interpreters across the board show higher levels of educational
attainment starting at the undergraduate degree level and beyond, suggesting a link between formal education and interpreter performance.\textsuperscript{56}

Regarding respondents’ native language, recall that in the broadest survey population representing all three roster levels, 43.1\% identified as native Spanish speakers; 38.5\% identified as native English speakers, and 29.2\% identified as fully bilingual. When filtering for certified-only responses, however, native English speakers dominate at 50\% of respondents, reversing the previous dominance of Spanish speakers, who represent only 25\% of the certified population (30\% of which identified as fully bilingual). Potentially, these numbers could be suggesting a higher success rate on the certification exam for native English speakers. Whether or not there is any inherent bias in the testing system utilized by the Consortium is beyond the scope of this research project; nonetheless, further research could prove fruitful in understanding the link between native language and test bias and/or performance, if indeed there is any. Data regarding participants’ country of origin places nearly half of respondents in the overall study cohort (48.34\%) identifying as US-born, although it cannot be assumed how many of the US-born also identify as native speakers of English. At 28.13\%, the next most significant population is that of Mexican-born interpreters, with all other Spanish-speaking countries represented (Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Cuba) at 4.69\% or less.

\textsuperscript{56} An interesting observation: four people, or 6.2\% of survey respondents hold a doctoral degree. None of these is a certified interpreter.

\textsuperscript{57} See previous footnote regarding Puerto Rico.
In sum, certified Wisconsin court interpreters are primarily female, much more highly educated than the general population, and they are US-born and native speakers of English. Having established the link between formal education and performance, evidence suggests that post-secondary institutions such as universities and community colleges may represent fertile training and recruiting ground for future court interpreters. Again, further research would help to illuminate why native English speakers appear to perform better on the Consortium’s certification exam.

As regards self-identifying markers, data has shown that 50.8% of the study cohort places their primary profession outside of translation and interpreting. When filtering for certified only respondents, this number drops to 20%. Significantly more practitioners in the certified category consider translation or interpreting their primary profession. By the same token, when asked if respondents identified primarily as translators, interpreters or both, a fairly dramatic shift occurs when comparing all respondents with only the certified population: not a single person in the certified group identifies primarily as a translator; 55% identify primarily as interpreters (versus 33.8% for all three levels), and 45% of certified respondents (versus 58.5% for all three levels) identify as both translators and interpreters. 21.2% more people at the certified level identify primarily as interpreters. In complement, 13.5% fewer certified respondents identify as being both translators and interpreters.

Regarding the number of interpreters on the roster who achieved certification via any other means except through the passing of a Consortium exam, only one person did so by passing the Federal Court Interpreters Exam, with the other 62 out of 63 having achieved certification through Consortium exams. Clearly, although other means to
Certification are recognized in Wisconsin, they are negligible, lending special weight and import to Wisconsin court interpreters’ perceptions of the three modes of interpreting in relationship to Consortium testing.

For membership in professional organizations, the two boasting the greatest representation of Wisconsin court interpreters are NAJIT (at 9.2% for the entire study cohort, and 25% for only certified interpreters), and the ATA, with exactly the same level of representation in both groups. The most surprising finding was that 83.1% of the entire study cohort (as compared to 55% of the certified-only group) does not belong to any professional association at all. It was presupposed that the benefits of membership were clear, but a strengthened membership base among Wisconsin court interpreters may be desirable.

In sum, while nearly half of the overall roster identifies professionally outside of TI, certified interpreters identify more as interpreters, meaning that they practice with more frequency, and presumably with a higher degree of skill, if we can assume that roster status is a reliable gauge of performance. These findings strongly justify the Committee’s decision to remove less qualified practitioners from the Spanish / English roster.

What are the implications of these self-identifying data markers? While data confirming that certified interpreters place more of their professional activity within the realm of interpreting alone and have higher levels of participation in professional organizations is not surprising in the least, the data suggests that increased participation and membership in professional organizations, especially due to the access they provide to
training, may help more novice interpreters to gain the methodological, professional and practical skills that they need in order to succeed in earning certification. The incontrovertible importance of the National Consortium for Language Access in the Courts as testers could also be enhanced if the training opportunities they offered were taken advantage of by more novice interpreters.

As regards respondents’ perceptions of the three modes of interpreting, participants considered simultaneous interpreting to be the hardest part of the certification exam, but also the easiest (with sight translation in second place for both groups and tying with consecutive in second place for the certified-only group). For those respondents who have taken the oral exam, the general study cohort reported having scored highest on the sight translation portion (13%); the more qualified group of interpreters analyzed (certified only) indicated having scored highest on the simultaneous portion at 25%. Equally perplexing, however, is the fact that simultaneous was also the part identified as that on which participants scored the lowest (14.8% for the general study cohort). For the certified group, all three modes were exactly tied at 18.8%, along with the significant 43.8% who did not remember their exam scores.

As regards obstacles to progression identified by those respondents who were not certified, the first identified was the expense of the exams at 37%, followed by 25.9% of respondents who have experienced exam failure already. 14.8% indicated that they
were not motivated to pursue certification as they continued to get contracted for court work in spite of their status on the roster\textsuperscript{58}.

The obstacle of exam failure identified here is especially interesting as it correlates directly with the concerns of the Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts and their reasons for paring down the Spanish /English roster of interpreters. In essence, Wisconsin finally has “enough” certified interpreters in Spanish, and can now afford the luxury of dispensing with old hiring practices of contracting less qualified people within that language pair. Significantly, the high rate of exam failure revealed by the Wisconsin perception study only serves to underscore the importance of identifying interpreters who are truly poised to succeed on the oral certification exam. Trainers, state program managers, credentialing bodies, and candidates themselves will all benefit from a data-driven definition of both the “soft” skills and the inherent mode-specific interpreter competencies which poise a candidate to succeed in meeting the minimum standard of achieving a score of 70% or higher on the Consortium exam.

Survey data leads us to an apparent impasse, then. It appears to be impossible to predict one mode as an indicator of aptitude; it seems equally difficult to identify which mode novice interpreters could benefit from training in the most in order to maximize their chances of passing the oral exam as a whole. Relying on hard data as opposed to memories or impressions is necessary in order to establish clear patterns.

\textsuperscript{58} Non-certified Spanish-language interpreters are no longer on the roster, and counties are no longer reimbursed by the state if they are used.
As a direct result and to that end, this study is being expanded upon now, at the dissertation stage, by closely analyzing data provided by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. These hundreds of pages of data promise to illuminate performance patterns of Spanish / English test takers, and will be the focus of Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

3.12 SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICATIONS OF THE WISCONSIN PERCEPTION STUDY

The Wisconsin perception study, although greatly abbreviated in this dissertation, has generated some useful indicators of aptitude which, in tandem with the empirical findings discussed in Chapters Five and Six, have made contributions to advancing our knowledge of predictive factors of interpreter performance. Concretely, the perception study is applicable and valuable for the following reasons:

1. Because of its scope and breadth. The high response rate on the survey as well as the amount of data generated are both significant;
2. Because it is unique. Nothing comparable has been done previously, and this study has not been replicated on any scale;
3. Because perceptions of the complexity and difficulty of the three modes of interpreting did not align with theoretical constructs of interpreter aptitude. Depth of processing and cognitive load studies discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation poised sight translation as a likely candidate to predict successful performance in the other two modes of interpreting, due to its complexity. Survey participants disagreed, however, and markedly so. The only way to clarify the discrepancy between theory and perception is by posing the question of a predictor mode empirically, by statistically analyzing the Consortium data set;
4. Because the study cohort is representative of interpreting rosters in most other U.S. states with three-tiered system, growing LEP populations, and diminishing fiscal resources. Implications from this study potentially go way beyond the borders of the study site; and finally,

5. Because the competence-indicating factors (demographic and self-identification descriptors) revealed in the study will serve as a useful complement to data gathered about specific modes as indicators of aptitude on the Consortium certification exam.

Can the seeming contradictions between what theory and perception studies yield be somehow reconciled or clarified? Before these unresolved questions are further explored empirically, other methodological and procedural descriptors of the Consortium exams must be investigated, especially in light of some very useful concepts borrowed from testing theory. Additionally, a few small yet revealing analyses of Consortium exam statistics have already been carried out. These studies, especially as they relate to alternative testing models and the identification of a predictor mode, are considered in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER FOUR: A BRIEF PSYCHOMETRIC REVIEW OF CONSORTIUM ORAL EXAMINATIONS AND PRECEDENTS FOR EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF CONSORTIUM DATA

Before considering a few precedents in analysis of Consortium data as they relate to predictor mode studies, Chapter Four will begin with the examination of some important methodological and psychometric properties of Consortium oral exams. While this section does not purport to delve deeply into language testing theory, an understanding is warranted of the instrument used to derive the statistics on which the studies discussed herein are based. Do Consortium oral exams measure what they purport to measure, and are they adequate instruments in light of basic concepts in testing theory? Cynthia Giambruno Miguélez states that

[i]n order to construct a valid and reliable certification instrument, it is necessary to understand the foundations of testing and the steps that are involved in the actual elaboration of the instrument. Many issues are involved in testing instrument design and development including what type of instrument is the most appropriate for a particular situation, how to write and test specific test items once the type of exam has been determined, what type of assessment method or scoring system should be used, who should be selected as readers and what type of training they should receive, what conditions are needed for administration of the exam, and how practical issues such as cost, administration sites, time concerns, and so on affect the testing process (1997, p.168).

Certainly a more thorough understanding of Consortium oral exams, their elaboration, administration, rating protocols, and issues of validity and reliability will be fundamental in understanding the testing instrument upon which preliminary and subsequent statistical analyses of predictor modes are based.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
4.1 OVERVIEW OF CONSORTIUM ORAL EXAMS

To begin, a discussion regarding the difference between norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced exams will be useful in order to classify Consortium oral exams. As succinctly summarized by Miguélez,

[t]here are two principle approaches to test score interpretation: criterion-referencing and norm-referencing. Criterion-referencing is an absolute measurement technique while norm-referencing is a relative measurement technique. Stated another way, criterion-referencing is a method by which the score referent is a specific standard and norm-referencing is a method by which the score referent is the distribution of scores. Criterion-referenced information is designed to evaluate mastery of a given skill or acquisition of a corpus of knowledge (performance objectives) while norm-referenced information provides the tester with information about a particular candidate’s abilities in relation to other candidates who take the test. Criterion-referencing is considered especially valid for screening and as regards purpose specific exams such as profession-related testing, particularly when training or formal study of the subject or skill area is not required for taking the exam. Criterion-referencing shows that an individual has achieved mastery, even if he has not done or completed training in the field. (1997, p. 174).

While norm-referencing has very specific situational uses59, “[o]riginal and current oral examinations developed for the Consortium are high-stakes criterion-referenced assessments” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 13) used to make score interpretations in relation to a functional performance level, as is appropriate for a profession-specific qualifying exam. Oral certification exams in general, and Consortium exams in particular are summative, high-stakes exams which allow or impede professional practice in court.

59 In China, exams have traditionally been norm-referenced as it is believed to be fair and as “the passing score must be linked to the number of places allotted by the Ministry for the incoming class” (Arjona-Tseng, 1994, p. 81). Furthermore, see June Eyckmans, Philippe Anckaert and Winibert Segers for their views on the advantages of norm-referenced translation evaluation methods.
Although mentioned in Chapter Three and detailed in Appendix F, Consortium oral exams consist of four parts based on transcripts or other court documents which simulate actual court interpreting. The four parts of the exam are:

1. **Sight translation of a document written in English and interpreted orally into the non-English language.** This part of the test simulates an interpreter reading an English-language document aloud to a non-English-speaking person. The document is about 225 words in length, and examinees are given six minutes to complete this portion of the exam (including preparation and rendering).

2. **Sight translation of a document written in the non-English language and interpreted into oral English.** This part of the test simulates an interpreter reading a non-English-language document aloud to an English-speaking person. This document is also about 225 words in length, and examinees are given six minutes to complete the exercise (including preparation and rendering).

3. **Consecutive interpreting from English into the non-English language and from the non-English language into English.** During this portion of the test, the interpreter interprets English-language questions into the foreign language and foreign language answers into English. The examinee may ask to have two of the test segments repeated, and this portion is administered by having a test proctor play the recorded courtroom simulation on a CD player.

4. **Simultaneous interpreting from English into the non-English language.** This portion of the exam consists of a CD recording of a simulated attorney’s opening or closing statement to a judge or jury. It is approximately 800 to 850 words in

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60 Also see Appendix G for a description of Consortium scoring unit categories and Appendix H, which outlines the standard distribution of scoring units on Consortium oral exams.
length, and is recorded at an approximate speed of 120 words per minute (much slower than most ordinary courtroom speech). Most of the passage is monologue speech by one voice, representing an attorney, although a brief section of colloquy by voices representing the judge, other attorneys, or a witness may be included (Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification, 2005, p. 4).

There are currently three active versions of the Spanish / English oral exam and several retired versions. When an exam is developed, it is assigned a numerical value and “so, for example, exam version 4.2 would refer to the second revision and updated form of exam 4” (C. Green, personal communication, February 3, 2011). Besides the addition of fifteen points added to consecutive sections, there have not been any changes over time, as far as Carola Green is aware, with the exception that

[in the past year, there was a Tech committee decision to change the time of some of the Consecutive allowed depending on the language; it used to be all exams were allowed 22 minutes but now it varies between 22 up to 27 minutes. The sight translations are all 6 minutes long in each direction regardless of language and the simultaneous is anywhere between 6.5 and 8 minutes long in all languages (C. Green, personal communication, February 3, 2011).]

Furthermore, and in large part thanks to the Consortium’s commitment to abiding by Test Construction Manual (TCM) parameters, the Consortium has enjoyed consistency as well as a perception of face validity by interpreting stakeholders. At the moment, the Consortium is not pondering the introduction of any new testing models, although they are undergoing a process of technological innovation in that “the test administration

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61 Carola Green is the Coordinator for Court Interpreting Testing Services and Operations at the National Center for State Courts.

process is shifting to using all-digital equipment and making digital recordings of exams instead of tape recordings” (R.J. Lee, personal communication, April 21, 2011). Indeed, the content and structure of Consortium oral exams has not stirred controversy in the field; nonetheless, a brief inventory of these oral exams’ psychometric characteristics will serve to augment ensuing discussions about test performance and potential indicators of interpreter aptitude.

4.2. Psychometric Considerations and Consortium Oral Exams

Psychometrics is the branch of psychology that “deals with the design, administration, and interpretation of quantitative tests for the measurement of psychological variables such as intelligence, aptitude, and personality traits” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 33). In the case of Consortium oral exams, whose purpose is certification and not gauging suitability for entry into a program of study, Etilvia Arjona-Tseng is not alone in affirming that the need for a psychometric approach to aptitude testing is undisputed. She states that

[a] psychometric approach ... implies following a number of procedures to ensure construct validation, such as standardization of test administration procedures, proper pilot testing of instruments and adherence to standard principles of measurement and test construction. Rater training, for example, enhances reliability in the evaluation of candidates’ performance. Perhaps equally important, a psychometrically sound approach enables us to evaluate whether we are, indeed, achieving our stated objective ... (1994, pp. 83-84).

In order to conduct this inventory of Consortium exams in relation to psychometric principles, two main sources shall be used. The first is a report prepared by ALTA Language Services, Inc., for the Judicial Council of California’s Administrative Office of the Courts entitled “California’s Assessment of the Consortium for Language Access in

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
the Courts' Exams”, published in 2010. Second, Consortium materials such as the Test Construction Manual, the Test Rating Manual, and the Overview of the Oral Performance Examination for Prospective Court Interpreters will be scrutinized.

The purpose of the California assessment was to determine the level of functional equivalency between California’s court interpreter certification examinations and the Consortium’s exams, and their detailed and well-documented analysis serves the purposes at hand of deepening our understanding of the way Consortium exams are constructed, rated, and administered, with the main principles of testing theory being addressed.

In order to carry out the assessment, various methodological steps were taken by ALTA Language Services, Inc., including:

- A literature and document review of scholarship pertaining to industry standards for valid test development in addition to documentation provided by Consortium staff;
- Qualitative interviews with key Consortium staff members as well as former and current language consultants and exam writers;
- A review of federal court interpreter test development;
- An in-depth test content review;
- A comparative analysis of test programs;
• A psychometric audit performed by a team of psychometricians who evaluated Consortium exams with regard to current test industry standards;\textsuperscript{63} and

• A standard-setting session with thirteen subject matter experts in order to establish the level of functional equivalency between the passing requirements of each program’s oral examinations (ALT Language Services, Inc., 2010, pp. 2-3).

The California assessment concluded that “[t]he Consortium has test administration and scoring processes that are standardized, and are supported by policy documents” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 18) and, in fact, all of these comprehensive policy documents are accessible online at the website administered by the National Center for State Courts. Those which relate most directly to issues of validity, reliability, test administration and security will be contemplated herein.

\textit{4.2.1 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY}

Undoubtedly, validity and reliability constitute “the two cornerstones of the usefulness of a test” (Miguélez, 1997, p. 182). If a reliable measure is one that measures a construct consistently across time, individuals, and situations, then reliability can be said to relate directly to the consistency of test results. Validity refers to the degree to which a test or other examination instrument is truly measuring what it is supposed to measure. How does the Consortium assure that it is complying with the requisite five types of validity which are commonly recognized as essential to the construction of certification exams?

\textsuperscript{63} “The relevant audit standards for the program were categorized according to the suggested outline for a technical manual for a testing program, as determined by the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999) and the Handbook of Test Development (Downing & Haladyna, 2006)” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 16).
To begin, *content validity* has to do with how well items on a test align with what the test is supposed to measure. Consortium exams, as previously discussed, are based on real court documents and transcripts, are conscientiously normed according to the Test Construction Manual, and contain all three modes of interpreting that are used by practicing professional court interpreters, making it a performance-based test. Furthermore, Consortium oral exams are considered to be task authentic precisely because they assess a candidate’s ability to apply standard-driven knowledge and skills to the real-world challenges of replicating the interpreting tasks which would be required of them in genuine professional settings.

Content validity, according to Miguélez, “overlaps somewhat with construct validity since construct validity has to do with how well an exam reflects the theoretical underpinnings that form its foundation” (1999, pp. 184-185). As mentioned earlier in the section on relevant terminology and concepts, *construct validity* refers to an assessment of how one’s (operationalized) ideas or theories have been translated into actual measures. In other words, does Consortium oral exam content actually measure what it proposes to measure? If one thinks in terms of aptitude for certain skills as generalized constructs, and the test in question tends to be consistent with other recognized measures of that construct, then the test has construct validity as a measure of aptitude. After a comparative analysis of Consortium oral exams and the California Court Interpreter Program, the California assessment affirmed that

[w]hile the constructs or make-up of the written exams for both CCIP\(^{64}\) and CLAC are somewhat different, they both serve the same function at very similar levels

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\(^{64}\) CCIP denotes the California Court Interpreter Program. CIP as used in this dissertation refers specifically to the Wisconsin Court Interpreter Program. See Appendix A for a list of acronyms used.
of difficulty: eliminating unqualified candidates from moving on to the oral exam phase of the certification process, and allowing those candidates who do pass to move on in the process (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 30).

Consortium oral exams have content validity because of the appropriateness of the texts used in exam construction, since course material is based on actual court transcripts or written documents presented in court, and also because the test texts derived from these transcripts are reviewed by experienced professionals (including judges, lawyers, and interpreters) who have consistently found them to be representative of the language typically encountered in court.

**Concurrent validity** demonstrates that a test is valid by comparing it with other tests that are similar in purpose, format, scoring, methods, etc. The California assessment team was thoroughly satisfied that “[m]odeling the Consortium oral exams after the Federal oral exams, which have legally been shown to be valid (Arjona, 1985), provided the Consortium with a strong foundation for oral test development...” and that the Consortium’s
development and use of the **TCM** (Test Construction Manual) and an objective scoring method has further facilitated the development of a consistent and transparent method of achieving test validity during each stage of test development for every language for which the Consortium develops an interpreter certification test (ALT Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 4).

In fact, the California assessment was most laudatory of the Consortium’s Test Construction Manual, declaring that

[t]he **TCM** is a key element in establishing test equivalency across versions and languages by ensuring that each oral exam has the same distribution of scoring units, plus or minus 10 percent. The transparency and consistency as evidenced by the use of the **TCM** during every phase of Consortium test development.
contributes to a documented method of establishing test validity and equality” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 19).

In addition to the transparency, consistency, validity and equality referenced by the preparers of the California assessment, Consortium examinees are tested with instruments which have met the criteria to be considered authentic tests. In other words, candidates are asked to apply their inherent skills and knowledge, and their scores provide direct evidence of whether they can or cannot perform the skills that are being assessed: the three modes of interpreting.

*Face validity* has to do with stakeholders’ perceptions of the validity of an exam, or even with the perceptions held by society at large. In order to be considered valid and legitimate, the certifying entity or authority and, by extension, the exams they administer, must satisfy all stakeholders, be they governmental, educational, professional organizations, or private clientele. These stakeholders “rightfully expect certification (or credentialing) procedures to be valid and reliable, and consider these authorities accountable to them” (Vermeiren, Van Gucht, & De Bontridder, 2009, p. 299). While neither the Consortium policy manuals nor the California assessment report addresses the issue of face validity, research has not revealed any controversy surrounding the way Consortium exams or policies are viewed by any group and, in fact, on the whole Consortium exams are held to be face valid precisely because of their concurrent validity (that is to say, their association with the federal certification exam), their content validity, and the authenticity of the tasks which examinees are asked to perform.
*Predictive validity* is the extent to which a score on a scale or test predicts scores on some other criterion measure. However, the only studies in existence which gauge any aspect of predictive validity of Consortium oral exams as a whole or in part are the New Jersey predictor mode studies described in this chapter and the analysis of the Consortium data set described in Chapters Five and Six. While some studies have been carried out by Hewitt and Stansfield on the predictive validity of Consortium *written* exams, this dissertation breaks new ground precisely because it tackles the issue of predictive validity on oral certification exams, seeking to correlate success on one scale (performance on specific modes of interpreting) with scores on another (success on the other two modes of interpreting).

The key to the *reliability* of any exam, however, is directly related to the consistency of its administration protocols and the scoring methods employed.

4.2.2 Exam Administration and Security

Exam administration contemplates the conditions under which exams are given, in addition to questions of security and confidentiality. While the number of times per year that oral exams are offered is at the discretion of every member state, proctors and raters are given scrupulously detailed training and written support in the form of policy manuals which summarize the test purpose, specify the procedures for test administration, and define the intended population of test takers. Additionally, the Consortium provides training for test administration supervisors and test proctors for the exams to ensure a standardized administration and scoring process (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 18).
The Consortium makes available three manuals which prescribe test administration standards for the three possible ways to orchestrate the examination process, which are to administer an abbreviated exam, to administer only the simultaneous exercise in the first exam sitting, or to utilize a full exam consisting of exercises in sight translation, consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting.

Abbreviated exams, for which the Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Abbreviated Test manual is used, are administered for languages for which a full oral exam does not exist. Abbreviated exams consist of two parts: first, candidates must pass one of the approved standardized English proficiency exams, and then they must complete a simultaneous interpreting test.

A second option is available for those states which use the bifurcated method, which involves administering the full exam but on two separate sessions, with candidates first having to sit for the simultaneous exercise. After successfully passing it, candidates can then go on to sit for phase two of the oral examination process which includes exercises in sight translation and consecutive interpreting. States which use the bifurcated method (New Mexico, Idaho and New Jersey) rely on the Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Simultaneous Test manual for the first phase of the exam, and then use the Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Entire Test or Phase 2 (Sight and Consecutive) manual for

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65 The Consortium’s three test administration standards manuals are available online at the National Center for State Courts’ website: www.ncsc.org.

66 Options include the Versant English Test (VET), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Passing cut-off scores for each of the exam’s components are stipulated for each exam type.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
those who have already passed the simultaneous on a previous occasion. This same manual is that which is used when the full oral examination is administered.

Upon inspection, Consortium test administration manuals prove to be completely uniform and address the same issues. All begin with stern warnings to program managers and test administrator supervisors to be cognizant of the fact that

\[ \text{the instructions provided in this manual should be followed very closely. All test proctors who administer Consortium examinations must be thoroughly trained prior to administration of examinations. The program manager / test administrator supervisor is responsible for providing training opportunities and for ensuring that test administration does not deviate from the instructions contained herein. If the test administration deviates from these instructions, the test may be invalidated, especially if such administration procedure affects the validity and reliability of the test or the test experience (Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Abbreviated Test, 2011, p. 2).} \]

All three manuals dictate requirements relating to security concerns and protocols, list the supplies and equipment to be provided by the Consortium, and go into minute detail about criteria that testing rooms should meet including room size and furniture contained, placement and type of electrical outlets, lighting, decorative artwork, and other visual and auditory distractions. Proctors are provided with checklists for sound checks and materials to have at the ready before the exam and on the day of the exam.

Information is also provided as to the three types of testing professionals and program staff who must be present in the testing situation, as follows:

- **Test administration supervisor**: This individual is responsible for oversight of the entire test administration process as outlined in these standards, including any required troubleshooting. Generally this will be Consortium staff or the member court or agency in the state where the test is being administered. It is the responsibility of the test administration supervisor to ensure that test security standards are maintained and that the tests are administered in
accordance with the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Agreements for Consortium Organization and Operation.

- **Test registration clerk.** The test registration clerk is the person to whom examinees report when they appear for the test. The clerk secures identification, registers the examinee, provides them with necessary pre-test information, and maintains security in the waiting area.

- **Test proctor.** The test proctor is the person who will greet the candidates after they have registered and escort them to the testing room. The proctor has been trained to administer the test in the same fashion to all candidates. The proctor will also escort the examinees to the exit when they have finished taking the test (*Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Abbreviated Test*, 2011, p. 2).

Test proctors must follow carefully crafted scripts when administering instructions, and have been trained to prepare for possible complications or challenges caused by examinees of three different personality types such as those who can be considered hostile or defensive, examinees who are extremely nervous, or those who are solicitous and unprepared (*Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Abbreviated Test*, 2011, p. 15). After the oral exam is completed, examinees are asked to sign an oath swearing that they will not reveal the contents of the exam, and proctors also have an opportunity to document and report any technological or other types of incidents which may have occurred during test administration.

As regards security, all three test administration standards manuals declare that

> the continued security of all test materials and instruments is of extreme importance. The cost of developing oral proficiency examinations is high. If test materials or instruments are compromised, it forces the Consortium to “retire” that test and develop a replacement test. Items for which the highest level of security is required include:

- Test scripts
- Prerecorded test stimuli
- Test scoring dictionaries
- Recorded examinee performances (*Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Administration Standards: Abbreviated Test*, 2011, p. 3).
Logically, in light of the many safeguards described in detail in Consortium manuals, the
California assessment concluded that

The Consortium provides acceptable security measures for test items, test
materials, score keys, and administration procedures. Confidentiality and
nondisclosure forms are signed by all test development personnel, test
administration personnel, and examinees; access to test scores is confidential to
the examinee and to trained and qualified member state program directors and
Consortium staff (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 18).

The only potential security issue identified was the small number of test versions in
some languages, possibly leading to unintended overexposure.

4.2.3 PROTOCOLS FOR RATING NCSC EXAMS

Furthermore, rater reliability is a critically important consideration. The Court
Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Rating Manual was written by the Technical
Committee of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, and comprehensively
frames the Consortium’s process of “developing and maintaining a sufficient supply of
trained raters and establishing standards to ensure they will rate oral exams in a valid
and reliable manner” (Technical Committee, 2010, p. 1) according to the testing
industry standards issued by the American Educational Research Association, the
American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in
Education. The manual sets forth how raters are selected, trained, classified, and
supervised, as well as how they will perform their rating duties (Technical Committee
2010, p. 2). Raters are directed to strive for “complete neutrality, fairness, and
objectivity throughout all rating activities” (Technical Committee, 2010, p. 5) and must
adhere to strict principles of confidentiality, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of
interest.
There are two categories of raters: Approved (including Approved Lead Raters and Approved Raters), and Provisional, defined as follows:

- Approved Lead Raters shall be highly experienced approved raters who have rated a substantial number of Consortium and/or federal examinations, served as an Approved Rater in good standing for at least one year, and demonstrated reliable, timely, professional performance of rating (and, if applicable, test writing) duties, and completion of continuing education requirements established by the Technical Committee.

- Approved Raters satisfactorily complete the application process, demonstrate reliable, timely and professional performance of rating (and, if applicable, test writing) duties, and complete continuing education requirements established by the Technical Committee.

- Provisional Raters are individuals who have served on the test writing team for a test in a new language; they serve as Provisional Raters until such time as they are eligible to be classified as Approved Raters (Technical Committee, 2010, p. 3).

Two raters are required, one of which must be an Approved Lead Rater, anytime a complete oral examination or an abbreviated model (simultaneous only) are rated, as well as when the candidate is a retest candidate. Member states with a bifurcated examination process in which the simultaneous section is administered first and the sight and consecutive sections are administered subsequently only to those who have qualified on the simultaneous “may contract with one rater to rate the simultaneous section of the examination under certain circumstances” (Technical Committee, 2010, p.
4). Furthermore, there are provisions in place for examinations for which there are no Approved Lead Raters.

Raters are given specific guidance about types of scoring units and how to determine whether they should be considered correct or incorrect (Technical Committee, 2010, pp. 8-12). Furthermore, they are given training in and protocols for compiling scores using a uniform marking system and scoring dictionaries of acceptable renditions. Afterwards, research on raters’ experience are compiled proposing changes to the scoring dictionary, and it is noted that “[w]hile the primary function of raters is to rate exams, they have an important secondary function in terms of providing ongoing feedback on how well the exams are functioning” (Technical Committee, 2010, p. 17).

Additionally, raters’ performance is supervised by Consortium staff, rating supervisors and, to a lesser degree, state court interpreter program managers, to ensure that they perform their duties in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Test Construction Manual.

During the actual grading process, each rater individually listens to and scores each section of the exam, then goes through a consensus process: in other words, raters must agree for any scoring unit to be assessed as incorrect, and then further research can be carried out by consulting designated sources in order to complement and complete the decision-making process. If an agreement cannot be reached between the two raters about whether a given scoring unit should be rated as acceptable or unacceptable, “the benefit of the doubt is given to the candidate and (the scoring unit) shall be counted as acceptable” (Technical Committee, 2010, pp. 7-8).
Grader reliability is vitally important as regards how it relates to the administration of certification exams, and the hallmark of rater reliability is consistency coupled with constant reviewing and refining procedures. Miguélez remarks that

> [t]he issue of inter-rater reliability, and by the same token intra-rater reliability, is one that plagues all test designers and administrators. High inter-rater reliability would mean all readers give the same results or marks for a specific performance. High intra-rater reliability would mean that the same rater would rate different performances with the same characteristics in the same way or would be able to mark the same performance the same way on different occasions (1999, p. 198).

The fastidiously detailed rater protocols outlined in the Test Rating Manual confer a considerable degree of presumed reliability upon Consortium oral exams. When asked about rater error and rater fatigue and whether or not the Consortium had any reason to be concerned in spite of the safeguards in place, Carola Green remarked that “[t]here is always an element of that but we account for that by having (the exams) always scored by no less than two people” (C. Green, personal communication, February 3, 2011). As regards rater fatigue, Ms. Green said that “[t]here are two hours allowed to rate a complete exam so realistically no more than 4 a day get rated... intra-rater reliability studies could be done to check on the margin of rater error so to speak but we do not do that for the Consortium at the moment” (C. Green, personal communication, February 3, 2011).

In the state of Wisconsin, the study site for the Wisconsin perception study, clear rescore guidelines are in place for borderline candidates. In the event that a candidate passes two parts of the oral examination and scores 67% or higher on the third part, an automatic rescore is done on the failed section, just as if a candidate passes one part of
the oral examination and scores 67% or higher on the remaining two parts, the two failed exercises are automatically rescored, with the cost being born by the CIP (Court Interpreter Program). These guidelines are not standard Consortium procedure, and rescore policies are at each state’s discretion.

4.2.4 FINDINGS

If, as Cynthia Miguélez asserts,

we accept that the only way to guarantee a linguistically handicapped individual’s constitutional and human rights is by providing adequate interpreting services in the courts, we must also accept that the only way to ensure the quality of these services is to develop a reliable and valid testing instrument which can be used to certify individuals as competent to carry out the tasks and duties required by the courts (1999, p. 167).

The Test Construction Manual, as well as myriad other transparent and accessible policy and standards manuals, satisfies these criteria by covering all areas of import including

- Overall design of tests;
- General management of test development activities;
- Production of base texts;
- Qualifications of test development teams;
- The test development process as well as documentation of said process;
- Description, selection and classification of scoring units on both full and abbreviated examinations;
- Length of test sections;
- Production of materials for test administrating and test rating;
• Field testing and revision;
• Maintenance of scoring dictionaries;
• Statistical analysis of tests;
• Sample scripts; and
• Sample scoring dictionaries.

The California assessment found overall that:

• The Consortium had created a comprehensive interpreter testing program with an impressive body of technical manuals;
• Exam content has been constructed based on solid and consistent test development processes that respect test industry standards;
• The Consortium’s Test Construction Manual provides a transparent blueprint for Consortium oral exam development and promotes test equivalency across languages and test versions;
• Many aspects of the Consortium’s oral exams were modeled after the federal interpreter certification exams; and that
• The Consortium employs highly qualified subject matter experts at every stage of the process of test development (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 3).

4.3 Precedents for Alternative Testing Models and Empirical Analysis of Consortium Data

After having determined that the exams upon which this study’s data are derived are valid and reliable, this section will begin to explore whether or not success in one mode of interpreting on the Consortium’s oral certification exam could potentially predict
successful performance in the other two modes. Likewise, the viability of utilizing a bifurcated testing model, using the mode that appears to predict overall success as a screening exercise, is contemplated. In order to isolate a potential predictor mode, precedents for using abbreviated exam models by Consortium member states will be discussed before continuing on to the evidence-based analysis of some 6,000 raw oral exam scores spanning over a decade, which will be the subject of Chapter Five of this dissertation. By closely scrutinizing the empirical results reflected in the small but significant predictor mode studies carried out in the state of New Jersey, together with Chapter Five's analysis of the Consortium data set, patterns of performance begin to emerge which may aid researchers in determining whether or not successful performance in one mode of interpreting can predict success in other modes. Unlike purely theoretical studies, the results contained herein are based almost exclusively on publicly available and internal reports published by the testing industry stakeholders at the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, in addition to personal interviews and communications with former and current court interpreting program managers in several key U.S. states. The data-driven result is the consideration of the implications of a bifurcated testing model which posits the simultaneous mode as a predictor of successful performance on the Consortium exam.

Additionally, section 4.3 will describe the subsequent involvement of the Consortium's Technical Committee in considering abbreviated testing models, discuss the realities of the three U.S. states that currently utilize a bifurcated model, and consider the implications of the use of a bifurcated model in relation to testing languages of lesser diffusion as well as the staffing and cost-reduction strategies associated with its use.
With substantial data supporting the relationship between success in the simultaneous mode and overall success on the Consortium certification exam, the implementation of a bifurcated model could have a very real impact on the way the Consortium exam is implemented and how future test development resources are allocated, especially as related to languages of lesser diffusion.

4.3.1 Exploring Abbreviated Test Models: The Case of New Jersey

The theoretical implications of identifying a predictor mode for court interpreting success are abundant; but what are the practical benefits? The search for a predictor mode on the Consortium exam, as it turns out, was born directly from the desire to solve a series of practical concerns faced by court interpreting program managers who believed that the implementation of an abbreviated test model could alleviate a series of logistical problems. To that end, before initiating an analysis of test score-related data, let us discuss the light that this data can shed on positing a bifurcated method as an alternative model for court interpreter certification testing. Beginning with a brief definition of bifurcated testing models, the potential desirability of an abbreviated testing model shall be explained in the context of the pragmatic impetuses behind one state’s statistics-based search for a predictor mode.

By way of definition, a bifurcated certification testing method tests simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting and sight translation exactly as a traditional oral certification exam does, with the difference that it simply does it in two phases. In other words, one of the exercises testing a specific mode of interpreting is used as a screening exercise, and candidates who pass it are then allowed to sit for the other two exercises. In the three U.S. states which currently use a bifurcated testing method, the
simultaneous mode is the one used as an initial screening instrument. Candidates who pass the simultaneous exercise are then allowed to take exams in consecutive interpreting and sight translation.

Adoption of the bifurcated approach to testing found its genesis in the state of New Jersey. According to Robert Joe Lee, former New Jersey program manager and former voting member of the Technical Committee of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, as resources began to dwindle in the 1990s, finding a more cost-effective way of identifying competent interpreters became an economic necessity as well as a pragmatic decision in his state. Lee was gravely concerned with using taxpayers’ money responsibly at a time when New Jersey did not charge its prospective interpreters for testing: at the time, all exam-related expenses were funded by the state. Costs related to testing and rating became unsustainable. In order to pare back expenses, New Jersey began by eliminating one of its three qualified raters who, at that time, were also the test administrators. The state had been paying two raters $250 a day to administer and rate six exams per day and, according to Lee, so many of the exams administered revealed such vast incompetency that it did not seem sustainable to continue to offer the entire exam, at such a high expense, when so few qualified interpreters were being identified. Lee in New Jersey as well as program managers from other states sought to remedy this cost-benefit dilemma and search for a way to screen test-takers more effectively (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 14, 2011).

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67 New Jersey has only begun to charge its examinees for oral performance exams as of July 1st, 2011.

68 The three raters were comprised of one academic linguist and two practicing interpreters with federal certification. When the decision was made to eliminate one of the raters, instead of suppressing one of the “categories” (i.e. academic versus certified practitioner), Lee looked for diversity of language background, training and expertise (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 14, 2011).
Under Lee’s direction, the New Jersey office endeavored to carry out a series of internal studies on which to base decisions regarding the use of abbreviated testing models. The New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts began by conducting systematic time studies, isolating the mean time per assignment for which each mode of interpreting accounted. In the first time study which took place during the weeks of June 7-11 and 14-18 of 1993, all interpreted events statewide at which full-time interpreters participated in the Superior Court were analyzed (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 15). Simultaneous interpreting accounted for 66% of the time used during the assignments measured, followed by consecutive at 57%. Simultaneous occurred more than any other function measured in the average assignment and also lasted a longer mean time. Sight translation, at 22%, seemed comparatively negligible in frequency, taking the least average amount of time per assignment of all interpreting modes. Time study two, conducted using the same variables during the weeks of March 11-15 and 18-22 of 1996, showed a reversal of time spent per function as the consecutive mode (in which 76% of assignments took place) then appeared in a greater proportion of assignments and lasted longer than simultaneous at 69% (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 16). This second set of results, in combination with the consecutive mode’s strong second-place showing in the first study, begs the question: why isolate simultaneous as significantly more essential in forming part of an abbreviated test model? Both sets of results show that simultaneous is either the most frequently used mode in the assignments contemplated in the studies or that it is in a close second with consecutive.

In order to determine whether or not there was any correlation between frequency of use of a specific mode of interpreting and said mode’s ability to predict performance in
other modes, New Jersey undertook an additional study based on the systematic isolation of the three interpreting modes in order to examine the impact of passing each one on passing the remaining parts of the test. Until now, these findings constituted the only systematic attempts made at specifically examining modes of interpreting as predictors of performance on Consortium certification exams, and are thus especially relevant to the questions under consideration herein.

The languages measured were Haitian Creole, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish, with a total of 134 candidates for the consecutive and simultaneous exercises, and 126 candidates for the sight translation component, as New Jersey at the time did not offer a sight translation component for Haitian Creole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor mode</th>
<th>% of examinees passing entire exam (New Jersey study)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As evidenced in the table above, when isolating for success on the sight translation component and its impact on passing the other two modes, 33% of all examinees who passed the sight translation exercise also passed the other two modes. The consecutive mode’s correlation to the passing of the other two modes was 51%. As regards the simultaneous mode, 81% of candidates who passed the simultaneous exercise also passed the other two components (Technical Committee, 2001, pp. 16-17). But what level of prediction would program managers and Consortium officials consider reliable

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69 To clarify, examinees who passed the predictor mode in question also passed the other two modes on the oral certification exam.
enough in terms of test validity in order to contemplate the use of abbreviated test models on a larger scale? According to the above results, there exists a full 48% difference between the success of simultaneous passers and sight translation passers in achieving success on both of the other two modes. Would these numbers vary significantly if a larger sample were used? Are they high enough to consider consecutive more seriously as a contender in an abbreviated test model? What can be safely affirmed is that sight translation seemed to be the mode least likely to predict passing-level performance in comparison to simultaneous and consecutive.

4.3.2 Exploring Abbreviated Testing Models at the Consortium Level: The Technical Committee

Following the predictor mode studies carried out in the state of New Jersey, Consortium officials decided to systematically explore the viability of abbreviated testing models, and the Consortium’s Technical Committee was charged with this task. By way of explanation, the Technical Committee of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts is responsible for the construction and design of court interpreter performance exams, the administration of court interpreter exams (including instructions), the content of test construction manuals, the rating of court interpreter exams, language-specific exam development, establishing recommended qualification standard levels for interpreters, establishing minimum qualifications for test administration and rating, assessment of tests developed by the Consortium, and assessment of tests administered by other organizations (Technical Committee, 2009, p. 1). A report published in 2001 by the Technical Committee of what was then called the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification relied quite substantially on New Jersey’s quantitative studies,
the first systematic and data-driven explorations of the viability of abbreviated testing models in the context of Consortium court interpreting certification. The genesis of the exploration of abbreviated models is thus: the Technical Committee, comprised of voting members from the states of New Jersey, Minnesota, Florida, Massachusetts and California, along with three other non-voting members, acknowledged a series of challenges in identifying and certifying qualified interpreters in a reliable and cost-effective way. The committee set about to address these challenges systematically through a contemplation of abbreviated testing models and a statistical justification for modifying the traditional oral exam comprised of exercises in all three modes of interpreting for certain languages for which standard test models did not exist. The report began by describing the dilemma faced by the Consortium at the time. They acknowledged that

while in theory it is desirable to write a standard performance test (i.e., two sight components [one in each direction], consecutive, and simultaneous ... to certify court interpreters in all languages desired by member states, the reality is that this is not presently and probably never will be feasible (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 1).

Moreover, conversations among the states regarding the selection of additional languages for which to write new tests had begun to break down for the first time, with the cost of adding tests for new languages to the Consortium’s test bank hovering between $25,000 and $35,000 (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 1).

Apprehensions about prohibitive testing costs were not the only concerns, however. Issues of access as well as the way interpreters of untested languages were perceived and compensated were also important considerations as the Technical Committee recognized that interpreters working in untested languages
do not benefit from the professionalization that interpreters who work in languages that are tested enjoy. This includes lack of both professional recognition (they are often labeled by terms such as ‘otherwise qualified’) and professional treatment (they are often paid substantially less than ‘fully’ certified interpreters) (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 1).

Holding as one objective, then, that of increasing inclusivity and diversity as regards testable languages available in the test bank, the Technical Committee put forward the question of an alternative test model as an acceptable solution, and undertook the exploration of this question as a priority. Although the committee's report clearly acknowledged the widely-held belief that a certification test must be valid and reliable if it is to be relied upon to identify qualified court interpreters, they also recognized that

... any test that can weed out people who cannot demonstrate ability to perform at least some of the highly sophisticated modes of interpreting would be welcome ... It is better to know for sure that an interpreter can perform even one mode of interpreting, than not to know it (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 2).

While the report explores and contemplates three different proposed abbreviated models, the Technical Committee agreed upon three basic principles to guide its review of possible models and ultimate recommendation to the Consortium. They agreed that any model ultimately adopted by the Consortium should have three characteristics: it should include at least the simultaneous mode, it should predict ability to perform as many modes of interpreting as possible which are not directly included in the model, and it should be easy and cost-effective to both develop and administer.

The Committee felt that the inclusion of the simultaneous mode was germane to an abbreviated test based on the previously discussed New Jersey statistics, affirming that passing the simultaneous exam could be taken as a “surrogate indicator that (examinees) have a high probability of passing sight and consecutive if those

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components were available in the language” (Technical Committee, 2001, p. 10). When asked whether or not Lee or other members of the Technical Committee had any preconceptions that simultaneous would be a predictor of success in the other two modes, Lee responded:

I think I was pretty open to seeing where the data analysis would lead and certainly gave each section a chance to prove itself. I do know that I favored and like the simultaneous best for the following reasons before doing the predictive analysis:

1. It’s the easiest and cheapest to develop.
2. It screens out the largest percentage/number of candidates.
3. It’s the easiest and cheapest to administer.
4. It’s the cheapest to rate.
5. It was by far the easiest section to replicate into other languages with fewest changes, and hence, another cost-saving reality (because you wouldn’t have to rewrite it at all and could use the same recording for any language!) (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

To be sure, Lee was not at all disappointed to have empirical evidence “that what (the Technical Committee) had concluded on logical and administrative grounds would actually be complemented by predictive statistics...”, and maintains that the research was “done from good research principles (i.e. testing hypotheses and following the data where they led” (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

The abbreviated model that was ultimately recommended consisted of the use of the simultaneous exercise as a qualifying exam, along with a “conversational piece” aimed at having some basis on which to assess English proficiency given that the simultaneous exercise only includes English-to-foreign language production. The conversational piece was meant to identify consistent non key-word issues such as problems with pronunciation and fluency. Some states were struggling with test-takers who could
succeed on scoring unit tests, but who could sometimes not be understood due to heavy accents. Originally conceived to be used as a “trump card” to decide borderline cases, Robert Joe Lee admits that it was almost never brought into play, and that he was personally against the conversational piece because it could be used to override an objective score at the same time as it introduced the possibility of rater bias and prejudice. The conversational piece was discontinued eventually. In fact, the Consortium’s policy is to rely only on objective scoring units. The Consortium does not allow for an evaluation of subjective components, such as the testing of a candidate’s pronunciation or accent in the foreign language. In fact, the Consortium considers scoring elements such as foreign language accent difficult to test in an objective manner and therefore specifically avoids testing KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities) that cannot be measured through objective scoring (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 4).\(^\text{70}\)

The advantages of the proposed abbreviated model were that it was the option that was by far the least expensive model to develop and administer, as probably any existing Consortium simultaneous test could be taken and revised to include the appropriate distribution of scoring units. At that point, the main expense to the Consortium would be the recruiting and training of examiners who could develop the dictionaries of acceptable and unacceptable renderings and do the grading. The report adds, “This test could even be administered before there is an assembled team of raters since it could be proctored to any interpreter of ANY language” (Technical Committee, 2001, pp. 6-7). In the United States, where English is the only language of record, the feasibility of using

\(^{70}\) Appendix C shows the knowledge, skills and abilities for court interpreters that are directly measured on Consortium oral exams. Those which are most notably unaccounted for by scoring units are those related to speaking skills.

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an English-into-foreign language simultaneous exercise to test speakers of all languages is readily apparent.

4.3.3 The Bifurcated Method in Practice: New Jersey, New Mexico and Idaho

Despite the obvious appeal of a shorter test which is easier to administer, it is important to acknowledge the potential for and justification of resistance to bifurcated or other abbreviated exam models, given the importance of task authenticity as a psychometric testing principle. In testing theory, an assessment tool is only considered to have task authenticity if it replicates challenges faced in real professional settings. Due to the fact that the bifurcated approach does not require examinees to perform all three modes of interpreting in the same examination sitting, task authenticity could be questioned.

There does not appear to be consensus among Consortium states about use of the bifurcated approach and, indeed, most member states require that all three exercises of the oral exam be administered in one sitting in order to afford the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate that he or she has the requisite stamina to perform all three skills in the allotted time.

With this understanding, an attempt was made to speak with current program managers of the three states which currently use the bifurcated testing method. In New Jersey, Manager of the Language Services Section of the Administrative Office of the Courts, Brenda Carrasquillo, chooses to continue to administer certification exam in two phases based on the extensive analysis of the bifurcated approach carried out by her predecessor, Robert Joe Lee. Ms. Carrasquillo alludes to the practical concerns addressed by the bifurcated method in stating that “Part of the reason we choose to administer the exam in two phases is simply due to AOC staffing issues since our office
is very small” (B. Carrasquillo, personal communication, February 24, 2011). In New Mexico, Statewide Program Manager at the Administrative Office of the Courts Pamela Sánchez explained that candidates “take the consecutive and sight within a year of passing the simultaneous examination” (P. Sánchez, personal communication, February 15, 2011), a fact which accounts for the testing results published in New Mexico’s year-end report to the Consortium. For 2010, a year in which all test-takers took Spanish-language exams, testing totals were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam exercise</th>
<th>Number of candidates tested</th>
<th>Number of successful candidates</th>
<th>Pass rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall passing rate</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Sánchez, 2010, p. 4)

In response to an inquiry about when and why New Mexico decided to use the bifurcated method in certification testing, Ms. Sánchez responded:

I believe NM has always tested this way. My understanding is that the decision was made in order for the simultaneous to serve as a screening tool... I don’t know why NM chose to do it this way, but I am not particularly interested in changing this. I do believe it not only saves the candidate money, but it serves as a screening tool for us and it also helps the candidate pace themselves, in terms of doing more training, prior to investing in all three examinations” (P. Sánchez, personal communication, February 2, 2012).

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71 Presumably 14 of the 29 test-takers in consecutive and sight translation had passed the simultaneous exam in 2009.
Without demographic information about the examinees\textsuperscript{72}, it is difficult to compare the 33\% pass rate in the simultaneous mode to other data sets, although the pattern that clearly emerges from New Mexico’s annual report is that the number of test-takers handled by the office is significantly reduced by using simultaneous as a screener.

Janica Bisharat, Program Manager of the Administrative Office of the Courts in Idaho, provided some very illuminating reflections on their office’s use of the bifurcated approach. She states,

Our reason for using the bifurcated testing approach is simply because we have very limited resources. We have tried both methods of testing and have found the bifurcated approach to be more efficient and quite frankly easier on our test proctor. We have one staff member who checks in exam candidates and proctors all the exams. Administering the oral exam in one sitting to a number of candidates over the course of a couple of days can be pretty taxing. We want to ensure that each exam is administered according to policy and without incident or disruption. It is our experience that we don’t administer nearly as many exams using the bifurcated approach, but we have not formally gathered any data to support this view (J. Bisharat, personal communication, April 21, 2011).

The Technical Committee’s findings and recommendations, as previously discussed, strongly hint at the probability of the simultaneous mode as a predictor of overall court interpreting aptitude. The cost-related implications of abbreviated test models on the surface may appear to be less germane to the central search for predictors of overall successful performance as proposed by this study; nevertheless, the practical implications to the Consortium and to state program managers of court interpreting

\textsuperscript{72} “... the Consortium doesn’t conduct any type of data collection of the test candidates; very briefly there were attempts to collect information from candidates about whether or not using the Practice Exam Kit was helpful preparation for the exam but even that was not very successful and we have since stopped asking for it” (C. Green, personal communication, February 11, 2011).
programs could be quite significant. Presumably New Jersey, New Mexico and Idaho, in their efforts to optimize limited resources, feel justified in using the simultaneous mode as the screening exercise of the bifurcated approach. More research was clearly warranted, however, given that no studies similar to those carried out in New Jersey had ever been reproduced in any context, in any state, or in any language pair. This study applies similar parameters to a large data set of some 6,000 Spanish / English test scores provided by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, thereby providing a larger set of statistical results. Chapter Five will analyze and discuss the Consortium data set, and comparisons with the New Jersey predictor mode studies will be contemplated in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF THE CONSORTIUM DATA SET AND A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION OF PREDICTOR MODES

This dissertation’s principal research questions involve examining theoretical constructs of interpreter aptitude while taking into account results from the Wisconsin perception study and the New Jersey predictor mode study, both of which posited the simultaneous mode as a predictor of success on the rest of the oral exam. Chapter Five will corroborate those results by carrying out a statistical study on a much larger scale.

In search of more data which could prove or disprove the Consortium Technical Committee’s hypothesis that success on the simultaneous mode can reliably predict passing performance on consecutive and sight translation exercises, contact was made with the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts to inquire about obtaining raw test scores on the exams it administers in order to carry out a broader quantitative analysis. Carola Green, Coordinator for Court Interpreting Testing Services and Operations at the National Center for State Courts, generously provided data consisting of exam scores for the Spanish / English language pair which covered a fifteen year period, from 1995 through March of 2010. These several hundred pages of raw test scores reflect the performance of test-takers who took all three portions of the oral exam in one sitting, providing data which promised to illuminate performance patterns of Spanish / English test-takers.

5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSORTIUM DATA SET

While numerical relationships between raw exam scores on the Consortium data set can be examined from myriad perspectives, the analysis carried out for this dissertation,
modeled in part on the New Jersey predictor mode study, examines successful performance in one mode of interpreting as a potential predictor of success in the other two modes. In descriptive terms, the following is known about the Consortium data set:

1. The data provide scores for 5,916 examinees in the Spanish / English language pair;
2. Several exam versions and two exam lengths are represented. For statistical analysis, a variable was added in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) in order to differentiate between the two formats so that the same parameters for analysis could be applied globally;
3. The number of points based on correct responses possible for each exercise is known, as well as what individual examinees scored on each section;
4. A cut-off score of 70% was used for each exercise, as that is the Consortium-recommended standard;
5. Scores for this data set begin in 1995 and run through March of 2010. Scores correspond to a progressively growing number of member states as more states joined the Consortium throughout the years;
6. Spanish / English scores from states which use a bifurcated testing method are not included; and
7. All 5,916 examinees took the entire exam in one sitting.

Of equal importance is what is not known about this data set. Specifically that:

1. Examinees’ names and the states where they sat their exams were not associated with the scores;
2. Depending on the state in which examinees were tested, they may or may not have been previously screened with a written exam\textsuperscript{73}; and finally,

3. No demographic information is associated with any of the raw test scores.

The following table provides a descriptive overview of the data analyzed:

| TABLE 15 CONSORTIUM DATA SET DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|----------|----------|----------|
|                                                                 | N     | Minimum | Maximum\textsuperscript{74} | Mean    | Standard deviation |
| Sight translation score English > Spanish | 5,916 | -1      | 29       | 15.65   | 4.514                |
| Sight translation score Spanish > English | 5,916 | -1      | 29       | 15.21   | 4.658                |
| Sight combined                         | 5,916 | -2      | 53       | 30.87   | 8.380                |
| Consecutive score                      | 5,916 | -1      | 88       | 50.14   | 11.748               |
| Simultaneous score                     | 5,916 | -1      | 77       | 41.83   | 13.573               |

The table above breaks down the scores of 5,916 examinees on the English-to-Spanish sight translation exercise, the Spanish-to-English sight translation exercise, the combined sight translation scores, and scores on exercises in the consecutive and simultaneous modes.

In reference to the column corresponding to minimum scores for each mode of interpreting for the data set’s descriptive statistics, a “-1” is recorded if a candidate does

\textsuperscript{73} As explained in Chapter Three, the Consortium makes a standard, English-only written exam available to its member states. The exam consists of 135 multiple-choice questions divided into ten sections and covers general vocabulary (with exercises in sentence completion, synonyms in context, synonyms and antonyms), idioms, sentence completion, court-related questions, sequence, professional responsibility and ethics, and scenarios (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 12). The time allotted for completion of the written exam is two hours and fifteen minutes. Candidates must pass with a score of 80% or higher.

\textsuperscript{74} To clarify, the maximum score column reflects actual maximum scores awarded on the various exercises, although due to anomalies, they sometimes exceed the Consortium’s thresholds. Each sight translation exercise should be worth a maximum of 25 points; a total of 90 points is possible on the consecutive exercise, and a total of 75 is the maximum possible on simultaneous portions.

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not attempt one of the exercises. In contrast, a score of zero indicates that an attempt had been made to carry out the exercise, but that the candidate had not gotten a single scoring unit counted as correct. For this reason, a value of “-2” as the minimum score achieved on the combined sight translation exercise is a possibility, indicating that a candidate scored a “-1” on both of the sight translation exercises in each language direction tested; in other words, the candidate did not attempt either of the sight translation exercises. Similarly, there were candidates who did not attempt the consecutive exercise or the simultaneous exercise, and thus a “-1” is the minimum score represented for those modes of interpreting as well.

As regards the column referring to maximum possible scores for each mode of interpreting, some explanation is warranted in relation to the descriptive statistics as there were six anomalous scores out of the total number of 5,916. On the Spanish-to-English sight translation section, an exercise which carries a maximum of 25 possible points, one test-taker got a 26; candidate #383 was awarded a score of 29 on both of the sight translation exercises. Additionally, examinee #382 earned a 26 and 27 (out of 25) respectively on the two sight translation portions. On the simultaneous exercise, one examinee was awarded a maximum score of 77 when the maximum score for this mode is 75 points.

The Consortium’s Test Rating Manual does not account for this possibility. The anomalies reflected in the column which depicts examinees’ maximum scores on each mode of interpreting can only be due to human error, in any of three possible contexts:
• First, a rater could have misread a number or made a mathematical error on his or her evaluation rubric when adding scoring units;\textsuperscript{75}

• Second, an error could potentially have occurred in the scoring process itself, although this is theoretically impossible because, as discussed in Chapter Three, each point on a Consortium court interpreting exam represents a scoring unit which was identified by at least two raters as being acceptable or correct, and rating protocols do not reward or acknowledge performance of any kind beyond that which is covered exclusively by a specified distribution of scoring units (see Appendix H); and

• Finally, a third and quite plausible possibility entails erroneous keystrokes while entering raw scores into Consortium databases.

Table 15’s mean score column represents average scores on a given exercise. Standard deviation reflects overall variability in scores, with a higher standard deviation indicating that the data points are spread out over a larger range of values. The simultaneous exercise is the one which has the highest standard deviation, showing that examinees scored roughly thirteen points both above and below the mean score of 41.83, for a point spread of 26. A higher standard deviation in simultaneous scores indicates a wider range of abilities (or lack thereof) in the simultaneous mode than is evidenced by consecutive or sight translation scores, a possible indicator of the mode’s inherent level of difficulty.

\textsuperscript{75} See the Test Results Report Forms, available in the Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Rating Manual at www.ncsc.org.
Clearly, comparing demographic information with scores would enhance our ability to analyze the data set and formulate meaningful conclusions about factors that may influence or elucidate candidates’ performances. However, as this information is not available, findings from the Wisconsin perception study represent a reliable and extensive body of information which complements the findings from the Consortium data set. Carola Green of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts confirms that

[t]he primary purpose of the raw score database is to store the information for the member states who then assign a certification or licensure status upon the candidates. ... Early on in the Consortium’s history test item level data was psychometrically analyzed to determine the functionality and performance of the scoring units. It has been awhile since that was done and it isn’t done from the raw scores but from tracking each correct and incorrect scoring unit and then checking to see if it is testing what we want it to test. I do not know of any analysis done with the scores themselves (C. Green, personal communication, February 11, 2011).

In spite of the fact that no personal or demographic information is collected by the Consortium or associated with exam scores, an important amount of data is available for analysis. A considerable number of interesting patterns can be observed simply by knowing the maximum number of points obtained by each examinee based on correct responses in addition to the passing cut-off score. Although each member state can exercise its right to establish cut-off scores and requirements for certification, the overwhelming majority conform to Consortium pass standards; that is to say, they require a 70% score or better on all three exercises in order to confer certification.

As regards the determination of appropriate cut-off scores, for the written portion of the FCICE, or federal exam, “a panel of 53 subject matter experts consisting of judges,
interpreters, and statewide program managers determined the 80% cut-off score for the written exam using the Angoff Method\(^7\) (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 13).

For the passing cut-off score needed to pass a *Consortium oral exam*,

the cut-score was determined by the Consortium Technical Committee based on the Federal court interpreter oral exam cut-score and research conducted by the state of New Jersey during its original program implementation. Specific data considered when evaluating the performance of an oral exam consists solely of an objective assessment and the cut-score percentage assigned when based on the scoring units rendered correctly by a candidate” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 15).

Fortunately the matter of scoring units is exceedingly clear, with both the description of all types of scoring units used as well as their distribution being carefully documented and publicly available. Appendix G describes the categories; Appendix H details their distribution on oral exams.

Finally, another feature of the Consortium data set merits a detailed explanation from the outset, and that is that oral certification exams of two different *lengths* were contemplated in this data set: that is to say, 2,680 exams consisted of 200 points, and 3,236 exams consisted of 215 points, with the difference lying solely in the length of the consecutive interpreting exercises which were expanded from 75 to 90 points at some point in time. Attempts to document the justification or rationale for this change directly with Consortium officials has proven fruitless, although former New Jersey program manager Robert Joe Lee suggested that the number of required scoring units may have been changed in order to more closely mirror the federal exam (FCICE), which

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\(^7\) “The Angoff Method relies upon the judgment of subject matter experts (panelists) who examine the content of each test item/task and predict the proportion of minimally-qualified candidates who will answer the item correctly. The average of the panelists’ predictions for a test item becomes the predicted difficulty of the test item” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 13).
has 220 scoring units (see Appendix I). The data set itself reveals that examination dates for oral exams with 200 points span from September 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1995 through May 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2008, and exams with 215 points span from June 21\textsuperscript{st}, 1999 through March 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2010. The final date after which exams with 200 points appear to have been taken out of circulation or retired is May 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2008. It has not been possible to learn which states used which exam formats of the two varying lengths, nor has it been possible to learn why specific states chose one length over the other during the years in which there were active versions of both lengths in circulation and at the disposal of member states. Because of these limitations, results will be discussed almost strictly in terms of data generated statistically from the entire data set.

Moreover, for the sake of clarity throughout this dissertation, exams consisting of 200 points will be referred to as shorter exams to distinguish them from those consisting of 215 points, which will be referred to as longer exams. Additionally, it is useful to recall that several exam versions were used in the Spanish / English language pair over the fifteen years for which scores were recorded in the Consortium data set. Nonetheless, it must be born in mind that all Consortium exams are conscientiously normed to be comparable in terms of the distribution of scoring units, degree of difficulty, etc., as discussed in the previous chapter. Presently, none of the shorter exams are in use any more; for some time, all Consortium oral exams for all languages have been designed to contain 215 scoring units, consisting of 25 points for each direction in sight translation, 90 points for the consecutive mode, and 75 points for simultaneous interpreting.

In sum, the results discussed in this chapter draw conclusions which contrast the longer and shorter versions of the exams when relevant; nonetheless, its most representative
and applicable conclusions are those which are based on global conclusions which contemplate both formats in combination. Of most importance is the fact that this data set represents an entire population and not a sample, and is therefore not subject to sample variability. The numbers discussed in this chapter’s analysis are actual values, not extrapolations.

5.2 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Two main tools were utilized in the analysis of the Consortium data set: the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), and Excel pivot tables. A preliminary approach to the data involved a series of experimental runs done in consultation with a statistician in order to learn how to manage the data, refine what could be learned from it, and eliminate information or conclusions that did not lend themselves directly to the overarching objectives of the study, i.e. observing relationships between performance on each mode of interpreting, discerning performance patterns for different categories of examinees, and evaluating each of the modes of interpreting as potential predictors of success on the other two modes.

In order to carry out this objective, preliminary runs of the data were carried out separately for longer and shorter exam versions. The decision to separate scores by exam length was motivated by a desire to see if there were any significantly different results; nonetheless, preliminary runs showed few significant differences between the two points lengths, and those that were revealed will be discussed throughout this chapter when relevant. On the whole, it was more useful to run all the data with the exact same parameters of analysis in order to make global conclusions across the nearly 6,000 scores.
Coding, sorting and analyzing the data were carried out systematically. The first step in the process entailed coding scores on a pass or fail basis. Determining whether or not an examinee had passed each individual mode of interpreting was absolutely clear for both the consecutive and simultaneous modes, as the Consortium’s standard cut-score of 70% was applied. For the sight translation exercises, the two scores (one for each language direction) were added together, and candidates needed to have earned a total of 70% correct scoring units across the two language directions in order to be considered to have passed the sight translation category. The decision to treat sight translation in this way was based on the fact that according to the “Certification Requirements by State” report available online from the Consortium, last modified March 31st, 2010, all member states except for five required examinees to obtain a 70% or higher score on the three scorable parts of the oral exam, meaning that the scores on the sight translation exercises in each language direction are combined for a final, overall score. As an exception, the state of Iowa requires candidates to score a minimum of 70% on each part of the exam (i.e., on each of the two sight translation exercises, not in combination), and requirements for Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Vermont are unclear (Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification Survey: Certification Requirements 2010). To reiterate, then, the parameters of analysis applied to all scores in the Consortium data set were those which represented the most typical scenario for passing among Consortium states: that is to say, a combined score of 70% on both sight translation exercises, and a 70% or better overall in consecutive and simultaneous, respectively. In order to code exam scores as passes or fails, all raw scores were converted into percentages and rounded to two decimal places, thus disambiguating
very close scores on two or more modes. Subsequently, scores were sorted in order to create several categories of examinees: those who passed all three exercises and thus the entire oral certification exam, those who passed two out of three exercises, those who passed only one exercise, and those who failed all three.

After categorizing exam performances based on passing or failing scores and sorting examinees into their respective categories based on degree of success on the exams, equations were embedded into Excel pivot tables. Internal coding was inserted to determine the order in which candidates scored on each of the three modes of interpreting so that specific performance patterns amongst full-pass examinees could be determined. In order to identify performance patterns and thereby identify areas of particular strength for candidates, examinees’ score sets were labeled using a three-digit code, referred to in this chapter as a descriptor combination. The first digit in the descriptor combination corresponds to how the examinee scored on sight translation; the second digit refers to performance in the consecutive mode, and the third refers to performance in the simultaneous mode.

**FIGURE 19 SAMPLE DESCRIPTOR COMBINATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sight translation column (first digit)</th>
<th>Consecutive column (second digit)</th>
<th>Simultaneous column (third digit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

= Candidate got highest score on sight translation

= Candidate got second highest score on consecutive

= Candidate got lowest score on simultaneous
For example, in Figure 19, the descriptor combination shows that the candidate scored highest on sight translation, followed by the consecutive mode, and finally the simultaneous mode. Some candidates scored exactly the same on two or more modes, which accounts for codes such as 112, 122, and so on. This also explains the fact that there are more high scorers on a given mode than there are test-takers. Again, this is simply because some candidates’ highest (or lowest) scores were exactly the same on two modes.

5.3 Overall Categorization of Examinees

In the absence of demographic factors associated with its scores, the most illuminating way to approach the sizeable Consortium data set was to analyze it on three distinct levels, focusing on:

- Those examinees who passed all three sections of the oral certification exam and thus met a minimal standard to practice in court (referred to as full-pass examinees);
- Those who passed two exercises and thus could feasibly train to re-take the exam, often with a reasonable chance to pass (partial-pass examinees); and
- Those who met a minimal standard of interpreting performance in only one mode of interpreting tested (low-pass examinees).

Finally, those interpreters who did not pass a single mode of interpreting (referred to as no-pass examinees) are identified but not very carefully scrutinized herein, as this dissertation’s aim is to learn from the performance patterns of those candidates who
experienced at least some degree of success. Each classification of examinee will be subsequently examined in the course of this chapter.

The following table depicts the overall categorization of the 5,916 examinees whose scores are reflected in the Consortium data set:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorization</th>
<th>Number of examinees</th>
<th>Percentage of examinees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-pass examinees</strong> (passed all 3 exercises and thus entire certification exam)</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>17.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partial-pass examinees</strong> (passed 2 of 3 exercises)</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>11.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-pass examinees</strong> (passed 1 of 3 exercises)</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>17.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No-pass examinees</strong> (failed all 3 exercises)</td>
<td>3,129</td>
<td>52.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>5,916</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In combination with Figure 20, the table above depicts a striking number of examinees who failed all three exercises. In fact, over half of all examinees (52.89%) were unable
to pass even a single mode of interpreting at the minimum level of 70%. The number of no-pass examinees stands in notable contrast to all of the other categories.

To be sure, exam failure by over half of all Spanish / English examinees is one of the salient features of the overall categorization of the test-takers, although it was interesting to observe that pass rates on the two exam lengths differed to a statistically significant degree when analyzed separately. Concretely, SPSS software was able to establish a twenty percent higher pass rate for the shorter, 200-point exam versions than the longer versions with 215 points. In point of fact, twenty percent of those who took a shorter exam passed, while only sixteen percent of those who took a longer exam passed77:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pass_test</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>2680</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>215</td>
<td>3236</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dramatic failure rates are a recurring theme. Not only was exam failure identified in the Wisconsin perception study as the second most important obstacle to progression on the roster of interpreters, but also, the state of New Jersey identified widespread exam failure as one of their primary frustrations because of the extent to which failing examinees absorbed state resources. High state-level expenditures for testing prospective court interpreters simply did not boast the benefit of identifying enough competent court interpreters. The “vast incompetence” revealed in each oral exam cycle

77 17.9% was the overall pass rate when exams of both lengths were combined for analysis.
that Robert Joe Lee experienced in New Jersey was a woe shared by other states in the Consortium; for this reason, the implications of widespread failure will be discussed in Chapter Six.

5.4 **FULL PASS EXAMINEES**

After having classified examinees by categories corresponding to their respective degrees of success on oral certification exams, the first level of analysis of the Consortium data set examines performance patterns for those examinees who met or surpassed the minimum standard mark of 70% on each of the three sections of the oral exam, focusing on what might legitimately be inferred from a strong performance in a specific mode. Analyzing full-pass examinees’ patterns of success may reveal something about the interpreters who are poised to succeed as well as what their skill sets may be, especially in consideration of the theoretical constructs of interpreter competencies associated with successful performance of each of the three modes of interpreting, as discussed in Chapter Two.

To begin, let us consider the mode in which full-pass examinees scored highest. In order to differentiate performance levels, it is useful to recall that all exam scores for full-pass examinees were assigned descriptor codes to reflect the order in which candidates performed best on the three modes, a classification system which bears further explanation as it will be used throughout this chapter. In essence, each full-pass examinee was given a three-digit number, or combination, to encapsulate and define their performance at a glance. These three digit codes bear two different types of information: first, each of the three digits represents performance in a specific mode of interpreting, with the first digit corresponding to performance on sight translation, the
second digit corresponding to performance on the consecutive mode, and the third digit corresponding to performance on the simultaneous mode. Second, a “1” indicates that the candidate’s highest score was in that mode, a “2” designates the mode in which a candidate’s second highest score was earned, and a “3” indicates their third, or last highest score (refer to Figure 19). The table below defines the performances reflected by each of the descriptor codes which occurred among full-pass examinees:

**TABLE 18 MEANINGS OF DESCRIPTOR COMBINATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor combination</th>
<th>Candidate’s performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Scored equally on all three modes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Scored best on ST and CI, second best on SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Scored best on ST and SI, second best on CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Scored best on ST, second best on CI and SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Scored best on ST, second best on CI, and third best on SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Scored best on ST, second best on SI, and third best on CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>Scored best on CI and SI equally, and scored second best on ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>Scored best on CI, and scored second best equally on ST and SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213</td>
<td>Scored best on CI, second best on ST, and third best on SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>Scored best on SI, and second best equally on ST and CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231</td>
<td>Scored best on SI, second best on ST, and third best on CI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>312</td>
<td>Scored best on SI, second best on CI, and third best on ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Upon assigning descriptor codes to all full-pass examinees, as seen in the table below, 49.10% of all full-pass examinees scored highest in sight translation. Full-pass examinees scored next best in the simultaneous mode at 33.24%, and third best in the consecutive mode at 23.14%.

The total number of examinees in the table below, at 1,117, exceeds the number of full-pass examinees in the data set (1,059), and percentages above add up to over 100
percent (105.48%) because some examinees got their highest score on more than one mode: in other words, their descriptor combination had a “1” in more than one column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 19 HIGH SCORES BY MODE FOR FULL-PASS EXAMINEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of examinees who got highest score on...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the consecutive mode overall seems to be the mode at which full-pass examinees were least successful, although it bears repeating that the examinees in this category were able to pass all three exercises on the oral certification exam.

This potentially unexpected inversion between the apparent difficulty of simultaneous and consecutive appears, at first glance, to directly contradict the theoretical constructs
of interpreting (which posed sight translation and simultaneous as the most cognitively complex) as well as results from the Wisconsin perception study, in which the simultaneous mode was perceived to be most difficult. However, this finding is not significant overall when we consider two important facts: first, that the examinees in question were all strong enough performers in all three modes so as to pass the certification exam; and relatedly, when examining partial-pass examinees in order to see which mode actually caused people to fail the exam overall, as will be discussed in the next section, it was clearly the simultaneous mode which excluded more people from earning certification.

For the moment, nonetheless, this finding represents an opportunity to address one of the more interesting differences discovered when exams of the two different lengths were analyzed separately: namely, that one of the differences discovered between the longer and shorter exam types, in addition to a differing overall pass rate as discussed above, was that the consecutive mode was performed with less success on the longer exam versions with 215 points than on the shorter, 200-point exams. Table 20 compares performances by modes for full-pass examinees on both shorter and longer exams:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 20 HIGHEST SCORES BY MODE FOR FULL-PASS EXAMINEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exams with 200 points:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% scoring highest on at least this mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sight translation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consecutive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simultaneous</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
One glaring similarity is that nearly half of all examinees on both exam lengths scored best on sight translation, while examinees on the shorter versions scored second best on consecutive at 30.22%, and third best on simultaneous at 29.12%, with a mere 1.1% difference between the two modes. In contrast, the longer exam versions showed not only a performance reversal between consecutive and simultaneous, but also a significantly larger disparity between them, at 22.03%. While this reversal between simultaneous and consecutive will be revisited during the discussion of partial-pass examinees, it must be born in mind that a panoramic, overall contemplation of the entire data set is of most relevance to this dissertation as both exam lengths were used during roughly the same time period. Furthermore, there are an almost equal number of exams in each category, with 2,680 consisting of 200 points and 3,236 consisting of 215 points.

Indeed, the mode of interpreting that Wisconsin court interpreters perceived to be the easiest does certainly seem to be the one which full-pass examinees passed most handily, as depicted in Table 20. Findings thus far appear to show consistently across exam versions that sight translation is performed with more ease and / or a higher degree of skill than consecutive. It is notable that examinees with strong performances in the simultaneous mode are able to perform the other two modes with nearly equal success. Certainly this is not surprising, as theoretical constructs of interpreter aptitude suggest that candidates with skill domains sufficient to successfully perform the simultaneous mode seem to have the cognitive and linguistic agility necessary to

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78 Out of the 15 years contemplated by the data set, both exam lengths were in use during the entire time, the only exception being a 15-month period during which only the longer exams were used.
“cover” the skills contained within the domains of the other two modes of interpreting with speed and accuracy.

5.5 Partial-pass Examinees

For the present discussion, examinees who have passed two out of the three interpreting exercises will be referred to as “partial-pass” examinees, even though for purposes of certification, it must be recalled that failing even one section precludes passing the exam overall. Referring to this category of test-takers as partial-pass examinees is simply slightly less cumbersome than calling them “examinees who passed two out of three modes of interpreting”.

Regardless of the nomenclature utilized, however, examinees who have passed two out of the three interpreting exercises on an oral certification exam may constitute the most interesting group, as they have the potential to give us a portrait of “near-miss” candidates – those who may not have displayed their full range of skills on the oral exam, who may have specific cognitive deficits which preclude them from passing one section versus another, or those who would benefit measurably from additional training, possibly leading to successful certification experiences in the future. Analysis of statistically-generated performance patterns in this section may give us answers to questions such as:

- Which was the one mode of interpreting that this category of test-takers failed? Is there a considerable gap between the number of candidates who failed simultaneous and the number who failed consecutive?
• What is the usefulness to interpreter trainers or test-administering bodies of identifying a single mode of interpreting which can reliably distinguish skilled candidates from unskilled candidates? Can such a mode of interpreting be utilized as a screening mechanism, such as in the realm of bifurcated testing models?

To begin to answer the questions posed above, we must first identify the mode of interpreting in which examinees’ performances declined enough on the oral exam that they were not able to pass it. For this population of partial-pass examinees, which mode had the most direct bearing upon whether they passed or failed the oral exam?

Out of the total 5,916 examinees analyzed, 707 fell into the category of having passed two out of the three modes of interpreting. Their performance patterns are shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th># of people out of 707</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed only ST</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed only consecutive</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>31.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed only simultaneous</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>59.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The impact of failure rates in the simultaneous mode is absolutely unmistakable. If 59.41% of these “near miss” examinees had possessed better skills in simultaneous interpreting (and by extension the skills within the simultaneous domain, as discussed in Chapter Two), they would have passed the oral certification exam and thus have gained access to practicing in U.S. courts. Figure 22 makes it patently obvious that...
successful performance in the simultaneous mode was a significantly bigger obstacle to partial-pass examinees than either of the other modes:

**FIGURE 22 ONLY MODE FAILED BY PARTIAL-PASS EXAMINEES**

For people who passed 2 of 3 modes, which is the only one they failed?

The fact that the simultaneous mode is the one which has proven to be the most significant obstacle for examinees overall was alluded to previously when it was mentioned that the consecutive mode was the one on which most full-pass examinees scored lowest. As previously mentioned, there existed a few interesting differences between the shorter and longer exam versions that would be mentioned when relevant, and the examination of partial-pass examinees presents such an opportunity. In terms of overall performance patterns for those candidates who passed two of three exercises, significantly more failed only the simultaneous exercise on exams with 200 points. In contrast, on exams with 215 points, the stumbling block was the consecutive mode. When superimposing visual depictions of the one mode of interpreting which eluded examinees, differences between the two exam lengths become evident:
Clearly, the consecutive mode proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for more candidates on the 215-point versions. But why was the consecutive mode failed by more examinees on longer exams than on shorter exams or across the entire data set as a whole? Logically, at this juncture, the puzzling nature of the reversal between consecutive and simultaneous as the modes in which full-pass examinees performed the worst must be explored. Are results being skewed by a specific 215-point exam version which may be less psychometrically sound than other versions, and thus significantly more problematic for examinees? Or is the extended length of the consecutive exercise on exams with 215 points really the crux of the problem? How can this seeming discrepancy be reconciled or explained?

In order to begin to make sense of this dilemma, a slight detour was made with the objective of discovering whether or not one exam version was skewing the overall
results. Unfortunately, elucidating significant differences between exams of different lengths presented a series of hurdles. To begin, direct scrutiny of the various exam versions was not permitted according to Consortium policy. Additionally, while the distribution of scoring units is available for scrutiny for longer exams (see Appendix H), such information is not available for exams with 200 points, making the examination of scoring units as indicators of difficulty all but impossible. It is equally impossible to isolate any irregularities in exam conditions or cognitive or demographic differences in examinees who sat test versions with 215 points. Nonetheless, the Consortium data set does indicate the exam versions taken by all of the test-takers who were tested with the consecutive-heavy 215-point formats. Thus, the only variable available for analysis is the specific version of the exam that was taken by these examinees.

Overall, six different versions of Spanish / English exams consisting of 215 points (in which the consecutive exercise was worth 90 points as opposed to 75) were given. Table 22 breaks down the different exam versions administered along with the number of full-pass examinees who took them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam version</th>
<th># of examinees</th>
<th>% of full-pass examinees who took this version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish consecutive 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish consecutive 2.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish consecutive 2.2</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>33.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish consecutive 4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish consecutive 4.2</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>32.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish consecutive 5</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>21.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of the 513 full-pass candidates taking exam versions with 215 points, clearly those versions which have had the most impact on overall results are Spanish consecutive 2.2 (taken by 33.53% of full-pass candidates) and Spanish consecutive 4.2 (taken by 32.55% of full-pass candidates), followed by Spanish consecutive 5, taken by 21.44% of full-pass candidates. Although three-digit descriptors were generated for all examinees in order to capture any potential differences in how candidates performed across exam versions, with so many descriptive combinations represented over six different exam versions it was challenging to extrapolate any overriding patterns without superimposing the three most highly represented versions and seeing how, if at all, they differ regarding significant patterns.

What is depicted above is a superimposition of high-to-low performance patterns on the three exam versions which had the most influence on overall results among all exam
versions worth 215 points. Three out of the six did not reveal convincing patterns nor did they account for very many of the examinees, and thus are not represented in the figure above. There does not appear to be any obvious visual discrepancy which would suggest flaws in exam construction, which may suggest that the mere extra length of the consecutive exercises on these exam versions may have had an influence on candidates’ performance. It is impossible to be sure without access to the exams themselves, which would allow for comparison of individual scoring units.

While the question of why examinees tended to score lower on consecutive on longer exam versions has been explored to the extent feasible, it is impossible to know for sure why consecutive caused failure in so many more candidates on exams with 215 points as opposed to those with 200 based solely on exam version taken. Without a sound basis on which to judge whether or not one or more longer exam versions is psychometrically flawed in some way, this dissertation shall proceed to emphasize global conclusions regarding predictor mode indicators. The majority of these conclusions will be discussed in Chapter Six. Before then, however, let us examine results for low-pass examinees who were successful on only one of the three modes of interpreting on their oral certification exams.

5.6 Low-pass Examinees

Examinees who demonstrated sufficient interpreting skills to pass one mode of interpreting but not the other two will be designated as low-pass examinees. It bears repeating, however, that these examinees did not pass the exam itself, as failing any one of the three sections constitutes grounds for exam failure. For this categorization of test-takers, notwithstanding, what can be learned by examining the numerical relationships
between scores of examinees who passed only one mode out of the three on the oral exam? Which was the only mode that they passed? Results from a performance profile of this particular low-skilled population may be limited to indicating which mode of interpreting is most accessible to unskilled interpreter candidates.

Out of the total number of examinees of 5,916, 1,021 of them were able to achieve a passing score of 70% or higher on one mode of interpreting. Table 23, below, shows that in 60.82% of cases, sight translation was the only mode that examinees could pass, followed by consecutive at 21.16% and trailed by simultaneous at 18.02%. Consistent with previous findings based on theory as well as the Wisconsin perception study, it would seem that the majority of examinees find sight translation to be the easiest mode of interpreting to perform, with consecutive in the middle and simultaneous representing the mode which is most difficult to perform to a minimal standard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th># of people out of 1,021</th>
<th>Percent who scored like this (for those who passed 1 of 3 modes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only passed ST</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>60.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only passed consecutive</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>21.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only passed simultaneous</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>18.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Figure 25 depicts a less marked difference between consecutive and simultaneous, it is resoundingly clear that sight translation is the only mode which the majority of seemingly unskilled examinees had the requisite level of competence to pass. In fact, across the entire data set, there is nearly a 40% difference between a low-
skilled candidate's likelihood to pass sight translation as opposed to either one of the other two modes.

**FIGURE 25 LOW-PASS EXAMINEES**

As regards overall performance patterns for low-pass examinees, the perplexing role reversal between consecutive and simultaneous is greatly attenuated although, in point of fact, it is still moderately present at this level of analysis.

There is insufficient data to be able to identify the reason for low-pass examinees having experienced greater difficulty in consecutive performance on the 215 points versions and greater difficulty in simultaneous performance on the 200 points versions. Nonetheless, further results revealed in the latter part of this chapter which fuse the two exam formats before submitting them to statistical analysis in order to establish global patterns posit the simultaneous mode as that which had the most significant effect on exam success across the 5,916 sets of scores analyzed.
Finally, the rate of exam failure across the nearly fifteen years and almost 6,000 examinees comprehended by the Consortium data set is substantial. These failure rates account for people who failed all three modes, and are not the failure rates for the exams themselves. Those rates are much higher, as a candidate who fails even one of the three exercises has failed the exam as a whole.

Over half of the examinees in the entire data set could not perform adequately on even a single mode of interpreting, a fact which becomes highly significant when one considers feasibility aspects of testing: that is to say, the cost / benefit ratio of the use of resources such as time, technology, personnel and space in relation to the number of qualified interpreters identified. These aspects of feasibility have a direct impact on the state-
level program managers who proctor and administer the test, the raters who grade it, and the candidates who pay for it.

Consequently, overall failure on the Consortium oral exams opens up a new avenue of exploration: identifying and implementing cost-effective screening mechanisms which also maintain face validity, a future line of research which seems quite urgent in light of the practical limitations of state resources discussed in Chapter Four. With the data available, however, there is simply no way of identifying specific reasons why half of the candidates examined could not pass even a single exercise on the oral certification exams included in the study. Is the culprit a lack of preparation or training, poor language skills, faulty test design, or poor test conditions?

More promising information directly related to the scope of this dissertation and its search for predictors of successful performance on the U.S. Consortium court interpreting exam comes from a direct analysis of each of the modes of interpreting as a potential predictor of success in the other two modes, as follows.

5.7 USING THE CONSORTIUM DATA SET TO EXPLORE PREDICTOR MODES

What is a predictor mode?

The idea behind a search for a predictor mode is the answer to the following question: does successful interpreting in one mode of interpreting predict successful performance in either or both of the other modes of interpreting which are tested on the U.S. Consortium oral certification exam? The Consortium data set provides answers to this question.
Analyses of individual modes of interpreting as predictors of success in the other two for the present discussion relies on data generated by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software and, notably, encompasses exam versions of both lengths. Therefore the conclusions reached here regarding predictor modes contemplate the entire data set, not a sample – almost 6,000 raw scores, with the aim of examining each of the modes of interpreting to see if any of them stands as a predictor mode of successful performance in the other two. Again, numbers revealed in this analysis are not subject to sample variability and are real values.

By means of a cross-tabulation function of SPSS, the ensuing discussion looks specifically at each mode of interpreting and compares the number of examinees who passed the particular mode in question in relation to the number of examinees who also passed the other two. Admittedly, this analysis can only entail numerical relationships, and purely empirical evidence in this case may be less desirable than the full picture afforded by more information about the candidates. Simple though the method might be, the results are statistically sound, and promise to impact the way Consortium exams are implemented, especially in the case of languages of lesser diffusion for which full exam versions in the three modes have not been developed.

To begin with the mode of sight translation, SPSS was used to cross-tabulate the relationship between passing the sight translation exercise and also passing the consecutive and simultaneous exercises. Out of the total 5,916 examinees, 2,331 passed the sight translation component. Out of these, 1,059 passed the other two exercises as well. As a result, 45.43% of examinees who passed a sight translation exercise were also able to pass exercises in the other two modes, as shown in Table 23.
The next cross-tabulation indicates the number of total candidates who passed the consecutive exercise and then also went on to pass both the sight translation and simultaneous portions of the oral exam. A total of 1,758 out of 5,916 examinees passed the consecutive exercise. The percentage, then, of candidates who were successful on the consecutive portion and then went on to pass the other two, and thus the entire certification exam, is 60.24%. Based on results from the Wisconsin perception study, the jump from roughly 45% to 60% between sight translation passers and consecutive passers is completely expected and coherent with previously discussed results.

If indeed successful performance of the consecutive mode requires more cognitive agility and represents a more complex interpretative task than does the performance of sight translation, it stands to reason that 14.81% more interpreters who can meet a minimum standard in consecutive are also better equipped to pass the exam as a whole. It would be logical, then, to predict that passers of the simultaneous mode across the entire Consortium data set should have an even higher overall pass rate than that of either of the other two modes and, indeed, this is the case.

As represented in the table above, 1,530 examinees passed the simultaneous portion of their oral certification exam. Out of the total of 1,059 overall passers, then, this represents a pass rate for candidates who had the requisite skills to pass the
simultaneous exercises (as well as consecutive and sight translation) at 69.21% percent, the highest of all three modes of interpreting. While Chapter Six of this dissertation will compare results of the New Jersey predictor mode studies and statistical analysis of the Consortium data set, drawing global conclusions, general conclusions generated solely by the Consortium data set are contemplated below.

5.8 General Conclusions Drawn from the Consortium Data Set

A global examination of the Consortium data set leads to several conclusions:

- **Sight translation is the most accessible mode of interpreting for all categories of examinees.** Examinees with the requisite skills to pass all three exercises overwhelmingly performed best on this mode, with nearly half of all candidates earning their best score on sight translation exercises. For low-skilled examinees who could only pass one of the three modes, for 60.82% that mode was sight translation.

- **Spanish / English examinees, over the course of some 15 years, have exhibited extreme rates of exam failure.** The most salient feature of the overall categorization of examinees across all exam formats and versions is that at least 80% of candidates in the Spanish / English language pair fail the exam as a whole, and over half cannot pass even a single exercise. The number of complete failures is quite dramatic, lending credence to the woes experienced in the state of New Jersey during Robert Joe Lee’s tenure as program manager, as discussed in Chapter Four. Precisely because the cost-benefit ratio between exam administration expenses and the identifying of qualified interpreters who can lend equal access to LEPs in court is so unsatisfactory, the issue of more
effective screening mechanisms is a timely question which warrants more serious attention, and which will be discussed at length in Chapter Six.

- **Exams of different lengths have differing overall pass rates.** Overall pass rates on exams with 215 points are lower than those with 200 points, at 16% and 20% respectively.

- **Exams of different lengths show reversed levels of success on the consecutive and simultaneous modes.** While sharing the similarity that nearly half of all examinees on both exam lengths scored best on sight translation, full-pass examinees on the shorter versions scored second best on consecutive at 30.22%, and third best on simultaneous at 29.12%, in comparison to second best on simultaneous at 37.62% and third best on consecutive, at 15.59. The exam versions with consecutive exercises which were fifteen points longer showed not only a performance reversal between consecutive and simultaneous, but also a significantly larger disparity between them, at 22.03%. Comparisons between exam versions utilized have proved inconclusive as to why this is the case.

- **Success in the simultaneous mode can make or break a fairly skilled candidate’s chances of overall success in obtaining certification.** In spite of the previous discrepancies mentioned above, when examining partial-pass examinees in order to see which mode actually caused people to fail the exam overall, it was clearly the simultaneous mode which excluded more people from earning certification. The impact of failure rates in the simultaneous mode is absolutely unmistakable. If 59.41% of all examinees who passed two out of three modes had possessed better command of the skills within the simultaneous
domain, they would have passed the oral certification exam and would have thus earned certification to practice in court.

- **Success on the simultaneous mode has the highest level of predictive validity for success on the other two exercises of the oral certification exam, at 69%.** In spite of the curious fact that full-pass examinees performed the simultaneous mode at a higher rate of success than consecutive, 69% of all candidates who passed the simultaneous exercise were able to pass the other two as well, thus earning certification. Furthermore, the full-pass examinees who scored best on simultaneous were able to perform the other two with nearly equal success, hinting at the possession of a more complete arsenal of interpreting skills by this category of interpreters.

Why is overcoming excessive exam failure desirable? What safeguards or screening mechanisms can be put in place in order to optimize chances of identifying court interpreters with a minimal skill set? How could a statistical justification of bifurcated testing methods create more access to equal footing in the courtroom for LEP individuals, especially those who are speakers of languages of lesser diffusion? The final chapter of this dissertation will tie the entire project together with conclusions and implications.
Universitat d’Alacant
Universidad de Alicante

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

The previous chapter analyzed almost 6,000 raw test scores on Consortium oral exams in order to observe pass rates on exams of two lengths as well as performance patterns among full-pass examinees. The single mode of interpreting which caused exam failure, precluding official credentialing to the greatest number of interpreters, was identified. Similarly, the seemingly least challenging mode (that which was passed most often, and that which was passed most by examinees who were successful on only one exercise) was ascertained. Data was analyzed to discern whether or not isolation of a predictor mode is possible. To what extent, though, were this project’s overarching objectives reached?

Chapter Six will begin by reviewing the major research questions proposed, and will then proceed to address conclusions of and applications to the entire body of research, entailing theoretical constructs, the Wisconsin perception study, and the Consortium data set, exploring avenues for further research and proposing very specific recommendations to testing bodies based on overall findings.

6.1 RESEARCH GOALS REVISITED

This study formulated some clear research questions and aimed to:

- Explore theoretical constructs of interpreter ability;
- Demographically profile a large body of practicing professional court interpreters, define and identify their perceptions of the three modes of
interpreting in terms of utility and difficulty in professional practice and in the testing cycle, and see if any parallels could be drawn between their perceptions and their actual performance on the Consortium court interpreter certification exam;

- Explore the validity, reliability and feasibility of current CLAC oral certification exams and their administration;

- Investigate any possible correlations between success in one mode of interpreting on certification exams and success in others, including considerations related to predictive validity, feasibility issues, and possible test administration reform; and

- Delve further into bifurcated testing and consider its possible statistical justification and practical applications.

Both the successes and limitations of this comprehensive search for factors which predict successful performance on Consortium oral exams will be framed with the aforementioned research objectives in mind.

6.2. The Three Modes of Interpreting and Predicting Interpreter Success

The extensive Wisconsin perception study successfully generated a demographic profile of a large and representative body of court interpreters who are qualified to practice professionally in a large state with a three-tiered system denoting differing levels of expertise. The study revealed that certified interpreters (those who passed the entire oral certification exam) in the Wisconsin perception study were primarily female, between the ages of 40 and 60, that they were U.S.-born and native speakers of English,
and that they were much more highly educated than the general population. Having established the link between formal education and performance, evidence suggests that post-secondary institutions such as universities and community colleges may represent fertile training and recruiting grounds for future court interpreters. While this study does not purport to explain why native English-speaking, mid-life, educated women seem to be more poised to succeed as court interpreters, nor is it being suggested in any way that interpreting candidates be screened based on age, gender, native language or any other factor which could constitute grounds for discriminatory behavior, any information which can shed light on recruiting, training, testing and empowering qualified court interpreters is of value. At the very least, due to the clear connection between higher education and success rates on Consortium oral exams, perhaps it would be worthwhile to contemplate using formal education as a screening factor, officially or unofficially, in tandem with a performance-based examination process.\footnote{Admittedly, measures such as this would probably make access to certification for speakers of LOTS (languages other than Spanish) more difficult at a time when courts increasingly face the dilemma of how to qualify people from languages of lesser diffusion who may not have a high degree of formal education and to whom little or no specific training in interpreting is available.}

In addition to the Wisconsin perception study's contribution of a significantly representative demographic and self-identifying profile of a large body of professional and semi-professional court interpreters, the insight that the interpreters offered as regards their perceptions of the three modes of interpreting bears directly upon the present discussion of indicators of interpreter aptitude. For one thing, the study showed that interpreters recognize the importance of all three modes of interpreting even...
though their use of each in their everyday practice varies. Similarly, all three modes are perceived as necessary components of a program of study for interpreters in training.

From a theoretical perspective, studies on sight translation which focused on cognitive load and information retention indicated quite high levels of complexity for the mode. On the contrary, however, it was perceived as being the least challenging of the three modes by the entire study cohort of practicing professionals on the state’s official roster, although the certified-only group perceived all three modes of interpreting equally, reporting that they “scored the lowest” on all three modes of interpreting on the exam in equal measure. Study results showed that more skilled and experienced interpreters (those who are certified) perceive ST as more important than the general study cohort. This fact suggests that as interpreters become more experienced, they begin to recognize the value and complexity of sight translation.

Moreover, examination of the Consortium data set revealed that sight translation is the most manageable mode of interpreting for all categories of examinees. Examinees with the requisite skills to pass all three exercises overwhelmingly performed best on this mode, with nearly half of all candidates earning their best score on sight translation exercises. For low-skilled examinees who could only pass one of the three modes, for 60.82% that mode was sight translation. In terms of predictive validity, however, sight translation was the mode which was least likely to augur success in the other two modes, both in the New Jersey predictor mode study and on analysis of Consortium data.
The consecutive mode, throughout the entire study, has seemed to inhabit a nether-space somewhere between sight translation and simultaneous in terms of theoretical cognitive complexity, perception of difficulty, and utility in professional practice. Most germane to this dissertation, it also straddles a distinctly middle ground in terms of its ability to serve as a predictor mode. Because many of the most interesting findings regarding the consecutive mode are closely linked to simultaneous, they will be discussed further on in this chapter.

It is the simultaneous mode, in fact, which eclipses the other two modes of interpreting, for myriad reasons. Apart from being acknowledged by theorists and practitioners as the most cognitively demanding mode to perform, it is performance in simultaneous which has been empirically proven to ultimately “make or break” a skilled candidate’s chances of obtaining certification. When examining partial-pass examinees (those who passed two out of three modes) in order to determine the mode which more of these candidates failed, it was clearly the simultaneous mode which excluded more people from becoming certified. The impact of failure rates in the simultaneous mode is absolutely unmistakable. As discussed in Chapter Five, if 59.41% of all examinees who passed two out of three modes had possessed better command of the skills within the simultaneous domain, they would have passed the oral certification exam and would have thus earned certification to practice in court.

While the Wisconsin perception study did not establish a clear correlation between any of the three modes and performance on oral exams, the purely data-driven analysis of the two predictor mode studies discussed in Chapters Four and Five did. These studies showed that it is success in the simultaneous mode which has the highest level of
predictive validity for success on the other two exercises of the oral certification exam: the very crux of this investigation. Because the strength of the evidence positing simultaneous as a solid predictor of interpreter ability is so convincing, and because its use with a bifurcated testing model has such important potential implications for testing bodies, the simultaneous mode and its connection to bifurcated testing merits a lengthier discussion.

Interpreting is a very complex task, say Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas, and “it is not reasonable to expect that one supertask will be found which will serve as the sole predictor” of interpreter ability (2009, p. 242). Is the simultaneous mode the “supertask” which can be looked to as a beacon of predictive validity in identifying qualified interpreters? Would the mix of tasks inherent in this one mode of interpreting and their discrete isolation and identification be useful to consider when designing and interpreting summative exams?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor mode</th>
<th>% of examinees on the New Jersey study who passed the entire exam</th>
<th>% of examinees in Consortium data set who passed the entire exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sight translation</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to begin to answer this question, the discussion must necessarily examine the only two predictor mode studies carried out to this point. How, then, do overall results from the Consortium data set compare to the New Jersey study (discussed in Chapter

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80 To clarify, examinees who passed the predictor mode in question also passed the other two modes on the oral certification exam.
Four) in terms of isolating a potential predictor mode of success on the overall oral certification exam?

Table 24 presents a comparison of the results of the two studies. The two data sets which are compared isolate a single mode of interpreting, and then determine the percentage of candidates who passed the predictor mode in question as well as the other two modes, thus passing the entire certification exam. For example, 69% of the Consortium examinees who passed the simultaneous mode also had the requisite interpreting skills to pass the consecutive and sight translation exercises. The two data sets examined differ in terms of the languages tested, their geographic scope (one state versus all member states), and the sheer number of examinees contemplated in the analyses. Similarities emerge, however, which suggest that of the three modes of interpreting, simultaneous is significantly more effective as a predictor of success on the other two modes, followed by consecutive and sight translation in the same order on both analyses, as depicted graphically in the figure below:

**FIGURE 27 PREDICTOR MODE RESULTS: NEW JERSEY AND CONSORTIUM DATA**
While the percentages differ to some extent, the pattern established between the modes is the same, with the simultaneous clearly the mode which, if completed successfully in an oral exam setting, is highly likely to predict success in the other two modes. The simultaneous mode’s strong showing is followed by the consecutive mode, and trailed quite significantly by sight translation. Upon consulting Robert Joe Lee about why he thought the simultaneous mode’s rates of prediction varied so widely, from 69% on the Consortium data set to 81% on the New Jersey study, Lee responded that New Jersey “…early on… had no preconditions for test takers – anyone and everyone could take the test, whereas I think many other states probably had more requirements by the time they were giving exams” (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Other questions to consider include lending due consideration to the consecutive mode, given that 60% of Spanish / English candidates who passed consecutive also passed the other two exercises, although this percentage drops to 51% on the New Jersey study. Is this level of predictability convincing or valuable? Traditionally the consecutive mode has been considered to be the most vital in the court interpreting context, although the reality in municipal, state, and county courtrooms may be otherwise\textsuperscript{81}. Furthermore, the consecutive mode garnered a rather close second place on both predictor mode studies discussed herein. Finally, the decision to make Consortium exams’ consecutive exercises worth 15 more points quite significantly affected overall pass rates.

\textsuperscript{81} The New Jersey time studies discussed in Chapter Four, which systematically isolated the mean time per assignment for which each mode of interpreting accounted, placed the consecutive mode as the most frequent in one time study and the second most frequent in another (after simultaneous). In municipal, county or circuit courts where many interpreted court appearances are not evidentiary in nature, the consecutive mode be used less frequently than suspected. Additional time studies on a larger scale are warranted.
6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO TESTING BODIES AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The wealth of information provided in the Consortium data set cannot be underestimated, and the possibilities for its analysis are extensive. Nevertheless, the scope of this study is limited to examining individual modes of interpreting as potential predictors of success on the entire oral certification exam, as well as to contemplating the potential for utilizing such information in the context of interpreter certification testing. The case studies and data considered in this study, then, pave the way for several conclusions, generate some as yet unanswered questions, and offer avenues for further inquiry. Examination of the data suggests that there are several key questions or areas of consideration which the Consortium and other official certification testing organizations may want to consider. These key areas of consideration hinge upon:

- The urgency of reliable candidate screening due to extreme exam failure;
- The importance of predictive validity in identifying qualified candidates;
- The need to collect candidate data in order to establish correlations between education levels and other identifiers and interpreter competence;
- A discussion of the place of bifurcated testing methods and their related feasibility concerns; and
- The potential impact of bifurcated testing on qualifying candidates who speak languages of lesser diffusion to practice in court.

6.3.1 EXAM FAILURE, CANDIDATE SCREENING, AND PREDICTIVE VALIDITY

Exam failure was often cited in the Wisconsin perception study, is discussed widely in Consortium publications, is frequently problematized in scholarly treatments of
certification exams, and was one of the most salient characteristics of the Consortium data set. While the reasons why so many candidates fail is beyond the scope of the present study, the fact that simultaneous is indubitably the stumbling block for so many examinees suggests that over half of the candidates who approach the testing experience lack key knowledge, skills and abilities inherent in the exercise of the simultaneous mode, which include rapid lexical access, sequential translation at the sentence level, comprehension, synthesis, analysis and output. Likewise, these examinees probably lack the cognitive sophistication to navigate registers (especially technical language) and process (transcode and encode) not only quickly but also accurately. Hewitt and Lee concur:

Are the tests fundamentally flawed and unfair to the people who take them? Do they mislead us about the quality of the work most of these people do when they serve the court as interpreters? Our answer is “no.” We suggest that the low-passing rates are better explained by the inherent difficulty of the work and by the lack of professional training among those people whom courts use to provide interpreting services. In our view, very few bilingual people pass the tests because very few bilingual people who think they are qualified to interpret in court (or who someone else thinks are qualified) actually are qualified. The tests are doing the job they were intended to do (Hewitt & Lee, n.d., n.p.).

The job that oral exams “are intended to do” is, of course, to prevent unqualified practitioners from obstructing defendants’ right to due process under the law. But with failure rates topping the 50% mark, is there a feasible way to screen out under-qualified examinees, and more wisely use the scant human, logistical and economic resources at the disposal of state-level program managers and testing bodies?

Screening candidates more consistently and more rigorously is a logical and realistic place to begin to restore the cost / benefit balance, and there is no more feasible first
step than making systematic, consistent, regulated, and obligatory use of the already extant Consortium written exams as an initial screener for candidates.

According to Consortium certification requirements updated as of August 4th, 2009, at least ten U.S. states required no written screening exam[82] (*Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification Survey: Certification Requirements 2009*). For those states which do have a written screening exam in place, the exact nature of what is being tested is not specified. In relation to written exams at the *federal* level, former New Jersey court interpreting program manager Robert Joe Lee insists that

> [t]he primary purpose of the written test was to determine that a candidate possessed a sufficient knowledge of English and of Spanish to have the mastery required to be able to function in Federal courts, given the wide range of levels of language and domains of vocabulary that can appear there (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Theoretically, the same holds true for the Consortium state-level test: its primary function may indeed be to test substantive knowledge[83], but its screening function has “the wonderful side benefit of eliminating lots of people who would no longer be taking ANY of the oral exam (yet another savings to taxpayers)” (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

To date, the only examinations of the predictive validity of written exams have been carried out by Stansfield and Hewitt, who determined that “the WE (written exam)

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[82] The states which required no written screening exam as of the publishing of this report are Alabama, Alaska, Delaware, Illinois, Main, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, South Carolina and Vermont. Minnesota only required a written ethics test.

[83] The written test measures candidates’ knowledge of three areas central to the work of a court interpreter: (1) The English language; (2) court-related terms and usage, especially in the area of criminal courts; and (3) ethics and professional conduct, or standards guiding the performance of duties.
clearly functions as an effective tool for reducing the number of examinees who are eligible to take the OE (oral exam), because they are highly unlikely to pass it” (2002, p. 20). However, Stansfield and Hewitt’s investigations focused on the written examination utilized for the federal court interpreting certification exam. To my knowledge, no systematic studies on predictive validity have been carried out which focus on the utility of written screening exams, with clearly defined parameters, on the Consortium state-level oral exams.

It stands to reason that the Consortium and other similar testing bodies should consider testing the predictive validity of written screening exams, potentially with an eye to standardizing them, enforcing their implementation, or considering other ways to screen candidates in order to avoid undue stress on limited resources in an effort to attenuate the effects of high rates of exam failure. Such approaches to screening could take a two-pronged approach. To begin, states which do not already utilize the written screening exams presently in use by the Consortium might contemplate making their use mandatory, thereby restricting influxes of unqualified candidates who do not possess the linguistic and cognitive skills needed to afford them reasonable expectations of succeeding in the examination process.

In addition to a preliminary written exam administered before the oral exam process, it behooves all interpreting stakeholders in the United States to begin to invest in and to cultivate a larger and more expansive translation and interpretation culture on a societal level, thinking ambitiously in terms of entrenching translation and interpreting

84 See Lawrence Venuti’s article “Towards a Translation Culture” at http://iowareview.uiowa.edu.
studies within the academy, acknowledging their importance and treating them as legitimate academic disciplines. This vision may seem like a dream for U.S. court interpreters at the present time, although it is shared by many stakeholders, including Robert Joe Lee:

In the ideal world, the court interpreting profession would start with a bachelor’s degree in the field!!! That would be the ideal base line. As with most standing professions, one must have a degree first, and the(n) one takes the licensing exam. Unfortunately we don’t have that luxury. I longed for it, thought about it, nudged institutions of higher education to do it, but until you have it, it’s just not a realistic option. The second step – perhaps even as a component of the degree program – would be a supervised internship. The third step would be a certification process that builds on the first two steps and includes the following:

1. A written exam (that’s much broader than the one the Consortium uses now – perhaps more along the lines of RID’s SC/L exam85).
2. A performance exam like we have now.
3. Character review (criminal record check, etc.).
4. If there is no bachelor’s degree or extensive educational/training program (or even if there is but it’s not satisfactory because it doesn’t cover what it should cover!), a two-week (just guessing at the time needed) program of intense training to cover professional ethics (including many case studies), protocol (e.g., how to handle difficult, unexpected situations, how to work effectively with a difficult judge, attorney, court employee, LEP party-witness; how to do team interpreting, telephone interpreting, and other forms of remote interpreting; etc.).
5. An oath (perhaps a swearing in ceremony by a Chief Justice or highest judge possible).

And, finally, there would be continuing education requirements for certification maintenance (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

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85 The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) has offered the SC:L credential (Specialist Certificate: Legal) since 1998. Holders of this specialist certificate have demonstrated specialized knowledge of legal settings and language used in the legal system. Documented training and legal interpreting experience are required prior to sitting for this exam.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
Lee’s comprehensive and idealistic vision of the U.S. court interpreter’s professional and academic trajectory holds promise for future initiatives for practitioners and academics alike in the growing field of TI studies.

6.3.2 Candidate Data Collection

Of vital importance to future research in this vein would be the possibility of cross-referencing demographic data with raw test scores. If the Consortium and other similar testing bodies began to collect and reference important identifiers such as gender, native language, level of education, etc., it would prove illuminating in our attempt to draw reliable profiles of interpreters with the requisite skills to pass the oral certification exam. The only initiative of this type of which I have become apprised is that Pamela Sánchez of the New Mexico court interpreting program is hoping that soon her state will “join in with Washington State Courts who are doing a survey to assess the relationship between a candidate’s educational background and their oral exam results” (P. Sánchez, personal communication, February 2, 2012). Candidate data is collected regularly as an intake portion of the FCICE, but such is not the case at the state level. In fact, the collection of data was actually one of the few areas for improvement identified in the psychometric audit described in the California assessment discussed in Chapter Four. The report identified “the collection of oral exam statistical data” (ALTA Language Services, Inc., 2010, p. 19) as a priority in order to enhance analysis of the performance of candidates on specific test items, although I contend that it would also prove useful as a complement to the present findings aimed at predicting successful outcomes for Consortium examinees.
6.3.3 BIFURCATED TESTING: FEASIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS AND LANGUAGES OF LESSER DIFFUSION

Naturally, the implications of this study extend beyond the confines of institutional and professional arenas into the areas of education and training. With hard data confirming that the interpreters who possess the skills to pass simultaneous exercises have statistically higher chances to pass consecutive and sight translation exercises, university or training programs would be justified in using entry or aptitude exams which test for the inherent skills involved in simultaneous interpreting.

The reasons for such reliance on the simultaneous mode are compelling. First, the predictive validity of using simultaneous as a predictor mode, which ranged from 69% to 81% on Consortium and New Jersey studies respectively, is persuasively high. If we consider the Consortium data set which measures only Spanish / English scores, even if this population of test-takers has specific characteristics which may not be shared by speakers of other Consortium languages, member states may benefit from weighing the cost-saving benefits of using the bifurcated method in administering the Spanish test, using simultaneous first as a preliminary screening instrument.

Furthermore, in contemplating the use of a bifurcated testing model, official credentialing organizations must not lose sight of the necessity of adequately upholding the highest standards of test validity (including task validity) in order to ensure that court interpreter certification continues to be valid and reliable. Interpreting stakeholders must acknowledge traditional institutional and professional resistance to abbreviated testing models. Currently 41 out of the 44 Consortium member states require their candidates for whom full exam versions exist to test in all three modes of
interpreting at the same time. Testing bodies must decide whether or not predictor mode studies are convincing enough to contemplate using a simultaneous exercise as a preliminary exam, with the consecutive and sight translation portions to be administered later. These concerns should also be balanced by a realistic and data-driven analysis of the real cost-saving measures enjoyed by states which currently employ the bifurcated approach: in other words, the perceived benefits of savings and use of personnel should be scrutinized and weighed in order to determine whether or not the benefits constitute a possible model that could or should be imported to other states.

Feasibility issues are absolutely essential considerations. Any testing method used, quite apart from issues of psychometric soundness, needs to be fully feasible in relation to factors such as space, time, infrastructure, and funding for raters as well as for test development, administration, and monitoring. Vermeiren, Van Gucht and De Bontridder warn that “[t]ransgressions of feasibility easily deprive the credentialing authority of its legitimacy” (2009, p. 305). Furthermore, the cost of testing to examinees must also be taken into account: it should be neither too low nor too high as, indeed, “tests that do not account for political and economic value may jeopardize validity” (Vermeiren, Van Gucht, & De Bontridder, 2009, p. 302).

Finally, and of utmost concern among Consortium member states as well as European Union nations, the results of this study should inform stakeholders who care about testing and certifying interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion. Even though a full exam may be most desirable, the reality is that even abbreviated exams do not exist for a plethora of languages. In the current climate of soaring exam development costs and
ubiquitous budget constraints, some states have turned to using Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) to test candidates who speak languages for which neither abbreviated nor full oral interpreting exams exist. OPIs assess a candidate’s proficiency in the non-English language by measuring his or her ability to use the language effectively and appropriately in real-life situations. Nevertheless, the obvious failing of a foreign language-only OPI is that it does not measure production skills in the language of record nor, most essentially, does it measure interpreting skills at all. While acknowledging that test development resources are hanging in a critical balance, perhaps the Consortium would do well to consider allocating funds for developing abbreviated exam versions (consisting of simultaneous exercises) in the most critical languages of lesser diffusion for which full exam versions have not yet been developed, rejecting the use of only non-English language OPIs to minimally qualify court interpreters. In sum, in a profession which struggles constantly with restraints on economic and human capital, further examination of specific modes of interpreting as predictors of global certification exam success constitute an important albeit preliminary contribution to the field of certification exam research.

Developing simultaneous interpreting exercises in the United States, where there is only one language of record, is extremely attractive from a feasibility perspective. Apart from

86 In the state of Wisconsin, the Court Interpreting Program offers Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) to candidates who interpret in languages other than Spanish (LOTS). Candidates who pass the multiple choice test and score a Superior level on the OPI will appear on the state’s official roster of interpreters. OPIs are available to interpreters of the following languages: Afrikaans, Akan-Twi, Albanian, Algerian, Amharic, Azerbaijani, Bengali, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cambodian (Khmer), Cebuano, Chavacano, Czech, Dari, Dutch, Gujarati, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Indonesian, Japanese, Javanese, Kurdish-Kurmanji, Malay, Malayalam, Marshallese, Nepali, Norwegian, Pashto, Persian Farsi, Punjabi, Romanian, Serbian-Croatian, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Slovak, Swahili, Tagalog, Tajik, Tamil, Tausug, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, Turkmen, Urdu, Uyghur, Uzbek, Wu, and Yoruba (Wisconsin Court Interpreter Program Policies, 2012, p. 6)
garnering healthy rates of predictive validity in the forecasting of acceptable performance in sight translation and consecutive, the economic advantages of isolating simultaneous as a predictor mode has distinct economic advantages, as discovered by Robert Joe Lee, former New Jersey court interpreting program manager, who elucidated this very point:

... it became clear to us that the most economical section of the test to administer and rate was the simultaneous. The question that I think framed the issue that yielded this result of bifurcating the process was this: “Which section of the test would eliminate the greatest number of candidates (and, therefore, save the most money by not having to administer the other two sections)?” That answer was obvious: the simultaneous, and by far! (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012).

Lee’s candid and critical approach to testing policy made for more than a lively conversation: he posited truly provocative questions. Recognizing that the federal model has shaped everything that has come after it, and that it is “first rate” psychometrically, Lee harbors doubts that testing in the other two modes is really necessary at all. He says “I would even take out the consecutive and the sight. That’s the next logical step, but only people who understand statistics would have any sympathy for this theory” (R.J. Lee, personal communication, March 16, 2012). Nonetheless, the most pervasive thinking among most Consortium states is that the most task-authentic examination conditions must necessarily entail administering all three exercises.

6.3.4 Other Approaches to the Consortium Data Set

The expansive Consortium data set offers possibilities for alternate perspectives when approaching the data. For example, in assigning descriptor codes to reflect performance patterns for full-pass examinees, it bears mentioning that sometimes the difference
between performances on one mode and another (which were coded differently, such as with a "1" and a "2", not as tying scores) were as slight as .33% of a point. Further scrutiny in the future could determine how narrow (or not) actual point spreads may be between modes for a given candidate. If point spreads for each mode on each exam version for the full-pass examinees were examined, how close together would their performances be, and to what extent could that indicate more readiness to succeed on oral certification exams? Similarly, meticulous point spread examinations among low-pass examinees could potentially reveal surprises. While it is unlikely that low-skilled interpreters would strongly excel at one mode and fail in the others, such performances could only be revealed through point spread examinations.

Likewise, further research could be done with the data at hand by analyzing the point spreads among failed modes of interpreting to detect patterns. While this analysis is not germane to the present project as efforts here are focused on analyzing what happens with successful examinees, analysis of no-pass examinees may represent an avenue for further research. With the data available, however, there is simply no way of determining with certainty why so many Consortium examinees were unable to perform at a minimal qualifying level.

On another tack, performance differences between exams with 200 points and 215 points are too significant to ignore completely, although their use has not provoked controversy within the profession, and there seems to be no loss of face validity to the exam as a whole in spite of the differences. Failure rates on the more consecutive-heavy exams comprised of 215 points rose by 20%, and on these same exam sets, it was the consecutive mode which presented a stumbling block for examinees on the verge of
passing. Even though the aforementioned characteristics of longer exams are effectively neutralized when the entire data set is contemplated as a whole, conceivably exams of differing lengths are not qualifying or disqualifying the same profiles of examinees, and the rationale is not clear.

Finally, all data generated in this study stem from exam scores in the Spanish / English language pair: the language combination which by far represents the greatest number of U.S. examinees. It could prove useful, however, to examine Consortium data across languages to see if any significant differences exist.

6.4 ADVANCING THE FIELD: SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This dissertation’s principal research questions involve examining theoretical constructs of interpreter aptitude, articulating perceptions of difficulty and utility of the three modes of interpreting as revealed in the Wisconsin perception study, taking a preliminary statistical look at predictor mode studies carried out in New Jersey, and putting them all to the test on an empirical level. It boasts several particular strengths, and advances the field of interpreting studies in the realm of interpreter assessment because:

- **The study is comprehensive**, with contributions from academics and theorists, Consortium officials, and independent researchers. It includes a survey-based perception component, the empirical analysis of several significant data sets, a strong foundation grounded in relevant theory, personal communications with stakeholders in the realm of testing and certification, and insight from policy and administrative documents drafted by test-administering bodies. This
combination of quantitative and qualitative input lends strength and complexity to the present search for indicators of interpreter ability. Similarly, the notable inclusion of industry documentation represents a degree of innovation and collaboration between academia and the profession that is seldom seen;

- **The study works with previously unexploited data, the analysis of which is being presented in this dissertation as original research.** Consortium officials have stated that they themselves have never approached their raw test scores from a statistical perspective. Significantly, this study represents the first time that raw test data for the Spanish / English language pair have been analyzed.

- **The data contemplated is not subject to sample variability.** What is of utmost importance is the fact that this data set represents an entire population, and is therefore not subject to sample variability. The numbers discussed in this dissertation's analyses are actual values, not extrapolations.

- **The study breaks new ground by directly tackling issues of predictive validity.** While some previous studies have (Hewitt and Stansfield) examined the predictive validity of Consortium written exams, this dissertation represents the first attempt to critically examine predictive validity on oral certification exams, seeking to correlate success on one scale (performance on specific modes of interpreting) with scores on another (success on the other two modes of interpreting).

- **The study was successful in identifying a predictor mode** which, to a statistically significant degree, is able to predict success on the other two modes
of interpreting in the context of Consortium oral certification exams, which have been proven to be valid and reliable;

- **The data-driven justification for using simultaneous as a predictor mode vindicates some current Consortium practices.** More states may want to consider following the lead of the three states which already screen their oral examinees with the simultaneous mode before administering the consecutive and sight translation exercises; and finally,

- **The empirical rationalization for using simultaneous as a predictor mode constitutes a discovery that can be put to work right now to solve real problems.** As an initial solution for Consortium member states faced with pressure to develop oral exams for languages of lesser diffusion, investing in the development of simultaneous exercises and their corresponding scoring dictionaries constitutes an option which robustly trumps current practices of administering Oral Proficiency Interviews. Similarly, in the European Union where the implementation of common standards in legal interpreting and translating is progressively becoming a reality, the statistical justification for beginning with the elaboration of simultaneous exercises in the E.U.’s multitude of languages could constitute a positive step toward ensuring access to equal footing in the courtroom without compromising test or task validity.

All stakeholders in the field of court interpreting studies are motivated by issues of fairness and a desire to preserve the constitutional and human rights of speakers of all languages, putting them on equal footing in courts of law and guaranteeing their rights to due process. Access to justice is a noble pursuit, one which merits being approached
analytically and empirically as well as passionately and altruistically. When state courts fail to provide competent interpreters to LEP people, the costs are high. According to Laura Abel,

[p]eople suffer because they cannot protect their children, their homes, or their safety. Courts suffer because they cannot make accurate findings, and because communities lose faith in the justice system. And society suffers because its civil laws – guaranteeing the minimum wage, and barring domestic violence and illegal eviction – cannot be enforced (2009, p. 1).

Although many states are still in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act which requires that state courts receiving federal assistance provide interpreters to people who need them87, the United States has taken some important steps toward ensuring equal access in the courts. First, 44 of the 50 U.S. states are currently members of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. States wishing to launch or improve their court interpreter programs have established models to follow for training, testing and credentialing court interpreters.

Second, the federal Department of Justice has made a concerted effort to enforce civil rights laws, beginning with Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Pérez’s August 2010 letter to each state’s Chief Justice or State Court Administrator, in which he addresses specific critical improvements needed in order to uphold the law in terms of providing access to LEPs88. The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice proclaimed

87 Laura Abel’s 2009 report entitled “Language Access in State Courts” carried out a study in 35 U.S. states, detailing the extent to which state courts fail (1) to require that interpreters be provided in all civil cases; (2) to guarantee that the courts will pay for the interpreters they provide (with the result that many people who need interpreters do not in fact receive them); and (3) to require the use of credentialed interpreters, even when such interpreters are available. The report is available at www.brennancenter.org.

that it views access to all court proceedings as critical, and that language assistance should be provided not only for courtroom proceedings but that access requirements should extend to court functions that are conducted outside the courtroom as well, without distinguishing between civil, criminal, or administrative matters. The letter also indicated that some court systems have failed to ensure that LEP individuals are able to communicate effectively with all individuals employed, paid or supervised by the courts, including criminal defense counsel, child advocates or guardians ad litem, court psychologists, probation officers, doctors, or trustees. Finally, federal legislators are looking for ways to provide state court systems with additional funding for essential court interpreter services.

This dissertation is an attempt to systematically approach the identification of predictors of successful performance on U.S. Consortium oral certification exams, representing one step towards ensuring that established due process rights are fully respected by providing quality interpreting services to the judicial system and thereby putting all individuals involved in legal proceedings, regardless of the language that they speak, on equal footing.
REFERENCES


Improving interpretation in Wisconsin’s courts: A report on court-related interpreting and translation with recommendations on statute and rule changes, budget items, interpreter training programs and certification tests, and judicial and professional education programs. (October 2000). Committee to Improve Interpreting & Translation in the Wisconsin Courts Report to the Director of State Courts.


Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams


Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams


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**Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams**


## APPENDIX A: LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AO, AOC</td>
<td>Administrative Office of U.S. Courts (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>American Sign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATA</td>
<td>American Translators Association (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIPS</td>
<td>“Children in need of protection and services” (Wisconsin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Consecutive interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Court Interpreter Program (Wisconsin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAC</td>
<td>Consortium for Language Access in the Courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCICE</td>
<td>Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTS</td>
<td>Languages Other Than Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATI</td>
<td>Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters (U.S., regional chapter of the ATA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBTI</td>
<td>Myers-Briggs Type Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAJIT</td>
<td>National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSC</td>
<td>National Center for State Courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJTCE</td>
<td>National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification (issued by NAJIT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RID</td>
<td>Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (U.S.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Simultaneous interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Sight translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCM</td>
<td>Test Construction Manual (Consortium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TI</td>
<td>Translation and Interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMTIA</td>
<td>Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association (U.S., regional chapter of the AT)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
### APPENDIX B*: KSAs Essential for Court Interpretation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Linguistic Skills</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1A</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1C</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1D</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Speaking Skills</strong></th>
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<td><strong>2B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4B</strong></td>
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<table>
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<th><strong>Interpreting Skills</strong></th>
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<td><strong>5B</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5L</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5M</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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89 This appendix is reproduced from page 43 of the report “California’s Assessment of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Exams” prepared by ALTA Language Services, Inc., for the Judicial Council of California’s Administrative Office of the Courts. The report is available online at http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/ALTAReport.pdf.
## APPENDIX C\textsuperscript{90}: KSAS Measured by the Consortium Oral Exam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section:</th>
<th>1A</th>
<th>1B</th>
<th>1C</th>
<th>1D</th>
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<th>3B</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Consecutive Section</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>4. Sight Translation: English</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sight Translation: Foreign Lang</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sight Translation: English</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{90} This appendix is reproduced from page 47 of the report “California’s Assessment of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Exams” prepared by ALTA Language Services, Inc., for the Judicial Council of California’s Administrative Office of the Courts. The report is available online at http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/ALTAReport.pdf.
Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
APPENDIX D: WALLACE: WISCONSIN COURT INTERPRETERS AND SIGHT TRANSLATION SURVEY

Survey Page 1. Welcome and introduction to the survey

Welcome, and thank you for your willingness to take this survey. It is expected that you will need about 20 minutes to complete it.

This survey aims to explore your perceptions of the mode of sight translation in your work as a Wisconsin court interpreter on the roster maintained by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Your honest reflections will be absolutely crucial in gaining a clearer picture of your experience with, training in, and perceptions of sight translation.

1. Do you give your consent for Melissa Wallace to include any data based on your answers in this survey in her doctoral research project on sight translation and Wisconsin court interpreters?

☐ Yes, I give my consent. I understand that my identity and my contact information will be kept strictly confidential and will be shared with no one. I consent to being identified in this research with a randomized code.

☐ No, I do not give my consent.

Survey Page 2. Identification and contact information

This page asks for your name and basic contact information in case I need to clarify any of your answers on the survey. Please know that all information on this survey is strictly confidential.

1. Please identify yourself and tell me how I can contact you in case I need to clarify some aspect of the survey.

Name: 

Email Address: 

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
Phone Number:  

2. As part of this study, I would like to do a slightly more in-depth interview with a select group of survey respondents. Would you be willing to participate in a 10-15 minute phone interview as a follow-up to this survey?

If so, please make sure that you filled out the information in the previous question.

☐ Yes
☐ No

Survey Page 3. Information about you

The following questions ask for some basic demographic information, as well as some questions about how you self-identify professionally.

1. What is your gender?

☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Transgender, gender queer, intersex, or other

2. What is your age?

☐ 20-30
☐ 30-40
☐ 40-50
☐ 50-60
☐ 60-70
☐ 70-80
3. What is the highest level of formal education that you have attained?

☐ High school

☐ Associates degree

☐ Undergraduate degree

☐ Some graduate work beyond an undergraduate degree

☐ Master's degree

☐ Some coursework beyond a master's degree

☐ Doctorate

4. Do you consider Spanish or English your "A" or native language?

☐ I identify as fully bilingual (English and Spanish)

☐ English is my native language

☐ Spanish is my native language

5. If neither Spanish nor English is your native language, what is your native language?

☐

6. What is your country of origin?

☐

7. How do you best describe your professional life?

☐ I work in another field, and do translation and/or interpreting on the side

☐ Most or all of my professional work is in the field of translation and/or interpreting

☐ Other. Please elaborate if you wish.
8. Which of the following best describes you?

- [ ] I consider myself primarily a translator
- [ ] I consider myself primarily an interpreter
- [ ] I consider myself to be both a translator and an interpreter

Other (please specify) ____________________________

9. What is your current status on the Wisconsin Court Interpreters roster?

- [ ] Trainee (have passed either the multiple choice portion or translation portion of the written test but not the oral examination)
- [ ] Provisional (have passed both the multiple choice portion and translation portion of the written test but not the oral examination)
- [ ] Certified (have met all the Director of State Courts’ requirements in Wisconsin, including passing an oral examination and written test)

10. For CERTIFIED interpreters only:
In what way did you earn certification to interpret in Wisconsin courts?

- [ ] I passed an NCSC (National Center for State Courts) Consortium exam, either in Wisconsin or in another state with whom Wisconsin has reciprocity
- [ ] I passed the federal court certification exam
- [ ] I passed the NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators) examination
- [ ] I am not certified. This question does not pertain to me.

11. Do you belong to any professional organizations related to translation or interpreting? Please check all that apply.

- [ ] I belong to NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators)
- [ ] I belong to the ATA (American Translators Association)
I belong to MATI (the Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters)

I belong to UMTIA (the Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association)

I do not belong to any professional organization related to my work as an interpreter or translator

Other (please specify)

Survey Page 4. Familiarity with sight translation prior to beginning certification process

For the purposes of this survey, sight translation is defined as the oral rendering of a written document into another language.

1. How familiar were you with sight translation, as defined above, before you began the 2-day orientation session required for court interpreter certification in Wisconsin?

☐ I had no idea what sight translation was before the 2-day orientation

☐ I had a general idea of what sight translation was before the 2-day orientation

☐ I had a clear idea of what sight translation was before the 2-day orientation

Survey Page 5. Questions about the practice of sight translation

This set of questions examines the extent and type of practice you may have had with the mode of sight translation as defined on the previous page.

Again, sight translation is the oral rendering of a written document into another language.

1. Did you see a demonstration of sight translation at the 2-day orientation?

☐ Yes

☐ No
2. Did you practice sight translation at the 2-day orientation?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I don’t remember

3. Did you receive training in the mode of sight translation prior to taking the final, oral part of the certification exam?

☐ Yes, I did train in the mode of sight translation before attempting the oral part of the exam
☐ No, I did not train in the mode of sight translation before attempting the oral part of the exam
☐ I have not attempted to take the final, oral part of the certification exam yet

4. If you DID train in the mode of sight translation before attempting the final, oral portion of the certification exam, please check all that apply:

☐ I have not attempted the oral exam. This question does not pertain to me.
☐ I trained at a university or community college
☐ I trained at a private interpreting seminar hosted by an individual, a company, or a professional organization
☐ I trained at a training event organized by the state of Wisconsin
☐ I trained on my own
☐ I trained with a partner

Other (please specify)
5. What kind of training or experience was most beneficial to you in preparing for the sight translation portion of the oral exam? Please comment freely and in as much detail as you can. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

If you have not yet attempted the oral exam, please leave this question blank.

6. As regards the use of sight translation on the job in Wisconsin courts, how frequently are you asked to perform sight translation (render a written document orally into another language)?

☐ Never or almost never

☐ Sometimes

☐ Often

☐ Very often

☐ Almost every time I interpret in court

Other (please specify)

7. When you are asked to perform sight translation in Wisconsin courts, which is the most frequent language combination?

☐ I render English-language documents into Spanish more often

☐ I render Spanish-language documents into English more often

8. Overall, how important do you feel sight translation is in your professional practice?

☐ Not very important

☐ Fairly important

☐ Very important
Other (please specify)

9. Please rank the following modes of interpretation in their order of importance / frequency of use. Write a number 1 for the most important, a 2 for the second most important, and a 3 for the least important.

Consecutive

Simultaneous

Sight Translation

Survey Page 6. Challenges associated with sight translation

1. What are the challenges that you associate with the use of sight translation in your professional practice? Please check all that apply.

☐ I don’t find sight translation challenging - I can do it with relative ease

☐ On the job, I often don’t have time to review documents before being asked to render them orally into another language

☐ I have not had opportunities to practice sight translation with a professional trainer

☐ I am not aware of how to practice sight translation on my own

☐ I don’t feel that I received enough training in the 2-day orientation in the mode of sight translation

☐ Practicing sight translation on my own is difficult

Are there other challenges?

2. Could you please elaborate on any challenges you experience with the use of sight translation in your professional practice?
3. Please consider any language-related challenges that you may face when sight translating. Check all that apply.

- [ ] Terminology
- [ ] Word order difficulty between languages
- [ ] Sentence order difficulty between languages
- [ ] Background knowledge insufficient to understand original documents
- [ ] Register
- [ ] Culturally-bound items
- [ ] Regionalisms
- [ ] Ambiguities in the source text
- [ ] Fluency / hesitation / false starts

Other (please specify)

4. Would you care to elaborate about any challenges you face when practicing sight translation? Your reflections are greatly appreciated.

Survey Page 7. Methodology of sight translation

This page will ask you a few brief questions about how you feel about training in sight translation and what your experiences have been.

1. If you have received training in sight translation or if you believe it would be useful, what sort of training do you believe to be most beneficial?

- [ ] Self-instruction (working alone with training materials)
Survey Page 8. Practitioners' opinions of sight translation and the certification process

1. If you have taken the final oral certification exam, whether you passed it or not, in which mode of interpreting do you believe that novice or prospective interpreters should train? In other words, which kind of training would help them the most in order to pass the oral exam?

☐ I have not attempted the oral exam yet

☐ Training in all three modes of interpreting would be equally useful in order to pass the oral exam

☐ Training in consecutive interpreting would be most useful for novice interpreters

☐ Training in sight translation would be most useful for novice interpreters

☐ Training in simultaneous interpreting would be most useful for novice interpreters

Other (please specify)
2. In your work as a Wisconsin court interpreter, which kind of further training would help you the most in order to perform better on the job?

Please rank these answers by placing numbers next to them, with a "1" being the most important and a "4" being the least important.

- Training in sight translation
- Training in simultaneous interpreting
- Training in consecutive interpreting
- Training in all 3 modes is equally important

3. If you have ever attempted the oral exam, whether you passed or failed, which section was HARDEST for you?

- The consecutive part was hardest
- The simultaneous part was hardest
- The sight translation part was hardest
- I have not attempted to take the oral exam
- I do not remember

4. If you took the exam and remember which part you found to be the hardest, would you please talk about why?

5. If you have ever attempted the oral exam, whether you passed or failed, which section was EASIEST for you?

- The consecutive part was easiest
6. If you took the exam and remember which part you found to be the easiest, would you please talk about why?

7. If you attempted the final oral exam in the certification process, which part did you get the HIGHEST score on?

8. If you attempted the final oral exam in the certification process, which part did you get the LOWEST score on?
9. I believe that one of the most revealing ways to look at sight translation within the context of Wisconsin court interpreting is to look closely at exam scores in the three modes of interpreting. This information is valuable whether you passed any, all or none of the exam sections.

Would you be willing to self-report your exam scores on the final, oral exam?

☐ I have not taken the oral exam

☐ Yes, I would be willing to provide my exam scores

☐ No, I would not be willing to share that information

☐ I would be willing to share that information, but I do not recall my scores on the exam

10. If you are willing to self-report your scores, please enter them here:

Simultaneous

Consecutive

Sight Translation

11. I am interested in seeing if there is a correlation between overall pass rates on the court interpreter final oral exam and test-takers’ performance on the sight translation exercise.

May I have your consent to ask the National Consortium for State Courts for your exam grades?

☐ yes

☐ no

12. If you are on the roster as a "trainee" or "provisional" interpreter, what obstacles have you faced in progressing? Please check all that apply.

☐ I am Certified. This question does not apply to me.

☐ The expense of the exams is an obstacle

☐ I still get called to interpret in court, so I am not motivated to progress on the roster

☐ I have taken certain parts of the exam and have failed

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
13. In conclusion, is there anything else that you would like to say about sight translation and your work as a Wisconsin court interpreter, especially as regards training, testing, and use of ST on the job?

---

**Survey Page 9. ¡Muchísimas gracias!**

Please accept my most sincere thanks for your participation in this survey. If you have any questions about it or would like to discuss any of the topics covered here in more detail, please don't hesitate to send me an email at mwallace108@gmail.com.

Learning more about the other practicing professionals on the Wisconsin court interpreter roster is deeply important to me. Thank you so much for your input!

Sincerely yours,
Melissa Wallace
APPENDIX E: WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM SURVEY

Page 5: Questions about the practice of sight translation

5. What kind of training or experience was most beneficial to you in preparing for the sight translation portion of the oral exam? Please comment freely and in as much detail as you can. Your responses are greatly appreciated. If you have not yet attempted the oral exam, please leave this question blank.

1. I have formal training but I also trained with a partner

2. Studying with the Acebo materials on my own and with other interpreters, looking up vocabulary, and memorizing frozen phrases.

3. n/a

4. I used the Acebo training materials and found them very helpful.

5. I believe the overall practice and studying for the whole test prepared me for sight translation. I didn't focus specifically on sight translation. I prepared with the ACEBO materials.

6. I attended the Agnes Haury Institute in AZ

7. Getting feedback on style, errors, improvements.

I did not train for it. I passed it though. I think the fact that I attended college both in Mexico and the US, that some of that education was language related, and that I have lived for a long time in both countries has given me a sound knowledge of both languages. I would say that my life experience is what has been most beneficial since I have really not trained formally to be neither an interpreter nor a translator, other than a couple of two/five-day training events.

8. As helpful as the trainings were, the most important thing was practice, practice, practice.

9. I simply picked up magazine articles and practiced on simple paragraphs.

10. Training on my own, using materials from ACEBO, which are mostly sample court/legal documents.

Training with partners helped me, as well as doing sample sight translations online. In many legal documents, there are terms that I have never heard of in English; though I can deduce what they mean, in Spanish it was hard to produce an equivalent. Learning alongside my boyfriend, an educated interpreter whose first language is Spanish, provided me a key to the door. He could critique my Spanish guesses,

91 Survey responses are reproduced exactly. No corrections have been made for spelling or grammar errors.
define Spanish terms for me in his own words, etc. Online, we found free programs that simulate the sight translation part of the state exam, by giving you a sample document and a Spanish translation (recorded). Again, it helped to first give it a try myself, then listen to the “answer” to see how I could have improved upon the translation, all the while noting stylistic, grammatic and/or contextual elements that make their “answer” better.

13. Just practice but I did not use the same type of document they presented at the exam.

14. ACEBO

15. acebo

16. I attempted the oral exam but did not train specifically for sight translation. Instead, I spent most of my time on consecutive and simultaneous exercises.

17. I set up a study group with 3 other interpreters from the general area and we would get together once a week for a few hours. I would also practice sight translation on my own at least once a week for many months prior to taking the certification exam.

18. I have been sight translating as one of the steps to the completion of the translation work I do now. I sight translate dictating onto a recorder so that my wife, who works with me in the translation work, can transcribe to the finished work.

19. I am a lifelong world traveler. Worked in International Sales & Mktg'Interpreting and Translating was a way of life, including Sight.

20. I JUST DID IT THERE WAS NO CHOICE

21. I went to a University to obtain a degree in Translation and Interpretation. I am not a casual interpreter. This was given as one of the subjects within the curriculum.

22. I did not train on sight translation before the oral portion of the exam. The survey does not allow you to leave question 4 blank.

23. I practiced as suggested, translating random statements, newspaper articles, from english into spanish and from spanish into english.

24. I attended an interpretation course at the University of Veracruz in Mexico. A portion of the course was dedicated to sight translation. Students received valuable feedback from the professor and had the opportunity to practice with a partner or in front of the class.

25. Acebo materials
26. Listening to the radio and trying to interpret
I listened and practiced on a program that involved cd's and exercises for interpreters

6. As regards the use of sight translation on the job in Wisconsin courts, how
frequently are you asked to perform sight translation (render a written document
orally into another language)?

1. never interpreted in court in Wisconsin

2. no longer an interpreter

3. Does not pertain to me.

4. I have never interpreted for a Wisconsin court.

5. I do not work in the court.

6. I just completed my certification. I have not had live experience.

7. I do not work in the courts at this time

8. Because I did not pass the certification exam I do not translate in the courts

9. I have not yet worked in the courts

10. I only work in MN

11. not yet working in court

12. daily in medical field which is where I currently work

13. I work as a medical interpreter

14. I HAVE TO READ THE CRIMINAL COMPLAIN TO DEFENDANTS AT ALL THE TIMES.
Page 6: Challenges associated with sight translation

1. What are the challenges that you associate with the use of sight translation in your professional practice? Please check all that apply.

1. handwritten letters, notes.
2. Getting feedback to really know if there is a need to improve or if satisfaction is real
3. In gen'l, the orientations should allow more time to practice all modes of interpretation, not just sight translation.
4. Legal terminology is a major challenge
5. Legal terms can be challenging to translate accurately

2. Could you please elaborate on any challenges you experience with the use of sight translation in your professional practice?

1. Most of the time I don't have time to read the document before translating it.
2. not legible, not enough time to revise the document.
3. used it in sales a few times when requested by a client
4. The pressure of "speed" during a trial makes it often more difficult.
5. When sigh translating a Spanish-language document to English, there is often very elaborate words in the document.
6. Legal words
7. Certain situation specific vocabulary/forms

8. N/A

9. Sight translation is not just “reading” eventhough this is the belief of many in the courts. Just because it is done with ease, as a professional should do it, doesn’t mean it is easy to do.

10. Legal language can be difficult, when is required to be translated with out previous review of the document or reference material.

As with any type of translation, it is difficult to translate concepts that do not exist in the target language or might be foreign to the target audience. When doing sight translation, you will not have enough time to consult sources to come up with an accurate translation.

11. Legal language can be difficult, when is required to be translated with out previous review of the document or reference material.

Today I sight-read a complaint for an attempted homicide case, and there was not sufficient time to read it prior to sight-translating it. It was not necessarily difficult, but I've done it other times, when I simply didn't know some of the words. One I remember in particular had to do with a conspiracy to kill a man; the homicide took place in a milk shed on a farm. Several of the words used were unknown to me. I had to ask the defendant himself, how to say them, because there wasn't time to research them online, and they weren't words commonly found in a dictionary. Needless to say I was rather embarrassed to have to ask for help from the person I was there to interpret for.

12. 

Sometimes when I am asked to sight translate a document, I feel that the person asking for the sight translation doesn't realize that it will take considerably longer to do that than to just read a document aloud to someone.

13. Perhaps some new words. The most challenging thing would be when the person benefiting from the translation does not understand the document and I am not allowed to explain it.

14. Terminology that I'm not familiar with

Recently, I had to sight translate a letter into English that had mostly technical terms in it, only some of which I was familiar with. Because it appeared that the doctor understood some of the Spanish terms that I did not (from their similarity to English), I glossed over those parts and filled in the rest. I mean, it's frustrating to only be able to sight translate 80% of a document adequately because of high specificity, without the opportunity to look up terms.

15. I am working at familiarizing myself with legal terminology in English and Spanish.

16. It gets easier with practice and increased familiarity with the legal jargon. Much of what I sight translate is somewhat standardized, both in English and in Spanish.
20. Most times I use sight translation is when the jail has intercepted letters from defendants and the detective and ADA are sitting next to me wanting an immediate sight translation.

21. medical/legal terminology knowledge, the in-between words are easy

22. Legal sight-translation has been a challenge for me because I do not have much experience with these kinds of documents, nor do I have access to any professionals in the field who can help me.

23. Documents often include a lot of legalese and they want it done immediately

The main challenge is the time factor. Usually for in-custody hearings the interpreter is given a very small window of time to review the complaint with the defendant and go over their rights with them. There is no time for the interpreter to review the document before translating it. This makes the whole process a little bit slower.

24. I am not currently interpreting for the courts

Often the biggest challenge is poorly written documents in "everyday" language (police reports are a good example). Legal documents are often easier, once you learn the style. The challenges are often related to time constraints: you get a document 5 minutes before you are supposed to sight translate it and the party (DA, child support etc.) will say "oh it's fairly straightforward". If I know that I will not be given much time to review a document (victim impact statements and juvenile cases especially) I will review or translate documents from similar cases to prepare ahead of time. Often other states or countries will have good examples. Also, I study blank documents and then the names, addresses etc. are the only thing missing. Those are often available elsewhere, so I make notes of those ahead of time. It seems that interpreters are expected to be experts in every type of specialized terminology.

25. Some context: I worked as the main interpreter for our county for 3 years and at first it was hard to get the other participants involved in court (DA, GALs, Child Support etc.) to provide me with documents. However, since I always paid great attention to detail and preparedness, most of them (even the judges) have now learned to appreciate the importance of a well prepared/informed interpreter. I have not taken the oral exam yet, so since the pilot program started in Sept., I have not worked as a court interpreter anymore. However, I still work for many of the other agencies involved in cases. An important point is that unless an interpreter takes the initiative to get the information, many participants don't remember to keep the interpreter in the information loop. This makes preparation all the more critical for sight translation.

26. Many documents, such as legal ones can present a challenge, especially if you do not get a chance to see them very often.

27. The biggest challenges come from the handwritten, poorly spelled letters in Spanish which must be rendering onto English
29. I've really only done it once, and the nature of the activity was unclear.

30. Challenges are present in "legalese", but it is important to find accurate equivalents that are understood well.

31. Handwriting is sometimes difficult to decipher.

4. Would you care to elaborate about any challenges you face when practicing sight translation? Your reflections are greatly appreciated.

1. I don't have problems with practicing.

2. Time is of the essence, one feels nervous about the expectations of those around.

3. I feel I am excellent at simultaneous translating and very good and consecutive. However, sight translation is very rarely needed, so I don't get to practice it that much. Terminology is my most difficult challenge. Sometimes I find that background knowledge might be insufficient, but not often.

4. No longer an interpreter/translater.

5. Sight translation is the easiest way to translate as far as I am concerned.

6. I personally, up to this time, 10 yrs in court have not come across any difficulties with ST. That doesn't mean I couldn't come across difficulties, just up to now I have been familiar enough with documents I have been asked to ST.

7. I don't have enough experience to clearly explain what I find challenging vs. easy or straightforward with regard to sight translation.


9. NONE SUFFICIENT TIME TO REVIEW DOCUMENTS PRIOR TO TRANSLATION.

10. I've had attorneys hand a document to the witness on the witness stand. Then they have asked the interpreter to do a sight translation on the spot, without previous notice, without regard to seriousness of the moment, etc.
11. I do field translations for police department. It is difficult to translate police form in the field.

12. See #2 answer.

13. ambiguities between spoken Spanish (Mexico, etc) and Castilian Spanish

14. x

15. 1) Lack of time to look at the documents in order to research unfamiliar terms, as I mentioned earlier. 2) Some judges understand better than others the particular intricacies that may be involved with sight translating. Some are more willing than others to explain the charges to the defendant in layman's terms, after the formal legal complaint has been read. When they don't, I worry about how much the defendant may have truly understood, especially when their defense attorney doesn't speak Spanish, and given the fact that most of the time interpreters do not interpret between the defendant and his attorney. I truly wonder how the atty can do a good job for his client.

16. I do not practice sight translation at this time.

17. Every country has specific terms the use in legal documents. In Mexico an Acta de Nacimiento is very familiar to me and easy to translate. One needs to know the terms from many countries for the oral exam.

Background knowledge and ambiguities in source text are both important. I have a master's degree and have a very strong liberal arts education; I had some level of background knowledge of legal terminology in both languages and even still find it difficult at times to do sight translation to my own satisfaction. I wonder, at times, how people with less educational background and less background knowledge can do an adequate job at sight translation (and I don't mean that in an unkind way!).

Regionalisms and register pose my biggest difficulty. Since I lived in Spain, the terminology used is quite different from that of Latin America (not to say that there aren't differences in Latin American regionalisms, just that the difference with Spain is much more exaggerated).

18. 1. enhanced training 2. practice 3. association/connection

One of the best ways to practice and to work with sight translation is by practicing "chunking" which is dividing sentences into "chunks" of meaning. This has helped me to work on the meaning and not be so tied to the actual words, or literal translation, which then is easy to insert false cognates. This technique has helped me to focus on the meaning and not the words.

20. Sufficient time and a quiet place to review a document would be nice.

Mostly I translate outside of the court, so I don't think about sight translation very much. I think it would be helpful to me to have more information. Since formal training never happens when I am free to be away from my regular job, I would prefer training by mail.
24. VERY SELDOM I HAVE TO USE THE DICTIONARY

25. Practice is the key. I sight translate with ease. It is not a concern to me. I practice any time I can, not only at work, but out as well.

26. There are really not many, and they usually have to do with proper grammar and sentence construction to make it sensical and understandable.

Most of the time, once you have done sight translation of a type of document, it keeps coming up again with slight variations in content. As a result, every time the same type of document is presented, sight translation flows more easily.

Initial challenges might be formal legal language or terminology, however, these challenges can be overcome with practice, especially since there is not great variation of document type.

Please keep in mind I have only had court interpreting experience in the last 2 months. My perspective might be different once I am more experienced.

When I do sight translation, I always ask to read the document first to make sure what I am going to translate. Usually, here in Lake County, IL the parties involved in a case make sure the interpreter is aware of any document that is going to be sight translated before the court is in session.

Page 7: Methodology of sight translation

1. If you have received training in sight translation or if you believe it would be useful, what sort of training do you believe to be most beneficial?

1. WOULD LOVE TO TAKE A TRAINING W/ INSTRUCTOR

2. sight translate by having close captions on any show, or news...expands your word vocabulary...develop speed.

3. also getting input from experts who can explain highly technical terms or nuances

4. I think an organized course would be more helpful, where you can get feedback and work with others to practice. Feedback is important and you don't get that working alone.

5. practice

6. These have been helpful when training for sight-translation in the medical field.
7. peer instruction also useful - others have good tips

8. University

2. **Is there another method that you believe would be helpful to teach / learn sight translation?**

1. Practice.

2. No

3. NO

4. If you know 2 languages you should be able to read and translate.

5. Possible databanks with general forms or resources for possible terminology

6. N/A

7. **EXAMPLES OF SOMEONE ON JOB TRAINING. SHADOWING**

8. x

   A continuing education requirement would probably help the interpreting profession, no matter what mode is used. As to methods, I think some work for some people and others work for other people. Look into the different teaching methods for answers--audio learning, visual learning, participatory learning, and all combinations thereof.

9. on the job training, actual materials to work on.

10. Having pre-recorded acceptable renderings of sight translations with which to compare one's own.

   Sample letters, showing an appropriate translation of forms of opening and closing that are not employed in English letterwriting. Also, way more in-person teaching of foreign legal terms in a setting where one can ask questions (as opposed to burying oneself in legal dictionaries and getting confused as can be).

11. Work with a native speaker who is familiar with the documents.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
14. I think you could possibly do it online, but I can tell you from experience that it's not the same.

15. I think a good mix between using a trained instructor and peer instruction would be ideal.

16. support team/updated printed material

17. acebo

to be given a collection of the most frequently used documents to work with/take with you, and to have an
attorney available at training to explain unclear items to make sure we are understanding what we are
translating

18. The "Chunking" method.

19. I think a guided course of action with a trained instructor is helpful for starting out and pointing students in
the right direction, but after that studying is important.

20. In training for interpreter for the court, more days dedicated to proper translation

21. Maybe televised training with comments from lawyers and court officers present.

22. Practice

23. BY READING THE SAME BOOK IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

Before even attempting learning this area, the person should explore in depth his/her language level in the
weakest language and develop it. My experience shows that most people who fail at sight translating lack
the foundation to speak the language properly.

24. Peer instruction guided by a trained instructor

25. DVD Courses, in particular the Rosetta-Stone for Spanish

As a supervisor for the Spanish interpreters in Lake County, IL I always recommend my fellow interpreters to
exercise sight translation when they are reading any document, any article in a newspaper or magazine.

3. I invite you to think about the ideal training experience in sight translation. Please describe in as much detail as possible.
1. For training purposes, it would be useful to work with various types of documents, on diverse areas, typed and handwritten. Legal and non legal. Using a timer.

2. do not have training experience

3. Sight translation is basically reading proficiency; the way to improve is to read!

4. A weekend with an experienced sight translator. Practice in terminology, order of sentences, etc. Lots and Lots of hand on practice!

5. Have people read and translate as much as possible using a lot of different scenarios.

6. Available resources to review, common forms, recommended sites, books, etc. Then a possible flashcard/PPT program that reviews such information.

7. practice, practice, practice, Practice makes perfect continues to be true

8. I don't know.

9. Observation and feedback by many peers and trained instructions all in the same setting.

10. It would be a link where I can go at a time that is convenient for me. With an e-mail support department.

11. One that covers a through explanation of terminology.

12. I don't think this requires extensive training. A session or two should be enough. The hard part is familiarity with the vocabulary.

See my answer above. Participatory training works the best for me, and is best done in a professional-level seminar, with immediate feedback by the instructor. Cost and location are the biggest drawbacks to such seminars. The best ones I've been to have been put on by the professional organization I belong to (MATI), on all these counts. Cost is relatively low, the benefits have been high, and locations have been varied. After the trainings, however, there is nothing like individual practice, and I can't stress that enough, no matter what level an interpreter is at, and regardless of which mode of interpreting we are talking about!

13. work on different subject matters, work on different socioeconomic and regional influences in the English language. Ed. level of the writer.

14. Coaching on methodology/tips: read document through first, clarify any questions/doubts if possible, etc. Authentic documents, ranging in difficulty and register.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
Peer/coach feedback or recordings as mentioned above.
Timed practice.

Practice with Birth certificate, formal government letters, death certificates, legal records. I am extremely familiar with the documents from Mexico. Most of the people I encounter here are Mexican. I have translated a lot of documents from Mexico and Nicaragua. This helps me in my work. I do not believe I will be working in the courts.

It could be done well in a classroom setting, even in a large class. Cooperative group work would be great - have a wide variety of documents available to work with, and have groups of 5 or 6 individuals of mixed levels of experience work together. Each person works independently for maybe 5 or 7 minutes with a document, practicing how they would sight-translate it. Then they go around the group, taking turns, critiquing each other after each one’s turn. The pieces would only need to be a minute and a half or two minutes’ worth of speaking time. People can take notes on their own critiques and others’, to increase their vocabulary and background knowledge. Making the readings range from simple and common to obscure or complicated (maybe not both at the same time!) would help, too, so they can build confidence with easy ones and really get into it with the more difficult ones.

First, receive a list of medical/legal terminology several weeks ahead of training/seminar so that at the training session, more time is devoted to actual interpretation/translation. Second, willing on-time instructors to share tips, ideas pro/con since everybody learns differently. Third, Seminars should be for one language at a time.

I would enjoy a small classroom environment for peer and instructor feedback. It would also be helpful to record myself so I can evaluate myself, too.

see above

The best way I believe to learn and practice is in small groups with an instructor taking the lead.

For my style of learning, I wish there were more references to options for problematic words and phrases, e.g., commonly mistranslated terms (due to differences in legal systems or the influence of U.S. English on Latin American Spanish).

Bring in the types of documents you would see, for example, divorce, family court, sexual assault, disorderly conduct, OWI

In the “translator” part of my business, doing it onto a recorder to ease the subsequent translation, has been for me the best trainer that I have had.

It would be in the town where I live, at a time I would be available. Otherwise, I prefer not to work in the courts unless they can’t find anyone else. I prefer to translate written documents where I can take my time.
27. Working in Int'l Business provides frequent opportunities with a great variety of terms and situations.

SELF MOTIVATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR ME. I WAS THE CREATOR DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER OF THE HISPANIC VOICE WITH WPR FOR MORE THAN 16 YEARS. THIS WAS A BILINGUAL PROGRAM THAT I DID FOR FUN. VERY SELDOM I WAS ABLE TO GET BILINGUAL INFORMATION.

Ideally, any training will be successful if the participants have a good educational level and speak both languages fluently. Then it is just a matter of practicing and recording themselves while doing the rendering in the foreign language.

It will have to include: good grammar to begin with, tons of vocabulary and colloquial knowledge for both target languages, proper articulation and a wide sense of elaborating practically, sensically and with purpose.

I would include these training steps:

1. Observation of a model, for example, being able to see an interpreter do sight translation, in person or on video.

2. Practice with group or partner in a protected environment that encourages self and peer correction.

3. Independent practice with opportunities for self evaluation and sporadic mentoring from a professional interpreter.

I love to read, and I usually read Spanish books that are translated from Spanish into English, and vice versa. I read first the English version, because I want to improve the English language, and then I read the Spanish version. This is a great exercise.

Page 8: Practitioners' opinions of sight translation and the certification process

4. If you took the exam and remember which part you found to be the hardest, would you please talk about why?

1. The length and speed of the material and my lack of "short hand" or note taking on my part.

2. I think the hardest was the sight translation. I always get very nervous about not being able to understand the terminology and translating the meaning correctly.
3. I guess I would say simult, just because once it started there was no stopping, just one brain freeze could do you under.

4. USING HEADPHONES AND SOMEONE SITTING IN CLOSE PROXIMATEY TO ONE.

I found the simultaneous part to be extremely difficult. It was very difficult to not lose track of what was being said next when I struggled with a word or phrase. Also I found figures and spelling to be difficult to rendered simultaneously. I also think is all brain power, with simultaneous interpretation you have no chance to jot anything down that will help you along. I think I did not know the legal terminology in my native language as well as needed for simultaneous interpretation.

5. I found simultaneous difficult, because the setting was very different from the settings I'm used to doing simultaneous interpretation in. I don't use headphones, and I don't work from recordings.

6. Consecutive was the hardest for me, because I tend to have a hard time remembering every word and phrase, and when I took notes, I was writing so fast that I couldn't read my own writing afterward.

7. Simultaneous was the hardest because the speed at which people spoke and the transitional speed between speakers was hard to get used to.

8. Without a lot of previous court experience, simultaneous is the hardest to practice for. It seems the most "unnatural."

I have a tendency to be a perfectionist when it comes to interpreting/translating, so when I am exposed to the fast-paced environment of simultaneously interpreting, I feel pressured to keep up. It's because I want to spend time on each word, and even more so if it's a word I'm unsure of, but you cannot slow down too much or you will lose whole sentences by getting behind. Also, having only English as my native language, and Spanish as a learned second language, when I have to process both at the same time in my head, the English can influence my Spanish choices overmuch (i.e. looking for words that have a similar sound as the English, or false cognates, or construction of sentences more like English than Spanish).

9. It was very long, full of details and was not Mexican Spanish.

10. If you get hung up on just one word, it can have a dramatic effect on the rest of the interpretation (i.e. getting behind and forgetting what was said).

11. Sight translation was the hardest for me because it was what I had the least amount of practice with and I tended to be too literal and tied to the words instead of focusing on the meaning.

12. The note taking part for consecutive.

13. not enough practice with legal terms

14. IT IS HARD TO REMEMBER LONG PARAGRAPHS WHEN YOU KNOW YOU HAVE TO PASS THE EXAM
17. Retention, dates and accuracy

18. Yes, of course, if I want to take it again then I will be better prepare.

19. I couldn't perform that quickly.

6. If you took the exam and remember which part you found to be the easiest, would you please talk about why?

1. I love simultaneous translation, that is not difficult for me, unless the speaker talks very fast or is soft spoken.

2. Easier for me to follow the speaker and repeat at short intervals. (less to remember)

3. I have been doing simultaneous interpreting for many, many years, so I find it very easy.

4. Sight Translation is at your own pace.

5. SIMULTANEOUS- ITS THE METHODE MOST COMMONLY USED. (LOTS OF PRACTICE)

6. I really don't know why. I probably felt I managed the time to rendered my translation. I'm not sure.

7. I don't find sight translation particularly difficult, apart from the occasional vocabulary word.

The sight translation part was the easiest, because it gave me time to think. Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting give you no time to think. The words have to be there immediately, or you lose the flow of thought.

8. I have been sight translating for a long time.

9. I'm a pretty good listener, am able to concentrate for a prolonged period of time and have a good short term memory.

It was easiest because I have the most practice at that mode. Also, because you get a whole unit of meaning (or more, hehe!) before putting it into the other language. That's much easier for me than having to dual-task, because I feel I can get the thought organized first, then present it in the other language, focusing less on form or similarity of words.

10. I have a strength is simultaneous translation.

11. I felt I had sufficient time to peruse the document being translated before beginning the sight translation.

12. The preparation time helped me feel comfortable and confident, but with not enough time to start second-guessing myself.

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
14. I have worked as a medical interpreter for years, so I am comfortable with consecutive interpreting. I would not say this part of the exam was “easy” because there were some difficult slang terms that were used.

15. I love simultaneous interpreting. I find it easy to do, possibly because it is the mode of interpreting that I have the most experience with and is used the most frequently in court.

16. Simultaneous. I have been doing it for 40 years.

17. Lots of previous practice

18. I HAVE EXPERIENCE

19. Sight translation comes naturally to me, I find myself many times doing this even when I’m reading leisurely!

20. To encourage others to take the exam to obtain a certification.

21. I do better visually

10. If you are willing to self-report your scores, please enter them here:

**Simultaneous:**

1. 72.0%

2. would have to look them up

3. 70.7%

4. Sorry, I would have to look for the papers.

5. Please contact me for them. I do not have them with me at present.

6. 145/215 (67%)

7. 86%

8. 60% (low)
Consecutive:

1. 65.6%
2. prefer to finish survey and get it back to you
3. 73.3%
4. Right now I am working on taxes.
5. Please contact me for them. I do not have them with me at present.
6. 67/90 (74%)
7. Don't recall
8. 60% (mid)

Sight translation:

1. 70%
2. in one night.
3. 82%
4. I do not remember right now.
5. Please contact me for them. I do not have them with me at present.
6. 29/50 (58%)
7. Don't recall
8. 80% (low)

12. If you are on the roster as a "trainee" or "provisional" interpreter, what obstacles have you faced in progressing? Please check all that apply.
1. I have not been called to interpret in the Wisconsin courts.

2. Getting enough practice in the real world before attempting to take the oral exam.

3. I HAVE NOT MADE THE TIME TO STUDY AND PASS

4. I have never been called. I might be because I live in Iowa.

5. have not had time to prepare yet

6. I am not interested in interpreting in the court any longer.

7. The demand in my area has not been strong enough to proceed.

8. I passed all tests. I have the background test to take. Do not expect problems.

9. I have been working in other areas and have not had the time until recently to study - I'm hoping to take the exam yet this year.

10. I have never been called and have other work.

   I have bought several of the Acebo interpreting books and the NAJIT practice test, but I seem to be unfocused in designing a regimen to prepare for the test. (I did not prepare very much when I took the exam my first time).

11. I am not certified yet, but others uncertified do.

13. The court only one people is certified not a trainee or Provisional

14. In addition, finding time to work on improving my skills has been a challenge, although I would like to work toward certification despite not working regularly in the courts.

15. don't do it enough to bother going further - work fulltime at my regular job

   I have heard so many horror stories about the passing rate for the oral exam that I feel I have to study everything and anything and it's very hard to do with family and work obligations (I do work in the field though). Since the exam is expensive, I don't want to take it unless I feel I am sufficiently prepared. I have used the prep material but I wish there were more guidelines so I can at least limit my studies a bit more. I have to explain that I am a very conscientious student so I feel overwhelmed by what I should be prepared for.

16. Time to get certified; time to train; time to take exams

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
18. currently working full time in the medical interpreting field

19. Location and dates of training.

20. FAILED CONSECUTIVE

21. I am motivated and get great positive feedback from commissioners, judges and attorneys, but find myself stranded when being examined (??)

13. In conclusion, is there anything else that you would like to say about sight translation and your work as a Wisconsin court interpreter, especially as regards training, testing, and use of ST on the job?

1. I think we do need more training in sight translation.

2. Since I have not done work in the Wisconsin courts, I cannot give my opinion, however, I have done sight translation in other areas.

3. No

4. no

5. I think the interpreters should be fluent on the language and have some knowledge of the slang and a good pronunciation (talking about the 2nd language)

   This is a very difficult field. I have decided to pursue other career avenues for the most part, although I have not discarded the goal of being an interpreter entirely. I have decided recently to pursue acting since I feel that is where I have the most potential and talent.

6. More training should be offered to those interested in becoming certified.

7. NOT ALL PERSONS PASSING THE EXAM ARE REALLY CAPABLE OF INTERPRETING. THE TEST REALLY DOESNT TEST ABILITY IN COURT TRANSLATION. LEGAL TERMINOLOGY IS A LANGUAGE IN ITS OWN.

   I think continuing education is very important for certified interpreters. I have not had opportunities to learn and continue to improve since passing the exams. I have tried to form alliances with colleagues to get feedback and learn, but the system doesn't give us opportunity for improvement. Just because I passed the exam doesn't mean I don't have need for improvement.
10. very good experience

11. x

I might be willing to give my consent to question 11 if I could have a copy for myself. I would also be interested in a copy of my answers on this survey. Besides that, I would be very interested in the results of your survey, although I’m sure you can’t share the specifics.

12. I do not expect to do much of this type of translation in the WI court system.

13. No.

14. The test should reflect the people in the court. We rarely see people from South America here.

15. Training isn’t long enough and there aren’t schools to teach accordingly, say during six months and be able to attend full-time to obtain a certificate or training for the certification process. Also, as I just mentioned above, I am not certified yet but others that aren’t certified are still working because they have the job/connections, I thought it was mandatory to be certified in Wisconsin.

16. NO.

17. After I took the certification exam, I did feel that ST was the hardest section of the test. I was disappointed that I did not spend more time preparing for ST; I honestly thought simultaneous was going to be the hardest. There seems to be a push for interpreters to get certified, yet I feel that there is not enough opportunity for us to train in Wisconsin. I would benefit from more training programs designed to help us refine our skills in preparation for passing the certification exam.

18. In preparation for all parts of the oral exam, I would like to have a better idea of the range of documents and subject matters for the oral test. I have asked some certified interpreters for guidance and they have been very vague. Some examples:

I. Is it generally Wisconsin based legal documents only or do I have to know the difference between the uses/definitions of legal terms in each state and the different Spanish speaking countries’ legal systems? Since there are sometimes different uses for the same term, the translation/interpretation would depend on the state/country. Also, will I have to translate Spanish language legal documents and do I have to know the difference in legal terms for each Spanish speaking legal system?

2. How specialized will the medical or other expert witness type terminology be? How much do I have to know about drug testing, explosives testing, microscopy, hair analysis, arson, accident reconstruction, DNA, forensic pathology, forensic anthropology, document analysis, fingerprints (I have a pre-med and forensics background and I do medical interpreting but I have no idea how much more I need to study)

3. How extensively do I have to know the parts of cars, guns, tools, drug paraphernalia, drug slang (and which countries’ slang do I have to know, all of them?)

I understand that we cannot be given a traditional "study guide", but I would like to have a better idea of what to focus on or what not to worry as much about because I don’t feel that we have been given enough information. Even medical or law students get more to work with. Since most of us also have family and work obligations while we are getting certified, it would be helpful to be able to make efficient use of the limited time we have.
20. The more exposure we receive, the better. I would like to see a week training on all aspects of translation. Even though this is a long time to take off, it would be worth it.

21. The main challenge for years was the rendering onto Spanish of the Plea Questionnaire and the Waiver of Attorney. However these forms are now available in most courts in English/Spanish therefore that sight translation exercise has effectively disappeared.

22. I remember it was stressful.

23. I DID NOT REALIZE THAT I HAVE BEEN DOING SIGHT TRANSLATION MOST OF THE TIME. GOOD MATERIALS FOR TRAINING ARE HARD TO FIND.
BUENA SUERTE MELISSA

24. I wished there was a more accurate correlation between my actual job performance (good) and my test performance (not so good), I feel that purposefully the exam is extremely rich in dates and situational complexities that make the exam unnecessarily difficult (does not reflect what happens in the courts I provide service to)

25. I'm happy to be a part of your research and would like to hear about the results. Congratulations on the work you're doing!

26. I work in Lake County, IL. In the last year, I can say that I used sight translation I would say maybe ten cases.

27. Not sure why you are doing this survey on sight translation when, in my case, it makes up less than 1% of my interpreting work.
APPENDIX F: WISCONSIN DIRECTOR OF STATE COURT INTERPRETER TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAM 2012 SCHEDULE (INCLUDING SAMPLE AGENDA) 92

STEP ONE: TWO-DAY ORIENTATION

Attendance at orientation is a mandatory first step towards obtaining certification. The two-day training is a 16-hour introductory workshop covering the fundamentals of court interpretation. It is designed to give participants an overview of the needs and expectations of the court, with emphasis on ethical conduct, legal terminology, court procedure, and basic legal interpreting skills. The training also includes small group practice exercises to develop interpreter skills. Faculty consists of judges, court commissioners, attorneys, and certified or qualified court interpreters. The registration fee for attending the two-day training is $160 per person. This amount includes training materials and lunch for both days. Participants are responsible for their own lodging and transportation. Interested individuals should send an application form with the fee to the address below. Attendees must be at least 18 years old to apply. The registration fee must be received prior to the training in order to hold a slot. No walk-ins will be allowed. Complete fee refunds may be allowed if the request is received by our office at least ten days prior to the training date. All other requests for refunds will be considered individually. A confirmation letter with logistical information will be sent in the mail approximately two weeks before orientation. Scholarships for speakers of certain refugee languages may be available. Individuals should contact our office to determine availability and eligibility. The mandatory first step towards becoming certified as a court interpreter is completion of a two-day orientation which is offered four times a year around the state. The curriculum gives participants an overview of the needs and expectations of the court, with emphasis on ethical conduct, legal terminology, court procedure, and basic legal interpreting skills. Participants must be at least 18 years old to attend.

The program is appropriate for all spoken and sign languages. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters who wish to participate must hold at least a Certificate of Interpretation (CI) and Certificate of Transliteration (CT) or National Interpreter Certification (NIC) from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and be licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS). This training is pre-approved for continuing education credits from RID.

The current cost for orientation is $160. Scholarships for speakers of certain refugee languages may be available in 2012. See a listing of all languages in which scholarships are available. Individuals should contact our office to confirm eligibility:

Office of Court Operations
110 East Main Street Suite 410
Madison, WI 53705
Phone: (608) 266-8635

2012 orientation dates

- March 9-10 (Friday and Saturday) Appleton (Deadline: February 24)
- May 19-20 (Saturday and Sunday) - Milwaukee (Deadline: May 4)
- August 25-26 (Saturday and Sunday) - Wausau (Deadline: August 10)
- October 20-21 (Saturday and Sunday) - Madison (Deadline: October 5)

92 The information contained in Appendix C has been compiled and abbreviated from that which is available at http://www.wicourts.gov/services/interpreter/certification.htm.
STEP 2: WRITTEN EXAMINATION

The written examination is the second step towards achieving certification and is generally offered four weeks after orientation. Interpreter candidates must have completed the two-day orientation to be eligible to take the written examination. The written examination serves as a screening test to determine eligibility to sit for the oral examination.

The test is in English and consists of two components: 1) multiple-choice test and 2) written language assessment. The multiple-choice part is comprised of 135 questions covering general English proficiency, court-related terms and usage, and ethics/professional conduct. Doing well on the written examination does not indicate a person is a certified interpreter. A candidate must pass either the multiple choice test OR the written language assessment in order to be eligible to take the oral examination which is considered in Step 3 in the certification process. A candidate may sign up for either the multiple choice test or the written language assessment or both.

STEP THREE: ORAL CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

The Wisconsin Director of State Courts offers the oral certification examination three times per year. An interpreter candidate must have passed either the multiple choice test OR the written language assessment to be eligible to sit for the oral examination.

Advanced and experienced court interpreters who have completed training and written testing requirements are encouraged to complete the certification process by passing the oral certification examination. To pass the oral exam, interpreters must possess a mastery of English language and the target language at the level of a highly educated native speaker, and have a thorough understanding of legal concepts in both languages. In addition, interpreters must be extremely proficient in specialized cognitive skills required to interpret in sight, consecutive, and simultaneous modes, and be able to convey messages accurately, completely and promptly.

A full oral test is offered in the following languages: Cantonese, French, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

An abbreviated oral examination is available in the following languages: Arabic (Modern Standard) – Sight and Simultaneous only; Arabic (Egyptian Colloquial) – Consecutive only; Chuukese; German – German-English Sight and Simultaneous only; Marshallese; and Turkish.

If you are a speaker of a language where no oral examination exists, we now offer an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). You may contact our office to schedule an OPI.

The current cost of the oral exam is $225 for in-state residents and $400 for out-of-state residents who have not begun the certification process in Wisconsin.

Overview of the Oral Performance Examination for Prospective Court Interpreters – Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification

Self-assessment: Are you ready to take the oral examination? (external link)

Oral examination description

Sight translation: For this part of the exam, the candidate is asked to read a document written in English, while interpreting it aloud into the target language, and to read a document written in the target language, while
interpreting it aloud in English. Each document is approximately 225 words in length. The candidate is given 6 minutes per document to review the content and perform the sight translation while being recorded.

Consecutive: During this segment of the exam, the candidate listens to a recording of an English-speaking attorney who is questioning a non-English speaking witness. The candidate must interpret aloud the English questions into the target language and the witness’ answers into English while being recorded. The questions and answers are of various lengths ranging from one word to a maximum of 50 words. The candidate is given 22 minutes to complete this portion of the test.

Simultaneous: With this part of the exam, the candidate listens to a recording in English of an attorney’s opening or closing statements to a jury or judge. This passage is recorded at a speed of 120 words per minute and is approximately 900 words in length. The speech continues for about 7 to 10 minutes without stopping. While listening through headphones, the candidate simultaneously interprets aloud all statements into the target language while being recorded. This segment takes about 12 minutes total including instructions and equipment preparation.

2012 oral testing schedule

Tuesday, February 28 and Wednesday, February 29: Deadline to register: Monday, February 6
Tuesday, June 26 and Wednesday, June 27: Deadline to Register: Monday, June 5
Tuesday, December 4 and Wednesday, December 5: Deadline to Register: Monday, November 12

The test location for the oral examination is at our offices at 110 East Main Street in Madison. You may pre-register for a one-hour test slot either by e-mail or telephone. Slots are held on a first-come-first-serve basis. Full payment of the testing fee must be received approximately three weeks prior to the test date in order to hold your slot. No walk-ins are allowed.

CHARACTER AND FITNESS & OTHER REQUIREMENTS

The other requirements for obtaining certification include filling out an oath of office form, keeping updated contact information on file with the Court Interpreter Program (CIP) and completion of a character and fitness screening.

Character and fitness screening process

In order to protect the integrity of court proceedings and the safety of the public, interpreters are required to meet a character and fitness standard. A court interpreter should be one whose record of conduct justifies the trust of the courts, witnesses, jurors, attorneys, parties, and the public. A record manifesting significant deficiency in the honesty, trustworthiness, diligence or reliability of an applicant is material to performance as a court interpreter and may warrant a denial of participation within the certification program or removal from the roster of interpreters.

Criminal background check

The CIP will conduct a criminal background check on all new participants who complete orientation through the Wisconsin Department of Justice Crime Information Bureau (DOJ-CIB) and/or the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA) website. The CIP will conduct a criminal background check annually on all interpreters listed on the roster through WCCA.

If the CIP finds a criminal conviction that may be material to the candidate’s performance as a court interpreter, but the candidate does not intend to pursue certification, no action will be taken. If upon screening, the CIP manager finds a criminal conviction that may be material to the interpreter candidate’s performance as a court interpreter and the candidate intends to pursue certification, the matter will be
referred to the Character and Fitness Sub-Committee. Cause for referral to the Character and Fitness sub-committee may include arrests; conviction of a felony; crimes involving dishonesty, deceit or misrepresentation; crimes requiring registration as a sex offender; arrests or convictions of similar offenses in other jurisdictions; or other illegal behavior. In making a determination whether referral to the sub-committee is appropriate, the CIP manager may take into consideration other factors such as age of candidate when the conviction occurred, length of time from when the crime was committed, nature and seriousness of the offense, and disposition.

Character and Fitness Sub-Committee
The Character and Fitness Sub-Committee (the Sub-Committee) is a permanent sub-committee consisting of three (3) rotating members of the Committee. The composition of the Sub-Committee at all times will include at least one judge. The Sub-Committee's charge is to consider all relevant information presented and to make a recommendation to the Director as to whether the interpreter's character and fitness are sufficient to ensure the integrity and competence of interpreting services and the maintenance of high standards in the administration of justice.

Character and fitness review process
If the matter is referred to the Sub-Committee, the CIP manager will gather relevant information related to the conduct in question. Relevant information may include but is not limited to search results from the DOJ-CIB, records from WCCA, criminal complaint, information, conditions of bond or release, judgment of conviction, and law enforcement investigative reports. The CIP manager will send a cover letter along with a copy of all supporting relevant information to the individual. The individual will have twenty (20) days to submit a written response to the CIP. The individual may also request an in-person hearing with the Character and Fitness sub-committee in lieu of submitting a written response or in addition to submitting a written response. If an in-person hearing is requested, a date, time and location at which all sub-committee members can meet in person will be scheduled. The CIP will provide the interpreter with written notice of the hearing. The interpreter may be represented by counsel and may present evidence. The sub-committee may request or gather additional information at the conclusion of the hearing. All hearings will be recorded and shall be private and confidential.

Within thirty (30) days of submission of a written response or within thirty (30) days of the conclusion of the investigation, the sub-committee will issue a report and recommendation to the Director as to whether the interpreter candidate possesses the character and fitness necessary to perform the duties of a court interpreter. If the individual did not provide a written response to the sub-committee for consideration, members shall make a recommendation with the supporting information alone. Members may consider the individual's lack of response when making its recommendation.

Upon receipt and review of the sub-committee's report and recommendation, the Director will issue a final decision as to whether the interpreter will be allowed to remain on the roster or whether the individual will be allowed to continue with the certification process if he or she is not currently on the roster. A letter shall be sent to the interpreter informing him or her of the Director's decision along with the report and recommendation of the Sub-Committee and copies of any information the Sub-Committee may have considered in making its recommendation.

If an interpreter has been removed from the roster or not been allowed to continue with the certification process, the interpreter may apply for reconsideration after a two-year period from the date of denial has passed or other specified date as determined by the Director. The review process governing character and fitness evaluations, along with any supporting documents submitted on behalf of the interpreter are confidential and will be shared only with the interpreter and court officials involved. The outcome of the review is public.
### Wisconsin Court Interpreter Orientation Sample Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8:30</strong> Registration</td>
<td><strong>8:30</strong> Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Breakfast</td>
<td>Continental Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:00</strong> Welcome</td>
<td><strong>9:00</strong> Criminal Terminology &amp; Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:05</strong> Introduction to Court Interpreting</td>
<td><strong>10:15</strong> Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:15</strong> Overview of the Court System</td>
<td><strong>10:30</strong> Breakout Session: Small Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9:50</strong> Break</td>
<td><strong>12:00</strong> Lunch (provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10:00</strong> DVD “Working with Interpreters”</td>
<td><strong>12:45</strong> Breakout Session: Small Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consecutive Interpreting Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10:25</strong> Court Interpreter Ethics</td>
<td><strong>2:15</strong> Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Interpreter</td>
<td><strong>3:45</strong> Court Interpreter Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process, Tests, Business Practices &amp; Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12:00</strong> Lunch (provided)</td>
<td><strong>2:30</strong> Juvenile, Family, CHIPS &amp; other Civil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terminology and Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12:45</strong> Breakout Session: Small Groups</td>
<td><strong>3:45</strong> Court Interpreter Certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q &amp; A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2:15</strong> Break</td>
<td><strong>5:00</strong> Adjourn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2:30</strong> Modes of Interpreting</td>
<td><strong>5:00</strong> Adjourn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3:25</strong> Skills for Note-Taking</td>
<td><strong>5:00</strong> Adjourn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3:45</strong> Breakout Session: Small Groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight Translation Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5:00</strong> Adjourn for the day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
# APPENDIX G: DESCRIPTION OF CONSORTIUM SCORING UNIT CATEGORIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Unit Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Testing Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Grammar</td>
<td>&quot;Grammar is a system of principles that govern the way a language works. Grammar describes how words relate to each other, particularly how they function in sentences.&quot;</td>
<td>Ensure that candidates recognize and, within the limits of the source and target languages, satisfactorily handle the interpretation of grammar, especially verbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Language Interference</td>
<td>Terms or phrases that may invite misinterpretation due to interference of one language on another (e.g., false cognates, awkward phrasing, terms or phrases susceptible to literal renderings resulting in loss of precise meaning).</td>
<td>1. Measure the ability to keep languages separate, speaking them as an educated native speaker would, with no interference from the other language, and 2. Measure the ability to avoid being constricted unnecessarily by the source language resulting in interpretations that are literal or verbatim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C General Vocabulary</td>
<td>Vocabulary that is widely used in ordinary parlance and could be spoken by native speakers appearing in any courtroom.</td>
<td>1. Measure the ability to preserve lexical content of general source language terms when interpreted into the target language, 2. Measure the depth and range of candidate’s vocabulary, and 3. Measure the ability to tap into a deep reservoir of vocabulary without hesitating or stumbling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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93 The chart above was created by ALTA Language Services, Inc. in their report entitled “California’s Assessment of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Exams” (p. 52) from information found in the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Construction Manual, pages 8-9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Unit Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Testing Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D Legal Terms and Phrases</td>
<td>Any word or phrase of a legal or technical nature, or which is not common in everyday speech, but is commonly used in legal settings.</td>
<td>Measure the candidate’s range of knowledge and recognition of common legal terms and styles of language used in courtrooms and the ability to faithfully interpret them into the target language, going into both languages, but especially from English into the other language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Idioms and Sayings</td>
<td>An idiom is “a speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements.” Sayings are short expressions such as aphorisms and proverbs that are often repeated and familiar, setting forth wisdom and truth.</td>
<td>Determine the candidate's breadth of knowledge and understanding of a language's common idioms and sayings, and the ability to interpret the meaning or an equivalent idiom or saying in the target language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Register</td>
<td>Style of language drawn upon in various social settings; a key element in expressing degrees of formality, including curses, profanity, and taboo words. Register shows, through a pattern of vocabulary and grammar, what a speaker or writer is doing with language at a given moment.</td>
<td>Assess the candidate's ability to preserve the level of language so that others' impression of the speaker is not raised or lowered by the interpreter and assess the candidate's ability to interpret offensive terminology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Numbers and Names</td>
<td>Any number, measurement, or proper name.</td>
<td>Measure the candidate’s ability to be precise and accurate with all numbers, maintain weights and measures as stated in the source language without converting them to another system (e.g., from metric to English), preserve names of businesses, streets, etc. without interpreting them (except that “Avenue,” “Street,” etc. may or may not be interpreted, but the actual name is not to be interpreted), and conserve every letter of a spelled name in the order uttered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Unit Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Testing Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H Markers, Intensifiers, Emphasis and Precision</td>
<td>Any word or phrase giving emphasis or precision to a description (e.g., adverbs, adjectives) or statement (e.g., can be grammatical in form), including time (e.g., the day after tomorrow, last night, next week).</td>
<td>Ensure that the various ways of marking speech are preserved so the same degree of impact and precision is conveyed to the listener of the interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Embeddings and Position</td>
<td>Words or phrases that may be omitted due to position (at the beginning or middle of a long sentence, second in a string of adjectives or adverbs) or function (tag questions).</td>
<td>Ensure that candidates preserve all elements of the source language, especially those that they may deem to be “unimportant,” or forget due to their location or function in the utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Slang and Colloquialisms</td>
<td>Slang and colloquialisms are informal, nonstandard words or phrases that are used in informal, ordinary conversation but not in formal speech or writing and are identified in standard dictionaries as “slang,” “colloquialism,” or “informal” or are listed in published dictionaries of slang and/or colloquialisms or in scholarly articles and books so identifying them. Slang items, which are coined by social groups, may be used in test texts only when they have passed into widespread usage across the United States.</td>
<td>Measure the candidate’s range of knowledge of nonstandard, informal forms of speech and their ability to interpret the meaning of such words and phrases without being bound to preserve their low register.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
**APPENDIX H**: STANDARD DISTRIBUTION OF SCORING UNITS FOR CONSORTIUM ORAL EXAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORING UNIT CATEGORY</th>
<th>SIGHT E – FL</th>
<th>SIGHT FL – E</th>
<th>CON</th>
<th>SIM</th>
<th>UNIT TOTAL</th>
<th>TARGET %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Language Interference</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: General Vocabulary</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Legal Terms and Phrases</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: Idioms and Sayings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: Register</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: Numbers and Names</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H: Markers, Intensifiers, Emphases and Precision</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: Embeddings and Position</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J: Slang and Colloquialisms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some early versions of the Consortium’s exams included 75 scoring units in the consecutive section. Subsequent exams include 90 scoring units.

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96 The chart above was reproduced by ALTA Language Services, Inc. in their report entitled “California’s Assessment of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Exams” (p. 54) as found on page 12 of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts’ Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Test Construction Manual.
Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
**APPENDIX I: COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FEDERAL COURT INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION ORAL EXAMS AND THE CONSORTIUM’S ORAL EXAMS**

### SIGHT TRANSLATION – ENGLISH TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Segment</th>
<th>FCICE</th>
<th>Consortium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Allowed</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Passage</td>
<td>230 words</td>
<td>200 – 225 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Scoring Units / Elements</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total Test</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Passage</td>
<td>Police or investigative reports</td>
<td>Police or investigative reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SIGHT TRANSLATION – FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO ENGLISH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Segment</th>
<th>FCICE</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Passage</td>
<td>Correspondence, affidavits (formal language)</td>
<td>Correspondence, affidavits (formal language)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams
### SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION - MONOLOGUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Segment</th>
<th>FCICE</th>
<th>Consortium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Required</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Passage</td>
<td>840 words</td>
<td>800-850 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Speech</td>
<td>120 wpm</td>
<td>120 wpm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Scoring Units/Elements</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total Test</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Passage</td>
<td>Opening/Closing Argument</td>
<td>Opening/Closing Argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION – WITNESS TESTIMONY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Segment</th>
<th>FCICE</th>
<th>Consortium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Required</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Passage</td>
<td>600 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Speech</td>
<td>Varies – up to 160 words per minute, with pauses between Q&amp;A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Scoring Units/Elements</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total Test</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Passage</td>
<td>Witness Testimony (in English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Predictors of Successful Performance on U.S. Consortium Court Interpreter Certification Exams*
### CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Segment</th>
<th>FCICE</th>
<th>Consortium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Allowed</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>22 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Passage</td>
<td>850-900 words</td>
<td>850-950 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Utterances</td>
<td>1-50 words</td>
<td>1-50 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Scoring Units/Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td>40* (English to foreign language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 (English to foreign language)</td>
<td>50* (foreign language to English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46 (foreign language to English)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some early versions of the Consortium's exams included 75 scoring units in the consecutive section. Subsequent exams include 90 scoring units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Total Test</th>
<th>34.5%</th>
<th>41.9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description of Passage</td>
<td>Witness Testimony (direct or cross – Federal Court)</td>
<td>Witness Testimony (direct or cross – Federal Court)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PASS REQUIREMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Segment</th>
<th>FCICE</th>
<th>Consortium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral Cut-Score</td>
<td>220 scoring units comprised of: grammar and usage (false cognates, use of verbs, interference, etc.), general lexical range (general vocab., legal terms and phrases, idioms/sayings, and conservation (register, slang, numbers/names, modifiers, embeddings, etc.)</td>
<td>215 scoring units comprised of: grammar, false cognates, general vocab., technical vocab., idioms, numbers, names, dates, modifiers for emphasis, register and style, special position of words, and slang/colloquial language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Must obtain 80% of the items correct. A holistic evaluation is also completed to assess candidates’ overall strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td>Must score 70% on each section of the exam.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>