INTERPRETING AT THE UNITED NATIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION (LCE)

Doctoral Thesis

Sevilla, 2015
DOCTORAL THESIS

INTERPRETING AT THE UNITED NATIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION (LCE)

Marie Diur

Supervisor: Dr. Lucía Ruiz Rosendo

Seville, 2015
The views expressed here in are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It all started in Paris. While doing pedagogical assistance, I met Clementina. When I told her that I was looking for a supervisor, she introduced me to Lucia. This was the beginning of a long and fantastic journey. Thank you, Clementina,

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to all the United Nations interpreters; this would not have been possible without you. Thank you for trusting me. I am highly indebted to you all.

Thank you to all of the interpreters who piloted my two questionnaires. Thank you Nick, Brian, Sun, Alma, Elena, Pierre, Monica, Sheila, Monica and Kate.

Special thanks to Anne Lafeber, Rebecca Edginton, Sophie Louyot, Leslie Gillen and Adela Burelli. Thank you Anne for answering all my queries and for helping me all the way. Rebecca, thank you for helping me out with the statistics. Thank you Sophie for giving me the necessary data about the Language Competitive Examinations and for sending me all the required material. Thank you Leslie for answering all my messages about the Language Competitive Examinations and for giving me all the information I asked for. Thank you Adela for your precious help. Thanks to all of you. I would have been unable to complete my dissertation without your invaluable help.

How many emails did I send to all of you? All emails were answered immediately. Alma, Sheila, Isabelle, Adela, Brian, Gillian, Ludovic….. I cannot thank you enough. Thanks for believing in me.

Thank you, Jesús, for your help and for offering me your books, which were instrumental for my dissertation.

And yes, for many years, you have seen me working on my computer all day long. Lea, thank you for your patience. I know you will have a bright future. You are a very talented young lady.

I have not named everybody but each and every one of you has played a great role in this long and fantastic journey. Thank you all.
Last but not least, thank you Lucia, you have been the best supervisor ever. Thank you for your kindness, understanding and patience. It has been a real pleasure working with you. I feel so lucky. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.
# INDEX OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................................................................. 27

**BACKGROUND** .................................................................................................................................................. 27

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY** ............................................................................................................................... 28

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES** ....................................................................................................................................... 29

**STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS** ........................................................................................................................... 30

**PART ONE LITERATURE REVIEW** ....................................................................................................................... 33

**INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................................................................. 35

**CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO CONFERENCE INTERPRETING** ................................................................. 37

1.1. **DEFINITION OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING** ............................................................................... 37

1.2. **CONFERENCE INTERPRETING MODALITIES** ................................................................................ 39

   1.2.1. Consecutive Interpreting (CI) ........................................................................................................ 39

   1.2.2. Simultaneous Interpreting (SI) ...................................................................................................... 40

   1.2.3. Transition from CI to SI: the sequencing ...................................................................................... 41

   1.2.4. Skills and competencies inherent in conference interpreting ...................................................... 43

1.3. **BRIEF HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY CONFERENCE INTERPRETING** .................................. 45

1.4. **CONCLUSION** ............................................................................................................................................. 49

**CHAPTER 2. ASSESSING CONFERENCE INTERPRETING: QUALITY CRITERIA** ......................................... 51

2.1. **QUALITY CRITERIA IN ENTRANCE EXAMS** ................................................................................ 51

2.2. **QUALITY CRITERIA IN INTERPRETING** .......................................................................................... 54

2.3. **CONCLUSION** ............................................................................................................................................. 59

**CHAPTER 3. INTERPRETING AT THE UNITED NATIONS: THE LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION** .............................................................................................................................. 61

3.1. **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** ............................................................................................................... 61

3.2. **THE LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION (LCE)** .......................................................... 68
5.3. Theoretical approach to empirical research on conference interpreting...... 124

5.4. General background of the empirical study.................................................. 125

Chapter 6. First survey on interpreting at the UN ........................................... 127

6.1. General objectives of the survey.................................................................... 127

6.2. Methodology .................................................................................................. 129

6.2.1. Definition of the study population............................................................... 129

6.2.2. Questionnaire design................................................................................... 130

6.2.2.1. Structure of the questionnaire ................................................................ 131

6.2.2.1.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information ............................... 131

6.2.2.1.2. Section 2: Training ............................................................................ 131

6.2.2.1.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN...................................... 132

6.2.2.1.4. Section 4: The LCE ........................................................................... 133

6.2.2.1.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools ....................................................... 134

6.2.2.1.6. Section 6: Interpreters with no official training ................................. 134

6.2.2.1.7. Section 7: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters.
Preparation of students coming from MoU schools ........................................... 135

6.2.3. Pilot study .................................................................................................. 135

6.2.3.1. Comments received during the pilot phase ........................................ 137

6.2.4. Distribution of the questionnaire ................................................................ 138

6.3. Results.......................................................................................................... 139

6.3.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information ....................................... 140

6.3.2. Section 2: Training background of UN interpreters .................................. 143

6.3.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN............................................. 153

6.3.4. Section 4: The LCE.................................................................................... 157

6.3.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools ............................................................... 167

6.3.6. Section 6: Interpreters with no official training ......................................... 171

6.3.7. Section 7: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters ................ 171

6.4. Discussion ..................................................................................................... 173
6.4.1. Section 1: Professional and personal information ............................................. 173
6.4.2. Section 2: Training background of UN interpreters ........................................ 173
6.4.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN ................................................. 175
6.4.4. Section 4: LCE ................................................................................................. 175
6.4.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools ...................................................................... 179
6.4.6. Section 6: Self-trained interpreters .................................................................. 181
6.4.7. Section 7: Teaching/coaching/mentoring ......................................................... 181

CHAPTER 7. SECOND SURVEY ON QUALITY CRITERIA AT THE LCE .................. 183

7.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ......................................................... 183

7.2. METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................ 185

7.2.1. Definition of the study population .................................................................... 185
7.2.2. Questionnaire design ...................................................................................... 186
    7.2.2.1. Structure of the questionnaire .................................................................... 187
        7.2.2.1.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information ................................ 187
        7.2.2.1.2. Section 2: Training ............................................................................. 187
        7.2.2.1.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN ....................................... 188
        7.2.2.1.4. Section 4: The LCE ............................................................................. 188
        7.2.2.1.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools .......................................................... 189
        7.2.2.1.6. Section 6: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters ........ 189
    7.2.3. Pilot phase ...................................................................................................... 190
        7.2.3.1. Comments received during the pilot phase ............................................. 191
    7.2.4. Distribution of the questionnaire .................................................................... 192

7.3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ............................................................................ 192

7.3.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information ............................................ 193
7.3.2. Section 2: Training background of senior interpreters .................................... 196
7.3.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN .................................................... 198
7.3.4. Section 4: the LCE .......................................................................................... 200
7.3.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools ..................................................................... 211
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.3.6. Section 6. Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4. Discussion</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.2. Section 2: Training background of senior interpreters</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.4. Section 4: The LCE</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4.6. Section 6: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8. Conclusions</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for MoU schools</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for the UN</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for senior interpreters</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9. Bibliography</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendixes</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1. Memorandum of Understanding</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2. Letter Sent to MoU Schools</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3. Form Sent to MoU Schools</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4. Letter Sent for the Pilot Phase</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5. Introduction to the First Questionnaire</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6. Reminder for the First Questionnaire</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7. First Questionnaire: Survey on MoU Schools Training and the LCE</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8. Introduction to the Second Questionnaire</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9. Second Questionnaire: Survey for New York Senior Interpreters</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Summary of tests used (Donovan, 2003) ................................................................. 52
Table 2. Summary of the ratings (in percentages) ................................................................. 55
Table 3. “Return on investment”: participation of UN staff to the programme ........ 82
Table 4. LCE results for the French booth from 2000 to 2014 ................................................. 84
Table 5. LCE results for the English booth from 2000 to 2013 ............................................. 84
Table 6. LCE results for the Spanish booth from 2000 to 2013 ............................................ 85
Table 7. LCE results for the Arabic booth from 2001 to 2012 ............................................. 85
Table 8. LCE results for the Chinese booth from 2005 to 2008 ............................................. 85
Table 9. LCE results for the Russian booth from 2005 to 2012 ............................................ 85
Table 10. Projected staff turnover (existing vacancies plus projected retirements) in interpretation, all duty stations, 2009-2016 ................................................................. 119
Table 11. Comparison of approaches to survey data collection (abridged and adapted from Czaja and Blair, 2005, in Robson, 2011: 245) ................................................. 122
Table 12. Typologies of interpreters chosen for the pilot phase ........................................ 136
Table 13. Breakdown of responses received ......................................................................... 139
Table 14. Percentages of answers received per booth ......................................................... 141
Table 15. Type of training received by UN interpreters ....................................................... 145
Table 16. Percentages for CI work at the UN .................................................................... 153
Table 17. Interpreting modalities at headquarters ............................................................... 155
Table 18. Interpreting modalities on mission .................................................................... 156
Table 19. Opinion of interpreters on the LCE success rate ............................................. 166
Table 20. Adequacy of training for working at the UN .................................................... 167
Table 21. Adequacy of interpreting modalities offered at MoU schools ......................... 169
Table 22. Differences between students from MoU and non-MoU schools ................. 173
Table 23. Typologies of interpreters chosen for the pilot phase........................................ 190
Table 24. Breakdown of answers received ........................................................................ 193
Table 25. Percentages of answers received per booth ...................................................... 194
Table 26. Type of training received by UN interpreters ..................................................... 197
Table 27. Interpreting modalities at headquarters ............................................................... 198
Table 28. Interpreting modalities on missions ................................................................. 199
Table 29. Opinion of interpreters on the LCE success rate ............................................ 204
Table 30. Opinion of respondents on the revamping of the LCE ................................. 205
Table 31. New format proposed for the LCE ................................................................. 206
Table 32. Criteria for marking the LCE ............................................................................. 207
Table 33. Marking policy of respondents ........................................................................ 209
Table 34. Importance of experience for respondents ..................................................... 210
Table 35. Adequacy of training for passing the LCE ..................................................... 211
Table 36. Adequacy of training for working at the UN .................................................. 212
Table 37. Outreach programme versus UN needs .......................................................... 213
Table 38. Differences between MoU and non-MoU students ........................................ 216
Table 39. Opinion of respondents on the Outreach Programme .................................... 217
INDEX OF GRAPHS

Graph 1. Number of men and women participating in the survey ....................... 140
Graph 2. Number of participants per booth.................................................... 141
Graph 3. Number of years at the UN .............................................................. 142
Graph 4. Years of service of respondents ....................................................... 142
Graph 5. Entry on duty of respondents ............................................................ 143
Graph 6. Number of interpreters that received formal training ....................... 143
Graph 7. Training received by UN interpreters .............................................. 144
Graph 8. Interpreting modalities in which UN staff interpreters had received training ........................................................................................................ 145
Graph 9. Transition from CI without notes to CI with notes ............................. 146
Graph 10. Training in note-taking for CI......................................................... 146
Graph 11. Months elapsing between CI and SI training .................................. 147
Graph 12. Explanation for SI not starting concurrently with CI ....................... 147
Graph 13. Explanation for SI starting after CI .................................................. 148
Graph 14. Months of SI training received during training ............................... 149
Graph 15. Usefulness of learning CI before SI ............................................... 149
Graph 16. Percentage of respondents for and against .................................... 152
Graph 17. Number of times that staff interpreters work in CI ....................... 153
Graph 18. Number of times interpreters work in CI in field mission .............. 154
Graph 19. Usefulness of training to pass the LCE .......................................... 157
Graph 20. Number of interpreters trained at a MoU school ............................ 158
Graph 21. Perception of self-trained interpreters ........................................... 158
Graph 22. Opinion of interpreters on the inclusion of CI in the LCE ............... 165
Graph 23. Opinion of interpreters on the LCE success rate .......................... 166
Graph 24. Relevance of training for working at the UN................................. 168
Graph 25. Opinion of interpreters of the relevance of CI and SI for working at the UN ........................................................................................................... 169
Graph 26. Number of staff teaching at a school ........................................... 171
Graph 27. Number of staff coaching interpreters at the UN ......................... 172
Graph 28. Number of men and women that have answered the surveys ........ 193
Graph 29. Number of interpreters that gave completed answers per booths..... 194
Graph 30. Years of service at the UN .............................................................. 194
Graph 31. Years as professional interpreters of respondents ....................... 195
Graph 32. Entry on duty of respondents ......................................................... 195
Graph 33. Years as senior interpreters of respondents .................................. 196
Graph 34. Number of interpreters that received formal training ................. 196
Graph 35. Type of training received by senior interpreters ........................... 197
Graph 36. Percentage of senior interpreters trained at MoU schools ............ 200
Graph 37. Usefulness of training for passing the LCE ................................. 201
Graph 38. Number of participations as jury members ................................. 202
Graph 39. Preparation of candidates for passing the LCE ............................ 202
Graph 40. Marking rigour of senior interpreters ........................................... 203
Graph 41. Pass rate according to senior interpreters ..................................... 203
Graph 42. Reasons for the success rate ........................................................ 204
Graph 43. Percentage of senior interpreters and format of the LCE .............. 206
Graph 44. Knowledge of the Outreach Programme among senior interpreters .. 211
Graph 45. Number of senior interpreters teaching at schools ..................... 215
Graph 46. Number of senior interpreters mentoring/coaching young interpreters at the UN ........................................................................................................... 215
Graph 47. Senior interpreters’ perceptions of the impact of teaching/mentoring/coaching for candidates to pass the LCE..........................217

Graph 48. Opinion of senior interpreters regarding the success of the programme..................................................................................218
INDEX OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Framework for research design (2011: 71)......................................................... 120
# List of Acronyms Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIIC</td>
<td>Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASU</td>
<td>Ain Shams University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>American University in Cairo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFSU</td>
<td>Beijing Foreign Studies University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>Consecutive Interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIUTI</td>
<td>Conférence Internationale permanente d’Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTI</td>
<td>Centre for Translation and Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGACM</td>
<td>Department for General Assembly and Conference Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.APG</td>
<td>Electronic Interpreters Assignment Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European Credits Transfer System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EII</td>
<td>Ecole d’Interprètes Internationaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMCI</td>
<td>European Masters in Conference Interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESIT</td>
<td>Ecole Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETI</td>
<td>Ecole de Traduction et d’Interprétation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agricultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FELC</td>
<td>Faculty of English Language and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTI</td>
<td>Faculté de Traduction et d’Interprétation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Generated Abstract Memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDUFS</td>
<td>Guangdong University of Foreign Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSTIL</td>
<td>Graduate School of Translation, Interpretation, and Language Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>Hautes Études Commerciales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAEA</td>
<td>International Atomic Energy Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>International Business Machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIT</td>
<td>Institut Supérieur d’Interprétation et de Traduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTI</td>
<td>Institut Supérieur de Traducteurs et Interprètes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCE</td>
<td>Language Competitive Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMSU</td>
<td>Lomonosov Moscow State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGIMO</td>
<td>Moscow State Institute of International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSLU</td>
<td>Minsk State Linguistic University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDSI</td>
<td>Professional Diploma in Simultaneous Interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIC</td>
<td>Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Simultaneous Interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SISU</td>
<td>Shanghai International Studies University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNGA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHQ</td>
<td>United Nations Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOG</td>
<td>United Nations Office at Geneva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOV</td>
<td>United Nations Office at Vienna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USJ</td>
<td>Université Saint-Joseph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Background

The first event that prompted me to consider carrying out a research study was my participation in 2013 as a jury member in the Language Competitive Examination (LCE) for French Language Interpreters. For that exam in particular, and although LCEs are normally managed by senior interpreters in New York, I was also part of the team entrusted with selecting materials for the LCE\(^1\). There were 109 eligible candidates and three weeks were needed to complete the marking process, which took place at the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York. All New York senior interpreters and myself listened and marked every recording. Only 9 candidates (8.25\%) were successful and passed the exam. That was when I began to reflect on the situation and to wonder what the reasons for such a high failure rate might be. As an active participant in the Outreach Programme (see § 3.3) that was launched by United Nations (UN) to address the shortage of qualified interpreters and as a firm believer in the importance of helping and mentoring the next generation of interpreters, I was puzzled by those results and this triggered my incipient interest in commencing a line of research after realizing that most of the applicants selected for this particular LCE had attended an interpretation training programme and yet did not have the capacity nor the level required to pass the LCE and, thus, enter employment at the UN. It is worth mentioning that the LCE is not merely an exam. It is a chain with a series of connected links: the UN, the Outreach Program, the candidates and the UN interpreting community. The connections between all the links seen through the lenses of the LCE constitute the cornerstone of my research.

\(^1\) It was the first time in the history of the LCE that a senior interpreter from another duty station could select some speeches (see § 3.2).
Objective of the study

After the marking of the 2013 French LCE, I came to the conclusion that, in order to pass the LCE, candidates needed to master specific aspects that prior training in interpreting might not sufficiently cover, such as a good command of the simultaneous interpreting (SI) technique, strategies for coping with speed, and an in-depth knowledge of the structure and content of UN speeches in general and LCE speeches in particular. In addition, candidates needed to be aware of the criteria that examiners were going to consider when assessing their renditions. So I posed the following general research question for my study: *why a relatively high number of candidates who have been previously selected and who have received specific training in interpreting face difficulties when confronted with the LCE?*

As a matter of fact, this issue has been previously dealt with. In 2007, the UN launched an Outreach Programme and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Conference Interpretation Teaching institutions (see § 3.3) to address the shortage of qualified interpreters. Two years later, in 2009, an expert panel on the revamping of the language examination format and methods was convened, and in 2010 Stephen Sekel, a member of the aforementioned panel, published an internal report on the LCE entitled: *Revamping of the language examination format and methods*. My own line of research, which can be considered as an extension, in the light of Sekel’s report (2010), of studies conducted thus far, seeks to propose potential avenues for future action. The general objective of my study is to analyse the specificities related to interpreting at the UN and the LCE, and to examine the training received at schools that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations (MoU schools) with the ultimate goal of providing a series of recommendations and guidelines targeted at MoU schools (and that could be extended to all training institutions). Those recommendations could be used to foster better cooperation between all stakeholders and could benefit the whole process. For that purpose, and in order to gain a better understanding of the training received by interpreters at MoU schools and the usefulness of that training for passing the LCE, I carried out an empirical study that included two questionnaires targeted at staff interpreters, on the one hand, and senior interpreters who had served as LCE jury members, on the other hand. The first questionnaire, targeting
the entire UN interpreters’ community, helped me analyse the perspective of UN interpreters. Their perception of the training they had received or their self-training to pass the LCE helped me gain a better understanding of the impact of training on LCE results. With the second questionnaire, targeted at senior interpreters, I was able to gain a better understanding of their views on the competencies required to pass the LCE and what could be done to improve the statistics.

**Specific objectives**

In order to obtain a clear idea of the general background to this issue and be in a better position to answer the general research question and achieve the overall objective I had set, I posed more specific research questions (RQs):

- **RQ1**: What is the LCE and how is it organised?
- **RQ2**: What competencies and skills are required to pass the LCE?
- **RQ3**: What are the main challenges of the LCE?
- **RQ4**: What are the working conditions at the UN?
- **RQ5**: What are the main interpreting modalities used at the UN?
- **RQ6**: How has contemporary history influenced these working conditions and modalities used?
- **RQ7**: Was the training received by UN interpreters adequate for them to pass the LCE?
- **RQ8**: What is UN interpreters’ position on the training they received?
- **RQ9**: Which marking criteria are being used at the LCE?

Given that the UN has signed MoUs and launched an Outreach Program (see § 3.3), questions in connection with the LCE must be understood within that context. This, in turn, led me to ask another set of specific questions:

- **RQ10**: What is the UN Outreach Program?
- **RQ11**: What is a MoU school?
- **RQ12**: How are MoU schools’ curricula organised?
- RQ13: Do MoU schools cover the competencies and skills that will be tested at the LCE?

In light of these research questions, I set the following specific objectives, which I tried to meet through my research:

- Objective 1: Analyse the LCE and how it is organized.
- Objective 2: Analyse the competencies and skills that are required to pass the LCE.
- Objective 3: Analyse the main challenges of the LCE.
- Objective 4: Outline the working conditions at the UN.
- Objective 5: Examine the main interpreting modalities used at the UN.
- Objective 6: Present a historical background to illustrate the evolution of working conditions and modalities at the UN.
- Objective 7: Find out if the training received by UN interpreters was adequate for them to pass the LCE.
- Objective 8: Analyse the opinions of UN interpreters on the training they received.
- Objective 9: Analyse the marking criteria used for entrance examinations in general and for the LCE in particular.
- Objective 10: Describe the Outreach Programme.
- Objective 11: Define the MoU.
- Objective 12: Analyse the curricula of MoU schools.
- Objective 13: Examine if MoU schools cover the competencies and skills that will be tested at the LCE.

**Structure of the thesis**

In order to meet these objectives and answer the research questions, I divided the thesis into two separate but interrelated parts:

The first part consists of a literature review. It is divided in turn into four chapters, which follow a pyramidal approach. Since this study focuses on the UN, the first chapter describes the underlying and general concept of the modality used
at this international organization: conference interpreting (definition, historical background, modalities and quality criteria). This chapter also presents a brief history of contemporary conference interpreting and describes conference interpreting modalities (consecutive, simultaneous and the transition from one modality to another). Chapter two is an assessment of quality criteria. In chapter three I present a historical analysis of interpreting at the UN and the genesis of the LCE, the Outreach Programme and the MoU schools. As it is important to understand how interpreters are trained and the different kind of curricular approaches that have and are still being used, the fourth and last chapter of this part of my thesis is devoted to conference interpreter training, curricular approaches and a curricular analysis of MoU schools.

The second part of the thesis presents the results of an empirical study on interpreting at the UN and the LCE. This part is divided into two chapters. The first, chapter five, is dedicated to the theoretical approach to empirical research, in general, and in conference interpreting, in particular. This part is, in turn, divided into three sections: first, the theoretical framework, in which I explain approaches that have been followed by different authors in the empirical design; second, a description of the general objective of the empirical study; and third, a presentation of the general design and the methodology underlying the empirical study. In chapter six I describe the results of the first survey, the purpose of which was to delve deeper into the opinions and perspectives of UN interpreters on the specificities of the work at the UN and of the LCE.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the quality criteria used to mark the LCE, Chapter 7 presents the results of the second survey. Although the approach and methodology are very much the same, the objectives were different as this second survey focuses on the views of the interpreters in charge of marking the LCE, and thus of deciding who can enter employment at the UN.

The last part of the dissertation includes a conclusion, in which I summarize my findings, suggest other lines of research and present a set of recommendations for the UN, for MoU schools and for senior interpreters. The thesis ends with the bibliography and the appendixes that include the documents mentioned throughout the text.
My research must be seen as a modest contribution to a much wider exercise: how to bridge the gap between the high number of candidates per examination and the relatively low success rate. Although some internal documents have been published on the matter, to my knowledge, since Sekel’s paper (Sekel, 2010) no specific report on interpretation and the LCE has been presented. My dissertation must be viewed in this context, as a tool that could complete the work done thus far and help the whole process move forward.
PART ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW
In this first part of my thesis, after a brief analysis of the concept of conference interpreting, I will give some background information on contemporary conference interpreting and the way the different interpreting modalities have been used in recent decades. Quality criteria in general and in conference interpreting in particular are also addressed in this chapter.

This part includes four chapters: explaining how we have arrived at the situation in which interpreters in general and UN interpreters in particular work today is necessary to better understand why some interpreting modalities are more used than others. For this reason, the first chapter of this section starts with an introduction to conference interpreting and an explanation of this concept as described by several authors, a brief history of contemporary conference interpreting in which I explain how the profession was created and how the different interpreting modalities were introduced, and a description of the different conference interpreting modalities in greater detail. I focus in particular on simultaneous interpreting since this is the modality used at the LCE. The transition from one modality to another is also described. I consider that defining the modalities used in conference interpreting is a necessary step as it is important to understand the reasons underlying the transition from Consecutive Interpreting (CI) to Simultaneous Interpreting (SI). I also present a review of literature on how skills can be acquired in SI and on the competencies inherent in conference interpreting in general. Chapter 2 focuses on quality criteria in entrance exams and in interpreting in general in that assessing quality is an important part of the LCE. In chapter 3, I present a historical analysis of interpreting at the UN and the genesis of the Outreach Programme and the MoUs since the Outreach Programme is the framework within which my research was conducted. Since I sought to determine whether the programme has achieved its goal, I felt it was necessary to explain in detail what the programme entails, why it was launched, its objective and its results. For the same reason, much of this chapter covers the LCE — challenges, topics, speeches and statistics — since it is one of the tools that allows the UN to verify whether the Outreach Programme is successful or not. Chapter 4, which focuses on conference interpretation training and
approaches to conference interpreter curricula, concludes with an analysis of MoU schools’ curricula as this would help to gain a better understanding of the adequacy of MoU school curricula for passing the LCE.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

1.1. Definition of conference interpreting

According to the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)^2, conference interpretation is conveying a message spoken in one language into another. Conference interpreting is practiced by highly trained interpreters at international summits, professional seminars and other events where seamless multilingual communication is crucial ([AIIC], 2014).

As I will explain later (see Chapter 2), after the International Labor Conference that took place in Geneva in 1927, interpreters were seen as the bridge between delegates speaking different languages. Interpretation was thus considered necessary to convey the message. For Pöchhacker, the expression “conference interpreting” is self-explanatory: contrary to other types of interpretation, be it liaison interpreting or public service interpreting, conference interpreting takes place in a conference bringing together participants from different countries and where there is multilateral communication (2004: 17). Along these lines, conference interpreting, as stated by Sawyer, must be distinguished from other multilingual activities: in the pedagogy used to teach conference interpreting, languages are considered as “a means to an end” and a foundation “for skills capacity building” (2004: 3). For Pöchhacker, conference interpreting in general and international conference interpreting in particular find their “apotheosis in the policy of linguistic equality of the European Union (EU)” (2004: 17). Indeed, as stated on the European Commission (EC) website, for the democratic legitimacy of the EU to move forward, it is

^2 The International Association of Conference Interpreters – commonly known by its French acronym, AIIC – was founded in 1953 when conference interpreting was still a fledgling profession. Today it has over 2900 members in more than 100 countries with a full-time secretariat in Geneva. When applying for membership, candidates make a commitment to respect AIIC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Standards, which are at the heart of a collective effort to promote professionalism and quality.
paramount that all participants be able to speak their own language. The decisions taken by EU bodies have a direct impact on the lives of millions of people and the citizens of Europe should not have to be represented in Brussels by their best linguists: they can send their best experts (EC, 2014). Due to these types of policies, conference interpreting is now considered essential in different international organisations as everybody needs to make sure that delegates are able to present their views, discuss and understand each other.

For Moser-Mercer, training and research are the cornerstones of conference interpreting, and conference interpreters, given their vast knowledge and skills, must acquire a very high level of multilingual and multicultural competence. These competencies are crucial given the importance of multilingual communication in our globalized economy (1994b).

In the same vein, Gile states that conference interpreting, compared to other types of interpreting, has been the subject of substantial literature on training and theoretical issues (2006a). For this author, however, conference interpreting is not tantamount to simultaneous interpreting given that conference interpreting as a profession started in the exclusive form of consecutive interpreting. The author wonders how conference interpreting could therefore be defined and how it could be differentiated from other types of interpreting given that “neither the setting, nor interpreting modalities” can be used to define it. Recapping the history of conference interpreting, Gile believes that the prestige of the profession is the direct result of how interpretation was considered at the beginning: interpreters’ skills while working in consecutive (see chapter 3) were widely acclaimed and this glowing admiration gave interpreters at the time a very high social status. As Gile rightly explained, this prestige continued at the UN and “when AIIC was set up in 1953, its rules were inspired by this image of interpreters as top-level professionals with a high social prestige” (2006a: 2). For Gile, a conference interpreter is a person that should be able to work both in consecutive and in simultaneous in different kind of meetings while respecting “high quality standards” (2006a: 2). This definition still summarizes the common perception.
1.2. Conference interpreting modalities

According to AIIC, “conference interpretation can be simultaneous, consecutive or, more rarely, whispered” (2014). In this review, I will focus on the two main modalities of consecutive and simultaneous given that, as rightly pointed out by AIIC, whispered interpretation is rarely used on the market in general and at the UN in particular.

1.2.1. Consecutive Interpreting (CI)

According to AIIC, consecutive interpreting (CI) is an interpreting modality which implies that the interpreter is in the same room as the speaker and follows the original speech while taking notes before presenting the interpretation. Very long speeches may be broken up into parts, with interpretation after each part, but a trained interpreter is capable of CI of speeches several minutes long. This kind of interpretation is suitable for scientific and technical presentations given by a single speaker, or in meetings where only a small number of languages are spoken, since it makes the meeting longer. Note taking is an essential technique in CI that involves committing to paper the logic and structure of the statement as an aid to memory, rather than recording everything that is said (AIIC, 2014). Note-taking implies the respect of several principles: noting the idea rather than the word, the rules of abbreviation, links, negation, emphasis, verticality, shift (Rozan, 1965).

In consecutive, the slowness of writing and the resulting delay between the moment information is heard and the moment it is noted submits working memory to high pressure, hence there is much more involvement of long-term memory (in the range of a few minutes) than in simultaneous (Gile, 2009). The interpreter must learn to grasp the main idea included in a sentence and take notes of the idea to avoid the risk of “parrot-like” transcoding (Gile, 2006a). While taking notes, interpreters should avail themselves of abbreviations (which can be a shorter version or a complete different word with the same meaning) and links that are obviously necessary to relate one idea to another. Along these lines, interpreters must be aware that “the part of any speech that is both the most important and the most difficult to note is the sequence of ideas and the links between them” (Herbert, 1952: 48). Negation and emphasis should be noted unambiguously and notes should be taken vertically i.e.
from top to bottom rather than from left to right thus allowing the regrouping of ideas, the rule of thumb being that the interpreter should avoid taking down too many symbols. The interpreter should have a clear idea of the links between different ideas and should read his or her notes accordingly. For Jones, interpreters need to learn how to read the notes and while doing so they need to make sure that they are communicating with the audience: interpreters should learn “the art of glancing down at their notes to remind them of what they are to say next and then delivering that part of the text while looking at the audience.” To better explain how to proceed; Jones uses the analogy of the pianist where the interpreter as the pianist needs to learn how to read ahead and prepare the next passage, thus “providing for a smooth, uninterrupted and efficient interpretation” (Jones, 2002: 64). In the same vein, Gillies states that, in order to do a consecutive, the interpreter needs first to listen to how the speech is built up (2013: 111). In fact, for the author listening and understanding the original speech are more important than note-taking (2013: 168).

### 1.2.2. Simultaneous Interpreting (SI)

As simultaneous interpreting (SI) is the main modality used at the UN (see § 6.3.3) and the only modality used in the LCE (see § 3.2), I will focus more on SI and on the transition between CI and SI.

According to AIIC, SI is defined as a modality in which the interpreter sits in a booth, listens to the speaker in one language through headphones, and immediately speaks his/her interpretation into a microphone in another language. The interpreting equipment transmits the interpretation to the headphones of listeners in the meeting room. SI is appropriate in bilingual or multilingual meetings and has the advantage of not lengthening the meeting, encouraging a lively discussion and more spontaneous contributions. SI requires a high level of concentration, since the interpreter is doing several things at once (multitasking): listening and speaking; analysing the structure of what is being said in order to present the speaker’s argument; and listening to his/her own interpretation to check for slips of the tongue (AIIC, 2014).

It is worth mentioning that the aim of SI is not to orally translate the words that are being spoken but rather to “communicate the meaning of a speech being heard” (Anderson, 1994). According to this author, SI is both a cognitive and a linguistic
process: in SI, interpreters have to process the information, ensure the simultaneity of the message and utter in a target language the message just heard in a source language. Although one might think that in SI interpreters listen and speak at the same time 100% of the time, according to Chernov interpreters speak and listen simultaneously for approximately 70% of the time, while the total speaking time of the source language speaker being 100% (1994). For the author, SI can be defined in the following way:

(...) a complex type of bilingual, meaning-oriented communicative verbal activity, performed under time constraints and with a strictly limited amount of information processed at an externally controlled pace. (Anderson, 1994: 140).

Liu et al. (2004) gave almost the same definition: SI means saying in the target language what is being heard in the source language while checking the output for accuracy and paying attention to the delivery.

1.2.3. Transition from CI to SI: the sequencing

When AIIC organised the first symposium on conference interpreting, one topic discussed was the “still disputed issue of when to introduce SI” in training (Mackintosh, 1999: 70). As a matter of fact, we will see in the curricular analysis (see § 4.3.4) that most MoU schools teach consecutive before simultaneous. This is what Mackintosh calls the “ESIT stance” i.e. mastering CI before exposing students to SI (1999: 70). Setton took the same line when he explained that although not everybody agrees with it, the “triangular words-sense-words doctrine of the “théorie du sens” pioneered by Seleskovitch and Lederer is still pervasive in today’s curriculum” (Setton, 2003: 15).

Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989) are the pioneers of the “théorie du sens” according to which the aim of interpreting is to convey in the target language the same reality described in the source language. In this case the reality is called the “sens”, the meaning. According to these authors, this interpretive theory includes three phases in training: in the first phase, students must have the required linguistic skills and extra-linguistic knowledge; in the second phase, students must learn how to “deverbalise” in order to be able to extract meaning; and in the third and last
phase, students should reformulate the message in the target language (without using the source language’s linguistic form) using only the meaning.

Several schools have followed this theory ever since: teachers have to teach students how to “hear the meaning” and then how to analyse the information received and visualise it. According to Seleskovitch and Lederer, in order for the students to be able to do that in simultaneous, they must first master CI since consecutive would be the only way for interpreters to learn how to do an “intelligent simultaneous”: “(…) la consécutive n’est que la première étape de l’interprétation et on ne saurait entamer l’enseignement de la simultanée sans s’assurer de la maîtrise des techniques interprétatives acquises en consécutive3” (1989: 126).

Both authors recognized that although consecutive has mostly been replaced by simultaneous, it is not possible to start teaching simultaneous immediately. When starting with SI, students run the risk of not being able to differentiate the source language from the target language. However, CI allows students to decompose different operations that they will have to perform concurrently in SI. Seleskovitch’s theory, elaborated on for SI by Lederer (1981), was, according to Pöchhacker, applied as the “undisputed school of thought in conference interpreting theory” (1995: 32). Seleskovitch’s school of thought was also used by European Institutions for their own training programmes (Sawyer, 2004).

Some authors such as Gile have conducted different research on the Paris School of thought: According to the aforementioned author, one argument postulated in literature is that simultaneous is just an “accelerated consecutive” (Gile, 2001). His conclusion is that, although CI is used less and less in today’s market, CI should be taught at least during the first half of a programme; however, he does not think that perfect mastery of consecutive should necessarily be institutionalized as a mandatory requirement for the conference interpreter’s degree. He proposes several options whereby CI could be taught at the beginning of the programme in order to detect and correct major weaknesses in students. CI could also be taught throughout the programme but not be tested as a requirement for the degree, except as a special option.

3 Consecutive is only the first step in interpretation and the teaching of simultaneous cannot start without ensuring mastery of interpretive techniques acquired in consecutive [author's translation].
Along these lines, Ilg suggested that instead of introducing CI at the beginning of the programme, it might be better to start with other type of exercises such as summarizing or reformulation exercises in the same language, since he felt that teaching CI at the beginning of a programme “presupposes that students have the ability to carry messages across linguistic barriers” (1996: 77). However, for Ilg, the sequencing between CI and SI should not be changed, i.e. CI should precede SI in the curriculum. It is worth mentioning that, while he recognizes that no research could determine the validity of this assumption, CI and SI “should only ever be attempted once other more pragmatic tasks have been mastered such as written translation, paraphrasing, sight translation, shadowing and cloze exercises” (1996: 73).

1.2.4. Skills and competencies inherent in conference interpreting

Several authors have explained that the necessary skills in interpretation can only be acquired gradually (Moser-Mercer, 2008b; Hoffman, 1997; Ericsson, 2000). As quoted by Lederer (2011), Seleskowitch used to compare skills acquisition with a home-made cake:


In order to acquire all those skills, young graduates have to go through different phases: a cognitive phase (in which novices develop a declarative encoding of the skill), an associative stage (in which novices are able to detect errors and eliminate them) and an autonomous stage (in which procedures become more and

⁴ To make your brioche, you will need flour, eggs, butter, milk, sugar, baking powder, salt and of course grapes. Combine and mix all the ingredients. Pour the butter into the prepared pan and put everything in the oven. When you remove the cake from the oven and cut it into slices, what are you going to find? No more flour, milk, butter, eggs sugar or salt but a nice cake with nice little grapes on it (Seleskowitch in Lederer, 2011: 4).
more automatic) (Anderson quoted by Moser-Mercer, 2000a). When a novice is able to shift from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge, the learning of a skill is near completion (Moser-Mercer, 2000a).

According to Hoffman (1997), in order to acquire the necessary skills and become an expert, there are seven different phases of developmental progression: naïve (total ignorance of the subject); novice (when one starts to study a given subject); initiate (i.e., a novice who has had an initial experience); apprentice (synonym of “student”); journeyman (a graduate who has just passed his/her final interpreting exams); and an expert. The final and seventh stage is the master, i.e. an expert who is qualified to teach others. For Hoffman, the novice needs to progress from the cognitive through the associative to the autonomous stages of skill acquisition (Hoffman, 1997). Unlike novices, experts have a more global view of the task. They perceive information in chunks and patterns, and possess a larger and better-organized knowledge base (factual, semantic, schematic and strategic knowledge). As a result, experts are capable of better reasoning and faster information processing (Moser-Mercer, Frauenfelder, Casado & Kunzli, 2000).

To become experts, even the most talented need around ten years of intense involvement (Ericsson, 2000). According to Ericsson, there cannot be any skill development without training i.e. without practice. In order to reach expert performance and gradually improve, it is necessary to concentrate, to practice a certain number of hours every day, to learn how to use memory, how to anticipate and be selective, and help from colleague and teachers is essential (2000: 200). However, for Ericsson, in order to obtain a better understanding of the whole interpreting process, future research is necessary because in the interpretation field, measuring performance is not as easy as in other fields. Ericsson also points out that in all domains and no matter the circumstances or the indicators of performance used, knowledge can only improve gradually. The most important thing is for interpretation students to understand that motivation, regular and deliberate practice and trial and error can go a long way to improving their interpreting skills. A progression phase will be followed by a regression phase and this must be clearly understood by teachers and students.

In summary, it can be said that whatever the model and the method used, knowledge and skills can only be acquired gradually and in order to reach higher
level of performance, different factors also come into play, such as motivation, self-confidence, capacity and aptitude appropriate learning environment and good coaching (Moser-Mercer, 2008b). Unlike novices, experts have a more global view of the task. They perceive information in chunks and patterns, and possess a larger and better-organized knowledge base (factual, semantic, schematic and strategic knowledge). As a result, experts are capable of better reasoning and faster information processing (Moser-Mercer et al., 2000). The objective of any training institution will therefore be to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills progressively.

1.3. Brief history of contemporary conference interpreting

The Paris Peace Conference is often considered as the event that marked the beginning of modern interpreting (Baigorri, 1999). During this conference, which took place in 1919, the Versailles Treaty was signed thus marking the end of World War I. The then President of the United States Wilson demanded—and his request was granted—that both English and French be the official languages of the conference. This decision meant the beginning of the end of French hegemony in diplomatic circles: mono-lingualism had been replaced by English/French bilingualism. It was at this Conference that consecutive conference interpreting really started.

For the first time, as Thierry (2007) rightly observed, interpretation took place within a structured framework, a real conference. Interpretation was no longer performed by diplomats who happened to know several languages but by persons who were the voice of the speaker and were interpreting on behalf of the speaker. At that time, interpretation did not exist as a profession as such, so interpreters were not professionals, and some were members of the military or the administration (Baigorri, 2000). At the Paris Peace Conference, interpreters had to work in plenaries and committees. Although interpreters had not received any training, they were nevertheless able to master the necessary skills, stand at the podium next to the speaker and perform in front of the whole audience translating all the statements from and into the two official languages. Interpreters were therefore important parties, they were highly regarded and delegates were in awe at their abilities. This fact made them highly visible figures at the meeting (Baigorri, 1999). By the end of
the First World War, when the League of Nations was established, English had achieved parity with French as a diplomatic language and the League of Nations held its meetings in French and English with consecutive interpreting (CI) (UN, 2015d). That was the beginning of what has been called “the golden years of consecutive”.

The interwar period was CI’s age of glory (Bowen & Bowen, 1985). However, although CI had been successfully used during the Paris Peace Conference, the time it took to interpret different speeches was considered a major obstacle. In order to speed up the proceedings, an American businessman, Eduard Filene, decided to set up a more effective and less costly system. Together with Gordon Finlay, an engineer-electrician, and Thomas Watson, president of International Business Machines (IBM), they decided to develop the Filene-Finlay-IBM system (Kurz & Bowen, 1999). The system was proposed to the then League of Nations Secretary General, the main argument being that this new interpretation system would allow the organization to save time and be more cost-effective, thus facilitating debates between delegations. It is worth noting that although Filene and his associates were not interpreters, they understood that interpreters needed “to be placed so that they could both see and hear the speaker” (Baigorri, 1999: 32) in order to improve their performance. Filene also realized that although consecutive interpreters did not receive any training, with this new system things would become very different. Filene and his associates therefore decided to fund the first simultaneous interpreting (SI) course for interpreters and it was during the International Labor Conference in Geneva in 1927 that SI was successfully used for the first time\(^5\).

However, despite the conference’s success, for several reasons SI did not replace CI at that time: the consecutive interpreters, afraid of a method that would relegate them to the anonymity of the booth, reacted with strong hostility. Delegates also wanted to be sure that they would have the time to think between interventions and before taking the floor and were thus afraid of the fact that the simultaneous modality would force them to react immediately to a given statement. They were also

---

\(^5\) According to Gaiba, there is no consensus about when and how SI was first used (1999). In this regard, it is worth highlighting that even AIIC does not have a fixed position on the matter as the website states that “the modern practice of conference interpretation is usually considered to date from the Nuremberg trials of 1945-1946”) (AIIC, 2014).
sceptical about interpreters’ capacity to follow an entire speech without taking notes. However, during the same period, in the 1920s, the use of SI expanded rapidly in the Soviet Union: at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress, interpretation was provided into six languages, and at the Twenty-First Party Congress into eighteen languages. In 1933, booths were used at the plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Moreover, at the Fifteenth International Physiology Congress held in Leningrad in 1935, academician Pavlov’s introductory speech was simultaneously interpreted from Russian into French, English, and German (Visson, 2005: 51).

As I have mentioned before, despite the first successful attempt to use SI during the International Labour Organization (ILO) conference in 1927, as explained by Baigorri, simultaneous, for several reasons, was not used at other international conferences: interpreters’ fear of losing their prestige (see Chapter 3), the economic crisis in 1929, the Great Depression that followed and the withdrawal of Hitler’s Germany from the League of Nations created an environment hardly “conducive to experimentation or technical innovation in the field of multilateralism” (1999: 34).

It was during the Nuremberg Trials that SI really took off and marked, as stated by Baigorri, “not so much the birth of SI as its coming of age” (1999: 34).

In this same vein, Gaiba (1999) highlights that it is often argued that the first war crime trial6 (Nuremberg Trials) would not have been possible without SI. As the trial was conducted in four languages (German, French, English, Russian), the organizers were afraid that working in consecutive might slow down the whole process and, despite the criticism and fear expressed, they decided to contact Léon Dostert7 who was fluent in English and French and had served as an interpreter for Eisenhower during the war. He was eventually recruited as Chief interpreter. Dostert proposed the use of “spontaneous immediate interpretation” (Gaiba, 1999: 12) and IBM was entrusted with developing and installing the system used during the trials.

---

6 Nazi-war criminals were tried in Nuremberg after World War II.
7 In 1942, Dostert, who was born in France and had studied in the US, enlisted in the American army and was appointed Staff Officer with the rank of Major. He served both as a Liaison Officer to the French Commander-in-Chief until 1944 and as an interpreter to General Eisenhower until the end of hostilities. In 1945, Colonel Dostert was entrusted with organizing the simultaneous interpretation system, the concept of which he was largely instrumental in developing, at the Nuremberg War Crime Trials (MacDonald, 1967).
Some delegations were against the use of SI because they feared that with that mode of interpretation it would not be possible to check against delivery, i.e. to check if the interpreter was indeed saying what the speaker had said. Despite these concerns, at pre-trial meetings Americans more or less imposed their views that SI was the best option for the trials and the decision was taken to find equipment and personnel to operate it (Gaiba, 1999). Countries such as the United States, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union were asked to find people with linguistic skills and to send them to Nuremberg to be trained by Dostert, but very few were selected.

The Nuremberg Trials mark the moment when SI was finally seen as technically feasible, time-saving and cost-effective (Baigorri, 1999: 34). After the trials, many of the interpreters who had worked at Nuremberg, mainly immigrants and refugees with knowledge of Russian, French, German, and English, went on later to become staff members at the UN (Visson, 2005). As explained by Mackintosh (1999), after the Nuremberg Trials, the UN and its specialized agencies required a large number of interpreters, which led to a massive increase in the demand for conference interpreters. In 1959, AIIC published recommendations for interpreter training and in 1963 officially recognised four conference interpreting schools: the universities of Geneva (Ecole de Traduction et d’Interprétation [ETI])\(^8\), Heidelberg, Paris-Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC) (since closed) and Paris-Sorbonne (Ecole Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs [ESIT]). Mackintosh also explains that in 1949 Leon Dostert, who had been in charge of language services at Nuremberg, founded the interpreters’ school at Georgetown University. In Germany, the Germersheim school was established in 1946, followed by Saarbrucken in 1948, Heidelberg in 1950 and the Institut Supérieur d’Interprétation et de Traduction (ISIT) (Paris) in 1959. A number of other schools\(^9\), not all connected with universities, appeared in the late fifties and early sixties (Mackintosh, 1999: 69).

---

\(^8\) ETI (now Faculté de traduction et d’interprétation) founded in 1941; FTI played a decisive role in the 1940s and 50s in the development of new pedagogical approaches to simultaneous interpreting and the definition of optimal working conditions (Université de Genève, 2014).

\(^9\) In 1963, Patricia Longley, former chief interpreter at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), started the interpreter-training course at the Polytechnic of Central London, initially to meet the UN demand for interpreters from Russian into English. It was an innovative programme, with a duration of only 6 months, an intensive timetable and very praxis-oriented. In 1969, the MIFS (Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies) in California, was formed from an earlier military training establishment. (Mackintosh, 1999: 69).
The number of schools and programmes continued to increase, and today there are 86 schools listed on the AIIC website (64 in Europe alone).

Given the increasing number of conference interpreting courses, in 1965 AIIC held its first symposium on conference on interpreter training where training, aptitude testing language combinations, language skills, teaching methods and course content and the still disputed issue of when to introduce SI were discussed (Mackintosh, 1999:70).

1.4. Conclusion

The training of simultaneous conference interpreters has developed and been institutionalized substantially since the first systematic writings on the subject by Herbert (1952) and Paneth (1957) nearly half a century ago (Pöchhacker, 1999). Gile has also explained that one result of Seleskovitch’s “théorie du sens” and the ESIT school of thought was that under Seleskovitch’s leadership many papers and several doctoral dissertations on interpreting were produced, and ESIT became the source of inspiration for aspiring interpreting researchers in the West and that during the same period, practitioners and trainers considered that CI needed to be taught before SI in order to give trainees “the appropriate analytical approach, whereas learning SI without this preparation entailed the risk of “parrot-like” transcoding” (Gile, 2006a).

CI’s relevant influence may be due in part to the historical development of both modalities. Gile (2006a), after explaining the difference between CI and SI given the efforts involved, believes that although CI is seldom used in some markets nowadays, teaching CI to students has several advantages: students can learn reformulation strategies without the added time pressure and can concentrate on listening and better control their utterance. Besides, when teaching CI, all the students in a given class can take notes at the same time - thus solving the problem of lack of booths. However, as pointed out by Pöchhacker, one of the contentious and as yet unresolved issues that has been discussed in the literature is the requirement of proficiency in consecutive before simultaneous (Pöchhacker, 2004: 180). Given the lack of a definite answer on the question, “the one trap to avoid is a dogmatic attitude, one way or another” (Gile, 2001: 4).
It is paradoxical, however, that, although SI has been largely used in international conferences since the Nuremberg trials, apparently this fact has not prompted training institutions to either alter their school curricula or introduce SI earlier on in the training. Given the fact that the objective of any training institution is to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills progressively, one can argue whether this approach to conference interpreting training is the most appropriate to train interpreters interested in working mainly in SI, as is the case for the United Nations.
Measuring quality is easier in some domains than in others. It might be, for example, relatively easy for a maths teacher to check if students have learned a certain formula or know how to solve a particular problem. In interpretation this can turn out to be a very complex task. A question on quality criteria asked to a group of conference interpreters will most probably yield a myriad of different answers. This might explain why, despite some successful attempts, there is still no homogeneity in training institutions’ testing methodologies.

2.1. Quality criteria in entrance exams

In many cases, prior to being admitted to an interpretation institution, students need to be tested. Entrance exams are usually organized to help the institutions choose the right candidates for the course. The objective is to identify the candidates that already possess the necessary skills that will allow them to reach expert levels (Ericsson, 2000). Along this line, Seleskovitch and Lederer believe that an optimal linguistic level and excellent general knowledge, as well as being in possession of a university degree, must be part of an entrance exam. For the authors, a written pre-selection could be organized when there are too many candidates, bearing in mind that a written exam can in no way substitute for an oral exam. The criteria to be taken into account by the jury (composed of trainers who are also professional interpreters) are the following: “knowledge of languages, methodology and sporadic mistakes” (1989: 228).

For Moser-Mercer, knowledge of mother tongues and foreign languages and general education must be part of aptitude testing, and also a high level of multiculturalism and international competence (1994b). Other skills must also be
tested such as comprehension (analytical skills and an ability to go beyond the information at hand to establish the broader picture), speed of comprehension and production, memory capacity (i.e. testing memory for complete ideas and logical relations), the ability to listen and speak simultaneously, voice and diction, communication ability, oral production and fluency, semantic processing speed, mental comparison speed, expressional fluency, and speech sound discrimination. The candidates should also be able to tolerate stress and to understand that there will be “learning curves” (Moser-Mercer, 1994b): there will be progression and regression phases and both are part of the learning process.

As stated by Donovan, it is very difficult to compare the entrance exams of different schools due to the different expectations, duration and structure of each. Donovan recalls that although interpreters are made and not born, knowledge of languages is by no means a guarantee that a candidate could become an interpreter, the common objective of the entrance exams being to evaluate not only language proficiency but also interpreting-related skills. In a study carried out in 2003, Donovan compared the entrance exams procedure of 12 European institutions. Several similarities were observed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF TEST</th>
<th>NUMBER OF COURSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of courses</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall tests</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written translation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General knowledge test</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictation (in B)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloze test</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech on random subject</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Number of institutions using the same type of tests.
This table shows the testing techniques most widely used during entrance exams procedures in European institutions. It is worth noting that pass rates in the 12 European institutions in question varied from 20% to 58% at the entrance exam and 25% to 85% at the end of the course (Donovan, 2003). Despite all the doubts surrounding entrance exams, Donovan concludes that although the actual entrance exams are well-suited to selection, they probably could be usefully supplemented and reinforced. As a matter of fact, the reliability of aptitude testing has been questioned by several authors: for Arjona-Tseng, the first issue is that different interpretations are given to terms like “skill”, “aptitude” or “reliability”. Her conclusion is that without sound test construction principles it is impossible to obtain a better understanding of who trainable students are. Although Arjona-Tseng considers aptitude tests to be really important and indispensable, they must however be “based on sound, professional practice” (1994: 84). In one article, Arjona explains the tests that have been developed and used to select translation and interpretation students in Taiwan. This prompted her to conclude that although identifying the “trainable” candidate is indeed a complex task, aptitude tests must be “designed so that subsequent analyses and test data interpretations can provide reliable information about results” (1994: 84).

For his part, Pöchhacker agrees with Arjona when he says that, although there is consensus regarding the nature and extent of the abilities required to pass an entrance exam, there is “little certainty regarding objective ways of testing candidates for the requisite knowledge and skills” (2004: 180). The same conclusion was drawn by Dodds: the Trieste School of Interpretation decided to conduct a research on its aptitude testing (those tests are required but are non-binding since Italian law does not allow any form of selection for the interpretation and translation programme). The results were the following: 36% of the candidates that had failed the test completed the course and became professional interpreters whereas 45% of the candidates that had passed the aptitude testing did not complete the course and dropped out. Given the results, Dodds argued that “these tests in their present form are unreliable, subjective and therefore unable to correctly predict the candidate's future academic and professional performance” (1990: 17). He concluded that, despite the complexity of the question, if further research is not conducted on the
test used to select candidates, aptitude tests might not be a reliable indicator (Dodds, 1990).

The fact is that, once an aspirant interpreter has been accepted on a programme, he or she will have to undergo several assessments during the school year. In some institutions, assessments can take place at different intervals (every six months or once a year, see §4.3.4); in all the institutions that have signed a MoU with the UN, students have a final assessment at the end of the programme (be it a one year or two year programme). For Sawyer, the aforementioned type of “test validation” in interpreting (2004: 231) can have three different consequences: personal, institutional and professional. “Personal” because the ramifications of false outcomes are complex; “institutional”, because false outcomes reflect poorly on the credibility of an educational institution; and “professional” consequences that arise from the personal and institutional consequences. For the author, the aforementioned three consequences have a direct impact on the professionalization of the interpreting profession. Pöchhacker thinks along the same lines when he says that assessments are not only linked to “curricular and didactic issues” but are also closely related to aspects such as “professional standards, competence and quality (2004: 187).

The objective of a sound assessment for “almost every interpretation curriculum institution and high quality education” (Sawyer, 2004: 5), is to measure the quality performance of students and/or candidates. One possibility could be for schools to establish a continuous assessment for students during the whole school year with several exams at different moments in the semester. This could help to avoid what Sawyer called “subjective testing” and cases where “strong-minded individuals sway jury votes” (2004: 8).

2.2. Quality criteria in interpreting

The emergence of quality as a research topic dates back only to the 1980s (Sawyer, 2004: 153). A quick search on “quality in interpretation” on the AIIC website yields more than 900 results: statements by AIIC members on quality, survey results, research papers or general comments on the subject. This clearly shows that for
interpreters, quality is an on-going debate and as stated by Kahane quoting Schlesinger:

(...), the amazing thing is that there is no consensus on quality. Granted, users and interpreters agree on certain quality criteria, but significant differences remain as to nuances, and especially as to the very essence of the elusive concept of quality; quality for whom, assessed in what manner? (AIIC, 2014).

In 2008, in a survey on quality commissioned by AIIC\(^{11}\) (2014), AIIC members were asked to rate different quality criteria. More than two decades later, the results confirmed the study that had been conducted in 1986 by Buhler. The two most important quality criteria in 1986 and in 2008 were consistency with the original and logical cohesion. Respondents also considered that correct terminology, correct grammar and appropriate style were also important quality criteria, and delivery-related criteria were rated lower except for the criterion of fluency. One of the conclusions of the survey was that the degree of importance attributed to various quality criteria varies in relation to the meeting and the domain in which the event takes place. Another survey on quality in SI was conducted by Pöchhacker and Zwischenberger (2010). Respondents were asked to listen and rate a one-minute interpretation. The following table summarizes the results that were presented to the AIIC community in 2008 and also provides a comparison with the 1986 Buhler survey results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Summary of the ratings (in percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLUENCY OF DELIVERY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRECT TERMINOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORRECT GRAMMAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) The first survey was conducted by Bühler (1986). In that survey, AIIC members were asked about their opinions regarding the most important quality criteria that they would take into account when sponsoring AIIC candidates.
As explained above, the results of Pöchhacker and Zwischenberger’s survey clearly show the importance of certain quality criteria vis-à-vis others, consistency being the most important quality factor followed by logical cohesion and fluency of delivery. It is also important to note that the survey targeted conference interpreters. The same questions asked to users could have yielded different results. Indeed, as Gile stated, some delegates can assess an interpreter as being very good simply because “the interpreter’s voice and self-assured delivery have a confidence-inspiring effect despite of the fact that the booth mate can detect several mistakes in the interpreter’s utterance” (2009: 38). Although, as Gile also explains, quality cannot be assessed by counting the number of errors since problems may arise when defining what an error in interpretation is (1994: 46), the author concludes that sometimes what matters to the delegates is the “packaging”. As explained by Gile, research performed in Spain by Collados Ais et al. (2009) suggests that in SI weakness in one parameter, such as accent, voice, style or grammar, can have far-reaching negative effects on the users’ perception of the quality of other parameters (1994: 39).

Pöchhacker, quoting Kurz, recalls that there is a relationship between quality perceived and quality expected that could be summarized in the formula “quality=
actual service-expected service” (2004: 156). What this means is that users of the same service might have different expectations and different needs. Interpreters are aware of the fact that the same speech given at a different speed, read by a different delegate or read by the same speaker when the sound is not perfect, will have a sure impact on the interpreter’s delivery. I will give an example, resulting from my own observations, which perfectly illustrates Kurz’s equation. At the UN, verbatim reporters attend certain meetings and work from digital sound recordings of meetings transmitted electronically to their workstations. They may, to varying degrees, work from the original speech, interpretation given at the meeting or a written translation provided by a delegation. Their role is to produce in extenso records of the meetings of the General Assembly, Security Council and other bodies. In order to work faster in their different languages, they will usually listen to the interpreters: an interpreter that will say everything with a very bad delivery or an unpleasant voice is usually considered as a bad interpreter by the verbatim reporter whereas an interpreter that omits entire paragraphs but has a nice voice and an assured delivery will be hailed by them as the best interpreter ever. The fact of the matter is that verbatim reporters need a clear utterance, with a good delivery at a slow pace, allowing them to take notes and make their summary, and an interpreter whose delivery is too fast because he or she is trying to say everything is not what they need and is therefore not considered as good as the previous one.

Along these lines, Moser-Mercer agrees when she explains that different expectations or needs “determine how each individual defines quality and goes about evaluating, assessing or measuring it” (1998: 41). For Moser-Mercer, if we want to define quality, we need first to distinguish between quality evaluation, quality measurement and quality assessment: quality can be evaluated when a researcher is trying to better understand the quality of the service provided by interpreters in the field. It can be measured with laboratory experiments using specific types of scales and it can be assessed in a classroom, a semi-controlled or a laboratory setting (Moser-Mercer, 1996). We probably should shift from “concern about ideal quality to quality under the circumstances” (Pöchhacker, 2004: 156).

In the same vein, Kopczynski states that it is necessary to take into account the linguistic and the pragmatic aspect of quality (1994: 87). The linguistic aspect means focusing on an equivalence, congruence and correspondence between text A
and text B (1994: 88) whereas the pragmatic aspect is “determined by the context”. For the aforementioned author, the context will be determined by different variables such as the speaker’s attitude, the interpreter’s competence, the form of the message or the setting (1994: 88). The results of a survey conducted by Kopczynski, targeting listeners and speakers, clearly showed that, for both groups, quality was primarily determined by content rather than form and that attention to details and “terminological precision” were a priority (1994: 98).

Gile (1994) also explains that interpreters in certain contexts know their clients expectations. They will therefore use different strategies: summarizing in some circumstances, translating as accurately as possible every phrase in the source speech or focusing on synchronicity. Moser-Mercer shares this sentiment when she says that quality is related to the environment in which the interpreter works and the same interpreter may provide outstanding quality in one type of meeting and struggle in another (Moser-Mercer, 1998). Moser-Mercer suggests that it is therefore better to speak about “optimum quality”, i.e. the quality an interpreter can provide if external working conditions are appropriate to the task at hand.

Along these lines, AIIC goes on to say that:

(…) quality interpretation depends on more than an individual interpreter's knowledge and skills. Working conditions, a spirit of collegiality in a profession where one rarely works alone, and the quality of conference and SI equipment in a field often dependent on technology are but a few of the factors that will affect the interpreter's performance (2014).

The only conclusion that we can draw as interpreters is that listeners and speakers do not always have the same expectations and that expectations will be different in different contexts (Kahane, 2000). For the purpose of the LCE, the question is worth asking: although we are all UN interpreters, we do not work for the same clients\textsuperscript{12}. We are requested however to use the same quality criteria although our “clients” expectations might differ. We might ask ourselves if it is indeed advisable to have clear quality criteria applicable across the board. We will see in the

\textsuperscript{12}The clients in this case are the different delegations that are members of the United Nations.
discussion part of the questionnaire (see §6.4 and 7.4) that this is more than a legitimate question to ask.

### 2.3. Conclusion

According to Sawyer (2004), concerns regarding the inadequacy of assessment practice and testing are voiced repeatedly in the professional community and in Translation and Interpreting Studies literature. Sawyer is right, there are inconsistencies in examination procedures\(^{13}\), inconsistencies between language combinations and inconsistencies between jury members. In some schools, speeches given to students are read while in others they will be “oralised”. In the same school with the same jury, the speed of speeches will be different and some speeches will be more difficult than others. For some language combinations, it is also more difficult to find jury members with the same language combinations and once found, they might be tempted to use their “hidden” power (Sawyer, 2004: 8). Indeed, this subject could be a research topic in itself. We have seen that there is no clear definition of what constitutes quality in interpretation and that different users will have different expectations; these different views on quality and quality criteria that exist in the “real world” also exist in the world of the UN in general and within the sphere of the LCE in particular. Assessing quality interpretation and deciding who possesses the necessary skills to enter employment at the UN is not an easy task. Different users have different expectations and the definition of quality might not be the same in all six booths given that interpreters do not always work for the same clients and hence clients’ expectations might differ.

\(^{13}\) For example, final examinations in CI can have durations of between five and fifteen minutes at CIUTI member institutes (Sawyer, 2004: 23).
CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETING AT THE UNITED NATIONS:

THE LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION

Given that my research does not deal with interpretation in general but focuses exclusively on interpretation at the United Nations (UN), this section will help us get a better understanding of how interpretation started at the UN, what modalities were and are being used, what UN specificities and challenges are, and how the LCE is organized.

3.1. Historical background

In order to reflect on the current situation at the UN in general and the current situation with respect to the LCE in particular, I thought it would be useful to provide a historical background. As a matter of fact, improving our knowledge of how interpreters worked at the UN, how they had to transition from one modality to another and how this shaped interpreter recruitment at the time is key to improving our understanding of the future we want for the next generation of interpreters that will have to pass the LCE and enter employment at the UN.

The forerunner of the UN was the League of Nations, an organization conceived during the First World War, and established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles “to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security” and “prevent a repetition of the horrors of the 1914-18 war in Europe” (UN, 2014). The League of Nations consisted of the Assembly, the Council and the Permanent Court of International Justice. Although the League of Nations did enjoy some remarkable political success in the 1920s, powerful states such as Germany, Italy, and Japan left the organization, and by the time the Second World War broke out in 1939, many had abandoned the League of Nations, and had instead returned to the traditional system of defensive alliances and power blocs.
However, the efforts of the League of Nations were not completely in vain: the Allies decided to create a new organization, the UN. Signed on the 26th of June 1945 in San Francisco, the Charter of the UN came into force on the 24th of October 1945. The Charter was signed on the 26th of June 1945 by the representatives of 50 countries. The UN officially came into existence on the 24th of October 1945 (UN, 2014). According to the Charter, the UN has four purposes:

- to maintain international peace and security;
- to develop friendly relations among nations;
- to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights; and,
- to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.

The UN has six main organs. Five of them — the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council and the Secretariat — are based at United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York. The sixth, the International Court of Justice, is located at The Hague in the Netherlands.

The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ of the UN and is composed of representatives of all Member States. The Security Council has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), is the principal organ to coordinate the economic, social and related work of the UN and the specialized agencies and institutions. The Trusteeship Council was established in 1945 to provide international supervision for 11 Trust Territories placed under the administration of 7 Member States, and ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the Territories for self-government and independence. The Secretariat

---

14 In his final speech, Lord Robert Cecil, one of the League of Nations’ founders, proclaimed that the efforts of those who had established the League of Nations were not lost, because without them the new international organization, the United Nations, could not exist. Lord Cecil closed the Assembly with the words: “The League is dead, long live the United Nations!” (UN, 2014).

15 The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Comprising all 193 Members of the United Nations, it provides a unique forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Charter. The Assembly meets in regular session intensively from September to December each year, and thereafter as required.
carries out the day-to-day work of the Organization. It services the other principal organs and carries out tasks as varied as the issues dealt with by the UN. Lastly, the International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the UN. It settles legal disputes between states and gives advisory opinions to the UN and its specialized agencies.

After the inception of the UN in 1946, all UN meetings were held with CI. In the first *Rules of procedure concerning languages* (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 1946a), Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish were named as “official languages” of the United Nations General Assembly, but only English and French were to be “working languages”, meaning that speeches could be delivered in any of the five official languages, but were only interpreted consecutively into English and French (UN, 2014). This meant that all speeches, especially Russian speeches (as this coincided with the beginning of the Cold War and the confrontation between the two blocs), needed to be translated in consecutive into English and then into French (the two official languages at the time). Thus, at a given meeting three hours could be devoted to listening to a speech in Russian and to the CI into English and then into French16. This was extremely time-consuming as sometimes a speech had to be interpreted consecutively into French or English or both, according to the language spoken, thereby taking longer to interpret than the original (UN, 2014).

Colonel Léon Dostert (who had been recruited from Nuremberg) was called upon to find a practical solution to the language barrier because traditional CI was making hearings unreasonably long. SI seemed to be the answer. The first official mention of this mode of communication was in December 1946 in a recommendation of the General Assembly:

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General and the observations made by several representatives in the Fifth Committee

---

16 When simultaneous interpreting began to gain ground progressively at the UN, all five official languages became working languages (Spanish in 1948, Russian in 1968 and Chinese in 1973. In 1981, Arabic became the sixth official working language of the United Nations.
1. Takes no decision, for the time being, on the SI system but recommends the continuation of the present practices until the next session of the General Assembly when a final decision should be taken.

2. Requests the Secretary-General to equip before the next session a second conference room and a second committee room with SI apparatus. (UNGA, 1946b).

The General Assembly therefore officially requested, in the first two paragraphs of the resolution that SI be used in some meetings and proceeded to adopt the first rules of procedure concerning language use and recommended that a thorough inquiry be conducted on the question of the installation of “telephonic” interpretation systems and the arrangements for the establishment of such a system. The same year, the General Assembly decided to hold its own session in simultaneous mode.

From the very beginning, Dostert established the rule that simultaneous interpreters should work in their mother tongue only in order to speak without accent. Later on, when Chinese became an official language, it was virtually impossible to find interpreters that would be able to interpret from Chinese, so Chinese interpreters were asked to work from and into Chinese. The same was done with Arabic when Arabic became an official language. This system still exists to this day. The Chinese and Arabic booths are two-way booths and, in contrast to the other booths that worked in pairs, they worked in three as they are obliged to have a B in their language combinations and are required to work both into and from their mother tongue.

As SI slowly started to gain ground, interpreters who until then had worked in consecutive started expressing their hostility and did not want to switch from consecutive to simultaneous. As they were very highly regarded by delegates and by other staff as well, they were afraid of losing their status. Working in a booth meant no longer being able to shine and be recognized. The arguments used by the pro-simultaneous group were simply that SI allowed a more authentic debate, all five official languages could be spoken and interpreted and, above all, this meant huge savings in time and money (Baigorri, 1999). The first simultaneous test, organized by Leon Dostert, took place in 1946. Given the hostility of the UN interpreters and their reluctance to be trained in SI, two teams of interpreters and two interpretation
sections were created: the “elite group” (Baigorri, 1999) of consecutive interpreters (led by the chief interpreter) and the team of simultaneous interpreters (Dostert’s team that consecutivists used to call “the telephonists”\(^\text{17}\)) that were receiving intensive training. Gradually, despite the hostility of the “elite group”, most meetings began being conducted in SI and in November 1947, the General Assembly adopted the following decision:

Taking into account the experience gained with the system of SI since its regular session of 1946

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on this matter,

1. Decides that SI be adopted as a permanent service to be used alternatively or in conjunction with CI as the nature of debates require

2. Authorizes the Secretary-General to provide personnel for four complete teams of interpreters with the necessary technical as set forth in the budget estimates for 1948 and the equipment and maintenance for which provision is made in the supplementary estimates for 1948;

3. Authorizes the Secretary-General to include in the equipment mentioned in paragraph 2 above, wireless equipment for use in the General Assembly Hall and in the two Council chambers, and to service conferences away from headquarters. (UNGA, 1947).

As requested by the General Assembly, several rooms were equipped and eventually the simultaneous mode almost became the norm, making multilingual debate easier and faster, and allowing for interpretation into and from a greater number of languages (Moggio-Ortiz, 2008). Although consecutive interpreters vigorously resisted “the offensive” of the new simultaneous mode of interpretation, by the late 1940s they were no longer able to prevent it from becoming the modality predominantly used in the meetings of the main bodies of the UN. The two interpretation sections and the two teams were merged (some of the CI interpreters learned SI while others decided to leave the organization) and SI became a common feature at all UN meetings. At the time, almost all UN interpreters were

\(^{17}\) The General Assembly, when adopting the first rules of procedure concerning languages, recommended a thorough enquiry into the question of the installation of “telephonic” systems of interpretation and to arrange for the establishment of such a system. That is why, at the beginning, simultaneous interpreters were called, with a degree of cynicism, the *téléphonistes* by their consecutive colleagues (Moggio-Ortiz, 2008).
representatives of privileged social groups, former government employees, political or ideological exiles, scholars who resided abroad for academic reasons or children of parents who spoke different languages (Visson, 2005). They all had solid academic backgrounds, had been schooled in different countries and in different languages and incidentally were all men. As stated by Herbert, the general belief at the time was that “interpreters were born and not made” (Herbert, 1978: 9). Many of these interpreters were academics, and/or came from the same social circles as the people they worked for. Hence, their image in the public eye was very prestigious (Gile, 2006a).

Thierry (2007), at the inaugural speech at Institut Supérieur de Traducteurs et Interprètes (ISTI), cited another factor that might explain why simultaneous became widely used from 1948 to 1955: the foundation of several international agencies (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in Geneva, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Rome, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Coal and Steel Community in Brussels. All those international organizations were working in more than one language and as SI had proven to be cheaper, quicker and more cost-effective, it began to be widely used in all international conferences.

In the 70’s, with the spread of conference interpretation training schools and the establishment of professional associations, another generation of interpreters appeared: interpreters with formal training and an increasing number of women. As a matter of fact, nowadays almost all UN interpreters have received formal training and the majority are women. As explained by Gile (2006a), the loss of prestige of simultaneous interpreters versus consecutive interpreters and the change of social status could have made the profession less appealing for men, which might explain the growing feminization of the profession.

In the early 70’s, working conditions at UN were very poor (interpreters could work for several hours with no interruption), so interpreters asked for radical changes and warned of unilateral action, albeit to no avail (Baigorri, 2004). On April 22, 1974, after 29 years of interpreting speeches non-stop, interpreters decided that as working conditions were not improving they would all take sick leave on the same
day thus preventing meetings from taking place. The next morning, 45 of the 75 interpreters called the office explaining that they were unable to work due to illness. This action prompted the then Secretary General to look into the matter and eventually better working conditions were agreed: the number of sessions per week was fixed (7) with a maximum duration of three hours. As stated by Baigorri (2004), these conditions still exist today; they were also adopted by AIIC in their agreement with the international organizations and by the freelance market in general. Indeed, at the UN, staff interpreters work seven sessions per week and freelancers eight.

After this epic battle between consecutive and simultaneous, with the emphatic and historic victory of the latter, today at the UN, interpreters are seldom requested to work in consecutive since the majority of conferences take place in simultaneous (see chapter 6). However, during missions and conferences away from headquarters, CI can be used. As CI is not part of the LCE, CI assignments are always on a voluntary basis. It is also worth noting that in order to gain time given his busy schedules, bilateral meetings with the Secretary General that used to take place in CI are now conducted using the bidule\textsuperscript{18}. In New York and Geneva, interpreters can be asked (on a voluntary basis) to accompany the Secretary General or Security Council members on country visits. Geneva interpreters in particular are regularly asked to go on Human Rights missions with what is known as Special Procedures\textsuperscript{19}. Field missions usually take place in countries undergoing particular difficulties and meetings are organized in very informal settings with no or very minimal infrastructure available. Some years ago, Geneva interpreters decided that, in such situations, using a \textit{bidule} was probably the most appropriate solution. Delegates quickly realized the advantages of using mobile equipment while working in the field. Since then, for missions away from headquarters, the \textit{bidule} is now

\textsuperscript{18} The “\textit{bidule}” is a portable equipment used for simultaneous interpretation without a booth: the interpreter is equipped with a microphone and participants can listen to the interpretation with their headsets.

\textsuperscript{19} Special procedures are either an individual (called “Special Rapporteur” or “Independent Expert”) or a working group composed of five members, one from each of the five United Nations regional groupings: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the Western group. The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and members of the Working Groups are appointed by the Human Rights Council (inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe) and serve in their personal capacities (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2015).
largely being used. It is worth noting, however, that after having participated in some of these missions, interpreters are still expected to use CI during press conferences or larger gatherings when the number of headsets is insufficient.

In conclusion, as explained by Baigorri (1999), the struggle between the consecutive and simultaneous modes of interpretation was one of the most important episodes in the history of the profession at the UN. The practical usefulness of SI made it the winner in this struggle, and it eventually became predominant at international conferences and fora in general and at the UN in particular.

3.2. The Language Competitive Examination (LCE)

Gone are the days of a first generation of (self-taught) interpreters: Russian aristocrats who grew up speaking French to their parents and Russian to their servants, while learning English from their governess and German from their tutor. (Kurz & Bowen, 1999).

As we have seen in previous chapters, although SI was tested for the first time at the League of Nations in the 1920s, it was only in 1946, after the Nuremberg Trials, that the UN decided that more and more meetings were to be held in simultaneous. This General Assembly decision prompted DGACM conference management department to recruit more interpreters. The first generation of UN interpreters, who were self-taught interpreters, worked only in consecutive (see §3.1). Then came the second generation20 (period covering the two decades from 1960 to 1980) (Baigorri, 2004: 87). As explained by Baigorri (2004:104), during those years, a large number of trainees or associate-interpreters21 were recruited. At that time, once selected, interpreters were considered trainees and received training within the scope of the UN’s own training programme. Trainees often came from other sections of the conference services, especially translation (Baigorri, 2004). At the end of the three-month training period, trainees were required to pass an exam. Success in the exam meant becoming a fully-fledged UN interpreter. This training

20 Between the first and the second generation, there was also what Baigorri called “the in-between generation”: it was composed of interpreters, that contrary to the first generation “were not had natural polyglots who had learnt languages from birth, nor did they have qualifications from schools of interpreting and translation” (2004: 89).
21 Trainees and associate-interpreters are recruited at a lower level.
programme disappeared at the beginning of the nineties for the following reasons: thanks to the programme, all the vacancies in the interpretation section had been filled, there were fewer numbers of internal candidates and more and more interpreters were being trained in interpretation schools in Europe and in the United States (Baigorri, 2004).

In 1980, the Secretary General told the General Assembly that:

(...) having been faced at the beginning of the year with the prospect of recruiting 12 interpreters, 50 translators and 30 typists he had undertaken an extensive publicity effort to advertise competitive examinations for that purpose. (UN, 1980).

Those competitive examinations were the predecessors of the LCE. The LCE in its current form was introduced during the nineties with the main purpose of establishing a roster of successful candidates from which to fill present and future vacancies since the only path for becoming a career UN language professional (interpreter, translator, editor, etc.) is to sit the LCE. UN Regulations prohibit the recruitment of candidates outside the LCE process (UN, 2014).

It is worth noting that both the in-house training and then the LCE never included CI, only SI. The LCE has also never been organized at regular intervals: it can be organized every two or three years for certain booths and certain language combinations (for English and French booths, the LCE can take place every year for interpreters with passive Russian given the high number of vacancies to be filled).

As regards the procedure, candidates have to go through an application process to apply for the LCE: applicants are first required to start the application process by creating a profile in the Careers Portal. In order to do that, candidates must first register on a specific website where they will be requested to fill out a questionnaire with their personal information. Once registered, the candidate can start the application for the LCE. The application is received by Human Resources, which proceeds with a first screening against the eligibility criteria (see chapter 3.2) and sends all the successful applications to the chiefs of the respective booths in New York. The chiefs of booths, together with the other senior interpreters in New York, assess all the applications and those candidates considered eligible are informed accordingly. The unsuccessful candidates are also notified. It is important
to understand that, in contrast to other organizations such as the EU, the UN does not require an interpretation diploma. This fact encourages a myriad of applicants with no previous training or experience in interpreting.

The LCE consist of two parts. In the first part, which is eliminatory, candidates whose main language\(^{22}\) is English, French, Russian or Spanish are asked to interpret three speeches of progressively increasing difficulty in terms of complexity and speed of delivery, from each of their source languages. The speeches are approximately 5 to 10 minutes each. Then candidates whose main language is Arabic or Chinese are asked to interpret three speeches from their foreign language into their main language and three speeches from their main language into their foreign language. The speeches are approximately 5 to 10 minutes each (UN, 2014).

Candidates are recorded and their interpretation from English is assessed first. Candidates who fail to interpret any one of the speeches in a satisfactory manner are automatically eliminated and the jury will not continue listening to the remaining speeches. Today, although French, English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian are all official and working languages, English is still the main spoken language at all UN meetings. This explains why English is eliminatory. Only candidates who have successfully interpreted all six speeches will then be invited to a competency-based interview, which constitutes the second part of the LCE. Applicants will only receive a pass or fail message from the Human Resources department. No other information will be given. It is worth mentioning, as explained on the UN website, that the decisions of the Board of Examiners (which is composed of senior interpreters of a given booth) are final and cannot be appealed against (Diur, 2014).

In order to understand the admission criteria set by the UN, I have chosen the French booth as an example and have reproduced part of the exam notice as it appears on the UN website:

\(^{22}\) At the United Nations, the concept of “A language” does not exist. Main language means the language in which the candidate “did his/her higher education studies”.
Applicants applying for the examination must:

(a) Have French as their main language;

(b) Have a perfect command of French and an excellent knowledge of English and Russian. The Board of Examiners, appointed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, requires that applicants’ claims to knowledge of official languages be supported by relevant documentation.

(c) Hold a university degree from a recognized school\(^\text{23}\) of interpretation in which at least one full academic year is devoted to interpretation. Alternatively, applicants must hold a degree or an equivalent qualification from a university or institution of equivalent status at which French is the language of instruction, and have 200 days of experience as conference interpreters or 200 days of work experience in the field of translation, editing, verbatim reporting or related fields. The Board of Examiners may, at its discretion, admit an applicant graduating from a university whose principal language of instruction is other than French provided he/she has adequate secondary educational qualifications from an establishment at which the principal language is French.

(d) Not have reached their 56th birthday by the deadline for submission of applications. (UN, 2015b).

As far as assessment is concerned, the UN Board of Examiners has developed assessment criteria for the LCE. Those criteria need to be followed by the panel when correcting the LCE, meaning that candidates will be assessed against those criteria only. As a transparency tool, the aforementioned criteria have been posted on the Outreach Programme website. Examinees must demonstrate (UN, 2014):

- Excellent passive comprehension of their two source languages;
- Accuracy in interpretation into grammatically correct target language;
- Ability to construct complete sentences;
- An understanding of appropriate style and register;
- An ability to keep up with speed;

\(^{23}\) There is no list of recognized schools as such. The important criterion is to hold a university degree from an institution where one full academic year be devoted to interpretation.
- Intelligent editing of logically redundant words and phrases;
- Ability to cope with difficult or dense passages;
- Good diction and delivery.

3.2.1. Main challenges related to the LCE

3.2.1.1. Speed

As already explained in previous chapters, the LCE is and has always been in SI only. As explained on the UN website (UN, 2014), candidates should have an excellent passive comprehension of their two source languages and should be capable of providing an accurate interpretation into grammatically correct target language and construct complete sentences with good diction and delivery. These skills are taught at interpreter training schools and are a prerequisite for any candidate who intends to work for an organization as a freelancer or staff member. A diploma in conference interpreting should ideally attest that the holder has acquired all the necessary sub-skills that will allow him or her to work in simultaneous at a professional level. However, interpretation schools train interpreters for a wide range of markets. For obvious reasons, they cannot concentrate on the UN market alone as not all students will end up working exclusively for the UN. This might explain why candidates sometimes have difficulties coping with UN speeches.

Speed has often been raised as a factor that might explain the low success rate. As a matter of fact, in the workload study on interpreter stress and burn out commissioned by AIIC in 2001, 78% of all respondents rated fast delivery rate as the major source of stress in their work. This high percentage can easily be explained: Gile (2009) has shown that when a speech is too fast or too dense, interpreters can “experiment interpreting failure” as interpreting requires some sort of mental energy that is only available in limited supply and interpreting takes up almost all of this mental energy and sometimes requires more than is available at which time performance deteriorates (2009: 182). The comfortable input rate for SI, according to Seleskovich (1965, in Gerver, 1976), is between 100 and 120 words “whereas rates between 150 and 200 words per minute provide an upper limit for effective interpretation” (Seleskovich, 1965 in Gerver, 1976: 172). The same conclusion was reached by Gerver (1976) himself when he conducted an experiment where ten
interpreters were asked to simultaneously interpret a speech at different delivery rates (95, 112, 120, 142 and 164 words per minute): the optimal input rate for SI being between 95 and 120 words per minute, a higher rate would mean an information overload that would negatively impact the interpreter’s performance.

For its part, the AIIC recommended rate for public speaking at international events is 100 words per minute in English (AIIC, 2014). However, all interpreters working in international organizations know that speakers tend to speak faster and faster given the limited amount of time allotted to them. In the same vein, Barik (1994) and Schlesinger (1998) have shown that there is a clear and robust inverse correlation between input rate and the interpreter’s ability to process a text. When the rate of input increases, the interpreter no longer has the time to process and will resort to a more-or-less word-based strategy (Schlesinger, 1998). Nevertheless, in their experiment, Liu et al. (2004) showed that although there were no differences in working memory capacity between experienced interpreters and students, professional interpreters had developed skills (constant judgment and selection) allowing them to better manage “competing demands on limited cognitive resources” and “to select more important ideas from the speech input under conditions where stringent task demands jeopardize completeness and accuracy of the output” (2004: 19).

The conclusion that can be drawn after studying the different models developed by Gerver (1976), Moser-Mercer (1978) and Gile (1995) is that there is an agreement on the fact that interpreters’ processing capacity can be saturated by different factors and speed is one of them. For the last LCE for French interpreters organized in 2014, the third speech (the faster one) was a speech in English delivered by the delegate of South Africa. The speech was delivered at 158 words per minute. The speech was chosen because it had two added difficulties, the accent and the theme (crime prevention and criminal justice). The third speech is generally the most difficult one and as already explained above, failure to interpret any one of the speeches in a satisfactory manner means automatic elimination.

Incapacity to cope with speed was probably one of the factors used to screen out most applicants for the job of SI already during the Nuremberg Trials (Gaiba, 1999) and, to paraphrase Moser-Mercer (2000b), this parameter is still being used to screen potential candidates for the LCE. And rightly so, one might add: interpreters
who pass the LCE could be immediately recruited. On the first day of their contracts, these interpreters could be assigned randomly to any type of meeting. Therefore, it is important to test beforehand if they would be able to cope with the kinds of speeches that are more and more frequent at the UN.

3.2.1.2. Topic

The materials used for the LCE are speeches taken from the General Assembly or the Security Council. In contrast to other international organizations where staff interpreters are asked to prepare speeches for the freelance test or for the staff examination, at the UN the standard practice is to choose speeches from real meetings, particularly speeches that have been interpreted by staff interpreters. Giving candidates a speech that has been interpreted by a UN interpreter in a UN meeting gives the jury an immediate idea as to whether a candidate can cope with such a UN speech. It also shows whether a candidate has come prepared for the LCE. This approach has never been debated at the UN. However, for the last LCE in 2013, some chiefs of booths decided to use a speech that had been delivered by a representative of the civil society. Although the speech had been given before one of the Commissions and was on the Middle East, candidates reported great discomfort at this deviation since they had prepared for the usual UN material (Diur, 2014).

The General Assembly is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. The subsidiary organs of the General Assembly are divided into categories: Boards, Commissions, Committees, Councils and Panels, and Working Groups and others. General Assembly speeches can be taken from the General Debate (speeches given by Chief of States or Governments delivered from the UNHQ in New York at the beginning of the General Assembly session) or from one of the Committees. There are six main Committees:

- The First Committee deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.
- The Second Committee deals with issues relating to economic growth and development such as macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system, and external debt sustainability), financing
for development, sustainable development, human settlements, poverty eradication, globalization and interdependence, operational activities for development, and information and communication technologies for development.

- The Third Committee also discusses the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination.

- The Fourth Committee, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, deals with a variety of subjects which include those related to decolonization, Palestinian refugees and human rights, peacekeeping, mine action, outer space, public information, atomic radiation and University for Peace.

- The Fifth Committee is the Committee of the General Assembly with responsibilities for administration and budgetary matters.

- The Sixth Committee is the primary forum for the consideration of legal questions in the General Assembly. All of the U.N. Member States are entitled to representation on the Sixth Committee as one of the main committees of the General Assembly. (UN, 2014).

The Security Council, under the charter, has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members (five permanent members with veto power) and ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for a two-year term, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter, all Member States are obligated to comply with Council decisions. The Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946 at Church House, Westminster.

Members take turn at holding the presidency of the Security Council for one month. Meetings of the Security Council shall be held at the call of the President at any time he deems necessary. Both open and closed meetings are formal meetings of the Security Council. Closed meetings are not open to the public and no verbatim record of statements is kept.

The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In
some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize
the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The Security Council also recommends to the General Assembly the
appointment of the Secretary-General and the admission of new Members to the UN.
And, together with the General Assembly, it elects the judges of the International
Court of Justice (UN, 2014).

For the LCE, the speeches chosen will be speeches that were given in one of
the organs described above. Usually speeches chosen are of a general nature and
tend not to be too technical. Fifth and Sixth Committee speeches deal with budgetary
and legal matters respectively and, given the technical nature of their debates,
participants are experts. For the LCE, First, Second, Third and Fourth Committee
speeches tend to be chosen given that they deal with disarmament, social,
humanitarian or cultural issues and decolonization and human rights, respectively
(Diur, 2014). Speeches from the Security Council will be, as closed meetings are not
open to the public, from the open meetings. They will usually be on a theme
regarding peace and security or on a specific country that is on the agenda of the
Security Council.

On the day of the LCE, applicants will listen to the recordings of the three
selected speeches. Prior to the start of each speech, the voice of a commentator will
indicate to applicants the name of the speaker, his or her position, the venue and
occasion and the date when the speech was delivered. When the LCE speech
corresponds to a speech delivered during the General Debate, speakers usually start
by referring to the general theme chosen for that particular session, and this theme is
also indicated to the LCE applicants a few minutes before the actual recording starts.
LCE speeches are usually taken from the previous year (although sometimes it
might be decided otherwise by chiefs of booths). This means that if candidates have
had the adequate preparation, they should already have a clear awareness of the
topics to be discussed even before the beginning of the exam (Diur, 2014). The LCE
portal also includes a link to the UN languages website where candidates are given
tips on how to prepare themselves for the LCE. The tips given are very good in that
they explain clearly that preparing the LCE does not mean focusing exclusively on
speeches from the UN webcast: candidates should become familiar with the UN
organizational structure (links are given to the UN website itself) and should read the
UN Charter in their working languages. It is also suggested that candidates be thoroughly familiar with the wording of the Preamble and other key articles (UN, 2014).

Some UN interpreters have suggested that candidates should be allowed more time to prepare a given topic before they take the exam. However, the common understanding is that the themes most likely to come up in the speeches can be identified by referring to the Secretary General’s and Security Council’s annual reports from the year prior to the LCE. Therefore, preparation for the LCE -according to the UN- should start long before the actual day of the exam and not before the beginning of the speech. Even when speeches chosen have been a departure from the usual speeches, the overall subject was always one of the topics mentioned in one of these two reports. Candidates should therefore prepare before the LCE. The lack of adequate preparation could be one of the causes of the low success rate. In fact, during the MoU conference organized in Salamanca in 2011, one workshop was devoted specifically to that question. The title of the workshop was: Why do so many applicants fail the UN Language competitive examinations? Although the workshop was dealing with both translation and interpretation, the conclusion was that one of the main reasons that could explain this high failure rate was insufficient knowledge of the main language, shortcomings in the ability to express ideas clearly and lack of understanding of general and UN-specific terminology. Understanding the reasons for the low success rate is all the more important given the LCE statistics in the last decade.

3.2.1.3. Accents

Accents are without any doubt (and this has been confirmed in the answers to the two questionnaires (see chapters 6 and 7) one of the challenges faced by candidates during the LCE. There are 193 members at the UN. This means that for the LCE a speech that has been given by 1 of the 193 delegations can be chosen. In contrast to the EU, where there are 24 languages and where each delegate can speak his or her mother tongue, at the UN there are only six official languages (English, French, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish). It is therefore inevitable that the majority of delegates at the UN are not able to speak in their mother tongue as they need to use one of the six official languages. This can cause added stress
for candidates taking the LCE: training institutions usually use native speakers throughout the curriculum. Students are seldom confronted with other types of accents.

In the workload study commissioned by AIIC in 2001, alluded to above (see §3.2.1.1), on stress and burn out that targeted freelancers and staff interpreters, difficult accents was also one of the main stressors mentioned (AIIC, 2014). Although the results of the study are more than one decade old, the fact that accents were quoted as a factor of stress and burn out is significant. Those results confirmed the results of a study conducted by Mazzetti (1999) in which he asked 15 students at the University of Trieste to interpret from German into Italian a written text that was read out using different accents. The aim of the study was to understand how a speech given by a non-native speaker can influence comprehension and can negatively impact the performance of the interpreter. Thanks to the experiment, Mazzetti was able to find evidence of the effect of accents on performance. For Pöchhacker, foreign accent also means different prosody, intonation, tempo and rhythm, which are important factors in the interpreting process (2004: 129).

3.3. The Outreach Programme: the MoU

Since 2006, in the resolutions on pattern of conferences adopted by the General Assembly, Member States, while acknowledging that measures have been taken to address the issue of the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, asked the Secretary General to:

(...) strengthen the cooperation with institutions that train language specialists (...) and to hold competitive examinations for the recruitment of language staff sufficiently in advance in order to fill current and future vacancies in language services in a timely manner. (UN, 2014).

Faced with this situation, Shaaban Shaaban, the then Under-Secretary General and Chief of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM)²⁴, in order to face the numerous retirements in the language

²⁴ The DGACM is the largest department in the United Nations Secretariat. The overreaching goal of the Department is to provide the physical and deliberative framework for all meetings taking place at
services and to respond to the low success rate at the LCE, decided to launch in 2007 an Outreach Programme targeted at interpreter and translator training institutions. Given the projected turnover (see Table 10) and the low success rate at the LCE, the main objective of the programme was to foster cooperation between the UN and academic training institutions in order to recruit qualified language professionals. As a result, MoU were signed with 22 training institutions as it was decided that MoU were to be signed with four institutions in countries where these languages are spoken. The MoU developed by DGACM details the type of cooperation envisaged between the parties such as provision of training materials, pedagogical assistance and participation of UN staff in end-of-course examinations, organization of in-house internships for selected students, or assistance in developing course modules and teaching materials (see Appendix 1).

In short, as stated clearly in all MoUs, the purpose of the Outreach Programme is for the parties to agree to cooperate in programmes with the aim of training students to take LCEs organized by the UN.

The programme was conceived to meet three objectives: 1) to ensure better visibility of language career opportunities at the UN; 2) to help candidates to better prepare for the competitive language exams in order to be recruited by the Organization; and; 3) to explore other potential avenues for cooperation between international organizations and training institutions.

A special website was also created with information on the LCE and the UN. The website was developed to serve as “a platform for cooperation between the UN and the universities that signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU Universities) with the UN” (UN, 2014). Another important feature of the Outreach Programme is that unpaid internships are organised for students enrolled in MoU universities and

---

25 At the United Nations, the term “language professional” applies to a range of specialized and interrelated occupations, mainly interpreters, translators, editors, verbatim reporters, terminologists, reference assistants, copy preparers and proof-readers.

26 The objective of the Language Internship Programme is threefold: To provide a framework within which undergraduate and graduate students from diverse academic backgrounds may be assigned to DGACM Language Services, where their educational experience can be enhanced through top-up training and practical work assignments; to expose interns to the work of the United Nation and to
UN staff are often invited to participate in final exams as jury members. Throughout the year, UN staff are also encouraged to have direct contact with schools and/or universities. In this context, open-door activities might be organized. This is the occasion to have an interactive debate and students are encouraged to intervene and ask questions. The purpose of these activities is to ensure that students become acquainted, early on in their training, with the requirements for becoming professional UN interpreters and to establish direct contacts with students, thereby facilitating the recruitment process and helping to guarantee high-quality work performance that is required of UN interpreters. This is also the occasion to organise pedagogical assistance exercises targeted at different groups of students with UN language combinations. It is worth highlighting that the general rule governing the Outreach Programme is that the financial burden would be borne by the universities as the programme does not have a dedicated budget, thus all activities must entail zero cost for the UN and can only rely on the capacity and willingness of staff.

A MoU conference\textsuperscript{27} is also organised once every two years with the participation of DGACM officials and MoU universities. It aims, among other things, to (UN, 2014):

- Review collaboration within the MoU network and propose ways to continuously strengthen and improve it.
- Allow partners within the MoU network to compare initiatives and methods in the fields of training language professionals, Training of Trainers (ToT), outreach and communication about training programmes, joint training activities and other related matters and to harmonize these efforts as much as possible.
- Discuss and agree on ways and means to create/strengthen synergies between academic training of language professionals and the needs of employers, specifically international organizations.

\textsuperscript{27} The conference is hosted on a rotating basis by one of the MoU universities. The first conference took place in Salamanca, the second in Mons and the third in Shanghai.
In December 2013, five years after the launch of the programme, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the pattern of conferences\textsuperscript{28}. In Resolution A/Res/68/251, the General Assembly, interalia:

- Notes with appreciation the measures taken by the Secretary-General, in accordance with its resolutions, to address, among other things, the issue of the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, and requests the Secretary-General to maintain and intensify those efforts, including the strengthening of cooperation with institutions that train language specialists, in order to meet the needs in the six official languages of the UN;

- Notes the need for energetic measures to avoid a disruptive shortage of applicants and a high turnover rate in the language career fields, particularly where rare language combinations are involved, and requests the Secretary-General to use the appropriate means to improve the internship programme, including through partnerships with organizations that promote the official languages of the UN;

- Also notes, in this regard, that recent efforts have led to the signing of memorandums of understanding and collaboration agreements with two universities in Africa and that a MoU has been signed with a Latin American institution;

- Welcomes the existing memorandums of understanding between the Organization and 22 universities as a way to strengthen the training of language professionals in order to improve the recruitment of qualified language staff, and requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to assess the appropriate number of memorandums of understanding in order to fulfil the needs of the Organization;

- Requests the Secretary-General to make further concerted efforts to promote Outreach Programmes, such as traineeships and internships, and to introduce innovative methods to increase awareness of the programmes, including through partnerships with Member States, relevant international organizations and language institutions in all regions, in particular to close the wide gap in

\textsuperscript{28} The report on Pattern of Conferences is published every year by the Secretary General. It focuses mainly on the utilization of conference servicing resources at New York, Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi.
Africa and Latin America, and to report to the General Assembly thereon at its sixty-ninth session;

- Requests the DGACM, in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management, to continue to increase its efforts to raise awareness among all Member States about opportunities for employment and internships in the language services at the four main duty stations. (UNGA, 2013)

The resolution clearly shows that the Outreach Programme and the LCE are treated as a priority by the General Assembly.

The same year, the Secretary General also presented a report to the General Assembly in which he stated, interalia, that:

“The next steps towards enhancing the capacity of the Organization to ensure the mandated multilingualism of its parliamentary deliberations will include building a larger pool of qualified language staff by identifying promising candidates through various means, including the revamped LCEs process, the Universities Outreach Program and internships and traineeships conducted in compliance with UN recruitment standards regarding language staff. Given the difficulties experienced in recent years in attracting and retaining qualified language staff, the strategic importance of such an endeavour is self-evident”. (UNGA, 2014).

In his report, the Secretary General presented a table called “return on investment”. The table indicated in figures the number of internships that had been organized and the number of interns that had passed the LCE and had then been recruited at the UN. Although the figures include translators and interpreters, the table clearly shows that out of 113 interns, only 36 passed the LCE, i.e. around 32%, while 304 working days were devoted to this activity.

Table 3. “Return on investment”: participation of UN staff to the programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of working days</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of MoU students who participated in the internship programme</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interns who passed the language exams</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The report also stated that:

- The objectives of the outreach, as in the past, include identifying and assisting individuals with a potential to succeed on a career path leading to in-house or contractual employment as qualified language professionals; and assisting select specialized schools in training students with due understanding of the UN requirements and specificities.

- Such help is provided through direct pedagogical assistance, including visits to schools and remote training, and through guidance to the teaching staff provided mostly remotely and at biannual MoU network conferences. In order to ensure a sustainable influx of new talent, the objectives need to be treated as on-going.

- Memorandums of understanding have been maintained with 22 universities in countries where one of the six official languages is spoken, to encourage the training of language staff and internships. (UNGA, 2014).

In other words, the Outreach Programme, the MoU and the LCE are being discussed at the highest level of the organization, and solutions are being sought to what is considered to be a priority for the organization.

### 3.3.1. LCE statistics

The following tables present the LCE pass rate for the six booths broken down per year and total number of candidates.


Table 4. LCE results for the French booth from 2000 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PASSES</th>
<th>PASS RATE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. LCE results for the English booth from 2000 to 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PASSES</th>
<th>PASS RATE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29 In 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2014, the LCE was organized only for candidates with passive Russian, hence the fewer numbers of applicants.

30 In 2001, 2002, 2008 and 2013, the LCE was organized only for candidates with passive Russian, hence the fewer numbers of applicants.
Table 6. LCE results for the Spanish booth from 2000 to 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PASSES</th>
<th>PASS RATE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. LCE results for the Arabic booth from 2001 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PASSES</th>
<th>PASS RATE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. LCE results for the Chinese booth from 2005 to 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PASSES</th>
<th>PASS RATE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. LCE results for the Russian booth from 2005 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL CANDIDATES</th>
<th>PASSES</th>
<th>PASS RATE (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When interpreting these tables, it is important to keep in mind that the huge difference between the numbers of applications in a given year are easily explained.
by the required passive languages in a particular LCE. This applies to the French and the English booths when one required language is passive Russian (the number of candidates with this language combination will be much lower). For certain booths, however, such as the Chinese booth, the number of candidates may be very high. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the number of successful candidates remains low.

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the pass rate remains very low year after year. It seldom exceeds 20%. This fact was already recognized by Sekel in his report when he said that the LCE “as a tool for staffing the language services was beginning to exhibit shortcomings in the form of low yields that were inadequate to fill projected, let alone existing, vacancies” (2010: 4).

For the French booth, with the exception of 2000 when 37.5% of candidates were successful, the pass rate has never exceeded 20%. As explained previously, in 2010 and 2014 the LCE was organized for candidates with passive Russian only. Since candidates with this language combination are much fewer than candidates with passive Spanish, more LCEs have been organized to fill existing and future vacancies. If we compare the percentages before and after 2007 (which is the year the Outreach Programme was introduced and the first MoU signed), no improvements were achieved as far as the number of successful candidates is concerned. In contrast, the 2013 LCE results were among the worst for the French booth since 2000.

For the English booth, the pass rate only exceeded 20% in 2003. There was a slight improvement in 2011 (after the launch of the Outreach Programme) and a decrease again in 2013. In 2013, the LCE was organized for candidates with passive Russian only. This combination is by far the most difficult to find on the market whereas English booth with passive Spanish is quite common. Another LCE was organised in March 2015 but the results were not available at the time of writing.

Since 2000, no LCE has yielded a pass rate of more than 20% for the Spanish booth: 2000, 2009 (two years after the launch of the programme) and 2013 (five years into the programme) were the worst years for the LCE. The only conclusion that may be drawn is that the Outreach Programme has had no positive impact on the results of the Spanish booth.
In the Arabic booth as well, the percentage of successful candidates never exceeded 20%. 2003 was unequivocally the worst year with no successful candidates out of 39 applicants. In 2009, two years into the Outreach Programme only 1 candidate was successful out of 93. And in 2013, five years after the launch of the programme, 15 out of 105 candidates were successful. In terms of the number of candidates that passed the LCE from 2000 to 2013, it is evident that the highest number of successful candidates - 15 - was recorded in 2013, although the pass rate in that year was also less than 15%. In the case of this booth, it is possible that the Outreach Programme is helping the recruitment of more candidates since the before and after figures clearly show the difference. Another LCE was organized in August 2014, but the results are not yet available.

Regarding the Chinese booth, an LCE was organized at the end of 2014. The results are not available and could not be taken into account. The only data are from before the launch of the programme. The percentages of successful candidates are quite low but no comparison can be made and no conclusion can be drawn on the impact of the programme.

The percentages for the Russian booth clearly show that results were better before 2007. In 2009 and 2012, which are the two years when the LCE was organized, results have worsened, with only 11.9% and 6.3% of candidates passing the exam in each respective year. Therefore, the Outreach Programme cannot be considered to have had a positive impact for the Russian booth since the results have gradually worsened instead of improving.

Although the data for the French booth prompted me to start with the line of research described in the introduction, the data above clearly demonstrate that the low success rate applies equally to all booths year after year. It will be important to see if the curricula of MoU schools are appropriate for passing the LCE and obtaining knowledge about the training background of successful candidates. The very low success rate is a more than legitimate reason to ask such a question. Although more examinations have been organized and despite the large number of applicants, no significant changes have been registered. My personal observation as a member of LCE juries led me to wonder if the curricula of MoU schools could perhaps be fine-tuned in order to better take into account UN specificities and challenges. Another factor should also be taken into account: how and where the
successful candidates were trained. In order to get more information on their training in 2014, Lafeber, a UN senior translator, presented on behalf of Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) an analysis of the universities attended by the candidates who passed the LCEs from 2010 to 2013. The aim of the analysis (which included all UN language professional groups) was to find answers to the following questions:

1. What proportion of successful LCE candidates graduated from MoU universities?
2. Do some MoU universities produce many more successful candidates than the others in a given language group or several language groups?
3. Are there other universities outside the MoU network that DGACM might wish to work more closely with?
4. In what ways can or should LCE success be used to measure the impact of the Outreach Programme?

Indeed, this analysis is very important for DGACM in general and for each language group in particular. In the case of the interpretation section, we have previously seen that the impact of the Outreach Programme is unequal and difficult to really assess given that the pass rate continues to be low. However, knowing how many successful candidates have been MoU trained is also very important in order to better comprehend and gauge the role of MoU schools in helping candidates to pass the LCE.

Some of Lafeber’s findings (I will quote only the conclusions that are relevant for my research) included the following:

1. Altogether, 52% of successful LCE candidates in 2010-2013 had attended at least one MoU university. However, by language and profession, the aforementioned proportion varied considerably.
2. Four MoU universities did not yield any successful LCE candidates in 2010-2013.
3. Four MoU universities had trained several successful LCE candidates for other target languages than that of the country in which they are based, in addition to successful candidates in their own language group.
4. Several non-MoU universities had trained as many successful candidates as the MoU universities (or more), particularly for the English and Spanish LCEs.

5. On average, and across all professions, 12 years elapse between obtaining a first university degree and placement on a roster.

Bearing in mind the purpose of my research and given my stated objective, I decided to focus specifically on the first and the last conclusions, i.e. the majority (52%) of successful LCE candidates in 2010-2013 had attended at least one MoU university and on average, and across all professions, 12 years elapse between obtaining a first university degree and placement on a roster. The first conclusion that I can draw is that if a candidate needs 12 years of experience before he or she is able to pass the LCE, success cannot be entirely attributed to the MoU school the candidate attended but also to the experience the candidate has gained.

Moreover, Lafeber’s report clearly shows that for all the LCEs organised between 2010 and 2013, some successful candidates were trained in non-MoU schools. Another observation can be made: some MoU schools did not yield any successful LCE candidates in 2010-2013 (Lafeber, 2014).

In order to try to grasp the reasons underlying the LCE low success rate, during the second MoU conference (§3.3) that was held in 2012 in Belgium, Sheila Shermet, a UN staff interpreter from the English booth was asked to write an article on the LCE, its success rate and the quality expected from candidates. In her article, the author explains that different kinds of meetings are held at the UN: expert meetings (where a specific topic is discussed) that are not UN-specific meetings and can be compared to meetings in the private market. In these kinds of meetings, all participants have the same objective, which is to communicate their ideas and to be asked questions afterwards during the interactive debate (Shermet, 2012). For these meetings in particular, the quality of interpretation will be considered positively if “it is easy to listen to all day, i.e. the voice quality is pleasant and delivery easy on the ears and the style and content native level and easy to understand without excessive mental gymnastics” (Shermet, 2012). For these types of meetings, what is expected by delegates is what Shermet calls “standard interpretation”. However, for the more UN type of meeting, like the debates that take place during a General Assembly or Security Council session, delegates’ expectations will be quite different quality wise:
at the UN, for certain passive languages, delegates will often ask someone from their delegation to monitor the interpretation or when this is not possible, will deliver his or her speech while listening to the interpretation in English. In this kind of situation, the speaker will be monitoring the interpretation and even presents alternative choices of words. This means that delegates do not judge the quality of interpretation by whether or not communication is working seamlessly, but rather whether or not they hear the words they expect. Shermet calls this “oral translation”. According to Shermet, this dichotomy regarding the two different types of interpretation might account for the low success rate in the LCE: LCE speeches are usually speeches taken from the General Assembly or the Security Council (see §3.2.1.2), in other words, speeches where, according to the author, an “oral translation” is required and candidates do not have the text; tackling these issues would help them achieve better results in the LCE (Shermet, 2012).

3.3.2. Conclusion

From the very beginning, the LCE has been handled by the interpretation division at New York headquarters. An unwritten methodology has evolved over time whereby the final selection of candidates (after a first screening procedure by the Human Resources department), the preparation of materials and the marking of the exam will be the responsibility of the corresponding chiefs of booths in New York (sometimes for the marking - or part of it- one or two senior interpreters from Geneva might be involved on an ad hoc basis). In the absence of clear written rules, the chief of booth is called upon to exercise his or her best criteria to select the type of speeches that will be used in each case. Heads of booth are free to decide that a given speech will start at the beginning or in the middle, to start with the most difficult speech or with the easiest one, to have three easy speeches or three very difficult ones (sometimes forgetting that when the speech was interpreted at the UN, interpreters most probably had the text). Heads of booths can design the LCE as they wish, and their decisions after marking the exams are final. One tacit rule that all chief of booths have followed so far (although in this case there is no formal decision either) is that speeches cannot be especially crafted for the LCE, but rather taken directly from speeches previously delivered and interpreted at the UN (Diur, 2014).
According to the UN (2014):

Many candidates fail at the examinations not because they do not fully understand a foreign language, but because they are not able to express their thoughts adequately in their own main language.

Although this quote from the UN outreach website might be true, my own experience is that candidates sitting the LCE also face different kinds of problems. For example, they might not know what to expect, i.e. if the fastest speech is going to be the first one or the last one (the unwritten rule has been that speeches follow an increasing order of difficulty but for some booths this rule no longer applies). In some other cases, candidates have been surprised that they had to do the second language (Spanish and/or Russian for the French booth) before the English speeches (as required, given that the English test is eliminatory). This could pose difficulties because candidates are more tired in the second part of the exam than in the first. This might be due to unclear instructions given to the human resources officer in charge of administering the exam in the different locations (exams are organized in different countries and instructions are read out by different human resources officers who sometimes have never seen a booth and/or an interpreter). The length of the speeches may also vary (the rule is that speeches must be from five to ten minutes); there is a huge difference between doing three five-minute speeches and three nine or ten-minute speeches. In this case as well there is no harmonization among booths and some blocs of languages can last 40 minutes instead of the recommended 30 minutes (Diur, 2014).

There are many potential explanations for the low success rate: as mentioned previously, the lack of a standardized methodology to guide the whole examination process and the inconsistency among booths represent real challenges. Although meeting those challenges could do much to improve success rates, candidates’ lack of basic UN knowledge should also be tackled. The lack of knowledge about the way the UN is structured or not understanding the differences among the Committees might represent an added difficulty. Unfortunately, this is still the case with the majority of candidates. The UN careers portal (which is where all LCEs are announced and through which all applications must be sent) clearly states that:
Interpreters working at the UN are expected to recognize, understand and – in a split second - have a word in another language for any one of a myriad of issues. The range of interpretation subjects is broad, including politics, legal affairs, economic and social issues, human rights, finance and administration. (UN, 2014).

Despite the fact that the LCE portal asks candidates to be aware of certain categories of topics featured on the UN website and despite the availability of all the necessary information on the Internet in general and on the UN website in particular, it is always surprising to note that some candidates still lack the required basic knowledge. One reason could be that the UN website contains a lot of information and for candidates this can be overwhelming. Candidates need to remember that LCE speeches follow a certain structure and the topics chosen are related to the main themes discussed by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Knowing where to find the information and how to analyse and use it in preparation for the LCE is therefore crucial (Diur, 2014).

Although knowledge of UN topics and specific terminology constitutes one of the challenges of the LCE, it is my belief that with proper preparation and with a detailed explanation on what to expect, candidates sitting future LCEs will be able to do better. But if we want that to happen, we all have to do our share: as explained in the introduction, the LCE is a chain with a series of connected links:

The first link is of course the UN. To foster cooperation with training institutions, the UN decided to launch an Outreach Programme and to sign MoUs and thus create a second link to the chain: MoU schools. The third link are the candidates to the LCE and the last link in the chain and, I would venture to say one of the most important links, are the senior interpreters in charge of marking the LCE and deciding which candidates have the necessary quality to enter employment at the UN. For this reason, in order to meet my different objectives, in my dissertation I will study the different links in the chain.

---

31 The portal explains how candidates can “create their own directories and name them using the categories featured on the UN website: peace and security; development; human rights; humanitarian affairs; international law”. 
As stated above, the low success rate revealed by the 2013 LCE results for the French booth prompted me to reflect on the causes for this relatively low pass rate. I therefore thought that it could be important to have a closer look at MoU schools and examine how they are organized and the curriculum offered and to revise the literature on training given that training is directly related to the chances of passing the LCE.

4.1. Approaches to conference interpreter training

4.1.1. Sawyer

The evidence presented suggests that a review of assessment practices in some interpreter education programmes and, by extension, the curricula of which interpreter examinations are a part, is in the interest of all curriculum stakeholders. It may well be that some instructional systems require fundamental changes in plan and/or purpose. Let’s hope that at the end of our research, it will be possible to move the long-awaited discussion forward. (Bobitt, 1971, in Sawyer, 2004).

Sawyer in his book analyses different types of curriculums, their design and their impact on the acquisition of skills and competencies (2004). He also describes how the environments can foster a better learning approach. Given the topic of my dissertation, his book is particularly relevant as he presents very frankly and clearly the problems that exist in interpretation training and examines the strength and weaknesses of the majority of curricula on offer.

Instruction at interpretation schools has been, according to Sawyer, “structured and sequenced in two basic models: open and closed curricula” (2004: 85), open curricula being like a menu from which students must make their choices, and closed curricula consisting of a fixed progression in skills acquisition.
For Sawyer, there are two possible definitions of what constitutes a curriculum: the curriculum as “a plan of action” that includes “clearly stated learning objectives” and the curriculum defined as “encompassing all of the learning experiences of the student” (2004: 42). These two definitions are, according to the author, part of the “official curriculum”. While analysing the schools curricula, in order to really understand what a school has to offer, one needs to “look beyond the conceptual framework on paper and draw upon an insider’s knowledge of the programme of instruction” (2004: 42). This means that students do not really know what they are getting into and this also represents an extra difficulty for those who want to study the school’s curricula since “the knowledge of an insider is required to fully evaluate those variables that are not apparent to the external observer” (2004: 43). Sawyer adds that this information about the hidden curriculum should be thoroughly documented and exposed for the benefit of the external observer (2004: 43), as well as for the benefit of future students and future researchers. This dichotomy between the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum must be taken into account, according to the author, while elaborating a case-study on curricula in general.

Two different approaches have been adopted to study curricula: the scientific approach and the humanistic approach. The scientific approach includes the behavioural approach, which represented the major foundation for curriculum for much of the previous century, and the “computational view of the mind”: here Sawyer quotes the information processing that was particularly studied by Gerver, Massaro and Moser (2004: 61). Sawyer’s conclusion is that although information processing studies have proven to be a strong tool, their usefulness as a pedagogical tool has not yet been made explicit although he qualified his comments by adding that Gile’s effort model, which was developed as a pedagogical tool, seems to allow students to build a simple yet efficient personal construct of their interpretation skills.

The other element of the scientific approach is the “skills and abilities in Instructional Systems Design” (Sawyer, 2004: 63). For the author, skills progression has always been recognized as a useful tool for interpretation training. This approach means having a curriculum that includes a breaking down of higher order skills into component skills through different modules that will ensure students gradually acquire different skills. It must be noted, however, that according to
Sawyer, there is very little empirical data supporting the inclusion of a translation or a consecutive module in an interpretation training programme.

A third component of the scientific approach is the “cognitive psychology of expertise”. Sawyer explains that in interpretation, to explain expertise, studies focused on the differences between the cognitive processes of novices and experts. Sawyer’s conclusion is that the different levels of expertise defined by authors such as Hoffman (1997) or Moser-Mercer (1997, 2000a) can be used to assess if a student has acquired the required skills before progressing to the next one. For that to happen, the environment must be conducive to learning and skills development. Sawyer also explains that the skill progression described by Hoffman (1997) will follow categories stemming from “medieval craft guilds” and that those categories were also followed by Moser-Mercer (2000a) and Kiraly (2000 in Sawyer, 2004: 71).

For Sawyer, the scientific approach provides a framework for instructional design by viewing the acquisition of interpretation competence as process whereas the humanistic approach focuses on cooperative learning, independent learning, small-group learning and social activities. The curriculum is viewed as an interaction between tutors and students. For Sawyer, although leading interpreter education programmes are situated in an academic environment, interpreter training has never truly left the realm of apprenticeship (2004: 76). Apprenticeship was also mentioned by Pöchhacker when he explained that at curricular level, the medieval tradition of the master teaching the apprentice was by no means obsolete (2010). Sawyer concludes by stating that the curriculum designer must structure the curriculum and events of instruction so as to promote and facilitate the integration of the professional community, cognitive apprenticeship through mentoring relationships, and reflective practice (2004: 85).

In this context, Sawyer poses very pertinent questions: for example, some curricula include a translation track (Arjona, 1984), which can come before, simultaneously to or independently from the interpretation track. Sawyer believes that more research should be conducted on this topic as, given the lack of empirical data, positions on the matter are based upon personal opinion and viewpoint (Sawyer, 2004: 92).
Indeed, as Sawyer rightly stated, interpreter training and thus interpreter curriculum face numerous challenges: the need to reduce the length of training periods, the erosion of working conditions, the changing role of technology, to name but a few (2004: 4). There is one particular challenge quoted by Sawyer that is especially relevant for the purpose of my research: the adaptation of training to the workplace. As explained previously, my dissertation must be seen in the UN context and the very low success rates in the LCE are a more than legitimate reason to reflect and wonder if the curricula of MoU schools are the most appropriate to help candidates pass the LCE and subsequently work for the UN in that, as mentioned above, although more examinations have been organized and despite the large number of applicants, very few candidates have managed to pass the LCE.

4.1.2. Hoffman

For Hoffman, in the light of research results, it can clearly be concluded that the performance of professional interpreters is manifestly superior to that of student interpreters (1997: 194). Therefore, for a novice to acquire the necessary skills to become an expert, skills need to hinge on a knowledge base and methods need to be developed in order to elicit the necessary knowledge that will allow skills to grow.

Although intensive practice is necessary according to Ericsson (2000), even the most talented student needs around ten years of intense involvement to become an expert- the novice needs to progress from the cognitive through the associative to the autonomous stages of skill acquisition (Hoffmann, 1997:199). For Hoffmann, if one uses the psychological research approach, expertise has defined features such as performance and skill, developmental progression, expert knowledge and memory organization and the expert reasoning process (1997:193).

As explained in section 1.2.4, Hoffman considers that in order to acquire the necessary skills and become an expert there are seven different phases of developmental progression (1997): naïve, novice, initiate, apprentice, journeyman, expert. The final and seventh stage is the master, i.e. an expert who is qualified to teach others. Although some of this terminology is seldom used, whatever the names given to these different stages, a good knowledge base, intensive practice,
motivation and good coaching are undoubtedly the necessary ingredients to help novices become experts.

For the purpose of the LCE, MoU schools are supposed to produce journeyman, i.e. young interpreters that have just graduated and that are fit to sit in the booth. It could be useful to know whether we are expecting journeymen or experts to pass the LCE. According to Lafeber’s report (see chapter 3.4), experts are the ones who are successful at the LCE.

4.1.3. Moser-Mercer

During the first sixty years of training simultaneous interpreters we have witnessed a phenomenal change from the reading of conference records (at the ILO in 1928) as a training method to the development of more comprehensive training methods built on a theoretical foundation. (Moser-Mercer, 2005b: 220).

According to Moser-Mercer, the publication of Pédagogie raisonnée de l’interprétation by Seleskovitch and Lederer marked the beginning of a “systematic and detailed treatment of the teaching of SI” (2005b: 216). Before that period, teaching methods used after the introduction of SI were poorly documented and when they were, records tended to focus on CI.

Moser-Mercer’s model on the cognitive aspects of the interpreting process found several practical applications: it was used by the author to develop a monolingual introductory course to SI; it helped select interpretation students at Monterey; and it was used to develop the beginning students’ abilities to handle linguistic material, to master the task of doing two things at the same time, to train retention in Generated Abstract Memory (GAM) and to reduce reaction time (1984: 318).

After analysing all the data collected over a four year period (data regarding students’ performance during the entrance exam and during the following years leading up to their final exams), Moser-Mercer’s recommendation was that, given the fact that problems evidenced in the introductory course often persisted until the final exams, it was therefore important to make sure that in a curriculum “extended
testing” were provided and specific criteria were used, thus allowing students to progress within a set period of time.

For Moser-Mercer, the first comprehensive overview of how curriculum designs support efficient training methods in simultaneous was Longley’s account of 1978. Longley’s curriculum included both CI and SI. While she was chief interpreter at UNESCO, Longley decided to design a course in order to address the shortage of English booth interpreters with passive Russian. Several of the interpreters trained by Longley were immediately recruited by the UN and participated in the UN training programme (see chapter 3). This course was a new departure: it was short in length (less than one academic year), it taught technique not languages, and it applied rigorous entry testing that targeted a person’s potential rather than the finished product. Longley considered SI and CI as interactive skills while other schools used a more sequential model of teaching consecutive before allowing students to embark on simultaneous (AIIC, 2014). Longley’s idea “of an intensive post-graduate short course to train simultaneous interpreters” (Moser-Mercer, 2005b: 217) was later used by the Commission of the EC (Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences [SCIC]) to train its own interpreters and has become the reference curriculum of the European Masters in Conference Interpreting (EMCI)32 (Moser-Mercer, 2005b). In this regard, Moser-Mercer believes that intensive courses might not allow students to have the required time to acquire the skills and this lack of specific interpreting education could have more serious consequences (2005a). Moser-Mercer is of the opinion that in the future it will be necessary to adapt interpretation training and education given the new challenges that the interpretation world will have to face such as the increasing number of language combinations. In order to identify learners’ needs and content requirements, four basic stages should be taken into account when building a curriculum: design, development, evaluation and revision (2005a). Before designing a training programme, it is necessary to identify the “need for instruction” and to make sure that the programme will target those needs. The second step will be to develop “an outline of the content to be covered” while taking into account “the instructional problems” and the goals of the programme (2005a:

---

32 The EMCI is a Masters-type university programme that was launched as a pilot project by the European Commission, DGXXII and the European Parliament in 1997.
63). As explained by Moser-Mercer, several factors will need to be factored in as this will determine the way the programme will be developed:

What works at graduate level in a multi-cultural setting with a variety of A-languages does not necessarily work at the undergraduate level in a more mono-cultural setting, where all students share the same A-language. (2005a: 64).

Choosing the training material and the teaching method is also part of developing a programme. For the author, theory must be taken into account given that:

No matter which model of the interpreting process we consider to most accurately describe the component parts and skills, our goal has to be to break down the acquisition of new skills into a logical sequence of process steps. (2005a: 65).

The training programme should therefore follow a specific progression. The progression must be explained to students and students should know in advance what skills they will be acquiring at the different phases of the progression. Students must also understand that, in order to acquire the different skills, they will need to learn to work on their own and to acquire a certain level of autonomy. They can learn in the classroom with the teacher and outside the classrooms with their peers. In order for this autonomous learning to be successful, trainers need to equip students with the required meta-language to analyse their performance (Moser-Mercer, 2005a). For the author, the best way to develop a greater learning autonomy and to foster an environment conducive to learning is by giving students regular feedback, inside the classroom and beyond. This feedback and the interaction that ensues between trainers and learners could take place through a learning portal in a dynamic interface that will allow a real exchange between trainers and learners. This portal could be used “to create collaborative reports, to access learning resources, to post news, to create one’s personal portfolio and to interact in a synchronous or asynchronous manner” (2005a: 69).

Moser-Mercer also thinks that in order to strengthen skills acquisition, “blended learning” could be put in place, i.e. a combination of face-to-face and virtual learning. This type of learning would allow both trainers and learners to see
problems from different viewpoints and thus encourage “cognitive flexibility”. Given the importance of new technologies, it indeed seems important to use them for training purposes as well. This new teaching method makes sense given the fact that young interpreters will be asked more and more to work in non-traditional modes such as remote interpreting and video-conferencing. In international organizations such as the UN, remote interpreting and videoconferencing are now being used on a regular basis and in this respect Moser-Mercer’s conclusion is accurate: “Training only for routine expertise will not prepare our students for tomorrow's challenges” (2005a: 69).

According to Moser-Mercer, all training institutions should be able to evaluate their own curricula against the objectives set. For the author, the use of the same curriculum and the same teaching methods year after year does not mean that the programme should not be assessed. It is also important to remember that training programmes in interpretation are known for suffering from high attrition rates and the pass rates in entrance and final exams are usually very low. The evaluation must therefore be a 360-degree evaluation that includes “not only formative evaluation - questionnaire handed out to students, but also qualitative evaluation” (2005a: 70). The results of the evaluation should be used to improve the training programme if need be since the new breed of trained interpreters must have the capacity and be in a position to face the new challenges.

4.2. Curricular approaches to conference interpreting

The evidence presented suggests that a review of assessment practices in some interpreter education programmes and, by extension, the curricula of which interpreter examinations are a part, is in the interest of all curriculum stakeholders. It may well be that some instructional systems require fundamental changes in plan and/or purpose. (Bobitt, 1971 in Sawyer, 2004).

When analysing interpretation training institution curricula, one cannot help but notice that there are huge disparities and inconsistencies between institutions. Some curricula include a translation track whereas others have core common modules for translation and interpretation. Although there have been some attempts
to develop common curricula\textsuperscript{33}, the differences between curricula are still a reality. AIIC has published guidelines and recommendations on training curricula; I will therefore start this section by stating AIIC’s position on the matter.

4.2.1. AIIC position

In 1999\textsuperscript{34}, the AIIC Training Committee published for the first time recommendations on curricular approaches (these recommendations are regularly updated). The recommendations are designed to help prospective interpreters understand what to look for in an interpretation training programme. Interpreting schools and programmes are also invited to compare their curricula with the following Best Practice recommendations (AIIC, 2014):

- Programs at post-graduate level are more appropriate to train conference interpreters for entry into the profession.
- Applicants have to pass an aptitude test before being admitted to the school.
- Applicants are encouraged to spend considerable time living and working or studying in a country where their non-native languages are spoken before they consider entering a professional training programme.
- The school and teaching faculty inform candidates before and during their studies about relevant potential employment opportunities.
- The curriculum should be posted on line.
- Courses are designed and interpretation classes taught by practicing conference interpreters whose language combinations are recognized by AIIC or by an international organization.
- Teachers of interpretation have had some teacher training specifically related to interpretation.
- All programmes are delivered by a combination of native speakers of the students’ A and B/C (native and non-native) languages.

\textsuperscript{33} EMCL is a case in point.

\textsuperscript{34} Those recommendations are updated regularly.
- The curriculum includes a theory component and a course which addresses professional practice and ethics. These theoretical courses should be delivered by practicing conference interpreters.

- The final diploma in conference interpretation is only awarded if the candidate's competence in both CI and SI in all working language combinations has been assessed and judged consistent with professional entry requirements.

- Final examinations are conducted in an open and transparent fashion. Candidates should understand the assessment criteria.

- Final examination juries are composed of teachers from the academic programme and external assessors who are also practicing conference interpreters. The latter's assessment of each examinee's performance should count towards the final mark awarded.

- Representatives from international organizations and other bodies that recruit interpreters are invited to attend final exams as observers if they are not already present as external assessors.

### 4.2.2. Sawyer

As explained by Sawyer, according to curriculum designers there are two basic models: open and closed curricula. Closed curriculum models are strictly sequenced whereas open curriculum models give learners more choices in determining the content and progression of the curriculum (2004: 85). Open curricula are like a menu from which the student must make choices and closed curricula consist of a fixed progression in skills acquisition. For Arjona-Tseng, there are five basic curriculum models that are followed by the majority of translating or interpreting training institutions (2004: 86):

- The linear problem: the translation track will precede the interpretation track.

- The modified linear model, which entails a specialization and "parallel tracking" (translation and interpretation).

- The Y-or forked track model where all students need to follow a mandatory core curriculum before choosing to specialize in either translation or interpretation.
- The modified Y-track model which includes a core curriculum and then a specialization in translation, interpretation or other multidisciplinary studies.
- Parallel track model: after an entrance exam, the students can enter the programme at different levels. Experience can also be used to enter the programme.

Sawyer goes on to explain that after the curriculum reform that took place in Germany and Austria, the idea of introducing modules to allow certain flexibility while giving the students the opportunity to “assemble programmes of instruction based upon their skills and abilities” (2004: 88) was voiced. A decision on any new approaches or any change of approaches in the curriculum design, must, according to the author, include the whole community: the administrators, instructors, students’ alumni and employers. It is also necessary to have clear training objectives in mind while developing a programme. Once the objectives are clear, one needs to “work backward” and elaborate skills sequencing, knowledge building and teaching objectives in order to meet those goals. Designing a curriculum means following several steps: elaborate a statement on the philosophy that the programme intends to follow and a clear vision statement; start by defining the goals of the programme; identity clear learning goals, include different type of assessments and make sure that the programme and the curriculum have a sound and reliable basis (2004: 91).

Further research into this topic would also be advisable in order to improve interpreter education programmes (2004: 92). Indeed, this lack of literature constitutes, as Sawyer rightly stated, one of the numerous challenges facing interpreter training and, consequently, interpreter curricula: in a period of budgetary constraints, training programmes are asked to reduce their duration or to limit the number of language combinations on offer. In the last few years, several training programmes had to close despite the fact that they had been training interpreters for decades. As explained previously, the challenge that interests me most for the purpose of my research is the adaptation of training to the workplace. Given the LCE results so far, this is a more than legitimate question to ask.

Sawyer’s conclusion is that when designing a curriculum, it is important to first tackle several elements: it is important to know if the curriculum will include both translation and interpretation and the kind of language combinations that will be offered (2004: 92). As stated by Sawyer, given that no empirical data are available,
“answers to these questions are based upon personal opinion and view point” (2004: 92).

4.2.3. Pöchhacker

For Pöchhacker, who like Sawyer deplores the lack of research on schools’ curricula, the majority of conference interpreting curricula still follow “the medieval tradition of the master teaching the apprentice” (2010). Indeed, the apprenticeship principle is still very much in use. One only needs to look at institutional websites that state that their teachers are all professional conference interpreters. (2004: 178).

Training programmes have different durations and different kinds of tracks: courses can range from sixth-month postgraduate courses to four or five-year courses where students have to follow a double track on translation and interpretation. Pöchhacker explains that in most cases, the interpreting courses are one or two-year master’s level courses (2004: 179). The author also thinks that the majority of programmes have the same curricular content: courses in consecutive and simultaneous, terminology classes and some “area studies” to allow students to acquire general knowledge. The real problem is that curricula can hardly be assessed given that part of the curriculum is “hidden” (see § 4.4), thus leaving several questions unanswered (2004: 180).

4.2.4. Mackintosh

Since all the new international organizations that had been created just after World War II decided to work in SI in order to save time, there was a massive demand for conference interpreters (Mackintosh, 1999: 69). This fact prompted the creation of several interpreter training programmes.

According to Mackintosh, most training institutions have followed three formats: the undergraduate format, which allows students to earn a first degree in both translation and interpretation; the Y format, which entails a core curriculum during three to four years and then specialization in either translation or

---

35 UN specialized agencies, the European Steel and Coal Community, the Council of Europe, NATO, etc.
interpretation; the third and last format is the post-graduate course, which includes either a master in translation or interpretation (or in both) or “professionally oriented courses” where trainers are professional interpreters and where an entrance exam is usually requested (1999: 71).

Mackintosh, while recalling the important role played by AIIC in curriculum shaping, explains that there are still several issues that have not been resolved: by way of example, Mackintosh refers to the appropriate duration of a course or the right starting time of SI training.

Mackintosh wonders, like other authors (Sawyer, 2004; Gile, 2009; Pöchacker, 2004), what the place of theory in a training curriculum should be and what kind of training trainers should receive. Trainer training has been emphasized by AIIC and it is now more and more understood that “good training practice” (Mackintosh, 1999: 75) is now necessary. In quoting the core curriculum of EMCI, Mackintosh believes that there is now a broad consensus on the core curriculum. However, in the future, according to the author, it will be necessary to focus on the training received by trainers and to make sure that research findings are factored into training curricula.

4.2.5. Gile

Gile noted that in most interpreting programmes, students will be given interpretation exercises that will be commented and corrected by their teachers. He advocates for the inclusion of theory during training as well since this will “contribute to a better understanding of phenomena, difficulties, strategies and tactics” (2009: 24). Although, according to Gile, there is a broad agreement on interpreting exercises, there is still no consensus on the duration of the curriculum, progression or even admission or graduation standards (2009: 16). While acknowledging the fact that a number of other courses on economics or law are often part of the training, there is no agreement on whether and in which form theory should be taught. For Gile, theory can have a positive impact on students: knowing how SI and CI cognitive processes worked could, given the “explanatory power” of theory, give “reassurance to students who experience doubts and difficulties” (2009: 17). Besides, according to Gile, theoretical concepts can also “help students to choose
appropriate strategies and tactics” (2009: 17). With a theoretical component, students can acquire the necessary tools to better understand the process.

4.3. Analysis of interpreting school curricula

4.3.1. Rationale behind the analysis of curricula

In order to be in a better position to give recommendations at the end of my thesis, I need to first understand how MoU schools’ curricula are designed and adapted to the needs of the UN and the LCE. In fact, one of the objectives of the MoU is to ensure that students become acquainted, early on in their training, with the requirements for becoming professional UN interpreters, and to establish direct contact between staff interpreters and students, thereby facilitating the recruitment process through the successful completion of the competitive examination (see §3.3). Since the UN competitive examination only tests candidates in SI, one of the main objectives of the curriculum analysis will be to determine at what point in the curriculum SI is introduced.

For the analysis, I needed to be able to obtain, for each school, information on the curriculum, the progression schedules and the sequencing between consecutive and simultaneous. The research question of my analysis was the following:

RQ: Are the main challenges of the LCE (SI, speed, UN topics and accents) sufficiently covered in MoU schools?

Thus, the objective of the curricular analysis is:

Objective: Analyse if the challenges of the LCE, namely the modality used (SI), speed, UN topics and accents are sufficiently covered in MoU schools.

As a matter of fact, all the MoU signed between the UN and training institutions are entitled (see Appendix 1) MoU between the UN and the University on cooperation in the training of candidates for LCE. The title itself indicates very clearly the main objective of the MoU: cooperation in the training of candidates for the LCE. In fact, Article 3 of the MoU specifies, inter alia, the responsibilities of universities, stating the following:
The University shall:

Adapt, in consultation with the UN, as appropriate, existing Training Programmes or create new Training Programmes leading to a master’s degree in conference interpretation and/or conference translation in any combinations of the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), with emphasis on preparation for LCEs organized by the UN.

Since my dissertation needs to be viewed in the UN context, the objective of the analysis is to get a better insight on how schools have been taking into account the specificities of the LCE and if they have been “adapting their training programmes” as requested by the MoU.

For the purpose of my research, knowing the moment SI is introduced would help me understand whether schools offer enough training on SI and also the duration of courses could have a bearing on the adequacy of the SI training for passing the LCE.

4.3.2. Methodology

Collecting internal and external documents from a range of translation and interpretation is a daunting task, as these documents, particularly those on course sequencing, may not be available from a central administrative office on the school level. Rather, they are often developed and circulated within individual programmes or departments (...). When internal documents are readily available to the public, as in the Conférence Internationale permanente d’Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI) handbook, they are often limited to an objectified, terse description that provides little information as to how the curriculum is implemented and how it is subjectively experienced. (Sawyer, 2004: 2).

Indeed, when carrying out the curricular analysis, I realized that some interpretation school websites do not always provide a clear picture of a given institution. For my dissertation, I needed to obtain very precise information on the schools curricula. The most important conclusion that I needed to be able to draw at the end of the analysis for each school was the sequencing between CI and SI and the moment SI is introduced in the curriculum, and if the challenges inherent in the LCE (speed, topics and accents) were sufficiently covered. This information is seldom stated on the schools’ websites. I therefore deemed it necessary to carry out
a survey using a questionnaire targeted at all MoU schools, the aim being to gather information on the sequencing between consecutive and simultaneous and on the inclusion of a specific module on the UN in the curriculum. The questions were as follows:

1. How many months are devoted to CI and how many months to SI?
2. Is consecutive taught before simultaneous?
3. When in the curriculum is simultaneous introduced?
4. What is the duration of the course?
5. Do you have a specific module on interpreting at the UN? If yes, what does it focus on?

For institutions whose websites were in either Russian, Arabic or Chinese, as well as for schools for which the information needed was not included on their websites, the following questions were included (the answers to those questions, while on the website, were only available in the original language):

1. Name of the programme
2. Creation of the programme
3. Target students
4. Background (history of the creation of the programme)
5. Faculty-profile
6. Language combinations offered
7. Admission criteria and exam
8. Internship (if available)

I decided to send the questionnaire via email (see Appendix 2) as I thought it was the easiest and quickest way to get answers. Questionnaires were sent, using the email address provided on the UN Outreach Programme website,36 to all 22 MoU

---

36 On the United Nations Outreach Programme website, all the schools that have signed a MoU provide the name of their focal points and their respective email addresses.
schools. The questionnaire was accompanied by a message explaining that I needed to gather more information for my dissertation. I received 12 answers.

Eventually, using information obtained on the websites and thanks to the responses received from the questionnaire, I could analyse 18 out of 22 MoU schools (see § 4.3.3). Four MoU universities could not be analysed at all (no information on the website and/or no answer to the questionnaire). For other schools, although the analysis was still possible, no information on sequencing was available.

4.3.3. Schools

Below is a list of all the MoU schools as it appears on the UN outreach website.

- **ARABIC**
  1. Ain Shams University (ASU), Egypt
  2. The American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt
  3. Damascus University, Syria
  4. Université Saint-Joseph (USJ), Lebanon

- **CHINESE**
  1. Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), China
  2. Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), China
  3. Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), China

- **ENGLISH**
  1. London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
  2. Monterey Institute of International Studies, USA
  3. University of Bath, United Kingdom
  4. University of Westminster, United Kingdom
When analysing the curricula of interpretation training institutions that have signed an MoU with the United Nations, one cannot help but notice the huge disparities and inconsistencies between institutions. Although the professional community is aware of this, we can only echo Sawyer’s words (2004): “curriculum and assessment in interpreter education programmes are under-researched and under-studied”.

The first conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that, as Pöchhacker explained, of the various models described in literature (Arjona, 1984; Mackintosh, 1999; Sawyer, 2004), except for the four to five year courses that include a translation track (offered by 4 schools), almost all the programmes offered in MoU schools are master’s programmes. Again, Pöchhacker was correct when he referred to the content and structure of most interpreter training courses. All of them featured “roughly similar curricular components: basic concepts of language and
communication, language enhancement, area studies (i.e. socio-cultural background knowledge), skill training in consecutive and SI, and professional ethics” (2004: 177). This is true in the case of almost all the institutions studied (15 institutions):

For most of the twentieth century, nearly all training programmes and institutions were geared to spoken language interpreting in multilingual international settings. With the clear goal of developing professional skills in consecutive and SI, first-generation teachers of interpreting, themselves accomplished professionals, established a lasting tradition of training by apprenticeship; that is transfer of know-how and professional knowledge from master to student, mainly by exercises modelled on real-life tasks (Pöchhacker, 2004: 177).

The apprenticeship model is followed by the majority of the schools analysed (15) and as Sawyer had observed a few years earlier, the three areas of testing were still apparent in a certain number of cases: (1) entry level aptitude or more appropriately, diagnostic testing for selection purposes; (2) intermediate, formative testing for entry into or confirmation of the interpretation degree track; and (3) final, summative testing for the purpose of degree or certificate conferral. The first two categories may not be separate in some training programmes (Sawyer, 2004: 32). As explained by Pöchhacker, “the medieval tradition of the master teaching the apprentice is by no means obsolete” (Pöchhacker, 2010). In terms of training periods, some schools adopt Arjona’s linear model or the modified linear model: the former sequences the programme so that instruction in translation precedes interpretation and the latter foresee an entry to either the interpretation or translation degree. The modified linear model is the system used by nine of the schools analysed.

Along the lines of Sawyer’s study, the second conclusion that I cannot help but draw after analysing the different schools websites is that the description of the official curriculum does not document the curriculum in its entirety (2004: 42). In order to obtain information about the sequencing between consecutive and simultaneous or to know exactly what the consequences are if a student fails the first year of a two-year master programme, insider knowledge is necessary. Given that insider knowledge is required to fully evaluate variables that are not apparent to the external observer but which may nevertheless have an impact on curricular outcomes (Sawyer, 2004), one cannot help but conclude that the hidden curriculum
referred to by Sawyer is indeed a reality at the majority of the schools studied. It is only with insider knowledge that one can determine that at 5 out of 7 schools that offer a two-year programme students will only study CI during the first year of the Master (Master 1). For other schools, nowhere on the websites was it clearly stated that simultaneous training was only introduced in Master 2. Besides, other institutions gave no indication of the hours of face-to-face study and self-study or skills progression. Sometimes no clear indications were given regarding final exams and it was therefore impossible to know which interpreting modalities were included. In fact, too often the curricular plan “depicts an ideal, not the curriculum in practice” (Sawyer, 2004: 42).

For some institutions, without insider knowledge it was impossible, looking only at the website, to know how the applicants were going to be assessed or if some assessments were de facto eliminatory (as was indeed the case in some programmes). For some schools it was not even possible to determine if final exams were organized and no information was provided on the admission process.

The sequencing between CI and SI is the same for 17 out of the 18 MoU schools analysed: CI is taught before SI. It is also worth mentioning that in 15 of the schools analysed more hours are devoted to CI than to SI. SI is introduced at a different stage of the programmes depending on the duration of the programme. SI is introduced earlier in two programmes: in the programme offered at FTI in Geneva (which lasts three semesters), SI is introduced during the first semester and at the London Metropolitan, SI is introduced on week four of a one-year programme. We also discovered that assessment is part of almost every interpretation institution’s curriculum and high-quality education is based on sound assessment (Sawyer, 2004: 5).

Regarding the inclusion of a specific module on the United Nations, only 5 schools answered to this question. According to the answers received to the questionnaires only 2 schools have a special module on the UN in which speed, accents and topics are taken into account. There are 2 other schools that do not have such a specific module but where UN material is used throughout the programme.
Indeed, as Sawyer rightly stated, interpreter training faces numerous challenges: the need to reduce the length of training periods, the erosion of working conditions, the necessity to train interpreters in less commonly spoken languages, the changing role of technology, to name but a few (2004: 4). One specific challenge quoted by the author is especially relevant for the purpose of our research: the adaptation of training to the workplace. As a matter of fact, given that all schools analysed have signed a MoU with the UN, they might be expected to make efforts to adapt their curricula to the workplace, i.e. the UN.

This analysis, although incomplete (curricular analysis could be a research topic in itself), allowed me to conclude that, despite some clear differences in the duration of the programmes, in almost all the 22 interpretation programmes that have signed a MoU with the UN, more time is devoted to CI before starting SI although, paradoxically, the LCE (see §3.2) is in SI only. At the UN, CI, which was already very seldom used (accounting for the fact that freelance tests and competitive examinations organised by the UN have never included CI) has been almost completely replaced by the bidule, leaving us to wonder whether the emphasis placed on CI in MoU schools is still justified in the interpretation environment at the UN in the 21st century.
PART TWO
EMPIRICAL STUDY ON
INTERPRETING AT THE UN AND
THE LCE
CHAPTER 5

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE

EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.1. Background

In the previous chapters, we have seen that, although SI was tested for the first time at the League of Nations in the 1920s, it was only in 1946, after the Nuremberg Trials, that the UN decided that an increasing number of meetings were to be held in simultaneous. This decision taken by the General Assembly prompted the conference management department to recruit more interpreters. It was at that time that the UN started running its own training programme. After three months, trainees were required to sit an exam and if successful, were moved to the interpretation section. This training programme disappeared at the beginning of the nineties (Baigorri, 2004).

The LCE was introduced in its current form during the nineties with the main purpose of establishing a roster of successful candidates from which to fill present and future vacancies as the only path for a career as a UN language professional (see chapter 3). We have also seen that, in contrast to developments in other international organizations, such as the EU, at the UN CI has never been part of the LCE. However, after carrying out a curricular analysis of MoU schools (see §4.3), I noticed that the CI module is taught at MoU partner universities, in almost all cases, before the module on SI. The number of hours devoted to CI may vary from school to school but the sequencing remains basically the same. The sequencing is not a problem per se. However given the LCE challenges (see chapter 3), as explained previously, the number of hours dedicated to SI may be insufficient for students to be able to cope with LCE typical speeches. As I have already mentioned, when I participated in 2013 as a jury member in the marking of the LCE, I wondered if results might have been different with a stronger focus on SI during training.
Moreover, although more examinations have been organized and despite the large number of applicants, very few candidates have managed to pass the LCE: the pass rate has always been very low (see Tables 3 to 8, §3.4). The real problem for the DGACM is being able to recruit candidates while keeping the required high standards necessary to work for the UN.

In 2009, the Secretary General’s report on pattern of conferences (A/64/136) requested that an expert panel be convened to discuss the revamping of the language examination format and methods. The mandate of this panel was two-fold:

- Develop a road-map of changes needed to improve the situation with regard to tests and examinations, review the methodology of examinations and look into ad hoc tests, traineeships and other options for identifying qualified language professionals for different roles.
- Review and propose practical measures to address the bottlenecks that contribute to lower-than-optimal success rates at many examinations. (UNGA, 2009).

After several meetings of the expert panel, a consultant, Stephen Sekel (former UN translator) published in 2010 a Draft discussion paper prepared on revamping of the language examination format and methods. Sekel’s report (2010) explained that this problem was common to all the different language groups at the UN and, given the projected staff turn-over (see Table 10), something clearly needed to be done: the table below shows the number of vacancies in different booths as of 31st July 2009 (all booths at that date were already understaffed) and the number of projected retirements until 2016. If one adds the first percentage on vacancies to the second on projected retirements, the seriousness of the situation becomes evident. An Outreach Programme was launched precisely for this reason, because doing nothing might result in a shortage of staff to provide interpretation services for all the required meetings.
Table 10. Projected staff turnover (existing vacancies plus projected retirements) in interpretation, all duty stations, 2009-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERPRETERS</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>CHINESE</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>FRENCH</th>
<th>RUSSIAN</th>
<th>SPANISH</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vacancies (as of 31 July 2009)</td>
<td>10 (19.2%)</td>
<td>5 (9.8%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>10 (22.2%)</td>
<td>4 (9.6%)</td>
<td>5 (12.2%)</td>
<td>39 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected retirements 2009-2016</td>
<td>13 (25%)</td>
<td>10 (19.6%)</td>
<td>19 (42.2%)</td>
<td>12 (26.6%)</td>
<td>14 (34.1%)</td>
<td>12 (29.3%)</td>
<td>80 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>23 (44.2%)</td>
<td>15 (29.4%)</td>
<td>24 (53.3%)</td>
<td>22 (48.8%)</td>
<td>18 (43.9%)</td>
<td>17 (41.5%)</td>
<td>119 (43.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his report, when explaining the table, Sekel stated that:

Given that the overall vacancy rate at the four DGACM duty stations stands at 14.2% for interpreters, when projected retirements in the period 2009-2016 are factored in, total turnover will reach 43.3% for interpreters. In absolute numbers this means that the competitive examinations will have to produce 119 new recruits in interpretation in the period in question. Particularly hard hit will be the English interpretation booth (53.3%) followed closely by the French (48.8%). (2010: 4).

This table therefore clearly shows that if the UN wants to keep recruiting interpreters via the LCE, the LCE success rate must be improved without compromising quality. In order to obtain a better understanding of the situation described by Sekel in his report, I think it is important to first understand what UN interpreters think of the usefulness of the training they have received for passing the LCE (and what they believe could or should be done to improve the situation) and second to hear the views of senior interpreters in charge of the marking as they are the ones who decide who can enter employment at the UN. Gathering empirical data is therefore the first step of the process.

5.2. Theoretical approach to empirical research

Empirical research has two stages: the first stage is the direct gathering of data through our external senses, with no preconceptions as to how it is ordered or what explains it; the second stage is the induction of patterns and relationship within the data (Coolican, 1994: 20). The empirical method therefore seemed to be the most
appropriate method as I needed to collect data and, based on the data gathered, to be able to “move from individual observations to statements of general patterns” (1994: 20), i.e. to draw general tendencies and conclusions.

In order to define my methodology, I used Robson’s simple framework for research design, which comprises five intertwined elements:

![Figure 1. Framework for research design (2011: 71)](image)

The first element is the purpose of the research: I wanted to determine whether UN interpreters thought their training was adequate for passing the LCE and gather the views of senior interpreters in charge of the marking. To do so, I needed to be able to collect data. Robson tells us that surveys are very widely used social research methods of collecting data from and about people (2011: 235). Buendia also explains that before selecting the instrument, the researcher needs to have a clear idea of the kind of data he or she wants to collect. As explained previously, the LCE is the guiding theme of the whole dissertation: the aim of the empirical study was to gather the views of UN interpreters on the adequacy of training for passing the LCE and the opinions of the senior interpreters in charge of marking the LCE. I wanted to collect evidence that would allow me to give recommendations on how to improve the LCE pass rate. The UN interpreting community and senior interpreters
are, in my opinion, one of the most important links in the chain and if we want to improve the statistics, we need to make sure that all the links are taken into account.

Given the aim of my research and in order to gather all the necessary data, I decided to carry out a survey. As recommended by Fink (1995: 14), before choosing a survey design I needed to answer several questions: What is the aim of the survey? Is a control group included? And who is eligible? The aim has already been indicated above, the control group, defined as “an assembly of people, institutions or units” (1995: 16), is obviously the UN interpreting community and senior interpreters, and the eligibility criteria are also clear, i.e. all the participants had to be part of the UN interpreting community.

The second step consisted in defining the methods that I would use in my research. According to Fink, survey designs can be experimental or descriptive (1995: 21): experimental designs being characterized by arranging to compare two or more groups, and descriptive designs by producing information on groups and phenomena that already exist (1995: 23). Since I was not comparing two groups and would be working within an existing group, I decided to use the descriptive method.

Although Buendía considers that the most used methodologies in educational research have been quantitative, such as experimental research, correlational research, quasi experimental research and surveys (1993: 5), since I decided to carry out a survey, I did not have to choose between quantitative and qualitative analysis. My study will be both quantitative and qualitative: quantitative because a statistical analysis of the data is expected (Robson, 2011: 19) and qualitative because findings will not only be presented numerically (2011: 20).

As questionnaires and interviews are widely used social research methods for gathering data from and about people (Robson, 2011: 236), the second step was to decide whether or not to use a questionnaire or interviews. Different approaches can be used for survey data collection purposes and different factors must be taken into account. Robson’s comparison (see below) helped me narrow down my choices:
In Robson’s comparison of approaches, on-line surveys yield the best results in terms of cost, distribution of sample, complexity of questionnaires, use of open-ended questions, response rate, response bias and control and quality of responses. As I wanted to gather the views of the whole UN interpreting community working at four different duty stations, it would have been virtually impossible to interview all of them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 11.</strong> Comparison of approaches to survey data collection (abridged and adapted from Czaja and Blair, 2005, in Robson, 2011: 245)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASPECT OF SURVEY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of data collection period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of question order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of open-ended questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of visual aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of personal/family records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data quality issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling frame bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of response situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of recorded response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
them and it would also have been very time-consuming. Furthermore, given the very low cost of on-line surveys, I decided to use an on-line questionnaire.

Buendia tells us that when questionnaires are used, three phases must be respected: a theoretical-conceptual phase, a methodological phase and a statistical-conceptual phase (1993: 121). Since my goal was to elicit data from and about the UN interpreting community, I set the objectives and the research questions; the second phase consisted of the selection of the study population and the definition of different variables; the third phase was the pilot phase; the fourth phase, the distribution of the questionnaire; the fifth phase, the analysis of the results; and finally, the discussion of these results and their relationship with the theoretical framework.

The first element of Robson’s graph described above (see Figure 1) is followed by a second element: the conceptual framework. This constituted the theory regarding the situation, what is happening and why (2011: 72): MoU schools do not place enough emphasis in their curricula on the challenges of the LCE, and the result is that very few candidates that take the LCE are successful because the training received would need to be adjusted to the needs of the UN.

The third element is the sampling population, i.e. the UN interpreters. My dissertation must be seen against the backdrop of the UN and to answer my research question, I needed to know what former students thought about the usefulness of their training for passing the LCE. For this reason, the UN interpreting community would be asked, via the survey, to give their perceptions about the training they received in general and to pass the LCE in particular. In the second survey, senior interpreters would be asked to comment on the LCE in general and the marking in particular.

The fourth element, the research questions, which constituted the central aspects from which all the other aspects emanated, will be covered in chapters 7 and 8 with each survey.

The fifth element of the graph, the method, can now be defined: a survey analysis via two questionnaires. In order to be able to better codify and analyse the answers, in the majority of cases I chose closed questions to which the respondents could choose one or several answers. Closed questions “force the interviewee to
choose from two or more given alternatives” (Robson, 2011: 283) and also make it easier to obtain specific statistics on a given answer. Some questions in the questionnaire were also semi-structured and/or open, the purpose being to allow the respondents to give a clear answer on their feelings regarding their training. Open questions allowed me to be flexible, go into more depth, test the limits of a respondent’s knowledge and encourage cooperation. One advantage of open questions quoted by Robson is particularly important for my dissertation: with open questions, the researcher is in a better position to make a “truer assessment of what the respondents really believe” and open questions “can produce unexpected or unanticipated answers” (2011: 283). For my dissertation, it was really important to unveil the true feelings of the UN interpreting community as a whole about their training, the LCE and the marking.

5.3. Theoretical approach to empirical research on conference interpreting

In interpreting studies, there are three basic research strategies: fieldwork, i.e. collecting data on people or occurrences in their real-life context; surveys, i.e. collecting data in standardized form from a larger group of people; and experiments, i.e. measuring the effects of manipulating a particular independent variable on one or more dependent variables (Pöchhacker, 2004: 65).

According to Sawyer (2004: 10), two main schools of research can be identified: “the natural science community” (Moser-Mercer, 1994b: 17), i.e. cognitive science and linguistics experts; and the “liberal arts community” (Moser-Mercer, 1994b: 17), i.e. researchers looking for a “more unified and holistic account” (Setton, 1999: 3). Although the researcher community has moved beyond this dualistic, divisive approach (2004: 12), Gile is of the view that a distinction needs to be made between observational and experimental approaches: observational research refers to studying a phenomenon as it occurs naturally, as it were in the field, whereas experimental research makes a phenomenon occur precisely for the purpose of studying it (Pöchhacker, 2004: 63). To quote Gile, “questionnaires have been the most common means to determine user expectations and/or responses” (Gile 1991: 163-64, in Moser-Mercer, 2008a: 1). For my research, I used questionnaires to determine UN interpreters’ expectations regarding the usefulness of their training in order to pass the LCE.
5.4. General background of the empirical study

The purpose of the first questionnaire was to obtain a clear idea of the UN interpreters’ views on the usefulness of the training they had received to pass the LCE. I also needed to know why they believed the LCE pass rate was so low, what the main challenges of the LCE are and what could be done to change the statistics. The aim was also to learn about the UN interpreting community’s views about what MoU schools and the UN should do to improve the situation. The ultimate goal was, on the one hand, to determine whether and to what extent the training offered at MoU schools corresponds to the level of performance required to pass the LCE and thus enter employment at the UN and, on the other hand, to determine whether SI training could usefully be introduced earlier on in MoU schools’ curricula while focusing on speed, accent and LCE specificities. Since the results of my paper only apply to the UN context, I decided, as part of my research, to conduct a survey that would target all UN interpreters working at the UN. This would allow me to collect data on the training received by UN interpreters and their perception of the adequacy of the training with respect to the demands of the LCE.

The second questionnaire was addressed exclusively to New York senior interpreters. The survey was designed to examine what jury members look for in a candidate sitting the LCE. Senior interpreters in New York serve on exam juries, which decide if a candidate has what it takes to be a UN interpreter. My goal was to gain a better understanding of what senior interpreters look for in a candidate and thus whether or not the training offered at MoU schools reflects performance requirements to pass the LCE and interpret at the UN. This second questionnaire, which was used to understand the position of the examiners, would shed light on what examiners think of the LCE in general and of the applicants’ preparation in particular.

These two questionnaires are complimentary in nature. The first allowed me to gain a better understanding of the usefulness of the training curriculum for passing the LCE and the second helped me to get a clearer idea of the examiners’ views and of what MoU schools could do to improve the situation.
6.1. General objectives of the survey

As I have explained in previous chapters, my personal observation as an examiner led me to the idea that the curricula of MoU schools could perhaps be fine-tuned in order to take better account of UN specificities and challenges. This prompted me to reflect on how the LCE could yield better results (which is one of the stated objectives of the MoU) and how schools could fulfil their part of the MoU in order for that to happen.

The ultimate goal was to determine whether and to what extent the training offered at MoU schools corresponds to the level of performance required to pass the LCE and thus enter employment at the UN.

As already explained in previous chapters, despite the large number of candidates and the increasing number of LCEs, the pass rates have always been very low (see Tables 3 to 8, §3.4). This situation may be due to several factors, including the training received and specific challenges of the LCE. I therefore also posed the following research questions in the first survey:

- RQ1: How is the interpreting community at the UN composed?
- RQ2: Which type of training have undergone UN interpreters?
- RQ3: How were structured the curricula of institutions in which UN interpreters had studied?
- RQ4: Which was the sequencing between CI and SI during UN interpreters’ training?
- RQ5: Which is the main interpretation modality used at UN headquarters and on missions?
- RQ6: Was the sequencing between CI and SI useful for UN interpreters to pass the LCE?

- RQ7: Was the curriculum of MoU schools the most appropriate to work for the UN?

- RQ8: What is the view of self-trained interpreters regarding their preparation for working at the UN?

Based on these research questions, I designed a questionnaire that would allow me to achieve the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Understand how the interpreting community is composed (how many years interpreters have been working as freelancers and then as staff members, when they passed the LCE, etc.).

- Objective 2: Collect information on the type of training (if any) of UN interpreters.

- Objective 3: Collect information on the curriculum followed at the institutions where they had received their training.

- Objective 4: Collect information on the sequencing between CI and SI during their training.

- Objective 5: Collect information on the main interpretation technique used at headquarters and on missions and determine how many times in their careers UN interpreters had used CI and the proportion of CI and SI in their daily work.

- Objective 6: Analyse the usefulness of the sequencing between CI and SI used by MoU schools for passing the LCE and examine the usefulness of this training for passing the LCE.

- Objective 7: Determine, given the everyday work at the UN, if the curriculum of MoU schools is the most appropriate to work for the UN.

- Objective 8: Analyse the views of self-trained interpreters regarding their preparation for working at the UN.
6.2. Methodology

6.2.1. Definition of the study population

The participants in a survey may consist of all members or a sample of the members of a given group (Fink, 1995: 3). For the purposes of this survey, the participants were all UN staff interpreters.

Since the results of the survey only applied to the UN context, the survey population only included UN staff interpreters. To avoid the low return of questionnaires invoked by Moser-Mercer (1996: 6), I decided to target all UN interpreters since the low success rate is common to all six booths.

In New York, the numbers of interpreters per booth are as follows:

- 19 interpreters in the English booth
- 16 interpreters in the French booth
- 21 interpreters in the Russian Booth
- 19 interpreters in the Arabic booth
- 23 interpreters in the Spanish booth
- 23 interpreters in the Chinese booth

In Geneva there are:

- 17 interpreters in the French booth
- 17 interpreters in the English booth
- 15 interpreters in the Russian booth
- 15 interpreters in the Arabic booth
- 14 interpreters in the Chinese booth
- 15 interpreters in the Spanish booth

In Vienna there are:

- 4 interpreters in the French booth
- 4 interpreters in the English booth
- 3 interpreters in the Spanish booth
- 4 interpreters in the Arabic booth
- 5 interpreters in the Chinese booth
- 3 interpreters in the Russian booth

Finally, in Nairobi the number of interpreters per booth are:

- 1 interpreter in the French booth
- 1 interpreter in the Arabic booth
- 2 interpreters in the Spanish booth
- 3 interpreters in the Russian booth
- 4 interpreters in the Chinese booth
- 2 interpreters in the English booth

In short, there are 250 UN staff interpreters working in four different duty stations. This number may vary slightly due to retirements and/or transfer to another duty station. As my research study needs to be viewed only in the UN context and its results cannot be extrapolated, the sample population was limited to these 250 UN interpreters.

6.2.2. Questionnaire design

The designed questionnaire focused on several aspects: the training received by UN interpreters, and the usefulness of the training for passing the LCE. The design of the questionnaire was aligned with the objectives and the research questions: the questions asked would provide an insight into the UN interpreters’ feelings about the adequacy of their training for passing the LCE and interpreting conditions and modalities at the UN.

37 All those numbers may vary, as interpreters can be transferred from one duty station to another and in some duty stations there are some vacancies.
38 For the questionnaire, I used LimeSurvey. LimeSurvey is an online survey application that enables user to manage online question-and-answer surveys.
The number of questions was also important. That is why I tried to avoid the pitfalls invoked by Moser-Mercer, i.e. producing a potentially long, uninterrupted series of “yes” or “no” answers since this would influence respondents to answer in a specific way and could distort answers to later questions (Moser-Mercer, 1996: 7).

6.2.2.1. Structure of the questionnaire

Following Moser-Mercer’s advice (2008: 151), in the presentation of the questionnaire, I explained the purpose of the survey, provided details of the data collector, explained why the survey was being conducted and why the respondents had been selected. Further information about how to complete the questionnaire, how long it would normally take to complete it, how the data would be used and who would have access to the information would also be provided; the introduction also contained assurances of confidentiality and anonymity of data. The questionnaire (see Appendix 7) was divided into seven sections in order to match the five research questions mentioned at the beginning of this chapter:

6.2.2.1.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information

The objective of the first section was to achieve the first objective, i.e., get a better understanding of the composition of the interpreting community in terms of:

1. Gender.
2. A language.
3. Number of years as UN staff member.
4. Number of years as a professional interpreter.
5. Year of passing the LCE.

6.2.2.1.2. Section 2: Training

The aim of this section was to collect information on the type of training (if any) of UN interpreters, the curriculum followed at their training institutions and the sequencing between CI and SI during their training. The following questions were asked:
6. Did you receive formal training in interpretation prior to becoming a professional interpreter?

7. What kind of training did you receive?

8. In which forms of interpretation did you receive training?

9. When did you make the transition from consecutive without notes to consecutive with notes?

10. Did you receive training in note-taking for CI?

11. How many months into your CI training did you start your SI training?

12. During your training, was an explanation given on why SI training did not start concurrently with CI training?

13. What was the explanation given?

14. During your training, did you receive an explanation as to why the simultaneous training module commenced subsequently to the consecutive training module?

15. What was the explanation given?

16. Did you understand the explanation given?

17. How many months of SI training did you receive during your training?

18. In your view, is it necessary to learn consecutive before learning simultaneous?

19. For what reasons?

20. If you could change something in the training you received, what would it be?

21. In your view, should failure to pass the CI examination at MoU schools result in the candidate being prevented from advancing to simultaneous training?

6.2.2.1.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN

This section aims to collect information on the main interpretation technique used at headquarters and on mission. The second objective was to find out how often in their careers UN interpreters had used CI and the proportion between CI and SI in their daily work. The following questions were asked:
22. In your work at the UN, how many times do you use consecutive on average in a given year?

23. In your work at the UN, how many times on average do you use consecutive in conferences away from headquarters and/or on field missions in a given year?

24. Please indicate the main techniques you used in your everyday work.

25. Please indicate the main techniques you use while on mission.

6.2.2.1.4. Section 4: The LCE

The aim of this section was to analyse the usefulness of the sequencing between CI and SI used by MoU schools for passing LCE. The second objective was to determine whether the training they received was appropriate for passing the LCE. The following questions were asked:

26. Was your training useful to pass the LCE?

27. For self-trained interpreters: do you feel that you were as well prepared as formally trained interpreters to pass the LCE?

28. In your view, what were the strengths of your training programme with regard to passing the LCE?

29. In your view, what were the weaknesses of your training programme?

30. In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE?

31. If you were trained at an MoU school, was the training you received useful to pass the LCE?

32. For what reasons?

33. LCE only tests candidates in simultaneous. Do you think it should also include consecutive?

34. For what reasons?

35. In your opinion, why is the LCE success rate so low? (excessive speed of speeches, lack of knowledge of UN subjects, lack of knowledge of UN structure, lack of general knowledge, stress, problems with A language,
problems with C languages, choices of exam material, criteria for selecting candidates).

36. Do you think that learning consecutive is a necessary precondition to work for the UN?

37. For what reasons?

6.2.2.1.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools

The aim of this section was to determine, given the everyday work at the UN, if the curricula of MoU schools are the most appropriate to prepare candidates for working at the UN. The following questions were asked:

38. Given the everyday work at the UN, is the training offered by MoU schools the most appropriate for employment at the UN?

39. Given the everyday work at the UN, do you think that the numbers of hours devoted to consecutive and simultaneous at MoU schools are the most appropriate for employment at the UN?

40. Do you think that the curricula of MoU schools are adequate to pass the LCE?

41. Do you think that the curricula of MoU schools should be changed?

42. Why?

43. Do you think that consecutive should be taught before simultaneous?

6.2.2.1.6. Section 6: Interpreters with no official training

The aim was to gain an insight into the position of self-trained interpreters regarding their preparation for working at the UN.

44. What kind of training did you receive?

45. Do you think that you were prepared for working at the UN?

46. Was your preparation: the same as interpreters who received official training, better than interpreters who received official training, worse than interpreters who received official training?

47. Do you wish that you had received official training?
6.2.2.1.7. Section 7: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters. Preparation of students coming from MoU schools

The aim was to gain a better understanding of what UN interpreters think of the preparation provided by MoU schools and to determine whether, in their opinion, it differs from the training offered by non-MoU schools:

48. Are you teaching in interpretation schools?
49. Are you coaching young interpreters at the UN?
50. Where are you teaching? (MoU and/or non-MoU schools)
51. In your teaching, do you notice any difference between students coming from MoU and non-MoU schools?
52. In your coaching, do you notice any difference between students coming from MoU and non-MoU schools.

6.2.3. Pilot study

As recommended by most authors (Fink, 1995; Gile, 2006b, Moser-Mercer, 2008a, Robson, 2011), a questionnaire should be piloted and modified taking into account the comments received during the pilot phase. Moreover, as stated by Moser-Mercer, the contents of a questionnaire are best looked at by someone other than the investigator him/herself (1996: 7).

The questionnaire was therefore piloted with eight interpreters\textsuperscript{39}. Seven were UN staff members. The first reason was that I wanted the six UN languages to be represented in the chosen sample. I therefore chose one interpreter per UN official language\textsuperscript{40} (since their training experience might have differed as they were trained on different continents and in different circumstances), and added two more interpreters: one staff member from the UN with knowledge in research and one former UN interpreter, who is now working for another international organization, with knowledge in research in general and surveys in particular. The second reason was

\textsuperscript{39} The interpreters that participated in the pilot phase did not answer the final questionnaire.

\textsuperscript{40} Two interpreters were chosen for the Spanish booth as I wanted to obtain the views of MoU and non-MoU trained interpreters.
because I wanted to avoid what Gile called “the untruthfulness of respondents” (2006b: 1) and needed to make sure that the participants chosen for the piloting phase would not hesitate to provide real feedback as they had been involved in outreach activities and had been working with students in schools and/or at the UN. As Gile also stated (2006b), respondents’ comments and suggestions can inspire new ideas, new points to explore, a different way of looking at things which the investigator did not think of initially and which can be integrated into the questionnaire.

The following table provides an overview of the training, A language and familiarity with research of the interpreters that were used for the pilot phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpreter</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Familiar with research and/or surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>MoU school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Self-trained</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>MoU school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Non-MoU school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>MoU school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>MoU school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>MoU school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Non-MoU school</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, the first criterion that I wanted to follow when selecting the interpreters for the pilot phase was the linguistic criterion: all UN languages needed to be represented since interpreters’ perceptions might differ according to language combinations. The second criterion was that I wanted a combination of MoU, non-MoU and self-trained interpreters. The third criterion was that I wanted to have interpreters that had done research and/or surveys before to make sure that they understood the purpose of the exercise.

I sent the exact same message to all the interpreters chosen. They were all asked to complete the questionnaire and to let me know if they honestly felt that any
questions needed to be added, removed or clarified and if there was any unintended bias.

6.2.3.1. Comments received during the pilot phase

The pilot phase was useful because it helped me correct some of the errors that I had included inadvertently in the survey. I received the following comments:

- Some questions were biased and needed to be removed.
- A section about interpreters that had not received any formal training had to be added otherwise the interpreters participating in the survey would not be able to answer some of the questions.
- I should not target only interpreters coming from MoU schools as several interpreters at the UN were not trained at such centres.
- In some duty stations such as in Geneva, CI is used in field missions so this should be taken into account.
- The acronym “LCE” had to be explained as some interpreters might not know that it is the official name of the recruitment exam and this should be indicated clearly in the introduction.
- A section on training/coaching young interpreters within the Outreach Programme (as this is part of the MoU) should be added.
- Some questions were redundant and should be cancelled.
- The option “other” or “not applicable” should be added for some questions.
- Some numbers were missing; the numbering problem should be verified.
- The option “rarely” should be added in section 3, regarding CI at the UN as CI is still used - albeit rarely - at some duty stations.
- For the technique used during field missions in section 3, “on average” should be added.
- The term “on mission” was not clear. It was preferable to speak about “conferences away from headquarters” in section 3.
- A question about non-MoU trained staff should be added. The questionnaire seemed to only target staff that had been trained at MoU schools.
- It should be possible to skip some questions in the questionnaire or to include the option “not applicable”.

- For the LCE, two options should be enough: before 1980 or after 1980 in section 1.

- A question on the fact that in some schools passing an exam in CI is required before moving to SI should be added in section 2.

- The term “bidule” should be explained.

- Some questions on MoU schools were mandatory but some staff had not been trained at such centres; the option “not applicable” should therefore be added.

- The years of passing the LCE should include more options since many interpreters had passed the LCE at the end of the nineties, early 2000s in section 1.

After the pilot phase, some questions were removed, sections were added and some were adapted in order to take into account the comments that had been presented. The final questionnaire had 52 questions.

6.2.4. Distribution of the questionnaire

Sending the questionnaire to all UN interpreters turned out to be a complex undertaking: although we all work for the same organization, being based at four different duty stations complicated the matter further. Staffing tables only include interpreters from the same duty station. There is no common database per language or per section and getting the names of all the UN interpreters at all four duty stations was a real challenge. Using the Electronic Interpreters Assignment Program (e.APG) system\(^\text{41}\), I was able to download the names of the interpreters at all four duty stations. Some names on the list were of retired staff members and some new recruits who I knew personally were not yet on the list. So, I had to double-check each name against DGACM documents containing the list of interpreters per duty station.

\(^{41}\) Web-based system for interpreters’ assignments common to all four duty stations.
The questionnaire was sent the same day via a group email to all the UN interpreters. Sending a message to other staff is a relatively easy process because it is not necessary to indicate the email address, the last name of the person is usually enough.

Two reminders (via email) were sent, after three weeks and one month respectively. The link to the survey was included in all the reminders.

### 6.3. Results

In the first section, I will present the results of the survey. As explained previously (see §6.2.4), the survey was sent to 243 interpreters (250 minus the 7 UN interpreters that participated to the pilot phase) and the breakdown of answers received was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interpreters Who Received the Survey</th>
<th>243</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses Received</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Responses</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete Responses</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of responses shows that more than half of the UN interpreting community answered the surveys (54%). The incomplete responses were probably due to the fact that respondents forgot to click on the “submit” button and/or save some answers and did not finish the questionnaire. Others probably started to complete the questionnaire and then started a new questionnaire without finishing the first one and the software consequently recorded these answers as incomplete.

As stated by Robson, unfortunately there is little agreement on what constitutes an adequate response rate (2011: 260). I do believe that in this particular case, given the three reasons stated below, the response rate can be considered as satisfactory and the sample population representative:
- It is the first time that the whole UN interpreting community has been asked as a group to respond to a questionnaire;

- This study population is composed of highly specialized professionals whose experience and knowledge could be considered as highly valuable;

- Although the percentages are different, answers were given by interpreters from all six booths, giving me a good idea of their perceptions.

For structuring purposes, the results are presented section by section (they will be analysed very briefly since they will be interpreted in the discussion section). Graphs are also included to illustrate the results more clearly. I have also used values in the graphs and percentages when commenting on the numbers.

### 6.3.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information

Of the 80 completed answers received, 65% were from women and 35% from men. Since women are the majority in the UN interpreting community, these percentages were to be expected.

![Graph 1. Number of men and women participating in the survey](image)

---

42 In all DGACM documents on the LCE and/or Outreach Programmes, no questionnaire has ever been mentioned and colleagues who have been at the UN for 30 years have confirmed this fact.
A language

As I work in the French booth at the UN, it is perhaps not a surprise that the majority of the answers came from my booth, followed by the Spanish, English, Arabic, Chinese and Russian booths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>28.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>21.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 2. Number of participants per booth

Number of years as UN staff member

A clear majority (56.25%) had been at the UN between 5 and 15 years. Only 7.50% had been at the UN for more than 30 years and 18.75% and 17.50% had been at the UN for less than 5 years and between 15 and 30 years, respectively.
Number of years as a professional interpreter

Only 5% of interpreters had less than 5 years of experience as professional interpreters. 26.25% had been working for between 5 and 15 years, 51.25% between 15 and 30 years and 17.50% for more than 30 years. The conclusion that can be drawn from these percentages is that more than half of the interpreters with a career of more than 30 years were freelancers or had worked for another organization before joining the UN.
When did you pass the LCE?

The majority of UN interpreters surveyed passed the LCE after 2000 (62.50%). Only 1.25% had passed the LCE before 1980, 13.75% between 1980 and 1990 and 22.50% between 1990 and 2000.

6.3.2. Section 2: Training background of UN interpreters

Did you receive formal training in interpretation prior to becoming a professional interpreter?

The results of the survey clearly demonstrate that the large majority of UN staff interpreters had received formal training in interpretation (92.50%). Only 6.25% were self-trained.
What kind of training did you receive?

The following graph shows the kind of training received by UN interpreters.

![Graph 7. Training received by UN interpreters]

53.75% of the interpreters had studied a master’s in conference interpreting, 17.50% of them had a master in translation and interpretation and 8.75% had completed a BA programme. Other interpreters answered that they had been enrolled in other studies (12.50%), indicating “Other” in their responses, in reference to different types of training not included in the answers provided, e.g. short training in dummy booth, special training courses organized by the UN, post graduate diploma and/or certificate, special training organized at universities, workshops and UN language courses.

In which forms of interpretation did you receive training?

The table (Table 15) below explains in greater detail the forms of interpretation in which staff interpreters had received training:
Table 15. Type of training received by UN interpreters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Training</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIAISON INTERPRETING</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHUCHOTAGE</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT APPLICABLE</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 8. Interpreting modalities in which UN staff interpreters had received training

These figures reveal that the majority of UN interpreters had been trained in both CI and SI (the other forms of interpreting were marginal).

When did you make the transition from consecutive without notes to consecutive with notes?

In 32.50% of the cases, 1 to 3 weeks were required to make the transition from CI without notes to CI with notes. In this context, it is important to note that 36.25% of interpreters thought that this question was “not applicable”, whereas for more than 17.50%, the period required was 6 weeks.
Did you receive training in note-taking for CI?

Training in note-taking for CI was received by 78.75% of interpreters compared with 15% who that this was not the case. Once again, this question was not applicable for 6.25% of the surveyed interpreters.

How many months into your CI training did you start your SI training?

According to the curricular analysis, several interpretation schools (see §4.3.4) only start SI after months or a year of CI. In some cases an exam in CI is required. It was therefore quite surprising to note that 17.50% started SI immediately, 12.50% started 1 to 3 months after CI, and 23.75% 3 to 6 months after CI. This means that 53.75% (the majority) started SI at the latest 6 months after CI, leaving...
only 28.75% that started SI after one year. For the 2 interpreters that chose the option “other”, simultaneous training started immediately. Here again, for 15% this question was not applicable.

Graph 11. Months elapsing between CI and SI training

**During your training, was an explanation given on why SI training did not start concurrently with CI training?**

Graph 12. Explanation for SI not starting concurrently with CI

Only 45% gave an explanation as to why CI had to start before SI and 20% were not told anything. 35% of the respondents chose not to answer this question.
What was the explanation given?

When asked to elaborate on the explanations given by their trainers, 36 interpreters gave the following answers:

- Mastering consecutive is a prerequisite and a foundation to mastering simultaneous. CI teaches to understand ideas, to reformulate, to listen, to process information and to avoid parroting and interpret the meaning and not the words (33 out of 36).
- CI trains you brain for SI at a slower pace (1 out of 36).
- CI teaches how to concentrate and it triggers memory (1 out of 36).
- Teaching CI before SI is the sequencing that must be followed (1 out of 36).

During your training, did you receive an explanation as to why the simultaneous training module commenced subsequently to the consecutive training module?

![Graph 13. Explanation for SI starting after CI](image)

In response to this question, 42.50% of respondents answered that during their studies they received an explanation as to why the simultaneous training module commenced subsequently to the consecutive training module (and 37.50% understood the explanation), while 18.75% did not receive any explanation. When asked to elaborate on the explanation given, respondents gave the same answers as for the previous question.
**How many months of SI training did you receive during your training?**

The majority (76.25%) received more than 6 months of training, 13.75% received between 3 to 6 months training, 3.75% between 1 and 3 months and 1.25% more than 1 month. The conclusion that can be drawn from these percentages is that almost 20% has had less than 6 months training in SI whereas as we have seen the LCE only includes SI (see chapter 3).

**Graph 14. Months of SI training received during training**

**In your view, is it necessary to learn consecutive before learning simultaneous?**

Although CI is seldom used at the UN, 57.50% of respondents (against 42.50%) thought that CI must be taught before SI.

**Graph 15. Usefulness of learning CI before SI**
When asked to elaborate on their answers to the above question, out of the 34 interpreters who thought that CI should not be taught before SI, some gave the following reasons:

- CI and SI are two different techniques that require different skills. Both can be learned independently. Being good at CI does not necessarily mean being good at SI (19 interpreters).
- As SI is the most used technique, the SI training period should be longer (1 interpreter).
- CI should not be imposed before SI: although CI teaches how to reformulate, the technique used in CI cannot necessarily be used in SI (3 interpreters).

The 46 interpreters that wanted CI to be taught before SI indicated that:

- CI is an excellent preparation for SI. It is useful for memory and concentration. CI helps to reformulate and translate ideas and not words. Only students that have mastered CI should start SI given that thanks to CI, students can learn to synthetize and this can be helpful with fast speeches in SI (45 interpreters).
- CI must be taught in school because some organizations such as the EU tests CI as well and CI may be necessary for the freelance market (1 interpreter).

Several respondents alluded to the fact that I should have included a reference to sight translation. They regretted that a technique that was taught in the majority of schools was not taken into account in the survey. They also added that sight translation helped them mastered SI. Three (3) interpreters also explained that although both modalities should be taught, CI and SI should start at the same time.

**If you could change something in the training you received, what would it be?**

The majority of interpreters were satisfied with the training received. Some would have liked to have started SI earlier and to have learnt another technique such as SI with text. Here again, several respondents thought that there was an inconsistency between their training and the requirements of the entrance examination. In this regard, the following answers were given:

- Schools should inform students what to expect in an entrance examination and should include more training in conference terminology (3 interpreters).
- The teachers were interpreters and not trainers. They did not have basic training in pedagogy. They humiliated students and were unable to foster an environment conducive to learning. Training was characterized by a lack of trust and respect. Teachers were not nice and had no bedside manners. Teachers should learn to give feedback and avoid psychological intimidation\(^{43}\) (7 interpreters).

- Schools should teach how to prepare documents, how to deal with speed, how to use voice and how to breathe. Dummy booth practice should be part of the curriculum. Schools should use real written text and should read them to help students familiarize themselves with real-life situations. Accents should also be introduced (17 interpreters).

More hours of SI and SI training should start earlier on in the curriculum (9 interpreters).

- CI should have been taught for a longer period and note-taking techniques should have been intensified. However, CI should not be a mandatory requirement for the diploma (3 interpreters).

- Training should start with sight translation. CI should not be taught from the C to the B language. Schools should not focus that much on CI but should insist on sight translation and SI with text (8 interpreters).

- Writing mandatory papers as part of the curriculum takes up time that could be used to learn interpretation (1 interpreter).

- Schools should include theory and history of interpretation in their curriculum (1 interpreter).

---

\(^{43}\) This fact was mentioned in response to this question and repeated throughout the questionnaire: the lack of empathy of trainers. Several interpreters complained about the fact that trainers were belittling students and that they were not giving real feedback and that the whole environment was not conducive to learning and progress but intimidating and denigrating.
In your view, should failure to pass the CI examination at MoU schools result in the candidate being prevented from advancing to simultaneous training?

60% of the participants answered “no” to this question compared with 40% who said “yes”.

When asked to elaborate on this response, respondents gave answers that were more or less identical to the ones given for previous questions:

The interpreters that thought that failure to pass the CI examination should not prevent the candidate from advancing to SI training indicated that:

- CI and SI are two different techniques that involve different abilities and skills. Some interpreters are better at SI and they should not be penalized. (29 interpreters).

- If failure is due to note-taking, the student should be allowed to start SI (2 interpreters).

- CI is hardly ever used and should not be mandatory. Use of the bidule and/or voice-over is more and more common (4 interpreters).

The interpreters that thought the opposite indicated that:

- Interpreters should master both as both techniques are complimentary in nature and professionally both are required. Failure at CI probably denotes an inability to process the meaning and to reformulate. Students should not be
allowed to start SI. Failing CI means that the student is not a conference interpreter and should not get the diploma (28 interpreters).

6.3.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN

The aim of this section was to determine the main techniques used by UN interpreters.

In your work at the UN, how many times do you use consecutive on average in a given year?

The important figure that needs to be underlined is that 53.75% of UN interpreters have never worked in CI during their career.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16. Percentages for CI work at the UN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT LEAST TWICE A YEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FROM 2 TO 5 TIMES A YEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE THAN 5 TIMES A YEAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 17. Number of times that staff interpreters work in CI

This figure could be understood in the context of the UN: as CI is not part of the LCE (see chapter 3.2), a UN interpreter cannot be asked to work in CI (since it cannot be assumed that the interpreter has mastered the CI technique); interpreters
can only be assigned on a voluntary basis. It is also worth mentioning that in the majority of cases, new recruits are more willing and able to work in CI when requested as the majority have been trained at interpretation schools and have received training in CI as well. I purposely added an option “other” to this question because I knew that some interpreters with a B in English are regularly assigned to high-level bilingual meetings that could take place in CI. Of the 9 respondents that chose this option, 3 explained that they had worked in CI only once during their entire career (which in some cases spanned more than 30 years) while 6 answered that they used CI on average once a year, in particular during missions away from headquarters.

**In your work at the UN, how many times on average do you use consecutive in conferences away from headquarters and/or on field missions in a given year?**

At some duty stations such as Geneva, special rapporteur missions are very common, but not so much at other duty stations. This could probably explain why 32.50% answered that they had never used CI on field missions, whereas 40% stated that they used it rarely and 8.75% at least twice a year and 5% from 2 to 5 times a year. Only 1.25% stated that CI was used more than 5 times a year. For this question, I added the option “other” knowing that the majority of UN interpreters could not answer this question as they were seldom assigned to field missions.

![Graph 18. Number of times interpreters work in CI in field mission](image-url)
In fact, out of 10 respondents that used this option, 2 answered that they had never been on such a mission and 8 explained that they used CI every time they worked in the field. In this section, I did not add a question on *bidule* as, once again, when interpreters do not work in the field or at high-level bilateral conferences at headquarters, they do not usually use this equipment in everyday work.

Please indicate the main techniques you use in your everyday work (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used)

Table 17. Interpreting modalities at headquarters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique Description</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SI:</strong> 88.75% of respondents gave 4 and 5 ratings to this technique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11.25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SI WITH TEXT:</strong> 73.75% of respondents gave 4 and 5 ratings to this technique</td>
<td>36.25%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CI WITHOUT NOTES:</strong> 86.25% of respondents gave 1 and 2 rating to this technique</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>82.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CI WITH NOTES:</strong> 85% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>77.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOR CHUCHOTAGE/WISSPERING:</strong> 83.75% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>16.25%</td>
<td>67.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORBIDULE (portable equipment used for SI without a booth):</strong> 77.50% gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>26.25%</td>
<td>51.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please indicate the main techniques you use while on mission (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used)

Table 18. Interpreting modalities on mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SI</strong></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SI WITH TEXT</strong></td>
<td>31.25%</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
<td>16.25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CI WITHOUT NOTES</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
<td>11.25%</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
<td>66.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CI WITH NOTES</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHUCHOTAGE / WHISPERING</strong></td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>8.75%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>51.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIDULE (portable equipment used for SI without a booth)</strong></td>
<td>17.50%</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
<td>42.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here again, the percentages indicate that SI and SI with text are the two main techniques used for conferences at headquarters and away from headquarters. SI with text, although important, is less used in the field for obvious reasons: missions away from headquarters may be important conferences where SI and SI with text will be used or may be small high-level missions with few delegates and one or two interpreters. This explains why for missions away from headquarters the
percentages for CI, whispering and bidule were higher. For headquarters, the 1 and 2 ratings for CI with and without notes were respectively 86.25% and 85%, respectively, and for whispering and bidule, 83.75% and 77.50%, respectively, whereas for missions away from headquarters, the 1 and 2 ratings for CI with and without notes were 75% and 72.50%, respectively, and for whispering and bidule, 68.75% and 56.25%, respectively. Those differences in percentages clearly show that although CI is not used very much at headquarters, on missions away from headquarters CI is still being used.

6.3.4. Section 4: the LCE

This section focused exclusively on the LCE, the training received by UN staff members before passing the LCE, the role of MoU schools, and their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their training. The section also dealt with the challenges of the LCE, the choice of SI for the LCE and their views on the low pass rate.

Was your training useful in terms of passing the LCE?

A clear majority of the respondents (82.50%) acknowledged that their training was very useful to pass the LCE. Only 6.25% thought that their training was not adequate. 11.25% chose the option “not applicable”.

Graph 19. Usefulness of training to pass the LCE
**Were you trained at a MoU school? Were you a self-trained interpreter?**

61.25% of interpreters were trained at a MoU school and 38.75% were trained elsewhere. 13.75% (from the non-MoU trained interpreters) are self-trained.

![Graph 20. Number of interpreters trained at a MoU school](image)

**Do you feel that you were as well prepared as formally trained interpreters to pass the LCE?**

When self-trained interpreters were asked if they thought they were as well prepared as formally trained interpreters to pass the LCE, half thought that their preparation matched that of formally trained interpreters. Three (3) answered no, and the rest thought that in some respects they were better prepared (thanks to their
experience as freelancers and/or the number of hours of self-practice) while in other respects, they felt that they lacked preparation.

**In your view, what were the strengths of your training programme with regard to passing the LCE?**

The majority of interpreters (71) gave very detailed answers that can be synthetized as follows:

- The fact that some teachers worked for the UN was considered important. This allowed students to be better acquainted with UN subjects and to have a better understanding of the LCE process and UN needs (24 interpreters).

- MoU schools gave intensive training (students gained endurance) and feedback. Students were also exposed to different kinds of speakers and registers, thus preparing them to work in different markets. The training started with CI, which gave students a good basis. A progression approach was followed while introducing SI (crafted speeches given by students first and then real conference speeches). CI also taught the students how to interpret the meaning and not the word. Students were able to learn SI and to practice a lot (35).

- Visits by UN chiefs of booths helped students get a better understanding of the whole process (1).

- Internships organized by the UN were quoted as being very important. Students could see how UN interpreters worked and it was a good opportunity for students to be known and remembered (1).

- Internships were criticized as being too focused on the LCE. The results being that interpreters can interpret UN speeches but have difficulties interpreting other kind of material. It was also said that the fact that young interpreters were targeted fresh out of school meant that new recruits did not necessarily have the required background and knowledge (1).

- For some MoU schools, especially FTI in Geneva, the majority of professors were UN staff. Students therefore had no problem with training with UN material or with going to the UN for dummy booth purposes (1).
- More emphasis should have been placed on speed as this is required to pass the LCE. In this case, only experience can help the interpreter pass the LCE with text read at full speed, the LCE being a sort of artificial exam (2).

- Although some schools were not MoU at the time, they still focused their training on the LCE and on UN speeches (2).

- The school taught them how to listen and control their stress while emphasizing the importance of the A language (1).

- Despite the training received and years of experience, self-training on UN texts before the LCE was emphasized as being a good way of passing the LCE (2).

- The rigor, accuracy and precision demanded during training were very helpful for passing the LCE (1).

In short, the vast majority of respondents were pleased with the training received. The majority emphasized that the fact that their training focused in part on UN material helped them enormously to pass the LCE. Teaching/coaching/mentoring by UN interpreters was considered as being a very important and crucial tool.

In your view, what were the weaknesses of your training programme?

Here again, interpreters gave detailed answers that can be summarized as follows:

- No weaknesses (13).

- The training did not focus enough on real-life situations or on different kinds of accents and on speed, with insufficient exposure to UN processes (12).

- Not enough training on sight interpretation and simultaneous with text. Students were not taught how to use documents and how to improve style and register (4).

- CI was considered as a weakness of the training programme: some students were kicked out because they did not pass the CI exam and therefore were not admitted to SI despite their good potential (1).

- Not enough SI training and too many extra subjects that were deemed unnecessary such as translation or précis-writing (1).

- Schools should teach students how to overcome stress (1).
- Schools did not offer positive reinforcement, leaving students with feelings of inadequacy, and not enough positive feedback (4).

- Training was too long (1).

- Training was too short with not enough CI and SI and SI with text (5).

- Not enough contact with UN Chief Interpreters and no information on UN language combinations and some language combinations were not taken into consideration during training (3).

- SI was introduced too late, not giving the students time to build up sufficient mileage (1).

- Having one year of CI was useful but the second year learning at the same time SI, SI with text and sight translation was too much, leaving little time to assimilate everything (1).

- Lack of internship possibilities and lack of professional interpreters as teachers (3).

- Lack of general knowledge classes (1).

- CI training was too long (3).

- Too much time lost on research papers instead of focusing on interpretation (1).

- Too much emphasis on the General Assembly and the Security Council while forgetting that even at the UN, interpreters are required to work in other types of meetings as well (1).

Thirteen (13) interpreters out of 68 respondents were pleased with their training. Twelve interpreters thought that the training did not take into account real life situations. The lack of exposure to accents was quoted several times as a real handicap. The same number of interpreters complained about the lack of fast speeches in their training: speeches used were never read, leaving them completely unprepared for real life situations.

It is worth noting the number of interpreters who complained about their teachers’ lack of empathy. Feedback was very rude, and positive reinforcement was never given, causing students to pull out. One respondent went as far as talking about moral harassment.
The lack of training on SI, SI with text and sight translation was mentioned by several interpreters. This is a legitimate concern given that, as we have seen in the answers to question 6.3.3, SI with text is one of the main techniques used by interpreters in their everyday work at the UN and sometimes new recruits have to learn this new technique while on the job.

Although only 3 interpreters complained about the duration of CI training, and several interpreters did not agree with the fact that in some schools passing a CI exam was mandatory before starting SI. They argued that while doing so, schools were probably missing out on students who could have become good interpreters;

The lack of professional interpreters in training was also quoted as a shortcoming. Some teachers did not have the same language combinations as their students and were therefore not in a position to give complete feedback and others had language teachers who were not interpreters and who only read newspaper articles in class. Some schools did not provide internship opportunities for their students.

In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE?

The answers (in order of importance) were as follows:

- Speed (47).
- Stress (23).
- Accents (14).
- Candidates have to listen to recorded speeches without seeing the speaker, artificial conditions (13).
- Poor quality of recordings and technical problems (9).
- Complexity of UN speeches and lack of familiarity with UN speeches (7).
- Problems with languages and with register (6).
- Stamina (5).
- Lack of general knowledge (5).
- Candidates are required to do a sight translation without text (4).
- Lack of information about the speeches and/or the context (4).
- Accuracy and completeness required (3).
- Speeches are not well chosen: they are too fast or too complicated and they are written speeches (3).
- Lack of experience and/or preparation (3).
- Speeches are too difficult and not adequate (2).
- Immaturity and lack of life experience (2).
- One hour is not enough to judge for proficiency on difficult speeches (2).
- Problems with assessment by jury members (not all that pass the LCE are good and some good interpreters do not pass the LCE), jury members are biased and unfriendly (1).
- Problems with the screening problem. It is sometimes unfair or not objective (1).
- Insufficient knowledge of languages (1).
- The LCE is too long (1).
- There is no feedback on performance (1).

The answers to this question indicate that the majority of respondents considered speed to be the main challenge. Indeed, as already explained (see chapter 3), at the UN the standard practice is to choose speeches from real meetings and especially speeches that have been interpreted by UN interpreters. Giving candidates a speech that has been interpreted by a UN interpreter in a UN meeting gives the jury an immediate idea as to whether a candidate can cope with the speed and content of UN speeches.

The unclear criteria used to mark the LCE were also mentioned as a reason why candidates fail the LCE. Some interpreters wondered why there were huge differences in quality among new recruits and why excellent interpreters did not pass the LCE.

The lack of feedback was mentioned by some interpreters as a problem given that candidates do not know why they fail and therefore could have difficulty improving.
When asked to elaborate, respondents repeated the answers given to the previous questions and the same factors and challenges were mentioned:

- Even good interpreters can fail the test because asking candidates to interpret very fast written speeches when UN interpreters probably had the text does not reflect real-life situations (10).

- The majority of candidates are not used to UN terminology and jargon and the speeches are given out of context (9).

- The LCE is less and less feasible given that during training students are asked to distance themselves from the speaker, whereas given the speed this technique cannot be used for the LCE (1).

- Candidates are too young and should acquire different kinds of experience before attempting the LCE (4).

- UN examiners do not apply objective criteria when marking the LCE given the different abilities of the new recruits (2).

- The LCE only measured a candidate’s ability to work at the UN and not necessarily elsewhere (2).

- Problems with languages, especially C languages (2).

- The artificiality of the exam (2).

- Technical problems (1).

- Freelancers working for the UN have a clear advantage. They work at UN meetings and have the necessary terminology (2).

- Lack of transparency for internship opportunities (1).

- Stress and accents (schools are still using BBC English and candidates are not confronted with accents during their training) (5).

**LCE only tests candidates in simultaneous. Do you think it should also include consecutive?**

The majority of respondents - 67.50% (54 out of 80) - did not consider that CI should be added to the LCE, whereas 32.50% (26 respondents) had the opposite view.
When asked to elaborate, respondents in favour of including CI explained that:

- Given that CI could be required at the UN, everybody should be able to perform CI and CI could be used to sort the wheat from the chaff (27).
- CI could be used to compensate bad results in SI (1).

Respondents against the inclusion of CI stated that:

- CI is not used at the UN and should not be tested. The exam should fit the purpose (33).
- Given the use of bidule, CI is no longer necessary (3).
- This will limit the number of successful candidates even more (1).

**In your opinion, why is the LCE success rate so low?**

The following graph and table show the answers given by respondents. The answers matched the answers given by respondents in question 30: *In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE?* Respondents were clear in their answers and their explanations when asked to elaborate on the reasons for the LCE success rate and consequently what could be done to improve the statistics.
Graph 23. Opinion of interpreters on the LCE success rate

Table 19. Opinion of interpreters on the LCE success rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of UN subjects</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with C languages</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive speed of speeches</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with A language</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of general knowledge</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of UN structure</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for selecting the candidates</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices of exam material</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the other factors mentioned by the respondents are indicated below:

- The lack of a specific preparation (1)
- Accents (1)
- The bar is set too high (1)
- Lack of concentration (1)
- Technical problems during the exam and exam format (2)
- Problems with A, B or C languages (1)
- Density of written texts (1)
- Lack of experience of young candidates (1)
- Candidates are not told how important precision and completeness are (1)

6.3.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools

Given the nature of your everyday work at the UN, in your view is the training provided by MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they face when working at the UN?

The following answers were given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the training is optimal</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, the training is not optimal</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous should be emphasized at MoU schools</td>
<td>36.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive should be emphasized at MoU schools</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both SI and CI should be emphasized</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A special module on the UN should be introduced</td>
<td>53.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something is missing in the training</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For a large number of respondents, there is a lack of consistency between the training provided by schools and real-life situations. Indeed, 32.50% of the interpreters felt that the training provided by MoU schools is not optimal. For 36.25%, the focus should be placed on SI whereas for 25% both CI and SI should be strengthened. It should be noted, however, that in their comments, several interpreters pointed out that they did not know what kind of training was offered at MoU schools and had no information on MoUs in general. Others thought that the real problem was the lack of emphasis on A language and on general knowledge. The time spent on writing a mandatory master’s thesis during training was once again criticized.

Given the nature of your everyday work at the UN, in your view is the number of hours devoted to consecutive and simultaneous at MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they face when working at the UN?

The following question was more specific and focused in particular on the numbers of hours devoted to CI and SI at MoU schools.
Table 21. Adequacy of interpreting modalities offered at MoU schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More hours of SI are necessary</td>
<td>43.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More hours of CI are necessary</td>
<td>11.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of hours of CI and SI is optimal</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of hours of CI and SI is not optimal</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something should be added</td>
<td>16.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 25. Opinion of interpreters of the relevance of CI and SI for working at the UN

The respondents that chose the option “other” explained that in this case they once again had no information on the number of hours devoted to each technique at MoU schools. They also thought that sight translation should be strengthened. Several interpreters also indicated that training in real-life situations at a UN duty station should be added. Some respondents, however, pointed out that all interpretation schools, including MoU schools, should train interpreters for all kinds of markets and not just the UN market, and young interpreters should be encouraged to work as freelancers before joining the UN. Self-practice during training was also emphasized.
In your view, are the curricula of MoU schools adequate to the task of preparing students to pass the LCE?

65% of respondents were of the view that MoU schools do not prepare students adequately for passing the LCE and that their curricula should, for the following reasons, be adapted:

- MoU schools should prepare students for UN “realities”: speed, SI with text, and accents (16).
- The curricula of MoU schools are fine as some young interpreters are perfectly able to pass the LCE (5).
- SI training should be emphasized. In some schools, students are required to write dissertations on different subjects, thus taking away time for self-practice. Marks in theoretical training should not be taken into account; only marks for technical skills should be part of the diploma (12).
- MoU schools should focus on training well-rounded interpreters who would be able to work in different markets in CI and SI and not only for the UN market (5).
- A special module on the UN should be introduced and internships at the UN should be required (2).
- One year’s training is not enough. All interpretation schools should be at the graduate level. Schools should check students’ linguistic skills and general knowledge (5).
- For Arabic, given that UN interpreters are required to use literal Arabic, which is not the spoken language in Arabic countries, schools should make sure that students when interpreting have the necessary mastery of the language (2).
- The problem is not the MoU schools but the material selected for the LCE. The UN should invest more resources in the Outreach Programme if it wants to get better results (1).

The same arguments were repeated by the respondents. Accents, speed, SI with text should be part of the curriculum of MoU schools. SI training should be emphasized and training should take into account the realities on the ground. However, it should be noted that several interpreters explained that they did not
know what kind of curricula were being offered at MoU schools and could therefore not comment. Some respondents also thought that the training offered by MoU schools was perfectly adequate as their role was to train interpreters for all kinds of markets and not only for the UN.

6.3.6. Section 6: Interpreters with no official training

Although this question was directed at interpreters with no formal training, the majority of interpreters that answered this question had received formal training. The others were either trained on UN training programmes or were self-trained. I am not in a position to give the results to the last two questions of this section since formally trained interpreters were the ones answering these questions.

6.3.7. Section 7: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters

This section was about the teaching/coaching/mentoring experience of UN staff.

Do you currently teach at an interpreting school or schools?

Graph 26. Number of staff teaching at a school
Do you coach young interpreters at the UN?

If the first and second graphs are examined together, the first graph shows that only 6.25% of respondents teach at a MoU school and 93.75% do not. The second graph indicates that 53.75% coach young interpreters at the UN compared with 46.25% who do not. The explanation for the difference in percentages is clear: it is easier to coach young interpreters at the UN than it is to teach at a MoU school. Teaching at a MoU school, except for the FTI in Geneva, means traveling; as explained before, only the FTI in Geneva is based in one of the four duty stations (which makes it easier for the UN interpreters based in Geneva since they are not required to travel).

In your coaching and/or teaching experience, do you notice any differences between students from MoU and non-MoU schools?

When asked if they noticed any differences between students and/or young interpreters coming from MoU and non-MoU schools, the answers obtained were as follows:

---

44 FTI Geneva: Cambridge Conference Interpreting Course, MGIMO University, University in Buenos Aires, University in UK.
Table 22. Differences between students from MoU and non-MoU schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It depends on the student not on the school</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from MoU schools are better</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no differences</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>51.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of interpreters could not answer this question and chose the option “not applicable”, probably because they did not teach and/or coach. Therefore, the above results are not really indicative of a difference between MoU and non-MoU trained students given the small numbers involved.

6.4. Discussion

6.4.1. Section 1: Professional and personal information

The first conclusion that can be drawn from the answers to this section is that a clear majority of respondents (56.25%) have been at the UN for between 5 and 15 years. This data can easily be explained by the fact that there have been many retirements in the last 15 years and new interpreters have been heavily recruited.

This data must be seen in correlation with the training background of UN interpreters: the large majority has received formal interpretation training and only 6.25% are self-trained. However, in 2004, the percentage of self-trained UN interpreters was 35% (Baigorri, 2004: 122). This difference is probably due to the fact that students can nowadays avail themselves of a myriad of training possibilities. As explained in chapter 3, after the change of generation and the creation of several interpretation schools, although some interpreters are still self-trained (since an interpretation diploma is no longer necessary to pass the LCE), the majority have been and still are receiving formal training.

6.4.2. Section 2: Training background of UN interpreters

According to the results, SI and CI are the two main modalities taught in training institutions, with the majority starting SI at the latest 6 months after CI. The sequencing used by schools, i.e. CI before SI, is still valid and has been used for the
majority of formally trained interpreters; however, only 42% of the respondents received an explanation about the sequencing. This data confirms the information collected for the curricular analysis (see §4.3.4): at all MoU schools, CI is taught before SI (although SI is introduced at a different stage depending on the duration of the programme).

It must be pointed out that, as shown in the curricular analysis (see §4.3.4), SI training usually starts in the middle or at the end of the first year of a two-year course. As explained in the theoretical section of my thesis and as stated by Pöchhacker, most interpreter training courses featured:

(...) roughly similar curricular components: basic concepts of language and communication, language enhancement, area studies (i.e. socio-cultural background knowledge), skill training in consecutive and SI, and professional ethics”. (2004: 177).

Some of the schools analysed have adopted Arjona’s linear model or the modified linear model: the former sequences the programme so that instruction in translation precedes interpretation and the latter offers parallel tracking entry to either the interpretation or translation degree, the consequences being that students do not get enough training in interpretation in general and in SI in particular. The results of the survey clearly show that several interpreters, while recognizing the value and the importance of CI, complained later about the insufficient number of SI hours offered during training, although in the large majority of cases SI training was provided for 6 months. Given that SI and SI with text are the main techniques used by UN interpreters during their everyday work (see section 3), it makes sense for MoU schools to increase the number of SI hours or to introduce SI earlier on in the curriculum because, in order to pass the LCE, candidates need to have passed the novice stage. As seen in the theoretical section (see §1.2.4), novice interpreters have a harder time linking different ideas while expert interpreters seem to be able to rapidly, if not directly perceive categories and concepts while at the same time remaining sensitive to important details. Skills need to be built on a knowledge base for those skills to grow and be taken to advanced levels and this knowledge needs to be elicited. Experts are capable of better reasoning and faster information processing (Moser-Mercer et al., 2000). Although students will probably not be experts at the end of their training, they should at least be expected to be able to
survive in the market as professional interpreters. MoU schools should make sure that their curriculums allow novices to become expert enough in all interpreting modalities but especially in the modalities that will be requested at the LCE, i.e. SI.

6.4.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN

Although CI is seldom used at the UN and is not part of the LCE (see §3.2), the majority of interpreters still think that CI should be taught before SI. The majority of interpreters who have passed the LCE have been taught using that sequencing. Thus, it could be easily understandable that they would advocate for the same training to be used for future interpreters. In their case, that training proved to be the most appropriate. This also explains why the majority of interpreters were satisfied with the training received. However, some would have liked the training to have been more attuned to real life situations. In the curricular analysis, we have seen that CI continues to be taught before SI at all MoU schools. According to Gile (2001), although CI is used less and less in today’s market, CI should be taught at least “during the first half of a programme”; however, he does not think that “perfect mastery of consecutive should necessarily be institutionalized as a mandatory requirement for the conference interpreter’s degree” (2001: 4). He proposes several options whereby CI could be taught at the beginning of the programme in order to detect and correct major weaknesses in students. CI could also be taught throughout the programme but could not be tested as a requirement for the degree, except as a special option. This could allow students to receive more training in SI and SI with text.

The conclusion about the main technique used at the UN is not a surprise. The main techniques used are without any doubt SI and SI with text. CI is used only on missions away from headquarters and during bilateral meetings and is slowly being substituted by the bidule. At some duty stations like Vienna, CI is almost never used, in contrast to Geneva where special rapporteur missions are still frequent.

6.4.4. Section 4: LCE

For a clear majority of interpreters (83.50%), their training was instrumental for passing the LCE, and it is worth noting that 61.25% were trained at MoU schools.
It is also important to note that more than half of the 11 self-trained interpreters said that their training was on a par with that of formally trained interpreters.

The detailed answers given by respondents clearly show that UN interpreters valued their training and for them the curriculum used was the right one for passing the LCE. However, they would also have liked schools to be more in touch with the realities of the profession and, to give an example that was mentioned by many of the interpreters, they said that speed is an element that should now be factored in all curricula. They also indicated that SI with text should be taught and that sight translation should be given at least the same importance as CI. As explained in chapter 3, speed is an integral part of the LCE as jury members want to make sure that successful candidates will be able to cope with UN speeches at any UN meeting. The selection of material for the LCE will invariably include a very fast speech to test candidates’ ability. Although as we have seen in the theoretical section, AIIC’s recommended rate for public speaking at international events is 100 words per minute in English (AIIC, 2014), some speeches can exceed 160 words per minute. In 2012, in Vienna, given the increasing difficulties faced by staff with speed, we calculated the number of word per minute of two speeches selected at random given by the delegations of Australia and United States at a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the results were as follows: 170 words per minute for Australia and 158 wpm for United States. This might explain why speed is still being used to screen potential candidates for the LCE. So it is not a surprise that speed was the first challenge quoted. Speed is increasingly becoming a problem that has even been voiced by UN staff: the duration of meetings has been shortened for saving purposes and delegations have to respect agreed time limits for their statements. The result is that the delivery rates of speeches have reached an all-time high. As a matter of fact, in order to understand what kind of strategies interpreters were using to cope with speed, Barghout et al. (2012) carried out a study in which 20 speeches from the Human Rights Council were randomly selected and analysed. It turned out that the fastest delivery rate was 188.57 wpm and the slowest 106.44 wpm. The average of the 20 speeches was 149.12 wpm, while AIIC recommends 100 wpm. The LCE is supposed to show how a candidate will perform during different kinds of UN meetings with different delivery rates. Once recruited, interpreters will be assigned to all types of meetings, thus explaining the speed of
some LCE speeches. On this point, I would like to reiterate (see §4.1.1.) one of the challenges facing training institutions mentioned by Sawyer (2004: 4), namely the adaptation of training to the workplace. Obviously MoU schools do not, cannot and are not expected to train interpreters only for the UN market. However, they have signed an agreement with the UN. The UN in turn expects MoU schools to train candidates so that they are able to pass the LCE and thus enter employment at the UN. So, adapting training to the workplace means training students (with the required UN language combination) to cope with speed, accents and UN contents and terminology.

Stress was the second challenge mentioned by respondents. In an exam situation, stress can have different explanations: the stress that all candidates usually feel when taking an exam or stress due to the unknown and the fear of forgetting what they have learned. In the case of the LCE, the fact that it is not organized at regular intervals can be an added factor: the frequency depends on the needs of the Organization. It can be organized every two to three years for certain booths and certain language combinations or every five years like in the Chinese booth (see §3.4). This creates added stress as candidates, in case of failure, do not know when they will be able to sit the LCE again. This, coupled with the fact that the freelance market has been shrinking for certain language combinations, can explain why an increasing number of freelancers now want to become permanents.

Stamina or lack thereof, technical problems, poor quality recording, artificial conditions were among the challenges mentioned by respondents. I would like to underline that technical difficulties are recurrent during the LCE: during past LCEs, certain specific problems were voiced by candidates and reported to human resources offices in New York. Sometimes human resources officers present are not told what to do, they do not know which bloc of language to start with or how many minutes of break interpreters should have between one bloc of language and the other. Interpreters are seldom present as they are not required to and are usually assigned to a meeting the day of the LCE and technicians asked to record the tapes will receive no specific information. On more than one occasion, tapes were not recorded and some candidates had to resit the exam. The fact that this has been mentioned as a challenge is not surprising.
I also expected interpreters to mention accents as a real challenge for passing the LCE. Indeed, it is only when interpretation schools use UN material for training purposes that students can become acquainted with all kinds of accents and given that this is not always the case, accents can become a real obstacle to passing the LCE.

The lack of UN terminology, the complexity of UN speeches coupled with the accuracy and the completeness required were also perceived as major obstacles to passing the LCE. As explained in chapter 3, in contrast to other organizations such as the EU, speeches are not especially crafted for the LCE. In the theoretical section (see chapter 3), I have clearly explained that preparation to the LCE must start way before the LCE.

Several respondents also alluded to the lack of fairness of the exam: candidates are required to interpret simultaneously fast speeches without having the text in front of them, whereas when UN interpreters did the speech in the booth they probably had the text and they might also have had the time to prepare it. Moreover, the selection of material was also criticized (speeches are too difficult and too complex) and candidates have to start interpreting without knowing the proper context whereas in real life UN interpreters know what kind of meeting they will be assigned to and can prepare the documents accordingly. A candidate having to interpret in an empty room with no one listening was also quoted as being an added difficulty. Indeed this can create an artificial situation that can be difficult to deal with.

For the question on the low LCE success rate, respondents were given several answers to choose from. After analysing the answers, the first conclusion that can be drawn is that the choice of answers given to respondents matched the surveyed interpreters’ comments on question 30 on the challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE. In this particular case, stress was considered the most important factor and speed ranked as fourth. Lack of knowledge of UN subjects and problems with C languages were given the same percentage and are, according to the respondents, the second factor that could explain the low success rate among candidates sitting the LCE. Problems with A language were attributed almost the same percentage as lack of general knowledge, while lack of knowledge of the structure of the UN was the next factor mentioned.
In hindsight, I should have included a question on B language for the Chinese and Arabic booths. In the case of the Arabic booth, the requirements for candidates with a B in English (having a retour for the Arabic and the Chinese booth is mandatory at the UN) will be SI into Arabic from three speeches delivered in English and SI into English from three speeches delivered in Arabic. For candidates with a B in French however, the requirements will be the following: SI into Arabic from three speeches delivered in French and SI into French from three speeches delivered in Arabic. In other words, for those with French B, their English will not be tested although once employed they will be working 99% of their time from English, whereas for other languages English is eliminatory.

For the Chinese booth, the requirements are the same (with the exception of the most recent LCEs in which candidates with a B in French could not sit the LCE as a B in English was mandatory).

B language is therefore an important element for those two booths and given that this is an important part of the LCE, this should have been taken into account.

6.4.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools

Many respondents felt there is a lack of consistency between the training provided at schools and real life situations. Indeed, 32.50% of the interpreters thought that the training provided by MoU schools was not optimal. For 36.25%, the focus should be placed on SI whereas for 25% both CI and SI should be strengthened. 65% of respondents were of the view that MoU schools do not prepare students adequately to pass the LCE. It should be noted, however that, when asked if they would change something in the training received, the majority of interpreters acknowledged that they were satisfied with the training received. 82.50% also indicated that their training was useful to pass the LCE (see question 6.3.5). These different percentages could probably be explained by the fact that although respondents had passed the LCE, they are nevertheless aware of the fact that the LCE success rate is still very low and that something is probably missing in the candidates’ preparation.

These percentages show that, according to the interpreters surveyed, a special module on the UN should be introduced in MoU schools. When asked MoU
schools if they had a special module on the UN, of the five schools that answered two have a specific module on the UN and for the other three, throughout the programme UN material is used and the structure of the UN is explained and studied by the students. This is very important given the results obtained in section 4 (on the LCE) and section 5 (on training): although knowledge of UN topics and specific terminology are two of the main challenges of the LCE, with proper preparation and with a detailed explanation on what to expect, candidates sitting the LCE in the future might be able to do better. LCE speeches follow a certain structure and the topics chosen are part of the major themes discussed at the UN (Diur, 2014). Knowing where to find the information and how to analyse and use it when preparing for the LCE is therefore crucial. A special module could indeed help candidates prepare more effectively for the LCE, thereby increasing their chances of passing. The special module could teach candidates how to organize the preparation and documentation process, how to cope with speed and familiarize themselves with accents, how to do a simultaneous with text, how to control stress and how to use the correct terminology while concentrating on the important themes and acquiring the necessary information. The same arguments were reiterated by the respondents. Accents, speed and SI with text should be part of the curricula of MoU schools. SI training should be emphasized and the training should take into account the realities on the ground.

Article 3 of the MoU signed between training institutions and the UN indicates very clearly what the responsibilities of schools are under the agreement (see Appendix 5):

ARTICLE 3

Responsibilities of the University

The University shall:

Adapt, in consultation with the UN, as appropriate, existing Training Programmes or create new Training Programmes leading to a master’s degree in conference interpretation and/or conference translation in any combinations of the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), with emphasis on preparation for LCEs organized by the UN.
Although as several interpreters have indicated MoU schools should train interpreters for all type of markets, MoU schools also have a special responsibility vis-à-vis the UN. Introducing a special module for students with the required UN language combination could help candidates become more aware of the specific challenges the LCE poses and prepare more effectively for the LCE, thereby increasing their chances of passing and this would also foster collaboration between conference interpreting institutions and the UN interpretation department.

6.4.6. Section 6: Self-trained interpreters

As explained previously, all respondents thought that they had to answer this question even though it was only intended for self-trained interpreters. It is obvious that the wording of the question was not clear enough for the respondents and it should have been worded more explicitly. As a result I am not in a position to draw any meaningful conclusion in this regard.

6.4.7. Section 7: Teaching/coaching/mentoring

The conclusion that can be drawn is that few UN interpreters teach at interpreting schools. This can easily be explained by the fact that in all four UN duty stations, training institutions seldom includes students with the UN language combination, except for FTI in Geneva. However, more than 50% of interpreters coach interpreters at the UN and their conclusion is that the capacities demonstrated by individual students depend on the students themselves and not on the school. Coaching at the UN has increased since the launch of the Outreach Programme. Here again, each duty station and each booth can decide how many students and/or young interpreters they will coach in a given year and some booths are more active than others.
Case law is defined, according to the Business Dictionary, as:

(…) part of common law, consisting of judgments given by higher courts in interpreting the statutes (or the provisions of a constitution) applicable in cases brought before them. Called “precedents”, they are binding on all courts (within the same jurisdiction) to be followed as the law in similar cases. Over time, these precedents are recognized, affirmed, and enforced by the subsequent court decisions, thus continually expanding the common law. (BusinessDictionary.com, 2014)

In section 3.2, I talked about the fact that the whole LCE process was New York driven: the selection of materials, the structure of the LCE and the marking. The absence of clear written rules has led to a methodology that has become, as stated above, case law, i.e. law based on decisions that judges have made in past cases (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2015).

As explained in the introduction to my research, New York Heads of booths and senior interpreters have been assigned the task of selecting LCE material and marking the LCE. It would be useful to get a better insight into the criteria they have been using for both tasks.

7.1. General objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to elicit the views of senior interpreters on the results of the LCE and find out if they consider that the LCE in its present form should be revamped and/or amended. In fact, senior interpreters, who are the ones who decide which candidates have the right skills to enter employment at the UN, are not usually asked about their perceptions and understanding of the whole process. In a previous chapter (see §3.4), I explained that the LCE was like a chain with different links. I am going to use the same analogy and explain further what I meant.
A chain can be used to connect point A to point B. In this particular case, the chain, thanks to its different links, connects MoU schools to the UN. In order for the chain to remain solid and not break, all links must be strong. If there is a weakest link the chain can still be used but the connection will not be that solid. In fact, all links are equally important; the last link, however, is the most important of all since it will determine what happens to all the candidates that use that link to get connected to the UN. Thus, efforts should be made to involve senior interpreters in the programme. Senior interpreters are therefore one of the most important links in the chain as they are the ones who decide if candidates have the right competencies to enter employment at the UN.

I also would like to add that reports on the LCE, its effectiveness and its revamping are usually written by the translation section, and interpreters are seldom included in these kinds of exercises. I do think that having senior interpreters express themselves clearly through the questionnaire will at least give all the UN interpreting community a chance to be, if not listened to, heard.

The research questions for this second questionnaire were as follows:

- RQ1: How is the senior interpreter community composed?
- RQ2: What is the training background of senior interpreters and the curricula followed at their training institutions?
- RQ3: What are the main interpreting modalities used at headquarters and on missions?
- RQ4: What are the competencies and skills that are required to pass the LCE?
- RQ5: What are the main challenges of the LCE?
- RQ6: Do MoU schools cover the competences and skills to be tested at the LCE?
- RQ7: Have senior interpreters noticed any differences in candidates’ competencies across the years?
- RQ8: Have senior interpreters noticed any differences in the level requested to pass the LCE?
- RQ9: What would senior interpreters do if they were in charge of designing a LCE?
Based on these research questions, the objectives of the survey were as follows:

- Objective 1: Understand how the senior interpreter community is composed (how many years interpreters have been working as staff, when they passed the LCE, when they became senior interpreters, etc.).

- Objective 2: Collect information on the training background of senior interpreters and the curricula followed at their training institutions.

- Objective 3: Collect information on the main interpretation technique used at headquarters and on missions and determine how often in their careers senior interpreters have used CI and the proportion between CI and SI in their daily work.

- Objective 4: Examine the competencies and skills that are required to pass the LCE.

- Objective 5: Examine the main challenges of the LCE.

- Objective 6: Analyse if MoU schools cover the competencies and skills to be tested at the LCE.

- Objective 7: Find out whether senior interpreters have noticed any differences in candidates' competencies across the years.

- Objective 8: Find out whether senior interpreters have noticed any differences in the level requested to pass the LCE.

- Objective 9: Examine what senior interpreters would do if they were in charge of designing the LCE.

7.2. Methodology

7.2.1. Definition of the study population

As already explained, the surveyed population consisted of all senior interpreters in New York, also referred to as P5 interpreters. The UN workforce is made up of different categories of staff. Within each category there are different levels, which reflect increasing levels of responsibilities and requirements. Professional and higher categories (P and D) are normally internationally recruited and are expected to serve at different duty stations throughout their career with the
Organization. Work in the professional category generally demands a high degree of analytical and communication skills, substantive expertise and/or managerial leadership ability (UN, 2014).

P5 interpreters usually have more than 10 years of experience at the UN. Interpreters cannot be recruited at the P5 level. All interpreters, even if they have a vast experience as freelance interpreters, can only be recruited, depending on their experience, as P2 or P3. All P5 interpreters have had to apply to a P4 post and then to a P5.

In New York and Geneva, there are five senior interpreters (P5) per language (the Head of Booth is also P5), whereas there is only one per booth in Nairobi and in Vienna, which can easily be explained by the fact that these two duty stations are smaller than the former two.

Only New York senior interpreters will be surveyed since they are the ones entrusted with selecting candidates and marking the LCE. Although some Geneva senior interpreters have been involved from time to time and on an ad hoc basis (only in marking since the selection of material has always been a New York prerogative), the general unwritten rule is that marking takes place in New York and is done by senior interpreters. This explains why I decided to focus only on New York P5 interpreters. The survey will therefore be sent to 31 senior interpreters (five P5 per booth (6 in the Chinese booth).

7.2.2. Questionnaire design

This second questionnaire, like the first one, also focused on the training received by UN interpreters and on the adequacy of the training for passing the LCE. The design of the second questionnaire was aligned with the objectives and the research questions: the questions asked would give an idea of senior interpreters’ feelings about firstly the adequacy of candidates’ training for passing the LCE, secondly the format of the LCE, and thirdly the MoU schools and their curricula.

---

45 LimeSurvey was used for the second questionnaire as well.
7.2.2.1. Structure of the questionnaire

As for the first questionnaire, the first section explained the purpose of the survey, who the data collector was, why the survey was being conducted and why the respondents had been selected. Further information about how to complete the questionnaire, how long it would normally take to complete, how the data would be used and who would have access to the information was also be provided; the introduction also contained assurances on the confidentiality and anonymity of data and instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. The introduction was followed by six different sections (see Appendix 9).

7.2.2.1.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information

The objective of the first section was to obtain a better insight into the composition of the interpreting community in terms of the following:

1. Gender.
2. A language.
3. Number of years as UN staff member.
4. Number of years as a professional interpreter.
5. Did you pass the LCE?
6. When did you pass the LCE?
7. Number of years as a senior interpreter (P5).

7.2.2.1.2. Section 2: Training

The objective of this section was to collect information on the type of training (if any) of UN senior interpreters. The questions in this section were as follows:

8. Did you receive formal training in interpretation prior to becoming a professional interpreter?
9. What kind of training did you receive?
10. In which forms of interpretation did you receive training?
7.2.2.1.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN

The objective of this section was to gather information on the main interpretation technique used at headquarters and on missions. The second objective was to determine how often in their careers UN senior interpreters had used CI and the proportion between CI and SI in their daily work. All this information is important given the sequencing still used in the majority of MoU schools. The questions in this section were as follows:

11. Please indicate the main techniques you use in your everyday work.
12. Please indicate the main techniques you use while on mission.

7.2.2.1.4. Section 4: The LCE

The objective of this section was to analyse the usefulness of the sequencing between CI and SI used by MoU schools for passing the LCE. The second objective was to determine whether senior interpreters considered that the training they received in MoU schools was adequate to pass the LCE. The questions in this section were as follows:

13. Were you trained at a MoU school?
14. Was your training useful for passing the LCE?
15. Were you a self-trained interpreter?
16. In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE?
17. How many times have you been a jury member?
18. Over the years, have you noticed any changes in candidates’ competencies?
19. Over the years, have you noticed any differences in the level requested to pass the LCE?
20. In your opinion, why is the LCE success rate so low?
21. If you were in charge of revamping the LCE, would you: keep the same format, change the format, or change part of the format?
22. If you could change the format, would you: add more speeches, have less speeches have slower speeches, add other type of tests (simultaneous with
text, sight translation, consecutive, etc.), give the candidates the themes of the speeches one month in advance, craft special speeches for the LCE, use non-UN speeches, not change anything, change everything?

23. When judging the applicants, which criteria do you consider to be the most important: excellent passive comprehension of passive languages, accuracy, ability to construct complete sentences, style and register, ability to keep up with speed, intelligent editing of redundant words and phrases, ability to cope with difficult and dense passages, good diction and delivery?

7.2.2.1.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools

The objective of this section was to determine, given the everyday work at the UN, whether the curricula of MoU schools are the most appropriate for working at the UN. The questions in this section were as follows:

24. Given the everyday work at the UN, is the training provided by MoU schools the most appropriate for working at the UN?

25. Given the everyday work at the UN, do you think that the numbers of hours devoted to consecutive and simultaneous at MoU schools are the most appropriate for working at the UN?

26. In your view, should the curricula of MoU schools be adapted?

27. Do you think the Outreach Programme is best able to respond to UN needs?

28. If you could change the Outreach Programme, what would you do?

7.2.2.1.6. Section 6: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters

The objective here was to gain a better understanding of what UN interpreters think about the training provided by MoU schools and to determine whether, in their opinion, this training differs from that provided by non-MoU schools.

29. Do you currently teach at an interpretation school or schools?

30. Where do you teach?

31. Are you coaching young interpreters at the UN?

32. In your teaching/coaching do you notice any difference between students coming from MoU and non-MoU schools?
33. Do you think that your coaching has been instrumental in candidates passing the LCE?

34. Are the Outreach Programme and the MoU schools a success?

35. Would you like to add something to the LCE and/or the Outreach Programme?

7.2.3. Pilot phase

On this occasion the questionnaire was piloted by two interpreters. The first criterion that I wanted to follow in selecting the interpreters for this pilot phase was that I needed interpreters who had been involved in coaching and/or teaching and who had participated in the Outreach Programme. The second criterion is that I wanted to have interpreters who had done research and/or surveys before to make sure that they understood the purpose of the exercise. I did not want to use any P5 interpreters from New York in the pilot phase because I wanted to “save” them for the questionnaire.

I chose one senior interpreter from Geneva and one interpreter from New York. Both interpreters had expertise in questionnaires. Both interpreters had been actively involved in the Outreach Programme and had extensive experience in teaching at schools and in coaching young interpreters at the UN. One of them had written an article on the skills required to pass the LCE that was presented during the second outreach conference. I therefore felt that both were ideal candidates to pilot the questionnaire given their teaching experience and their knowledge of the Outreach Programme and of MoU schools.

The following table provides an overview of the training, A language and familiarity with research of the interpreters used for the pilot phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A LANGUAGE</th>
<th>TRAINING</th>
<th>FAMILIAR WITH RESEARCH AND / OR SURVEYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERPRETER 1</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>MoU school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERPRETER 2</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Self-trained</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I sent the exact same message to both interpreters. They were both asked to complete the questionnaire and to let me know if they honestly felt that certain questions needed to be added, withdrawn or clarified and if there was any unintended bias (see appendix 4).

7.2.3.1. Comments received during the pilot phase

As with the first questionnaire, the comments received were very useful. I was asked to add more alternative answers and to modify certain questions. It was also suggested that I add a question on the importance of freelance experience to pass the LCE. The following suggestions were received:

- Some grammatical errors must be corrected.
- For some questions, the options to choose from are missing.
- Instead of the word “chuchotage” the word “whispering” should be used as “chuchotage” is mostly used in Europe.
- Another choice should be added to the question on the training offered by MoU schools in section five: “more hours of SI and CI” should be added.
- When asking questions about the curricula of MoU schools in section 5, an option “I do not know” should be added.
- A question on the importance of freelance experience to pass the LCE should be added in the fourth section.
- A question on the importance of the B language versus the A language should be added for the Arabic and Chinese booths in the fourth section.
- A question on what senior interpreters are testing for - entrance level or mastery level - should be added in the fourth section.
- The option “mentoring” should be added in section 6.
- As regards the challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE, a question on B language should be added for the Chinese and Arabic booths in section 4.
- On the question on the revamping of the LCE, the option “faster speeches” should be added in section 4.
- A question on senior interpreters’ knowledge of MoU schools and the Outreach Programme should be added in section 5.
Following the comments received, two important questions were added to the survey:

- A question on quality of the B language versus the A language for the Arabic and the Chinese booths. As explained in previous sections (see chapter 6), at the UN, the Arabic and the Chinese booths are manned by three interpreters as they are bi-active booths. For the LCE, candidates whose main language is Arabic or Chinese are asked to interpret three speeches from their foreign language into their main language and three speeches from their main language into their foreign language. The speeches are approximately 5 to 10 minutes each (UN, 2014). For the Chinese booth, the foreign language requested is English and for the Arabic booth it can be either English or French.

- A question about the level of competence that was being tested at the LCE. Were jury members testing for mastery or entry level competence? Mastery level meaning that the candidate, once recruited, can be assigned to any kind of meeting whereas with entry level competence the candidate, once hired, will still need careful mentoring and coaching and may be assigned to any meeting only after one or two years of careful monitoring.

### 7.2.4. Distribution of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent on the same day via a group email to all senior interpreters. Two reminders (via email) were sent, after three weeks and one month, respectively. The link to the survey was included in all the reminders. A last reminder was sent one month later.

### 7.3. Results of the survey

As for the first survey, for structuring purposes the results are presented section by section (they will be analysed very briefly since they are interpreted below in the “Discussion” section). Graphs are also included to better illustrate the results. Additionally, values are used in the graphs and percentages when commenting on the numbers.

As explained before (see §7.2.1), the survey was sent to the 31 senior (or P5) interpreters and the breakdown of the answers received was as follows:
Table 24. Breakdown of answers received

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF INTERPRETERS THAT RECEIVED THE SURVEY</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RESPONSES RECEIVED</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLETE RESPONSES</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOMPLETE RESPONSES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of total responses clearly shows that the majority of senior interpreters answered the survey. Given the overall number of senior interpreters and in particular given the fact that only New York senior interpreters were surveyed, thus further reducing the study population, I believe that, as in the first survey, the response rate can be considered good and representative as, to my knowledge, it is the first time that senior interpreters have the possibility of participating to such an exercise.

7.3.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information

Out of the 14 completed answers received, 7 were from women and 7 from men.

Graph 28. Number of men and women that have answered the surveys

A language

The majority of the answers came from the English and Spanish booths, followed by the French and Arabic booths. It is important to note that no answers were received from the Chinese and Russian booths.
Table 25. Percentages of answers received per booth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 29. Number of interpreters that gave completed answers per booths

Number of years as UN staff member

A clear majority of senior interpreters (50%) had been at the UN between 15 and 30 years; 28.57% had been at the UN for more than 30 years and 21.43% for between 5 and 15 years; 0% had been at the UN for less than 5 years. These percentages can easily be explained by the fact that it usually takes more than 5 years as UN staff member to become a P5.
**Number of years as a professional interpreter**

None of the senior interpreters had less than 5 years of experience as professional interpreters. 14.29% had been working at the UN for between 5 and 15 years, 50% between 15 and 30 years and 35.71% for more than 30 years.

![Graph 31. Years as professional interpreters of respondents](image)

**When did you pass the LCE?**

The majority of senior interpreters surveyed passed the LCE between 1990 and 2000 (57.14%), 35.71% between 1980 and 1990 and 7.94% after 2000. None of the senior interpreters had passed the LCE before 1980. The change of generation observed in the first questionnaire was also evident here.

![Graph 32. Entry on duty of respondents](image)
Number of years as a senior interpreter (P5)

The majority of respondents (57.14%) had been P5 interpreters for between 5 and 10 years, 35.71% had been P5 for less than 5 years and 7.14% had been P5 for 10 to 20 years. None of the senior interpreters had been P5 for more than 20 years.

Graph 33. Years as senior interpreters of respondents

7.3.2. Section 2: Training background of senior interpreters

Did you receive formal training in interpretation prior to becoming a professional interpreter?

The results of the survey clearly show that the large majority of UN senior interpreters had received formal training in interpretation (78.57%). Only 21.43% were self-trained.

Graph 34. Number of interpreters that received formal training
What kind of training did you receive?

The following graph shows the kind of training received by UN senior interpreters.

28.57% of the interpreters had studied a Master in Conference Interpreting; 35.71% of them had studied a Master in Translation and Interpretation and 14.29% a BA programme. One interpreter had been enrolled in a Master-equivalent type of programme.

In which interpreting modalities did you receive training?

The table below explains in greater detail the forms of interpretation in which senior interpreters had received training:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Training</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison Interpreting</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuchotage/Whispering</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service Interpreting</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those figures reveal that the majority of senior interpreters had been trained in both CI and SI (the other forms of interpreting being marginal).
### 7.3.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN

Please indicate the main techniques you use in your everyday work (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 27. Interpreting modalities at headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SIMULTANEOUS:</strong> 100% of respondents gave a 5 rating to this technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **SI WITH TEXT:** 64.29% of respondents gave 5 and 4 ratings to this technique |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28.57% | 35.71% | 35.71% | 0% | 0% |

| **CI WITHOUT NOTES:** 92.86% of respondents gave 1 and 2 rating to this technique |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 0% | 0% | 7.14% | 7.14% | 85.71% |

| **CI WITH NOTES:** 100% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 0% | 0% | 0% | 21.43% | 78.57% |

| **CHUCHOTAGE / WHISPERING:** 100% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 0% | 0% | 0% | 28.57% | 71.43% |

| **BIDULE (portable equipment used for SI without a booth):** 71.43% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 0% | 0% | 28.57% | 50% | 21.43% |

Please indicate the main techniques you use while on mission (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used)
Table 28. Interpreting modalities on missions

| Simultaneous: 78.57% of respondents gave 4 and 5 ratings to this technique |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| 62.29% | 14.29% | 0% | 7.14% | 14.29% |

| SI with Text: 35.71% of respondents gave 4 and 5 rating to this technique and 35.71% gave a 3 rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| 14.29% | 21.43% | 35.71% | 14.29% | 14.29% |

| CI without Notes: 85.71% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| 0% | 7.14% | 7.14% | 7.14% | 78.57% |

| CI without Notes: 85.71% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| 7.14% | 7.14% | 0% | 7.14% | 78.57% |

| Chuchotage / Whispering: 78.57% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| 7.14% | 7.14% | 7.14% | 14.29% | 64.29% |

| Bidule (portable equipment used for SI without a booth): 57.14% of respondents gave 1 and 2 ratings to this technique |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5  | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1  |
| 0% | 14.29% | 28.57% | 14.29% | 42.86% |

The percentages indicate that SI and SI with text are the two main techniques used for conferences at headquarters and away from headquarters. SI with text, although important, is used less in the field for obvious reasons: missions away from headquarters may be important conferences where SI and SI with text are used or may be small high-level missions with few delegates and one or two interpreters. This explains why for missions away from headquarters the percentages for CI, whispering and bidule are higher. For headquarters, the 1 and 2 ratings for CI with and without notes were 100% and 92.86%, respectively, and for whispering and bidule, 100% and 71.43%, respectively, whereas for missions away from headquarters, the 1 and 2 ratings for CI with and without notes were the same -
85.71% - and for whispering and bidule, 78.57% and 57.14%, respectively. Although the percentages for senior interpreters differed slightly from those for the whole interpreting community (this can be explained by the fact that senior interpreters might be asked to do more high-level meetings), the results show that although CI is not used very much at headquarters, on missions away from headquarters, as revealed in the first survey, CI is still being used.

7.3.4. Section 4: the LCE

Were you trained at an MoU school?

The majority of senior interpreters were not trained at a MoU school (78.57%). Only 21.43% of respondents were MoU-trained interpreters and 21.43% were self-trained.

![Graph 36. Percentage of senior interpreters trained at MoU schools](image)

Was the training you received useful for passing the LCE?

57.14% answered yes. 42.86% chose the option "not applicable". The choice of that option can be explained by the fact that the majority were not trained at MoU schools, as seen in the previous answer.
Chapter 7. Second survey on quality criteria at the LCE

Graph 37. Usefulness of training for passing the LCE.

In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE?

The respondents mentioned the following challenges:

- Speed (11).
- UN jargon and terminology (6).
- Foreign accents (5).
- Insufficient knowledge of one of the languages and lack of training for some language combinations (2).
- Unreal situations with recorded speeches and no audience (2).
- Lack of endurance (1).
- Register (1).
- Lack of text (1).

One respondent stated that the LCE did not present any major challenges.

How many times have you been a jury member?

The majority of respondents (64.29%) have been jury members less than three times. 35.71% have participated to the marking between 3 and 5 times. LCEs are not organised at regular intervals, and this would explain the fact that the majority of P5 interpreters have marked less than 3 LCEs. We have seen that (see §3.4) less than 5 LCEs were organised in a 10-year period for certain language combinations.
Over the years, have you noticed any changes in candidates’ competencies?

The following graphs clearly show that for senior interpreters there are no clear-cut answers: 28.57% considered that candidates are better prepared, whereas 28.57% stated that they did not know the answer to that question. For 14.29%, candidates’ preparation was unchanged and for 7.14% candidates were less well prepared. 21.43% chose the option “not applicable”. One respondent explained that candidates are definitely less prepared because they do not have adequate mastery of their active and passive languages and they lack interpretation techniques.
Over the years, have you noticed any differences in the level required to pass the LCE?

35.71% thought that jury members have become stricter. 14.29% thought the opposite. 21.43% noticed no differences and 28.57% did not know how to answer the question.

![Graph 40. Marking rigour of senior interpreters](image)

What is your opinion about the pass rate for the LCE?

For 78.55% of the respondents, the pass rate is low. 28.57% thought that it was average. These responses clearly indicate that senior interpreters acknowledge that the LCE pass rate is inadequate. It should also be noted that none of the senior interpreters thought that the pass rate was high.

![Graph 41. Pass rate according to senior interpreters](image)
In your opinion, why is the success rate medium or low in the LCE?

Table 29. Opinion of interpreters on the LCE success rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems with A language</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive speed of speeches</td>
<td>64.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with B language</td>
<td>64.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with C language</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of general knowledge</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of UN subjects</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for the selection of candidates</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of UN structure</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices of exam material</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 42. Reasons for the success rate

The respondent that answered “other” explained that freelancers who have not worked for the UN have little to no chance of passing the LCE.
The answers to this question indicate that problems with A language were considered by the majority of respondents to be the underlying reason for the low success rate. It is worth highlighting that in the first survey problem with A language was only the fifth factor mentioned. In the first survey, the first factor mentioned was stress, but here it was the fourth factor mentioned by senior interpreters. As senior interpreters are responsible for marking the exams, the fact that they mentioned problems with A language as the main factor should be taken into account by MoU schools.

**For the Arabic and Chinese booths, do you pay more attention to the A language, the B language or both?**

Question 20 was about the importance of B languages for the LCE and was targeted only at the Chinese and Arabic booths. For 3 respondents, A and B languages are equally important. Although respondents were given the option of adding more comments, none did. The answers given clearly indicate that for bi-directional booths, both languages have equal importance.

**If you were in charge of revamping the LCE, what would you do?**

The answers were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change part of the format</td>
<td>64.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep the same format</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the format</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As all answers to the questionnaire were anonymous, there was no way of matching an answer to a specific booth and/or person. Therefore, I do not know if these answers came from the Arabic booth only. The only conclusion that can be drawn at this stage is that the answers do not apply to the Chinese booth since no answers from that booth were received.
When asked to choose some of the suggestions included in the list, the following percentages were obtained:

**Table 31. New format proposed for the LCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add other types of tests (simultaneous with text, sight translation, consecutive, etc.)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use non-UN speeches</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not change anything</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give the candidates the themes of the speeches in advance</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have less speeches</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add more speeches</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have slower speeches</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One respondent explained that day-to-day material should be used for the LCE.

When asked to elaborate on their choices, respondents gave the following comments:

The respondents that would like to keep the LCE as it is indicated that:

- The speeches chosen are adequate and reflect the reality of a UN staff interpreter (1).
- The LCE format is adequate and helps select good candidates (1).

The respondents that would like to modify the LCE indicated that:

- Knowing how to use the UN webcast and interpret UN speeches over and over again does not mean that the person is a good interpreter (1).
- At least 1 non-UN speech should be included in the LCE. A non-written statement should also be included (4).
- SI with text should be tested as it is part of the day-to-day work of a UN staff interpreter (3).
- More speeches should be introduced and the LCE should be held in 2 different sessions, thus allowing candidates to have enough time to rest between different blocs of languages (1).
- The second part of the LCE, i.e. the interviews should be conducted in all the candidate’s active and passive languages (1).
- The theme of the speeches should be provided (1).
- Given the specificities of UN speeches, candidates have problems with register and style notwithstanding their capacities as interpreters (1).
- General knowledge and CI should also be tested (1).
- A real progression in the speed of speeches should be respected (1).

When judging the applicants, which criteria do you consider to be the most important (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the most important criterion)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 32. Criteria for marking the LCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXCELLENT PASSIVE COMPREHENSION OF THE PASSIVE LANGUAGES: 100% GAVE 5 AND 4 RATINGS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACCURACY: 100% OF RESPONDENTS GAVE 5 AND 4 RATINGS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpreting at the United Nations

Accuracy and ability to construct complete sentences were given the highest ratings whereas good preparation on UN topics received the lowest. This means that when marking the LCE, senior interpreters attribute much more importance to the quality of interpretation than to the knowledge of UN jargon.
When judging the applicants, what are you testing? Entry level or mastery level?

The answers were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking Policy of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry Level Competence</strong>: the interpreter is not quite ready for UN high-level meetings but with mentoring and experience he/she could be ready within a year or less</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mastery Level</strong>: the interpreter can be assigned immediately to all meetings, including high-level meetings. No mentoring is required</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Something in the Middle</strong></td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to elaborate, senior interpreters gave the following answers:

Respondents who opted for mastery level:

- Only mastery level can be tested at the UN given that once recruited, interpreters need to be prepared to work in any meeting. Only full-fledged interpreters can be admitted (4).

- Mentoring opportunities are limited at the UN and no further training can be offered; only mastery level can be tested (2).

- New recruits have shown mastery level and have been assigned at high-level meetings so this is the level that should be tested (1).

- Candidates should be judged on their mastery of the technique and not on their mastery of UN subjects and terminology as those can be acquired later (1).

Respondents who opted for entry level competence:

- Candidates can be recruited at a lower level, if the potential is there; once recruited, after a while it will be possible to assign them to all kinds of meetings (1).

- Some candidates have not attained mastery level yet but have shown potential. With more experience they will be able to do well and should therefore not be eliminated (1).
- For some language combinations, such as Arabic into English, entry level is tested given the lack of high-level formal training for that language combination (1).

- High-level meetings can be left to senior interpreters while beginners get accustomed to the UN (1).

- Mentoring should be part of the UN (1).

- If during the LCE a candidate is making intelligent linguistic choices and shows a perfect understanding of the speech even if he/she does not use the exact vocabulary, the candidate could still be admitted (1).

Respondents who opted for “something in the middle”:

- For these candidates it will not be difficult to reach mastery level so they should be admitted (1).

- As long as candidates do not do contre-sens and have a perfect understanding of the speeches, they should be admitted even though they might have made grammatical mistakes (1).

Do you think that for passing the LCE experience is mandatory, advisable, not necessary or it depends on the candidate?

The answers were the following:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisable</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Necessary</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It Depends on the Candidate</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to that question clearly show that for the majority of senior interpreters (42.86%) freelance experience is advisable for passing the LCE.
7.3.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools

Are you aware of the curricula and training offered at MoU schools?

An overwhelming majority (78.57%) answered no. This is quite worrisome. As stated before, one of the most important links in the LCE chain is unaware of what the other links have been doing despite the fact that all the links need to be interconnected in order for the chain to be strong.

Graph 44. Knowledge of the Outreach Programme among senior interpreters

Given the requirements to pass the LCE, in your view is the training provided by MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they will face when working at the UN.

Table 35. Adequacy of training for passing the LCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the training is optimal</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, the training is not optimal</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous should be emphasized at MoU schools</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consecutive should be emphasized at MoU schools</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both SI and CI should be emphasized</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A special module on the UN should be introduced</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something is missing in the training</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some respondents added that CI should be used as a basis for SI in all cases and that language skills should be tested more strictly at the entry level in schools
and that progress should be monitored during the programme. However, it should be noted that in the comments several interpreters pointed out that they did not know what kind of training was offered at MoU schools and had no information on MoUs in general.

**Given the nature of your everyday work at the UN, in your view is the number of hours devoted to consecutive and simultaneous at MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they will face when working at the UN?**

The following question was more specific and focused in particular on the numbers of hours devoted to CI and SI at MoU schools versus the challenges faced by interpreters when working at the UN. Only 28.57% of respondents thought that more hours of SI were necessary and 32.50% chose the option “other”. These percentages should be seen in the light of previous answers given: the majority of senior interpreters are unfamiliar with the curricula of MoU schools.

### Table 36. Adequacy of training for working at the UN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORE HOURS OF SI ARE NECESSARY</th>
<th>28.57%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MORE HOURS OF CI ARE NECESSARY</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE HOURS OF CI AND SI ARE NECESSARY</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF CI AND SI IS OPTIMAL</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF CI AND SI IS NOT OPTIMAL</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>32.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMETHING SHOULD BE ADDED</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In your view, should the curricula of MoU schools be adapted?**

78.57% thought that the curriculum should be adapted for the following reasons:

- The curriculum should meet UN needs (1).
- More SI with text should be introduced (1).
- MoU schools could offer UN-specific training through the Outreach Programme to allow students to become more acquainted with speed and accents (3).

- Students should be taught accuracy (1).

- Interpretation techniques and linguistic skills should be strengthened (1).

- UN interpretation is changing and so should the curriculum (1).

- Results have not been great so far so something should be done (1).

- MoU schools should use the experience of UN staff to help their students on a regular basis (1).

21.43% answered the opposite. Here again, several respondents commented that they were unfamiliar with the curricula of MoU schools.

Do you think the Outreach Programme is best able to respond to UN needs?

The answers were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I DO NOT KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME SHOULD BE BETTER ADJUSTED TO UN NEEDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL FOR THE UN INTERPRETATION SECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN STAFF COULD DO MORE WITHIN THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME IS NOT RESPONDING TO UN NEEDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME DOES NOT HELP CANDIDATES TO BE BETTER PREPARED FOR THE LCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME SHOULD BE CANCELLED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoU SCHOOLS ARE NOT DOING THEIR SHARE WITHIN THE OUTREACH PROGRAMME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to elaborate on their answers, several senior interpreters stated that they had no information on the Outreach Programme and MoU schools’ curricula; one senior interpreter went as far as saying that he or she had never heard of the Outreach Programme.
Other senior interpreters gave the following comments:

- For some booths, e.g. the Spanish booth, the programme has not been successful in providing more candidates from Latin America (1).

- MoU schools need to train interpreters for all kind of markets however they should focus much more on SI with text and speed (1).

- The Outreach Programme should focus on real UN needs: there is a shortage of passive Russian but the Outreach Programme is still training language combinations where there are no shortages (1).

- Nothing has been done to reach out to candidates from underrepresented countries, especially African countries (1).

- The MoU programme and the UN should allow interpreters to give pedagogical assistance during two weeks; receiving trainees is good but not enough (1).

- MoU schools should not change their programmes to fit UN needs (1).

- Thanks to the Outreach Programme, more candidates are aware of the LCE and have been recruited by the UN (1).

- The Outreach Programme does not receive enough funding from the UN. More schools should be part of the programme (1).

- The Outreach Programme should be constantly adapted to UN needs (1).

- The Outreach Programme should include more schools and should take into account their performance (1).

If you could change the Outreach Programme, what would you do?

The respondents gave the following answers:

- More schools from Latin America should be included (1).

- Schools should be responsible for identifying the needs of different markets and prepare their students accordingly (1).

- One or several UN duty stations should organize a standing training course that could last one month or more. This course could be used to train candidates in UN-specific material (2).

- The LCE should be advertised more in interpretation schools (1).
- More UN staff should be involved in the programme (1).
- The Outreach Programme should be more structured and more energy should be put into the programme (2).

**7.3.6. Section 6. Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters**

**Do you teach or provide pedagogical assistance?**

![Graph 45. Number of senior interpreters teaching at schools](image)

**Do you coach/ mentor young interpreters at the UN?**

![Graph 46. Number of senior interpreters mentoring/coaching young interpreters at the UN](image)

A comparison of these two graphs is quite revealing: the first graph represents the number of interpreters teaching at MoU schools and the second one the number of interpreters coaching students at the UN. In the first graph, only 35.71% of respondents teach at a MoU schools and 64.29% do not. In the second graph,
78.57% coach young interpreters at the UN while 21.43% do not. The difference in percentages has an easy explanation: it is easier to coach young interpreters at the UN that is to teach at MoU schools. Teaching at a MoU school, with the exception of the FTI in Geneva, means traveling; as explained before, only the FTI in Geneva is based in one of the four duty stations (which make it easier for the UN interpreters based in Geneva).

**In your coaching/teaching/mentoring experience, have you noticed any differences between students from MoU and non-MoU schools?**

The answers were the following:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOT APPLICABLE</strong></td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I DO NOT KNOW</strong></td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT DEPENDS ON THE STUDENT NOT ON THE SCHOOL</strong></td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STUDENTS FROM non-MoU SCHOOLS ARE BETTER</strong></td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER</strong></td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STUDENTS FROM MoU SCHOOLS ARE BETTER</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THERE ARE NO DIFFERENCES</strong></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of interpreters could not answer this question and chose the option “not applicable” probably because they do not teach and/or coach. The above results are therefore not very indicative of a difference between MoU and non-MoU trained students given the small numbers involved.

**Do you think that your teaching/mentoring/coaching has been instrumental for candidates to pass the LCE?**

35.71% of respondents thought that their coaching had been instrumental for candidates to pass the LCE. The same percentage of respondents answered that they were not sure if this had indeed been the case.
When asked to comment, respondents explained that:

- It was hard to determine the impact of coaching and mentoring (2).
- Coaching and mentoring have definitely helped candidates to pass first the freelance test and then the LCE (5).
- Although coaching might have helped candidates to pass the exam, I cannot be sure that it was due to that (1).
- The successful candidates are the ones who are really motivated; this was not due to coaching (1).

**In your opinion, are the Outreach Programme and MoUs a success?**

When asked if they considered that the Outreach Programme and MoUs had been a success, senior interpreters gave the following answers:

**Table 39. Opinion of respondents on the Outreach Programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I DO NOT KNOW</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I AM NOT SURE</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT APPLICABLE</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpreting at the United Nations

Graph 48. Opinion of senior interpreters regarding the success of the programme

When asked to elaborate, respondents gave the following answers:

- It is difficult to define success and to understand if the programme needs to be a success for the UN or for candidates (1).

- I do not have enough information on the Outreach Programme and the MoUs to judge (6).

- Despite the programme, for some language combinations (passive Russian) there is still a lack of good candidates and candidates tend to come from the same few countries (1).

- Despite the good will of staff interpreters, funding for the programme should be more adequate. Sometimes the programme ends up putting more stress to the section (1).

- Although results are not perfect, the Outreach Programme has clearly helped (1).

- The UN is not a school, and the Outreach Programme must not be seen by schools as a university exchange programme. Trainees should have real potential (1).

- Interns do not always have the necessary skills (1).

In the last question in this section, I asked respondents if they wanted to add any further comments. The following comments were made:
- The Outreach Programme should not only target interpretation schools but should reach out to liberal arts colleges in order to attract more candidates to the profession. Interpretation is evolving and interpreters should do something to ensure the survival of the profession (1).

- The UN should understand that training future recruits is an essential component of the profession and therefore should not be treated as a mere exercise on an ad hoc basis (1).

- Training courses should be permanent and should be staffed. The structure, objectives and material should be consistent. Students should also have the same level (1).

- The Outreach Programme is not necessary. Competent UN staff should be able to hand-pick good motivated candidates (1).

### 7.4. Discussion

#### 7.4.1. Section 1: Personal and professional information

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the clear majority of senior interpreters surveyed (50%) had been at the UN for between 15 and 30 years. This can be explained by the fact that interpreters at the UN can be recruited at the P2 or P3 levels. P2 interpreters are beginners with very little or no experience, whereas P3 interpreters must have at least 4 years of experience. Once recruited, they will be promoted to P4 first and then to the P5 level. The transition from P3 to P4 is quite straightforward. After 2 to 4 years in the job, interpreters are usually promoted without much difficulty. However, the transition from P4 to P5 is more complex. There are only 5 P5 interpreters per booth (6 in the Chinese booth). P5 posts only become vacant when a senior interpreter retires and for each P5 vacancy there will be at least 4 candidates. The obvious conclusion is that not everybody will become a senior interpreter and that the majority of staff at the UN will retire at P4, having never attained the P5 level. This explains why senior interpreters in New York have been working at the UN for between 15 and 30 years because it took them a long time to become P5 interpreters.

This also accounts for the fact that the majority of the senior interpreters surveyed passed the LCE between 1990 and 2000 (57.14) and that only 7.94%
passed the LCE after 2000: interpreters who passed the LCE before 1980 have retired or are in the process of retiring. In 2000, due to the fact that quite a number of interpreters were in the process of retiring, a LCE for several languages was organised after years of a freeze in recruitment (the last LCE had been organised 10 years earlier). The candidates that were successful in the 2000 LCE and that were recruited in 2001 or 2002 were promoted very quickly and some have reached the P5 level in less than 10 years since their recruitments coincided with retirements of several P4 and P5 interpreters.

This has also prompted a generational shift at the UN and senior interpreters that have been at the UN for more than 30 years (28.57%) are slowly retiring. None have been at the UN for less than 5 years for obvious reasons as it is virtually impossible to become senior interpreters after only 5 years on the job.

The answer to the next question (number of years as a professional interpreter) must be viewed together with the answer to the previous one: no senior interpreters have less than 5 years of experience as professional interpreters, 14.29% have been working between 5 and 15 years, 50% between 15 and 30 years and 35.71% for more than 30 years.

The answer to the last question (number of years as senior interpreter) is also easy to understand: the majority of respondents (57.14%) have been P5 for between 5 and 10 years. Some are part of the group of interpreters that were recruited after the 2000 LCE and that had the possibility of gaining promotion very quickly, while others have been at the UN for a longer period and were promoted when several senior interpreters retired.

**7.4.2. Section 2: Training background of senior interpreters**

The fact that the large majority of UN senior interpreters have received formal training in interpretation (78.57%) must be viewed in the context of the former section. The change of generation explains the fact that almost all new recruits since the late nineties have been trained at interpretation schools (although the majority not at MoU schools) in SI and CI. The self-trained generation is in the process of retiring with the exception of the Arabic booth where self-training for the Arabic-English language combination is still widely used since the combination is not offered
by all schools. It is however worth mentioning that 57.14% of respondents thought that the training they had received was useful for passing the LCE.

7.4.3. Section 3: Interpreting modalities at the UN

In line with the answers given by the whole UN interpreting community, SI and SI with text are the two techniques that are used most at the UN. However, in the case of the “bidule”, senior interpreters use it more than staff interpreters as P5 are usually the ones entrusted with working on high-level missions for the Secretary General and/or the Security Council in the field. In those missions, the bidule is widely used. Conferences at headquarters are in SI and in SI with text and the large majority of interpreters at the UN will retire after 30 years of service without having done a consecutive, let alone used the bidule. This might also explain why some interpreters in the first and second surveys advocated adding SI with text to the LCE as it is, after all, one of the main techniques used in everyday work. The paradoxical situation is that a candidate that passes the LCE will be asked, once recruited, to immediately perform in SI with text whereas this technique, which is one of the techniques used most at the UN, has not been tested. In fact, in the first survey several respondents complained about the lack of training in SI with text in schools.

7.4.4. Section 4: The LCE

As already explained in a previous chapter (see §3.2), the LCE can be organized every two or three years for certain booths and certain language combinations. This accounted for the fact that the majority of respondents had participated in marking less than 3 times (64.29%). Although in recent years the LCE has tended to be organized on a more regular basis in a 10-year span (depending on the booths and language combinations), there will not be more than 5 LCEs.

When asked if they had noticed any changes over the years in candidates’ competencies, senior interpreters did not give a clear answer: 28.57% think that candidates are better prepared, whereas 28.57% stated that they did not know. For 14.29%, candidates’ preparation is unchanged and for 7.14% candidates are less well prepared. 21.43% chose the option “not applicable”. The unclear position of
senior interpreters is probably due to the fact that, given the majority had marked only 3 LCEs or less, they might have difficulty understanding what the level was like before and what it is like now. This is why it was important to determine whether jury members are stricter than before. 35.71% of respondents thought that jury members are stricter. More severity could be justified given the changing working conditions (see §5.3.1). However, it is quite surprising to note that 14.29% are less strict and that 28.57% did not know how to answer the question. The only conclusion that can be drawn from these different percentages and this lack of consensus could be that the same criteria are not used across the board, and that some booths are stricter than others.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents agreed that the pass rate at the LCE was low and when asked what they would do if they could change the format, 50% of the respondents concurred with what was said by UN staff, i.e. add other type of tests such as SI with text. The use of non-UN material was also suggested by some senior interpreters, since some were of the opinion that instead of cramming speeches on the UN webcast, candidates could be asked to prepare in a more holistic way. In the comments given by respondents, the introduction of SI with text was mentioned several times: according to these respondents, the fact that SI with text is now one of the main techniques used at the UN should be taken into account when crafting the LCE. It would be perfectly possible for candidates to have the text for 1 of the 3 speeches. This being said, if we take into account the results of the first survey where UN staff complained because they considered that SI with text was not taught enough at MoU schools, some candidates would probably face difficulties if this were added to the LCE. It is indeed true, as stated by several respondents, that it is important for jury members to test candidates for what will be their everyday work at the UN. A real progression in the complexities and speed of the speeches should however be followed. Some senior interpreters have suggested for the exam to take place in two sessions as some candidates still lack the necessary endurance. Some respondents also commented that the lack of general knowledge was also a hindrance for candidates. Since the introduction of a new type of interview (let us not forget that the interview is the second part of the LCE, see chapter 3), the
competency-based interview\textsuperscript{47}, it is no longer possible to test during the interview the candidate’s knowledge of the UN or even his or her general knowledge. Before, interviews were used for that purpose. This is probably why some respondents commented on the fact that general knowledge should be part of the system and they also wanted for the interview to be held in all the candidates’ languages.

Several senior interpreters also suggested that giving candidates the themes of the speeches in advance could help them be better prepared. During the LCE, candidates are given a document with some specific elements on each speech. Here again, there is no common practice: for some booths, the elements will all be given at once -in writing- for all six speeches. This means that the candidates have a little bit more time to prepare (especially for the last three speeches as there is a 30-minute pause between the two blocs of speeches). However, in other booths those elements are given orally before the start of each recorded speech. Giving the theme in advance to candidates will therefore be a real departure from the current situation.

Another potential problem voiced by one of the respondents is that given all the UN material available on the UN website, candidates might become very good at interpreting UN speeches but might have difficulties interpreting other kinds of speeches. In this particular case, the respondent thought that the UN might not necessarily select the best candidates. This was echoed by another respondent who said that adding CI to the LCE would help the jury identify the real interpreters.

Although none of the respondents opted for crafting special speeches for the LCE in the same way other organizations do, some would have liked to have fewer and slower speeches, while others suggested adding more speeches. It is important to note that for some respondents (28.57\%) the LCE should not be changed as it has helped recruit good candidates that were assigned immediately to all kinds of meetings, even high-level meetings.

When I asked senior interpreters to identify the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE, in line with the answers given by staff interpreters, speed

\textsuperscript{47} Competency-based interviews are also called "behavioral interviews" or "criterion based interviews." Such interviews are based on the concept that past behavior and experience is the best indicator of future performance. In other words, your history tells a story about you: your talents, skills, abilities, knowledge and actual experience in handling a variety of situations (UN, 2015).
was the first problem mentioned by respondents, the second being UN jargon and terminology. All the other challenges, foreign accents, artificial situation, insufficient knowledge of languages, lack of text and problems with register and endurance, were also mentioned by UN staff. The conclusion that can be drawn is that senior interpreters and UN staff alike concurred on the challenges faced by candidates. However, when senior interpreters were asked why so many applicants fail the LCE, for senior interpreters problems with A language was the main reason explaining the low success rate, and excessive speed of speeches, problems with B and C languages and stress were, respectively, the second, third and fourth reasons mentioned. The other factors mentioned, but to a lesser extent, were lack of general knowledge, lack of knowledge of UN subjects, criteria for selection of the candidates, lack of knowledge of UN structure and choices of exam material. When staff interpreters were asked the same question, problems with A language was the fifth stressor mentioned, while stress, lack of knowledge of UN subjects, problems with C languages and excessive speed of speeches were mentioned as the first, second, third and fourth stressors, respectively. As senior interpreters are the ones doing the marking, MoU schools should pay particular attention to their views on this matter.

The criteria used by senior interpreters for the marking was one of the important parts of this section. In chapter 3.2, I listed the criteria according to which candidates are assessed. I will repeat them here for comparison purposes:

- Excellent passive comprehension of their passive languages;
- Accuracy in interpretation into grammatically correct target language;
- Ability to construct complete sentences;
- An understanding of appropriate style and register;
- An ability to keep up with speed;
- Intelligent editing of logically redundant words and phrases;
- Ability to cope with difficult or dense passages;
- Good diction and delivery; and
- Good preparation on UN topics.
When asked to assign a rating to the above criteria, respondents clearly prioritized the first three criteria on the list, i.e.:

- Excellent passive comprehension of their two source languages;
- Accuracy in interpretation into grammatically correct target language; and
- Ability to construct complete sentences.

The other criteria, ability to cope with difficult or dense passages and good diction and delivery, were also considered as important factors. Ability to keep up with speed and style and register were in the third group of priorities, while intelligent editing of logically redundant words and phrases and knowledge of UN topics were given less priority.

Another important question in this section was the question about what senior interpreters were testing when they judged candidates: entry level competence (the interpreter is not quite ready for UN highlevel meetings but with mentoring and experience he/she could be ready within a year or less), mastery level (the interpreter can be assigned immediately to all meetings, including high-level meetings. No mentoring is required) or something in the middle.

This is not only a marking issue but also a real policy issue: in order to address the shortage of qualified interpreters and to prepare for upcoming retirements, in 2007 the UN decided to launch an Outreach Programme and sign MoU with conference interpreter training institutions. The programme was designed by the DGACM with three objectives in mind: ensure better visibility of language career opportunities at the UN; help applicants to better prepare for the competitive language exams in order to be recruited by the Organization; and explore other potential avenues for cooperation between international organizations and training institutions (UNGA, 2010).

MoU schools can only prepare candidates for entry level. Mastery level can only be acquired after years of experience. 35.71% of respondents test for entry level whereas 42.85% for mastery level and 21.43% for something in the middle. The explanations given by the respondents were quite clear. The respondents that opted for mastery level thought that, once recruited, interpreters need to be prepared to work in any meeting and given the fact that mentoring opportunities are limited at the
Interpreting at the United Nations

UN, only mastery level could be tested. They also pointed out that lack of knowledge of UN jargon and terminology should not be penalised if the candidates were able to demonstrate mastery of interpretation techniques.

The one respondent that opted for the beginners’ level explained that the goal should be to find candidates with good potential and that candidates deemed not to be fully prepared should nevertheless be recruited but could not be assigned to high-level meetings. They also thought that mentoring should be part of the UN and that for some language combinations, such as Arabic into English, the first option should be tested given the lack of high-level formal training.

For respondents that opted for “something in the middle”, as long as candidates do not do contre-sens and have a perfect understanding of the speeches, they should be admitted even if they make some mistakes.

Only one conclusion can be drawn from the above answers: there are no clear criteria for the marking of the LCE and jury members (in the same booth and in different booths) have clearly different ways of assessing candidates. There are many potential reasons for the low success rate (the same problem is faced by other international organizations like the EU). As mentioned previously, the lack of a standardized methodology to guide the whole examination process and the inconsistency among booths constitute real challenges. Above all, if mastery level is the level requested, what could the role of MoU schools then be? By definition, MoU schools can only prepare candidates for entry level and if this is not the level requested and expected, should the objective of the Outreach Programme be changed and should we focus on training and coaching interpreters with a few years’ experience instead? In particular, given the fact that when asked if they considered that experience was necessary to pass the LCE, 42.86% of senior interpreters answered that experience was advisable for passing the LCE whereas 35.71% thought that it was mandatory. For 28.57%, it depended on the candidate. These results confirm Lafeber’s conclusion (see §3.4): “On average, across all professions, 12 years elapse between obtaining a first university degree and placement on a roster” (Lafeber, 2014).

In the past, passing the LCE meant spending two mandatory years in New York before requesting a transfer. Since this rule no longer exists, interpreters can
be directly recruited in another duty stations. In smaller duty stations like Vienna or Nairobi, once recruited, an interpreter can be assigned the next day to a summit with Heads of States as this might be the only meeting available that week. Although staff at all duty stations are more than willing to mentor young interpreters, depending on the size of the section, this might not always be possible.

**7.4.5. Section 5: LCE and MoU schools**

MoU were signed with 22 training institutions as it was decided that MoU were to be signed with four institutions in countries where these languages are spoken. The MoU developed by DGACM detail the type of cooperation envisaged between the parties such as provision of training materials, pedagogical assistance and participation of UN staff in final examinations or organization of in-house internships for selected students (see Appendix 1). In short, as stated clearly in all MoUs, the purpose of the Outreach Programme is for the parties to agree to cooperate in programmes with the aim of training students to take LCEs organized by the UN.

Strangely enough, an overwhelming majority (78.57%) of respondents answered that they were not aware of the curricula and training offered at MoU schools. Some nonetheless commented that SI in particular and CI should be emphasized and that a special module on the UN should be introduced to allow students to become more acquainted with speed and accents. It should be noted, however, that in their comments, several interpreters pointed out that they did not know what kind of training was offered at MoU schools and had no information on MoUs in general. When asked specifically if more hours of CI and SI were necessary in MoU schools’ curricula, respondents agreed that more hours of SI in particular and CI should be added whereas 78.57% thought that curricula should be adapted in order to better meet UN needs. SI with text was again emphasized as being something that schools should focus upon and several respondents pointed to the fact that the way of interpreting at the UN was evolving and that schools’ curricula should evolve in the same manner.

The lack of knowledge of the MoU schools’ curricula and of the Outreach Programme prompted 57.14% of respondents to say that they did not know if the programme was indeed responding to UN needs.
This is a real problem for the UN as it means that the programme has not been sufficiently publicized. To reuse the chain analogy, senior interpreters in charge of marking the LCE are the last link in the chain. They judge whether the programme has indeed been successful (one of the success criteria, as clearly defined in the MoU, is the number of interpreters recruited via the LCE). There is obviously a missing link in the chain because some senior interpreters do not even know that such a programme exist in the first place. However, it must also be pointed out that some respondents had more information on the programme and thought that the results have been quite positive so far although schools should focus more on speed and SI with text.

Although schools should be responsible for identifying the needs of different markets and preparing their students accordingly, the programme has also made it possible to reach out to more and more potential candidates. However, the programme has been chronically underfunded and relies mostly on good will and staff availability. This has led to a situation described by senior interpreters in which whole continents are underrepresented and forgotten, Africa and Latin America being a case in point.

7.4.6. Section 6: Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the majority of senior interpreters does not provide pedagogical assistance and do not teach at schools. As was the case for UN staff interpreters, this can easily be explained by the fact that except for FTI in Geneva, there are no training institutions at the locations of the UN duty stations (and when there are, students seldom have the required UN language combination).

However, more than 78.57% of interpreters coach interpreters at the UN and some of the respondents concluded that the capacities demonstrated by individual students depend on the studentsthemseleves and not on the school. Others, however, stated that they could not tell if there were any differences between students and/or young interpreters coming from MoU and non-MoU schools. The majority of interpreters could not answer this question and chose the option “not applicable”, probably because they do not teach and/or coach. Some could not tell if their
teaching/mentoring/coaching had been instrumental in candidates passing the LCE as they did not know what impact this had had. They also stated that the motivation of candidates was essential. Other respondents could clearly tell that it was thanks to their coaching that candidates were able to pass freelance tests and the LCE.

The last question in this section was also an important one. I wanted to know if senior interpreters considered the Outreach Programme to be a success: here again, the majority could not answer the question because they did not have enough information on the programme. The lack of funding, a problem reiterated in all outreach publications, must clearly be resolved. Interpretation section staff have been coaching/mentoring young interpreters on top of their everyday work, sometimes producing more stress for the whole section. This also means that only candidates with sufficient financial resources are able to participate in internships, meaning that candidates from poor countries are often unable to participate and part of the world is under-represented.

As explained by some senior interpreters, the programme should reach out to universities where students might be interested in the UN and should not only focus on interpretation schools. Preparing the next generation of UN interpreters should be treated as a priority and not as an added burden.
When I participated in 2013 in the marking of the LCE and started to reflect on the low success rate, I decided to conduct a research study on this topic with the following research question in mind: *why do candidates who have been previously selected and who have received specific training in interpreting not have the specific competences and skills necessary to pass the LCE?* In order to answer this question, I followed different steps.

In the theoretical part, and in order to meet my objective, I needed to explain all the concepts that I was going to use in the study. In order, to get a better understanding of the concepts that will be used throughout the text, I started first by explaining the meaning of conference interpreting and by providing a historical overview of the evolution of conference interpreting. In order to explain how interpreting in general, and at the UN in particular, has evolved until the present day, it was necessary to obtain a better understanding of the reasons why certain interpreting modalities are more used than others. Defining the modalities used in conference interpreting was also a necessary step as it was important to understand the reasons underlying the transition from CI to SI as this might explain why SI is not always given the priority it deserved in schools’ curriculum. As the LCE only uses SI, I deemed it useful to concentrate on the way skills can be acquired in SI and what has been said on these aspects by different authors. Assessing quality is also an important part of the LCE, which is why I devoted an entire chapter in the first section to quality criteria. Quality criteria could be the subject of an entire dissertation and we have seen that quality is difficult to define. Depending on the respondents, answers to a question on quality will probably yield very different results. We all think that we know what a good interpreter is and how a good interpretation is supposed to “sound” but defining real criteria is indeed a complex undertaking. For entrance exams, the criteria vary according to the schools and aptitude testing has been criticized as different interpretations are given to terms like skills, aptitude or
reliability. The interpreting community faces the same problem: surveys have yielded different results according to the individuals consulted. It therefore should come as no surprise when, in the second part of the study, it was revealed that UN senior interpreters face the same dilemma during the marking stage.

In the theoretical section I also concentrated on interpreting at the UN as my research must be seen against the backdrop of the UN: the historical overview presented in my thesis served as a basis for the second empirical section. Knowing how interpretation started at the UN, how it evolved and why and how one interpreting technique took priority over another was necessary in order to understand the questions that I included in the survey, such as the question on the technique used during work at UNHQ given that the LCE is all in SI. The Outreach Programme was the framework within which my research was conducted. As I aimed to determine whether the programme has reached its goal -namely to recruit more interpreters-, I therefore needed to explain in detail what the programme entails, why it was launched, its objective and its results. For the same reason, I described the LCE in length as it is the tool that allows the UN to confirm whether the Outreach Programme is fulfilling its intended purpose.

To answer my general research question and in order to get information on the training offered, I needed to know what kind of syllabi MoU schools were using. I started first by conducting research on the different approaches at curricular level and what had been written on this subject by the findings of different authors. Once I had established the theoretical framework, I studied the curricular programmes of MoU schools since this could allow me to get a better understanding on the adequacy of the curriculum for passing the LCE.

The second section presented two empirical studies on interpreting at the UN. This section was divided into four chapters: the first described the theoretical approach to empirical research in conference interpreting; the second chapter described the results of a the first survey, the purpose of which was to delve deeper into the opinions and perceptions of UN interpreters on the specificities of work at the UN and on the LCE; the third chapter presented the results of the second survey; and this fourth and final chapter presents the conclusions of that section.
The first survey was the first time that the UN interpreters had the opportunity to give their opinion on the training they had received, the working methodologies at the UN, the LCE and what MoU schools could do to improve the situation. The results of the survey reveal that although the respondents were happy with the training they had received, they would have liked to have received more training in SI and SI with text (see § 6.3.4). The vast majority of interpreters felt that the training they had received at MoU schools was instrumental for passing the LCE, which is a very positive finding. However, they also would have liked for schools to be more in touch with the realities of the profession and to realize, to give an example mentioned by many interpreters, that speed is an element that should now be factored into all curricula. They also indicated that SI with text should be taught and that sight translation should be given at least the same importance as CI.

In the second survey, for the first time senior interpreters were able to explain what criteria they considered to be most important and what they looked for in a candidate: according to senior interpreters, who I consider to be the most important link in the chain, the reasons for the low success rate were the following (see §7.3.4): problems with A language, excessive speed of speeches, problems with B and C languages and stress. The other factors that were mentioned, but to a lesser extent, were lack of general knowledge and lack of knowledge of UN subjects. When asked what MoU schools should do (although in this particular case, given their lack of knowledge on MoU schools’ curricula, they were probably referring to all training institutions), a clear majority thought that the curricula should be adapted in order to better meet UN needs. SI with text was again emphasized as being something that schools should focus on and several respondents pointed to the fact that the way of interpreting at the UN was evolving and that schools’ curricula should evolve in the same direction. The survey allowed senior interpreters to express themselves clearly and MoU schools should take into account the opinion of the most important link in the chain.

The two surveys could also be instrumental for MoU schools (and incidentally for non-MoU schools as well): the curricular analysis revealed that candidates received training in CI and SI, CI is taught before SI and SI is introduced later on in the curriculum (this depends on the school and on the duration of the programme). In the section on the special challenges of the LCE, I mentioned interpreting modality
as one of the main challenges, along with speed, accents and topics. The three speeches per language given during the LCE are not of a technical nature, there are no difficult words or expressions and the names of places and/or people will be given to the candidates. The fact that the exam only takes place in SI and that the speed of the speeches is being used to select candidates should be taken into account and could be factored in in the MoU schools’ curriculum.

In view of the above, I consider that this research could be relevant for the UN, for the UN interpreting community, for MoU schools and for non-MoU schools as well. I also believe that my dissertation, and especially the results of the two surveys, can foster collaboration within the MoU network. The MoU conference that is organised once every two years (see § 3.3), with the participation of DGACM officials and MoU universities, aims, among other things, to:

- Review collaboration within the MoU network and propose ways to continuously strengthen and improve it;
- Discuss and agree on ways and means to create/strengthen synergies between academic training of language professionals and the needs of employers, specifically international organizations (UN, 2014).

One way of creating and strengthening synergies between the academic training of language professionals and the UN could be for MoU schools to take better account of UN needs: MoU schools could make minor adjustments to their curricula as requested by the UN interpreting community as a whole and by senior interpreters in particular.

Despite the relevance of the results presented above, my research does, however, present certain limitations:

In the first survey, the response rate was not what it could have been. It was adequate to draw conclusions but a better response rate would have certainly given a better overview of the whole situation; I should also have included a question on the B language for the Chinese and Arabic booths since the LCE is organised slightly differently for these booths (see §3.2).
For the second survey, I did not receive any answers from senior interpreters from the Chinese and Russian booths. The results can therefore only be applied to four booths and not six.

My research was also hampered by the fact that it was very difficult to obtain official UN documents. As a UN staff member, I had to obey specific rules and it is clearly stated that:

The use of publicly available data and information can be permitted as long as you properly identify the sources and copyrights of the UN. Please bear in mind that data and information not publicly available can be used by staff for official purposes only (UN, 2014).

I would have liked to have used statistics on the failure rate of candidates coming only from MoU schools and, although these data are available, I was unable to get access to this information. Lafeber’s report (2014) is on all professional groups and does not breakdown the data by professions and it would have been interesting to get these data for each booth.

Despite all these limitations, this research must be viewed as an attempt to help improve the LCE success rate. To do so, further research could be considered in relation to the following:

Firstly, further on the LCE: should it be revamped? A comprehensive study of what is being done in other international organizations could serve as a basis for such an exercise. The research could follow Lafeber’ 2012 thesis (see bibliography) which analyses what other international organizations are doing. This could enable the design, after a comparative analysis, of an improved LCE that would yield better results while being fair and competitive.

Another line of research could focus on the tracking of interpreters coming from MoU schools. It might be important to determine whether enrolment at a MoU school is instrumental for their careers at the UN. A comparative analysis could be made between MoU and non-MoU schools in order to identify any differences in the careers of interpreters who have intended both types of schools.

I will conclude this chapter by making three recommendations: first for the MoU schools, then for the UN and the Outreach Programme and lastly for the UN interpretation section.
Recommendations for MoU schools

As I have already suggested, MoU schools could slightly adjust their curricula in order to take better account of UN needs and specificities for students with UN language combinations. The curricula could include more SI, SI with texts and speeches that are read and not “oralised” given the challenges identified in chapter 3.2. Students could gradually be introduced to UN material and become accustomed to speed, accents and the UN structure. SI with text, since this is second main technique used at the UN (see §6.3.3), could also be given greater priority and students should practice this technique with UN speeches. Lafeber in her report (2014) explained that “two factors determine the gap between graduation and being rostered: the “readiness” of candidates to pass LCEs and each service’s definition of “readiness”: the readiness of candidates could be improved with more hours of SI as requested by the UN interpreting community and the interpretation service definition of “readiness” as clearly stated in the two surveys. Candidates need more SI and also need to practice with speed, manage their stress, be able to cope with accents and become acquainted with the UN structure.

Another possibility could be for schools to incorporate a special module on the UN; some schools have this module and others include the UN in their syllabuses and UN speeches are given to students. Lafeber stated in her report that:

Data from other years and from now on will need to be analysed to confirm whether, indeed, in addition to producing more successful candidates from MoU universities (by encouraging their graduates to apply), the Outreach Programme can, though intensive pedagogical assistance, expedite the preparation of graduates capable of passing the LCEs. One factor that would also have to be measured, however, is any shift in the LCEs towards assessing potential rather than expertise (2014: 8).

In order for this to happen, a special optional module could be introduced at the end of the curriculum for graduates with the UN combination. This brainstorming optional module could focus on UN terminology, accents and features of speeches. This would help candidates prepare more effectively for the LCE, thereby boosting their chances of passing. The goal could be to try to bridge the gap between the high number of candidates per examination and the low success rate. LCE speeches follow a certain structure and the topics chosen are part of the major themes.
discussed by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Knowing where to find the information and how to analyse and use it towards the LCE is therefore crucial. This module could teach candidates how to organize the preparation and documentation process and how to use the correct terminology while concentrating on the important themes and acquiring the necessary information. If candidates are familiar with the issues at stake and the subjects on the General Assembly and Security Council agendas, this would really help them to better anticipate what might come when they are confronted with a General Assembly or Security Council speech. For example, knowing the name and the nationality of the speaker (the name and the nationality will give candidates an idea of what the speaker might say - speakers coming from a developing or a developed country will probably have a different approach to a given topic) and when and where the speech was given are real tools that candidates can use during the LCE (Diur, 2014).

Senior interpreters participating in the survey said that the main challenges of the LCE were speed, UN jargon and terminology, foreign accents, insufficient knowledge of one of the languages, lack of training for certain language combinations, lack of endurance and register. All of these issues could be tackled in a special module.

**Recommendations for the UN**

The UN could make sure that the UN interpreting community in general and senior interpreters in particular have sufficient knowledge of the Outreach Programme. Again, all the links in the chain could be taken into account. If there is a weakest link somewhere in the chain, the whole programme could be in jeopardy. The UN could also set up a working group formed exclusively by interpreters. The tendency is to put all professional language groups in the same category, when they really belong to different categories. This group would be entrusted with brainstorming on the revamping of the LCE; senior interpreters have clearly stated that if they were in charge of revamping the LCE, the majority would add other types of tests such as SI with text or sight translation. The working group should include senior interpreters from all duty stations since there are no reasons to exclude other duty stations. This working group should also answer very fundamental questions.
What is the LCE testing? Can we shift - as enquired by Lafeber (2014) - towards assessing potential rather than expertise?

In the first survey, several interpreters also indicated that there were many technical problems during the LCE. These problems could easily be solved:

Technicians could receive a “to do” list explicitly stating what should be done before, during and after the exams. The list filled and signed by the technician, the human resources officer and the interpreter present during the exam should be returned together with exam material to the exam section.

- Digital recordings could be used for exams in order to guarantee sound quality.
- Instead of recording the candidates on tapes or CDs, technicians could be required to record all the candidates on USB drives only (each candidate would have a track and a number assigned to them as is now the case). This would facilitate delivery, listening and marking. In any event, tapes should not be used any longer.
- A senior interpreter could be present in the room at all times to ensure the smooth running of the LCE.

The LCE could also be more predictable: The lack of predictability can sometimes become a real obstacle when it comes to preparation. The LCE could take place at fixed intervals and on specific dates: potential candidates would have ample time to prepare and this would greatly reduce pressure. In her report, Lafeber says that “12 years elapse between obtaining a first university degree and placement on a roster” and senior interpreters are also telling us that to pass the LCE, experience is advisable. The working group could also examine the possibility of adding one selection criterion: applicants should have at least 3 to 4 years of experience.

In the meantime, and this could be done immediately, once the successful candidates have been notified, the Chiefs of the Interpretation Services and the Chiefs of Section of all four UN headquarter duty stations should receive the names of all candidates in a table indicating their rated scores.

We have seen that MoU schools could adapt their curricula but the UN should also fulfil its part of the contract: senior interpreters have clearly stated that they
would like the LCE format to be partly revamped and, once again, since they are an important link in the chain, their opinions should be heard.

**Recommendations for senior interpreters**

Senior interpreters could be provided with clear criteria to assess candidates, and those criteria could be applied by all booths in the same manner. The selection of material should also correspond to clear guidelines and should involve all four duty stations. The duration of the speech and the order in which the speech will be given should be the same for all booths. Failed candidates could receive written feedback from the president of the jury explaining the reasons for their failure and suggesting ways to improve. This has been introduced by one Head of booth in NY and has proven to be extremely helpful for candidates.

A brainstorming exercise for senior interpreters at all duty stations should decide on all these matters. In the survey, some senior interpreters stated that they would like the LCE to include non-UN material and that the themes and/or subjects of speeches could be given to the candidates before the LCE. These suggestions are a real departure from the current LCE. New York senior interpreters should not take decisions on such important issues without the involvement of all senior interpreters. All duty stations should participate because the UN interpreting community is composed of one family and one family only.

Another element should be debated: as senior interpreters gave different answers to the question on the level that they were testing (see §7.3.4), perhaps having two different LCEs, as in the EU, one for entry level and one for mastery level, could be the solution. Young interpreters with no experience and experienced interpreters could be assessed separately. The LCE for interpreters with no or little experience could be easier, perhaps with slower and fewer speeches. At the EU, interpreters recruited for entry level are recruited at a lower grade. If they want their careers to develop more quickly, they have the possibility to sit the LCE for Mastery level and their grade will be modified accordingly.

In the case of the UN, interpreters with no or little experience could be recruited as P1 and assigned with more experienced interpreters who could coach them. This new system would also mean that they could only be recruited in New
York and/or Geneva, and not in smaller duty stations, since they could not be assigned to difficult meetings right away. In this particular case, MoU schools could have a greater role to play and the optional module on the UN mentioned above could serve as preparatory training for passing the LCE.

In conclusion, the purpose of this thesis was to present some concrete ideas that could help the Organization recruit more candidates and fill current and future vacancies while ensuring that the LCE remains competitive and efficient. It must be seen as my modest contribution to the Outreach Programme in which I firmly believe. As stated at the beginning of my dissertation, the LCE is not merely an exam. It is a chain with a series of connected links: the UN, the Outreach Programme, the candidates and the UN interpreting community. Each link must be linked to another link to form a chain. If we do not want the chain to break, the strongest link must help the weakest one and each link must help the other links. This could be useful if we want to help the Outreach Programme move forward.


APPENDIXES
Appendix 1. Memorandum of Understanding
Appendix 2. Questions sent to MoU schools
Appendix 3. Form sent to MoU schools
Appendix 4. Letters sent for the pilot phase for the two questionnaires
Appendix 5. Introduction to the first questionnaire
Appendix 6. Reminder for the two questionnaires
Appendix 7. First questionnaire: Survey on MoU schools training and the LCE
Appendix 8. Introduction to the second questionnaire
Appendix 9. Second questionnaire: Survey for New York senior interpreters
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND UNIVERSITY OF -------------------- ON COOPERATION IN TRAINING OF CANDIDATES FOR COMPETITIVE LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS

03/08/2010 DGACM/MOU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 2 - of 8 August 2010

This Memorandum of Understanding (here in after “MoU”) is entered into between the United Nations, an international intergovernmental organization founded by its Member States, pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, signed on 26 June 1945, represented by its Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (hereinafter “DGACM”) and University of ------------------------------- ------- (hereinafter the “University”).

WHEREAS for the past several years, international organizations that employ language professionals globally have been confronted with increasing shortages of qualified conference interpreters and conference translators, especially for certain language combinations,

WHEREAS the United Nations has been making consistent efforts to address this problem by, inter alia, sharing with various educational institutions information about its competitive language examinations and employment opportunities for their qualified graduates;

WHEREAS the General Assembly, in its resolution 64/230 of 22 December 2009, acknowledged the measures undertaken by the Secretary-General to address the issue of the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, and requested him to maintain and intensify those efforts, including the strengthening of cooperation with institutions that train language specialists to meet the need in the six official
languages of the United Nations; and 03/08/2010 DGACM/MoU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 3 - of 8 August 2010

WHEREAS the University has programmes aimed at training university graduates (or equivalent thereto) to become professional conference interpreters and conference translators, and wishes to cooperate with the United Nations in preparing its students for careers in translation, interpretation and related language professions;

NOW THEREFORE, the United Nations and the University (hereinafter separately referred to as a “Party” and jointly referred to as the “Parties”) have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

Purpose

In accordance with the terms and conditions of this MoU, the Parties agree to cooperate in programmes with the aim of training students to take competitive language examinations organized by the United Nations (hereinafter the “Training Programmes”).

ARTICLE 2

Responsibilities of the United Nations

Subject to applicable United Nations regulations and rules, the United Nations shall:

- Subject to the prior express written approval of the United Nations, allow the University to state in its course prospectuses or promotional materials that Training Programmes are geared, in particular, to preparing students to take competitive language examinations organized by the United Nations and to state that parts of the Training Programmes have been developed in cooperation with the United Nations;

- At the request of the University, provide training materials (e.g., texts of speeches, documents and sound recordings of speeches, terminological and reference materials);

- Provide a description of the subject matters relevant to the United Nations language services so that the University could provide a list of its faculty members
possessing expertise in those fields who could be contacted by United Nations language services for consultations at no cost to the United Nations on the pro bono basis (see Article 3); 03/08/2010 DGACM/MoU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 4 - of 8 August 2010

- At the request of the University, advise on the structure and content of curricula for the Training Programmes and assist in developing course modules and teaching materials;

- At the request of the University, assign United Nations staff to conduct training in the form of, for example, workshops, lecture series, and master-classes, the details of which would be agreed upon by the Parties in advance in writing;

- At the request of the University, assign United Nations staff to participate as observers during end-of-course examinations in the Training Programmes, with such assignments to be agreed upon by the Parties on a case-by-case basis, under separate agreements;

- At the request of the University and at no cost to the United Nations, receive selected students under the United Nations Internship Programme, for internships with the United Nations language services, subject to the conclusion of separate agreements;

- At no cost to the United Nations, conduct orientation seminars for the trainers/instructors of the University in order to familiarize them with United Nations-specific terminology and language usage, as applicable.

**ARTICLE 3**

**Responsibilities of the University**

The University shall:

- Adapt, in consultation with the United Nations, as appropriate, existing Training Programmes or create new Training Programmes leading to a master's degree in conference interpretation and/or conference translation in any combinations of the six official United Nations languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), with emphasis on preparation for competitive language examinations organized by the United Nations;
- Receive from the United Nations and widely disseminate among relevant target audiences announcements of competitive language examinations organized by the United Nations; 03/08/2010 DGACM/MoU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 5 - of 8 August 2010
- Select students to be recommended for internships with United Nations language services;
- Provide a list of its faculty members possessing expertise in the subject matters relevant to the United Nations language services, who might, subject to applicable United Nations rules and regulations, be contacted by United Nations language services for pro bono consultations at no cost to the United Nations or retained by the United Nations in their personal capacity as consultants on a short-term basis to provide training to the United Nations language staff, under the understanding that such arrangements shall be subject to the conclusion of separate consultancy agreements between the recommended faculty members and the United Nations;
- Ensure that students enrolled in the Training Programmes are informed that in order to be recruited by the United Nations, graduates of the Training Programmes shall still be required to pass competitive language examinations organized by the United Nations.

ARTICLE 4

Use of the Name and Emblem of the United Nations

1. The University shall not advertise or otherwise make public the fact that it is cooperating with the United Nations pursuant to this MoU, except as provided for in Article 2 above, without the prior express written consent of the United Nations. Nor shall the University, in any manner whatsoever, use the name and/or emblem of the United Nations, or any abbreviation of the name of the United Nations in connection with its business or otherwise without the prior express written approval of the United Nations.

2. The University shall not use the United Nations name or emblem in the title of its Training Programme.
ARTICLE 5

Status of the Parties

1. Neither Party nor its personnel shall be considered as an official, agent, employee, representative or joint partner of the other Party. Neither Party shall enter into any contract or commitment on behalf of the other Party. 03/08/2010 DGACM/MoU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 6 - of 8 August 2010

2. Each Party shall carry out its responsibilities and obligations under this MoU in accordance with regulations and rules applicable to it, and, unless separately agreed upon in writing, bear its own costs with respect to the implementation of this MoU.

ARTICLE 6

Confidentiality

Except as contemplated by Articles 1 and 2 of this MoU, both Parties, their employees and contractors shall keep strictly confidential all information and materials relating to this MoU and/or provided by one Party to the other Party. Neither the United Nations, nor the University, shall release any such confidential materials to third parties without the prior express written consent of the other Party, except as may be required by law.

ARTICLE 7

Duration, Amendment, Termination

1. This MoU may be amended by mutual written agreement of the Parties.

2. Either Party may terminate the MoU, for cause, upon thirty (30) days’ notice, in writing, to the other Party. The initiation of conciliation or arbitration, in accordance with Article 8 of the MoU below, shall not be deemed to be a “cause” for or otherwise to be in itself a termination of the MoU.

3. This MoU shall enter into force upon its signature by both Parties and shall be in effect for two years.
ARTICLE 8

Settlement of Disputes

1. AMICABLE SETTLEMENT: The Parties shall use their best efforts to amicably settle any dispute, controversy, or claim arising out of this MoU or the breach, termination, or invalidity thereof. Where the Parties wish to seek such an amicable settlement through conciliation, conciliation shall proceed in accordance with the Conciliation Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law ("UNCITRAL") then obtaining, or according to such other procedure as may be agreed in writing between the Parties. 03/08/2010 DGACM/MoU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 7 - of 8 August 2010

2. ARBITRATION: Any dispute, controversy, or claim between the Parties arising out of this MoU or the breach, termination, or invalidity thereof, unless settled amicably under Article 8.1, above, within sixty (60) days after receipt by one Party of the other Party’s written request for such amicable settlement, shall be referred by either Party to arbitration in accordance with the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules then obtaining. The decisions of the arbitral tribunal shall be based on general principles of international commercial law. The arbitral tribunal shall be empowered to order the return or destruction of goods or any property, whether tangible or intangible, or of any confidential information provided under this MoU, order the termination of the MoU, or order that any other protective measures be taken with respect to the goods, services or any other property, whether tangible or intangible, or of any confidential information provided under this MoU, as appropriate, all in accordance with the authority of the arbitral tribunal pursuant to Article 26 ("Interim Measures of Protection") and Article 32 ("Form and Effect of the Award") of the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules. The arbitral tribunal shall have no authority to award punitive damages. In addition, unless otherwise expressly provided in this MoU, the arbitral tribunal shall have no authority to award interest in excess of the London Inter-Bank Offered Rate ("LIBOR") then prevailing, and any such interest shall be simple interest only. The Parties shall be bound by any arbitration award rendered as a result of such arbitration as the final adjudication of any such dispute, controversy, or claim.
ARTICLE 9

Privileges and Immunities

Nothing in or relating to this MoU shall be deemed a waiver, express or implied, of any of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations, including its subsidiary organs.

ARTICLE 10

Notices

Any notice required to be given by either party under this MoU shall be given in writing, shall be deemed given when actually received by the other party, and shall be conveyed via first class mail, postage prepaid, or via private courier, facsimile or electronic mail as follows: 03/08/2010 DGACM/MoU/Rev. 1 Model MoU - 8 - of 8 August 2010

To the United Nations:

Dr. Shaaban M. SHAABAN, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, United Nations, 300 E 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017, Room IN-632. Facsimile: +1-212-963-8196; e-mail: shaabans@un.org.

To the University:

-----------------------------

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the duly authorized representatives of the Parties affix their signatures below.

For the United Nations: For University of ------------------:

______________________ ______________________
Shaaban M. SHAABAN
Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management

______________________ ______________________
Date
APPENDIX 2

LETTER SENT TO MoU SCHOOLS

6. When was your institution created?

7. How many months are devoted to consecutive interpretation and how many months to simultaneous?

8. Is consecutive taught before simultaneous?

9. When in the curriculum is simultaneous introduced?

10. What is the duration of the course?

11. Do you have a specific module on interpreting at the UN? If yes, what does it focus on?
### Form Sent to MoU Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the institution and when was it created?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program duration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is consecutive taught before simultaneous?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes or no?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When in the curriculum is simultaneous introduced?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many months are devoted to consecutive during the whole program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many months are devoted to simultaneous during the whole program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a specific module on interpreting at the UN? If yes, on what do you focus?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear (with the first name),

At the outset, let me start by thanking you very much for your willingness to participate in this pilot phase. As you know, the objective is to get all the necessary feedbacks that will allow me to make the required improvements to the questionnaire. I would therefore like to ask you to be honest, frank and politically incorrect if need be. Let me know what you think of the questions (do I need more, less and/or different questions), of the introduction to the survey (is it too long, too short, not clear enough), the number of sections (do I need more, less, different sections) and the overall structure of the questionnaire. Please, feel free to make any comments, suggestions and especially critics that you deem necessary. I need to develop the best questionnaire possible and I cannot do it without your help. Thank you very much in advance and please feel free to contact me any time.

Marie
Dear colleague,

My name is Marie Diur. I am Chief of the French booth at the United Nations Office in Vienna and I am doing a PhD at the Universidad Pablo Olavide of Sevilla. My research aims at first determining, given the everyday work at the UN, if the number of hours devoted to Consecutive Interpretation (CI) and Simultaneous Interpretation (SI) in MoU schools is the most appropriate to work for the UN and second analysing the usefulness of the sequencing between CI and SI used by MoU schools versus passing the Language Competitive Examination (LCE). The ultimate goal is on the one hand to determine the adequacy between the training offered at MoU schools and the level of performance required to pass the LCE and thus work for the UN and on the other hand to see whether SI training could be introduced earlier on in the MoU school’s curriculum.

As the results of my paper will only apply to the UN context, I decided, as part of my research, to conduct a survey that will be targeted at all UN interpreters working at the UN. This will allow me to collect data on the training received by UN interpreters and their perceptions on the adequacy of the training versus passing the LCE.

I have designed a short questionnaire using a software called LimeSurvey. As stated on LimeSurvey website: “This survey is anonymous. The record of your survey responses does not contain any identifying information about you. If you used an identifying token to access this survey, please rest assured that this token will not be stored together with your responses. It is managed in a separate database and will only be updated to indicate whether you did (or did not) complete this survey. There is no way of matching identification tokens with survey responses”.

271
I would therefore be very grateful if you could take a few moments (it should take no more than 15 minutes) to fill in the questionnaire as your training, work experience and professionalism would be a very useful contribution to my research.

Here is the link to the survey and again rest assured that, in answering the questions, your identity and answers will remain confidential.

I would like to conclude by thanking you once again in advance for your cooperation. If you shall need more information, do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

Best regards,

Marie Diur
Dear colleagues,

I am very grateful for all the answers received to the survey so far. Thank you so much for your support! For those of you who still want to participate, here is the link again (the survey will be active for two more weeks).

Thanking you in advance,

Best regards.

Marie
APPENDIX 7

FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE: SURVEY ON MoU SCHOOLS TRAINING AND THE LCE

There are 52 questions in this survey

Personal and professional information

1. Gender *
   Please choose only one of the following:
   - □ Female
   - □ Male

2. A language *
   Please choose only one of the following:
   - □ English
   - □ French
   - □ Arabic
   - □ Chinese
   - □ Russian
   - □ Spanish
   - □ Other :

3. Number of years as United Nations staff member *
   Please choose only one of the following:
   - □ Less than 5 years
Between 5 and 15 years
Between 15 and 30 years
More than 30 years
Other:

4. Number of years as a professional interpreter *

Please choose only one of the following:

Less than 5 years
Between 5 and 15 years
Between 15 and 30 years
More than 30 years
Other:

5. When did you pass the Language Competitive Examination (LCE)? *

Please choose only one of the following:

Before 1980
Between 1980 and 1990
Between 1990 and 2000
After 2000

Training

Questions on training

6. Did you receive formal training in interpretation prior to becoming a professional interpreter?

Please choose only one of the following:

Yes
No
7. What kind of training did you receive? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- BA programme
- Master in translation and interpretation
- Master in Conference Interpreting
- Not applicable
- Other:

8. In which forms of interpretation did you receive training? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- Simultaneous interpreting
- Consecutive interpreting
- Liaison interpreting
- Chuchotage
- Public service interpreting
- Not applicable

9. When did you make the transition from consecutive without notes to consecutive with notes? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- 1-3 weeks after starting consecutive without notes
- 3-6 weeks after starting consecutive without notes
- More than 6 weeks after starting consecutive without notes
- Not applicable

10. Did you receive training in note-taking for consecutive interpretation? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
11. How many months into your consecutive interpretation training did you start your simultaneous interpretation training? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Immediately
☐ Between 1 to 3 months
☐ Between 3 to 6 months
☐ After one year
☐ Not applicable
☐ Other:

12. During your training, was an explanation given on why simultaneous interpretation training did not start concurrently with consecutive interpretation training?

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

13. What was the explanation given?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Yes” at question “12 [B8]” (During your training, was an explanation given on why simultaneous interpretation training did not start concurrently with consecutive interpretation training?).

Please write your answer here:
14. During your training, did you receive an explanation as to why the simultaneous training module commenced subsequently to the consecutive training module?

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

15. What was the explanation given?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Yes” at question “14 [B9]” (During your training, did you receive an explanation as to why the simultaneous training module commenced subsequently to the consecutive training module?)

Please write your answer here:

16. Did you understand the explanation given?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘12 [B8]’ (During your training, was an explanation given on why simultaneous interpretation training did not start concurrently with consecutive interpretation training?) and Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘14 [B9]’ (During your training, did you receive an explanation as to why the simultaneous training module commenced subsequently to the consecutive training module?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

17. How many months of simultaneous interpretation training did you receive during your training? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] More than 1 month
- [ ] Between 1 to 3 months
- [ ] Between 3 to 6 months
18. In your view, is it necessary to learn consecutive before learning simultaneous?*

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

19. For what reasons?*

Please write your answer here:

20. If you could change something in the training you received what would it be?*

Please write your answer here:

21. In your view, should failure to pass the consecutive interpretation examination at MoU schools result in the candidate being prevented from advancing to simultaneous training? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

22. For what reasons?

Please write your answer here:
Interpreting modalities at United Nations

23. In your work at the UN, how many times do you use consecutive on average in a given year? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Never
☐ At least twice a year
☐ From 2 to 5 times a year
☐ More than 5 times a year
☐ Other:

24. In your work at the UN, how many times on average do you use consecutive in conferences away from headquarters and/or on field missions in a given year? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ At least twice a year
☐ From 2 to 5 times a year
☐ More than 5 times a year
☐ Other:

25. Please indicate the main techniques you used in your everyday work (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used). *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

Simultaneous
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Simultaneous with text
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
26. Please indicate the main techniques you use while on mission (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used). *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

- Consecutive without notes
- Consecutive with notes
- Chuchotage
- Bidule (portable equipment used for simultaneous interpretation without a booth)

27. Was your training useful in terms of passing the LCE? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

28. Were you trained at an MoU school? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
29. Was the training you received useful in terms of passing the LCE? *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘28 [D2]’ (Were you trained at an MoU school?)

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not applicable

30. Were you a self-trained interpreter? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

31. Do you feel that you were as well prepared as formally trained interpreters in terms of passing the LCE?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was ‘Yes’ at question ‘30 [D3]’ (Were you a self-trained interpreter?)

Please write your answer here:

32. In your view, what were the strengths of your training program with regard to passing the LCE?

Please write your answer here:

33. In your view, what were the weaknesses of your training program?

Please write your answer here:

34. In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE? *

Please write your answer here:
35. For what reasons?

Please write your answer here:

36. LCE only tests candidates in simultaneous. Do you think it should also include consecutive? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

37. For what reasons? *

Please write your answer here:

38. In your opinion, why is the LCE success rate so low? *

Please choose all that apply:

☐ Excessive speed of speeches
☐ Lack of knowledge of UN subjects
☐ Lack of knowledge of UN structure
☐ Lack of general knowledge
☐ Stress
☐ Problems with A language
☐ Problems with C languages
☐ Choices of exam material
☐ Criterias for selecting the candidates
☐ Other:
LCE and MoUschools

Language Competitive Examination and MoU schools

39. **Given the nature of your everyday work at the UN, in your view is the training provided by MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they face when working at the UN?** *

Please choose all that apply:

- [ ] Yes, the training is optimal
- [ ] No, the training is not optimal
- [ ] Simultaneous should be emphasized at MoU schools
- [ ] Consecutive should be emphasized at MoU schools
- [ ] Both SI and CI should be emphasized
- [ ] A special module on the UN should be introduced at MoU schools
- [ ] Something is missing in the training
- [ ] Other:

40. **Given the nature of your everyday work at the UN, in your view is the numbers of hours devoted to consecutive and simultaneous at MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they face when working at the UN?** *

Please choose all that apply:

- [ ] Yes, the numbers of hours of CI and SI is optimal
- [ ] No, the numbers of hours of CI and SI is not optimal
- [ ] More hours of CI are necessary
- [ ] More hours of SI are necessary
- [ ] Something should be added
- [ ] Other:
41. In your view, is the MoU schools' curriculum adequate to the task of preparing students to pass the LCE? *
   
   Please choose only one of the following:
   
   □ Yes
   
   □ No

42. In your view, should the MoU schools' curriculum be adjusted? *
   
   Please choose only one of the following:
   
   □ Yes
   
   □ No

43. For what reasons?
   
   Please write your answer here:

44. Do you think that consecutive should be taught before simultaneous?
   
   Please write your answer here:

45. What kind of training, if any, did you receive? *
   
   Please write your answer here:

46. In your view, when you passed the LCE were you adequately prepared for working at the UN?
   
   Please write your answer here:

47. In your view, was your level of preparation? *
   
   Please choose only one of the following:
   
   □ The same as interpreters who received formal training
48. Did you regret not having received formal training? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes, because something was missing from my preparation
☐ Yes, because I felt that my colleagues were better prepared
☐ No, because my preparation was adequate to work for the UN
☐ Not applicable

Teaching in schools and coaching young interpreters

49. Do you currently teach at an interpretation school or schools?*

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

50. Where do you teach? *

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Yes” at question “49 [G1]” (Do you currently teach at an interpretation school or schools?).

Please write your answer here:

51. Do you coach young interpreters at the UN? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No
52. In your coaching and/or teaching experience, do you notice any differences between students from MoU and non-MoU schools? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ There are no differences

☐ Students from MoU schools are better

☐ Students from non-MoU schools are better

☐ It depends on the student not on the school

☐ Not applicable

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Your help is highly appreciated.

Marie

Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.
INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Colleague, My name is Marie Diur. I am Chief of the French booth at the United Nations Office in Vienna and I am working on a PhD at the Universidad Pablo Olavide, Seville. Some time ago I sent a survey targeting the entire UN interpreting community. This new survey is addressed exclusively to New York senior interpreters. The survey is designed to examine what jury members look for in a candidate sitting the Language Competitive Examination (LCE). Senior interpreters in New York serve on exam juries which decide if a candidate has what it takes to be a UN interpreter. My goal is to gain a better understanding of what senior interpreters look for in a candidate and thus whether or not the training offered at MoU schools reflects performance requirements to pass the LCE and interpret at the UN. The results of the two surveys will be an integral part of my research and will be used to evaluate the adequacy of the training as regards the demands of the LCE. I have put together a short questionnaire using LimeSurvey. As stated on LimeSurvey's website: “this survey is anonymous. The record of your survey responses does not contain any identifying information about you. If you use an identifying token to access this survey, please rest assured that this token will not be stored together with your responses. It is managed in a separate database and will only be updated to indicate whether you did (or did not) complete this survey. There is no way of matching identification tokens with survey responses.” I would therefore be very grateful if you could take a few moments to fill in the new questionnaire, which is shorter than the previous one. Your professional experience as a senior interpreter and jury member would be a very useful contribution to my research. Here is the link to the survey and again, rest assured that in answering the questions your identity and answers will remain confidential. Thank you in advance for your contribution. Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Best regards, Marie
There are 44 questions in this survey

**Personal and professional information**

1. **Gender** *
   
   Please choose *only one* of the following:
   
   - Female
   - Male

2. **A language** *
   
   Please choose *only one* of the following:
   
   - English
   - French
   - Arabic
   - Chinese
   - Russian
   - Spanish
   - Other:
3. Number of years as United Nations staff member *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- [ ] Less than 5 years
- [ ] Between 5 and 15 years
- [ ] Between 15 and 30 years
- [ ] More than 30 years
- [ ] Other:

4. Numbers of years as a professional interpreter *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- [ ] Less than 5 years
- [ ] Between 5 and 15 years
- [ ] Between 15 and 30 years
- [ ] More than 30 years
- [ ] Other:

5. When did you pass the Language Competitive Examination (LCE)? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- [ ] Before 1980
- [ ] Between 1980 and 1990
- [ ] Between 1990 and 2000
- [ ] After 2000
- [ ] Other:
6. Number of years as a senior interpreter (P5) *

Please choose only one of the following:

- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 and 10 years
- Between 10 and 20 years
- More than 20 years
- Other:

Training

7. Did you receive formal training in interpretation prior to becoming a professional interpreter? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No

8. What kind of training did you receive? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- BA programme
- Master in translation and interpretation
- Master in Conference Interpreting
- Not applicable
- Other:

9. In which interpreting modalities did you receive training? *

Please choose all that apply:

- Simultaneous interpreting
- Consecutive interpreting
Interpreting modalities at United Nations

10. Please indicate the main techniques you use in your everyday work (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used). *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

- Simultaneous
  - Simultaneous with text
  - Consecutive without notes
  - Consecutive with notes
  - Whispering
  - Bidule (portable equipment used for simultaneous interpretation without a booth)

11. Please indicate the main techniques you use while on mission (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the main technique used). *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

- Simultaneous
  - Simultaneous with text
  - Consecutive without notes
  - Consecutive with notes
  - Whispering
  - Bidule (portable equipment used for simultaneous interpretation without a booth)
12. Were you trained at an MoU school? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

13. Was the training you received useful in terms of passing the LCE?

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not applicable


Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

15. In your view, what are the main challenges faced by candidates sitting the LCE? *

Please write your answer here:

16. How many times have you been a jury member? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Less than 3 times
☐ From 3 to 5 times
☐ From 5 to 10 times
☐ More than 10 times
☐ Not applicable
☐ Other:
17. During the years, have you noticed changes in candidates’ competencies? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Candidates are better prepared
- [ ] Candidates are less well prepared
- [ ] Candidates’ preparation is unchanged
- [ ] I do not know
- [ ] Not applicable

18. During the years, have you noticed any differences in the level required to pass the LCE? *

Please choose only one of the following:

- [ ] Jury members are more strict
- [ ] Jury members are less strict
- [ ] No differences
- [ ] I do not know

19. In your opinion, how is the pass rate at the LCE? *

Please choose all that apply:

- [ ] Low
- [ ] Medium
- [ ] High
- [ ] Other:

20. In your opinion, why is the success rate medium or low at the LCE?*

Please choose all that apply:

- [ ] Excessive speed of speeches
- [ ] Lack of knowledge of UN subjects
- [ ] Lack of knowledge of UN structure
☐ Lack of general knowledge
☐ Stress
☐ Problems with A language
☐ Problems with B language
☐ Problems with C language
☐ Choices of exam material
☐ Criteria for selection of the candidates
☐ Other:

21. For the arabic and the Chinese booth, do you pay more attention to:

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ The A language
☐ The B language
☐ The A and the B language
☐ Not applicable
☐ Other:

22. If you were in charge of revamping the LCE, you would? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Keep the same format
☐ Change the format
☐ Change part of the format
☐ Other:

23. If you could change the format, you would: *

Please choose all that apply:
24. Could you elaborate on your answers to the above question *

Please write your answer here:

25. When judging the applicants, which criteria do you consider as being the more important (rank from 1 to 5, 5 being the most important criterion): *

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

Excellent passive comprehension of the passive languages

1 2 3 4 5

Accuracy

1 2 3 4 5

Ability to construct complete sentences

1 2 3 4 5
### Appendix 9. Second questionnaire: survey for New York senior interpreters

**Style and register**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ability to keep up with speed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intelligent editing of redundant word and phrases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ability to cope with difficult and dense passages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good diction and delivery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good preparation on UN topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excellent passive comprehension of the passive languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accuracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ability to construct complete sentences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Style and register**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Style and register**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ability to keep up with speed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good preparation on UN topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26. When judging the applicants, what are you testing? *

Please choose all that apply:

☐ Entry level competence (the interpreter is not quite ready for UN high level meetings but with mentoring and experience could be ready within a year or less)

☐ Mastery level (the interpreter can be assigned immediately to all meetings, including high level meetings. No mentoring is required)

☐ Something in the middle

☐ Other:

27. Could you elaborate on your answer to the above question? *

Please write your answer here:

28. Do you think that for passing the LCE experience is: *

Please choose all that apply:

☐ Mandatory

☐ Advisable

☐ Not necessary

☐ It depends on the candidate

☐ I do not know

29. Are you aware of the curricula and training given at MoU schools? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes

☐ No
30. Given the requirements to pass the LCE, in your view is the training provided by MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they face when working at the UN? *

Please choose all that apply:

- [ ] Yes, the training is optimal
- [ ] No, the training is not optimal
- [ ] Simultaneous should be emphasized at MoU schools
- [ ] Consecutive should be emphasized at MoU schools
- [ ] Both simultaneous and consecutive should be emphasized
- [ ] A special module on the UN should be introduced at MoU schools
- [ ] Something is missing in the training
- [ ] Not applicable
- [ ] Other:

31. Given the nature of your everyday work at the UN, in your view is the number of hours devoted to consecutive and simultaneous at MoU schools optimal in terms of preparing interpreters for the challenges they face when working at the UN? *

Please choose all that apply:

- [ ] Yes, the number of hours of simultaneous (SI) and consecutive (CI) is optimal
- [ ] No, the number of hours of SI and CI is not optimal
- [ ] More hours of CI are necessary
- [ ] More hours of SI are necessary
- [ ] More hours of CI and SI are necessary
- [ ] Something should be added
- [ ] Not applicable
32. In your view, should MoU schools’ curricula be adjusted?*

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

33. For what reasons? *

Please write your answer here:

34. Do you think the outreach program is best able to respond to UN needs? *

Please choose all that apply:

☐ The outreach program should be better adjusted to UN needs
☐ The outreach program is not responding to UN needs
☐ The outreach program does not help candidates be better prepared for the LCE
☐ The outreach program has been instrumental for the UN interpretation section
☐ The outreach program should be cancelled
☐ MoU schools are not doing their share within the outreach program
☐ UN staff could do more within the outreach program
☐ I do not know

35. Could you elaborate on your answers above?

Please write your answer here:

36. If you could change the outreach program, what would you do? *

Please write your answer here:
Teaching/coaching/mentoring young interpreters

37. Do you teach or provide pedagogical assistance? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

38. Do you coach/mentor young interpreters at the UN? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No

39. In your coaching/teaching/mentoring experience, do you notice any differences between students from MoU and non-MoU schools? *

Please choose all that apply:

☐ There are no differences
☐ Students from MoU schools are better
☐ Students from non-MoU schools are better
☐ It depends on the student not on the school
☐ I do not know
☐ Not applicable
☐ Other:

40. Do you think that your teaching/mentoring/coaching has been instrumental for candidates to pass the LCE? *

Please choose only one of the following:

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I am not sure
Interpreting at the United Nations

41. For what reasons?

Please write your answer here:

42. In your opinion, are the outreach program and the MoUs a success?*

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure
- I do not know
- Not applicable

43. For what reasons?

Please write your answer here:

44. Would you like to add any other comment?

Please write your answer here:

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey
INTERPRETING AT THE UNITED NATIONS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE LANGUAGE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION (LCE)

Doctoral Thesis
Sevilla, 2015

Author: Marie Diur
Supervisor: Dr. Lucía Ruiz Rosendo