Enhancing on-the-job training of staff interpreters in the state court of Singapore

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Abstract

Specialised formal training at degree level is recommended for judiciary interpreters. But where it is neither an option nor required, in-house on-the-job training deserves serious consideration as a credible route to competency. Practically nothing is available in the literature about judiciary interpreting in Singapore despite its long history. While the unavailability of formal training in the country is a known fact, little has been written about how well State Courts interpreters are performing in the circumstances. However, given that they work in a bilingual milieu, often with judges, lawyers and/or lay persons who speak English and the other language in interpreter-mediated proceedings, the lack of serious concerns raised within the Judiciary and the public at large speaks well of them.

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BASHIR
BASALAMAH

ENHANCING ON-THE-JOB TRAINING OF STAFF INTERPRETERS IN THE STATE COURTS OF SINGAPORE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Advanced Studies for Interpreter Trainers
Advisor: Barbara Moser-Mercer

January, 2015
KEYWORDS: judiciary interpreting, on-the-job training

ABSTRACT:
Specialised formal training at degree level is recommended for judiciary interpreters. But where it is neither an option nor required, in-house on-the-job training deserves serious consideration as a credible route to competency.
Practically nothing is available in the literature about judiciary interpreting in Singapore despite its long history. While the unavailability of formal training in the country is a known fact, little has been written about how well State Courts interpreters are performing in the circumstances. However, given that they work in a bilingual milieu, often with judges, lawyers and/or lay persons who speak English and the other language in interpreter-mediated proceedings, the lack of serious concerns raised within the Judiciary and the public at large speaks well of them.
This paper aims to make a broad assessment of the performance of Singapore State Courts interpreters through the perceptions of former senior interpreters. Their views of the prevalence of challenges against interpretation from judges, lawyers and lay persons, and the degree of respect interpreters enjoy from them, will be used as indicators of the quality of their performance and, by extension, the effectiveness of their underlying training. Based on the survey findings, the paper will attempt to offer viable and practical recommendations to enhance their current training regime.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Formal vs Informal Training of Judiciary Interpreters

The value and primary importance of formal training for interpreters, particularly at university level, is a given in the literature. Gonzalez et al (2012:103), for instance, argue that formal degree programmes enable judiciary interpreting as a profession to provide “assurances of competent and ethical service delivery” and “to take a step forward in forging its identity as a specialized professional discipline.”

However, as EC DG Interpretation (2009:11) noted, “[…] while such a higher education stream where it exists is to be commended, the reality is that it will be offered only in the main […] languages and has by necessity a wider academic remit than legal interpreting only. It also lacks the flexibility to meet the language needs of our rapidly changing multilingual societies.”

For judiciary interpreters in the State Courts¹ of Singapore, formal degree-level training in interpreting is neither mandated nor is it an option. It is not required of candidates seeking recruitment as court interpreters, and neither is specialised training in court interpreting currently available in Singapore, at degree or any level².

¹ In March 2014, pursuant to an Act of Parliament, the former Subordinate Courts was elevated in status and renamed State Courts. The State Courts are headed by a Presiding Judge ranked equal to a High Court Judge (State Courts, 2014a:10 and 2014b:1.) All references in this paper to the State Court shall refer as well to the former Subordinate Courts, and vice versa.
² The SIM University BA in Translation and Interpretation, described as “Singapore's first and only degree programme specialising in translation and interpretation,” is generalist in nature, combining translation and interpreting, and is available only in English and Chinese. No formal training currently exists in any form for the other main language pairs used in the Judiciary of Singapore. http://www.unisim.edu.sg/programmes/programme-details/Pages/BA-Translation-and-Interpretation.aspx, accessed 2 Feb 2014.
And yet, in spite of these circumstances, State Courts interpreters appear to have acquitted themselves well. Throughout a history that goes back well into the mid-19th Century, concerns and questions over the quality of interpretation by staff court interpreters are practically unheard of.

Sawyer (2004:56) notes the “consensus” in interpreting studies literature “that the overarching goal of interpreter training is to produce interpreters who are able to work immediately and reliably on the market [...] in the sense that the program graduate is competent and ready to work directly after graduation.” However, as he continues:

This absolute statement does not make allowances for mentoring by senior interpreters on the job, which is often done as fresh graduates are incorporated into teams and work with experienced colleagues. Mentoring and internship possibilities are also becoming more widespread in the institutional markets, with programs aimed at the recruitment of young interpreters who are expected to broaden and deepen their qualifications, for example at the European Union.

Thus, while full-time specialised programmes may be the ideal in producing full-fledged practitioners ready for immediate performance, in places like Singapore where no such option exists, informal on-the-job training and mentoring deserves recognition. Indeed, as staff judiciary interpreters in the State Courts appear to have demonstrated, this has been an effective route to competence.

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3 Brief paragraph in The Straits Times, 17 May 1900, page 2: “Mr S Sopaien, Tamil interpreter at the Penang Police Court, is reported to have been promoted to be interpreter at the Supreme Court, Singapore.” From http://newspapers.nl.sg/Digitised/Article.aspx?articleid=straitstimes19000517-1.2.19&sessionid=cde67b7c1ee7480db9c197ff03c60&keyword=interpreter&token=interpreter, accessed 4 Apr 2014
The Judiciary of Singapore has always had a core team of staff interpreters handling combinations of English and the local languages – Malay, Indian languages, and Chinese languages. They are not freelancers engaged as and when the need arises, but full-time public servants somewhat like their Malaysian counterparts (Wong 1990:114, Ibrahim and Bell 2003:212, Ibrahim 2007:207), with whom they share common roots⁴. Being staff means they are afforded the time to learn the ropes gradually through actual court work and guidance by seniors.

In the State Courts, the lower half of the Singapore Judiciary, interpreters begin their in-house training journey with simple assignments, guided and mentored for a time by more senior colleagues. As they gain in competence and experience, they graduate from simple, routine tasks to more complex, tougher, and longer assignments.

Like the domestic court interpreters that Stern (2012:7) referred to, they usually work “in isolation, one interpreter per case.” In between and at the end of assignments, however, they return to base in language-specific pools of some 20-30 interpreters, which include senior colleagues having up to 40 years of full-time experience each and much institutional memory to share. Thus they benefit not just from the guidance and mentoring they receive as students, but also from continuing “professional [interactions] (information sharing, solidarity and professional support),” which Stern cites as one of the “[factors] contributing to the quality of interpreter-mediated

communication” (*ibid*:2-7), and which Wenger (1998:72-85) calls a community of practice.

Admittedly, the training is unstructured. Doss et al (2007:2) offer insights from the world of industry into what structured on-the-job training entails, including having set training objectives, progress milestones and regular assessments. The in-house, on-the-job training that novice court interpreters undergo in the Singapore Judiciary has none of these features, and interpreters are only assessed for readiness to move on to the next more challenging task.

The only structured training available are language classes, for English and the other language. This is not surprising given the general assumption that, beside a good education, proficiency in two languages is the only qualification one needs to be an interpreter. Otherwise, competencies are acquired through informal and unstructured mentoring and learning interactions.

In spite of this, however, the indications are that this in-house, on-the-job training regime has worked. State Courts interpreters regularly carry out their tasks – in an adversarial system of justice and a bilingual environment – for the benefit of judges, prosecutors, counsel and lay persons who speak English and at least one of the local languages interpreted. Yet, no concerns or questions are known to have been raised about their performance, in court or by the public at large, that might suggest a “systematic criticism of interpreting” (Stern, 2012:1) or the degree of questioning of
interpreters’ performance which Ew and Ibrahim-Gonzalez (2013:466), Ibrahim and Bell (2003:217), and Wong (1990:111) allude to in Malaysian court interpreting⁵.

Indeed, staff judiciary interpreters in Singapore exude self-confidence, passion, and pride in their job, as reflected in these remarks by a senior, carried in the Subordinate Courts in-house newsletter *SubCourts News*, Issue 3 (2011:6):

> I enjoy my work as it allows me to help people express themselves verbally. I have gained vast experience as a Court Interpreter for 44 years. In 1970, I interpreted in a murder trial. This case was special to me because it was the first ever criminal trial after the jury system was abolished⁶. After 25 days of hearing, the accused was convicted. I followed the case with great interest when it subsequently went before the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council⁷ in London. I feel that an interpreter plays a vital role in a trial. Accurate interpretation coupled with confidence in handling parties [goes] a long way in the administration of justice. […]

This paper aims to make broad assessments of the performance of Singapore State Courts interpreters, as a basis for recommending improvements to the current training regime. Owing to an unfortunate setback that precluded access to currently serving interpreters, judges and senior court officers, the study will rely on the

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⁵ Wong (1990:111) on the problems faced by Malaysian court interpreters: “The witness may be uneducated, shy, overzealous, untruthful, evasive; the bench may be impatient, sarcastic, inconsiderate, intolerant, while counsel may be critical and ready to find fault with the interpreter and to challenge his interpretation. An open court interpretation may be challenged in various ways. A slip may be made in the interpretation and an issue made out of it. Sometimes the integrity of the interpreter is questioned.”

⁶ In Singapore, trial by jury was abolished in 1969.

perceptions of former senior interpreters with recent work experience. They will be asked for their assessments of the prevalence of challenges against interpretation from court actors, and the degree of respect interpreters enjoy from them, as indicators of the perceived quality of the interpreters’ performance.

Based on the survey findings, the paper aims to present viable and practical recommendations to enhance the current training.

1.2. Judiciary Interpreting in Singapore

In a multi-racial society like ours, what is most inspiring about the law is the principle of equality of all persons before the law and the entitlement to equal protection of the law.

Justice Goh Joon Seng (Supreme Court of Singapore, 2006:102)

The Judiciary of Singapore, a legacy of the British judicial system, comprises the State Courts (formerly the Subordinate Courts) and the Supreme Court. For more than a century now, the Judiciary has relied on standing corps of interpreters to serve the city-state’s multi-ethnic and multilingual population. Both the State Courts and the Supreme Court – which itself comprises the High Court and the Court of Appeal, the apex court of the land – have their own Language Services Departments (formerly Interpreters Sections), manned by interpreters in the main local languages. Despite a highly educated populace and the ubiquitous use of English in the country, they still routinely mediate in court proceedings involving Mandarin, Tamil, Malay, Punjabi, Malayalee, Hokkien, and Cantonese. They attend to matters ranging from simple
court appearances and ancillary matters, to complex trials and inquiries which may last days, weeks or months.

Little has been written about judiciary interpreting in Singapore itself, but fortunately we can turn to literature out of Malaysia for some reference. Singapore and Malaya (now Malaysia) were under British colonial rule for well over 150 years, and court interpreters in both countries share a common history at least until World War II. The following notes from Ibrahim and Bell (2003:212) are therefore helpful:

Court interpreting in Malaysia can trace its origins back to colonial times, when interpreters were employed by the British administration to facilitate trials conducted in all courts in languages other than English. The importance of interpreters in courts throughout the whole of the Federation of Malaya was formalised by the creation of the Interpreters' Association in 1937 and, in 1948, by its establishment as a trade union […]

The provision of services in Malaysia thus differs in two major respects from the legal interpreting system in the United Kingdom and many other countries. First, the Malaysian system is far older than most others; and, second, it is staffed, almost exclusively, by full-time government employees. […] In contrast [to UK Public Service and Court interpreters], the Malaysian Court Interpreter is a civil servant.

Below is a brief description of the State Courts interpreting service (State Courts, 2014a:19):

The Language Services Department aims to provide quality interpretation and translation services, and administers the statutory declarations and
affidavits of court users. The Department also provides mediation services for maintenance disputes at the Family Court and assists in the bail and other applications made at the various registries. […]

Judiciary interpreters in Singapore are bound by an Oath of Office prescribed by law and taken before a Judge when they begin service. In the State Courts, it is provided in the Schedule to the State Courts Act. Also known as the Interpreters’ Oath, it imposes a strict duty of competence and integrity, as follows:

I, .............................................................., having been appointed an interpreter of the .................................................. Court, do solemnly swear (or affirm)\(^8\) that I will faithfully interpret, translate and transcribe from the ................................ language into the English language and from the English language into the ................................. language to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability and without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

State Courts staff interpreters are recruited at two grades. The lower grade, Language Officer (LO), calls for at least a senior high school or polytechnic diploma as minimum entry qualification. On recruitment, Language Officers must attend language classes for about a year and then pass a Qualifying Language Examination. The higher grade of Language Executive (LX) requires a University degree. Language Executives are not required to attend language classes upon recruitment.

\(^8\) Another legacy of the British colonial legal system, where only Christians are deemed capable of swearing an oath – on the Bible. Everyone else can only ‘affirm’. The legal effect of both formats of oath, however, is the same, i.e. the declarant is legally bound by it and liable for any breach thereof.
In the State Courts, interpretation is generally performed in two modes, consecutive (when bi-directional, e.g. when a witness is being examined) and simultaneous whispering (when uni-directional, e.g. when the on-going proceedings are explained to an accused person at the dock). Sight translation is also used when written material such as charges or statement of facts are read out to the accused person. Simultaneous interpretation by electronic means has never been tried, and note-taking is not widely practised.

The bulk of the work of State Courts interpreters is in the Criminal Justice Division, which in 2013 dealt with some 250,000 cases large and small (State Courts, 2014a:55). The figure includes about 60,000 criminal charges brought by the Public Prosecutor, 114,000 charges and summonses brought by regulatory agencies, and 72,000 traffic violation cases. The State Courts’ total caseload in 2013, including civil litigation in the Civil Justice and family matters in the Family and Juvenile Justice Divisions, was some 344,000.

This caseload profile gives the State Courts a significant role in the administration of justice in Singapore (State Courts, 2014b:2):

The first instance courts, namely the District Courts, Magistrates’ Courts, Juvenile Courts, Coroners’ Court, and Small Claims Tribunals, play an integral role in the administration of justice in Singapore. With a combined annual caseload of about 350,000 and managing more than 95 per cent of the Judiciary’s total caseload, these Courts are where people in Singapore seek access to justice and protection of the laws.
A detailed caseload profile can be viewed in Appendix 8.3.

Incidentally, the State Courts also rely when necessary on freelance sign language interpreters and freelance interpreters in the so-called ‘foreign’ non-English languages: Indonesian, Thai, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Myanmar, Bengali, Sinhalese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, Farsi, French, German, Spanish, etc (State Courts, 2014a:19).

However, the recruitment and training of freelance interpreters is different from that of staff interpreters, and will not be a subject of this study.

1.3. Multi-Lingual Singapore

The Republic of Singapore, a small Southeast Asian island nation just north of the Equator, has long been a magnet for migrants particularly from Southeast, South and East Asia. Its 5.47 million total population (NPTD et al, 2014:5) is consequently a colourful mix of ethnicities and tongues.

Singapore’s citizen core of about 3.34 million people is 76 percent ethnic Chinese, 15 percent Malays, 7.4 percent Indians and 1.4 percent of other ethnic origins. The non-citizen population – 0.53 million Permanent Residents and 1.60 million non-residents⁹ – is even more diverse. They include significant numbers of Mainland Chinese and

⁹ “Non-residents” refers to foreign nationals granted long-term passes to live in Singapore for employment, education or as dependents of citizens or such foreign nationals. They include nationals from Southeast Asia, China & East Asia, the Indian Sub-Continent, Australia & New Zealand, Europe, and the Americas.
Indonesian, Thai, Bangladeshi, Filipino, Australian, Indian, British, Japanese, Korean, Sri Lankan, Cambodian, Vietnamese, French, Swiss and Myanmar nationals.

The citizen ethnic composition, however, explains the Judiciary’s core language needs. English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil are the official languages of Singapore, although English is *de facto* the language of administration and communication. Most Singaporeans are thus bilingual, speaking English as well as Malay, Tamil or Mandarin (or one of the so-called Chinese ‘dialects’) to varying degrees of proficiency. The education system is English-based, with Chinese, Malay or Tamil as a required mother-tongue language depending on one’s ethnic background.

The Singapore.sg website (app.singapore.sg/society/our-people/language) explains this linguistic potpourri:

[…] Linguistically, most Malays in Singapore speak the Johore-Riau variant of Malay, similar to that spoken in the west Malaysian peninsula [and] Riau Islands.

For the Chinese majority, Mandarin is the most common, frequently spoken at home by about 47.7 per cent of them. They also speak other Chinese dialects such as Hokkien (9 per cent), Cantonese (4.7 per cent), Teochew (3.7 per cent) and other dialects such as Hakka and Hainanese (1.29 per cent). […]

About two-thirds of the Indian population are Tamil speakers from India's south-eastern state of Tamil Nadu. About 36.6 per cent of Singapore's Indian population speaks Tamil frequently at home. Other Indian
languages spoken include Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, Punjabi and Gujarati. [...] 

Colloquial Singaporean English, also known as Singlish, is an English-based creole language spoken in Singapore. Although English is the lexifier language, Singlish has its unique slang and syntax, which are more pronounced in informal speech. Singlish vocabulary formally takes after British English [...] Singlish also uses many words borrowed from Hokkien and Malay.

Graphics showing the population figures and citizen ethnic composition of Singapore are shown in Appendix 8.1.

1.4. A Personal Connection

It is more than academic interest that drew the author to the topic of training for Singapore’s judiciary interpreters. The Judiciary was where he learnt the ropes of what was to become a lifelong career in interpreting, under the guidance of more experienced colleagues and through regular learning interactions in the interpreters’ pool. The author thus has direct personal experience in the Judiciary’s in-house interpreter training process, and takes great pleasure in the opportunity to contribute back to it through this study.
2. Literature review

This Literature Review covers the following component areas of our subject matter:

- benefits of formal instruction for individuals and organisations
- the case for formal training of judiciary interpreters
- formal training and the interpreting profession
- mentoring and apprenticeship in interpreter training
- user satisfaction as indicator of the effectiveness of training
- community of practice as a learning model
- recommended competencies and curriculum

2.1. Benefits of Formal Instruction for Individuals and Organisations

With regard to the benefits of formal training to the individual and the organisation, Burke (1995: no pagination) offers the following findings of a study involving “over 1,200 women and men in managerial and professional jobs in the same large professional services firm”:

- “[Individuals] who participated in more internal and external courses described the firm in a more positive way; reported more favourable work outcomes (job satisfaction, intent to quit) and saw greater support provided by the firm in its efforts to provide high quality of service and products to clients.”
- “[Individuals] reporting greater usefulness and value from their training courses also reported […] a perceived higher quality of service and products being provided to clients and fewer barriers to service excellence within the firm.”
• “[Individuals] perceiving greater value in their formal courses were more satisfied with their jobs and felt better about the firm compared to other places where they could work.”

• Individuals reporting greater value from their training “were less likely to quit,” perceived “greater support and fewer barriers to quality service” and “are positive about the quality of the organisation’s services and products.”

Thus training results in improved job satisfaction as well as better employee perception of the organisation, of the quality of its services and products, and of their ability to achieve service excellence.

In their round-up of the literature on this subject, Aguinis and Kraiger (2009:454-455) cite the following studies:

• Marks et al (2002): training resulted in skill improvements “through a change in trainees’ knowledge structures or mental models”, and specifically, “mentally rehearsing tasks allowed trainees to increase declarative knowledge […]”;

• Taylor et al (2005): the largest effects of training were for declarative and procedural knowledge (i.e. knowledge about the “what” and the “how”, respectively, of a given task);

• Kozlowski et al (2001), Kraiger et al (1993), Smith et al (1997): Training may have an impact not just on declarative and procedural knowledge, “but also may enhance strategic knowledge, defined as knowing when to apply a specific knowledge or skill”;

• Driskell et al (2001): formal training “may enable consistency in performance across conditions”.


In other words, formal training benefits the individual through skill improvements and increased declarative and procedural knowledge – the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ – of their tasks, as well as promotes consistent performance under different conditions.

As for benefits to the organisation, Aguinis and Kraiger cite other studies showing how training practices enhance an organisation’s reputation for excellence (Clardy, 2005, highlighting the formidable reputation of US Navy SEALS, built through a rigorous training programme). Quoting Brown and Van Buren (2007), they also found that formal training raises the organisation’s social capital, “via relationship building, norm development, and institutional trust […] important social processes that in turn are likely to affect organizational-level outcomes.”

2.2. The Case for Formal Training of Judiciary Interpreters

Only exceptionally gifted people (of whom I have only met one or two during my professional career) can hope to accede to these professions on their own without developing serious bad habits and making mistakes that will tarnish their professional performance for the rest of their careers.


Lederer (2007:18) observes that formal training helps “avoid would-be translators having to learn slowly by trial and error while looking for the most adequate strategies,” and offer them “shortcuts to competence.”
Gile (2009:7) similarly argues that formal training can at least “help individuals who wish to become professional interpreters or translators enhance their performance to the full realization of their potential”, as well as “help them develop their Translation\textsuperscript{10} skills more rapidly than through field experience and self-instruction, which may involve much groping in the dark and learning by trial-and-error.”

Abel (2009:21) recommends that courts (in the United States) require interpreters “to obtain credentials through a process that provides training and tests the necessary abilities.” This, in her opinion, is “the best way of ensuring that the interpreter possesses those skills.”

Berk-Seligson (2002:216) opines that “[in] addition to certification exams, training programs would be vital in upgrading the competency of those […] who are currently employed as interpreters in courthouses, and those who wish to enter the profession.”

Gonzalez et al (2012:25) specify an even higher level of training for interpreters, arguing that “[the] level of language and interpreting expertise required of court interpreters is highly specialized and demands advanced formal study in language, interpreting, and translation, as well as the completion of a four-year college degree in any area, preferably followed by an advanced degree.”

They (ibid:663-4) also highlight the link between interpreter competence and justice, commending jurisdictions that have “correctly seen the relationship between

\textsuperscript{10} Italics and capitalisation in the original. By “Translation” (with a capital T), Gile refers to the overall field covering both interpreting and translation.
interpreting skills and access to justice,” as well as those that organise and sponsor interpreter training programmes. They “not only provide a service to interpreters, but also improve the administration of justice” by so doing.

2.3. Formal Training and the Interpreting Profession

EC DG Interpretation (2009:9) emphatically places training, qualifications and professionalism in the definition of a legal interpreter:

A ‘Legal Interpreter’ is a trained, qualified professional providing interpreting to those involved in whatever capacity in a legal system whose language they do not speak […]

Gile (2009:7) argues that formal training programmes can “help raise general professional standards […] by selecting the best candidates at admission and the truly skilled at graduation,” as well as “help standardize working methods.”

In a discussion derived from Houle (1980), Underwood and Wallace (2002: no pagination) specify formal training as one of nine “collective identity characteristics” of a profession. They also cite Harris (1993:34) who defined formal training as "formal processes for the transmission of the explanatory theories, doctrines (systems of values), applied theories, and practice theories" of a profession.

11 Instead of ‘court interpreting’ or ‘judiciary interpreting’, which refers only to the judicial setting, EC DG Interpretation (2009:9) opts for the more inclusive term ‘legal interpreting’, which covers “interpreting in all settings in the legal services, from police and customs investigations, pre-trial hearings or lawyer-client meetings, to trials, post-trial procedures, immigration hearings, […] Arrest Warrant proceedings, rogatory commissions, etc.”
Theory and practice, and their transmission, also figure in another group of characteristics of a profession, called “performance characteristics.” The four characteristics organised in this group include “mastery of theoretical knowledge” and “use of practical knowledge.” As explained by Underwood and Wallace (ibid):

> Theory and philosophy provide a guide to describe and understand the problems and circumstances of the world as they apply to the particular occupational area.
>
>A professional area should have a substantial body of knowledge and techniques that reflect the practical application of the field. Practical knowledge is the techniques and strategies, based in theoretical inquiry, that have been found useful through experience.

Professionalisation, and the training that it necessarily mandates, arises from the need for quality assurance, maintenance of performance standards, and trust in the professional's competence, which are relevant concerns in judiciary interpreting. DG Interpretation (2009:15) points out that:

> “Professions come into being where trust is required, primarily because the clients¹² are not in a position to judge for themselves the quality of service being given.”

Corsellis (2008:85) elaborates this point:

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¹² DG Interpretation (2009:15) defines an interpreter’s ‘clients’ as those who “do not speak both the languages in question.” In the courtroom, they are not just the non-English speaker but everyone – including judge, prosecutor and counsel – who speak the language of the jurisdiction but not the other language in an interpreter-mediated interaction. They too count as the interpreter’s clients.
A formal profession arises when trust has to be engendered. Where a client is not in a position to judge the quality of service at the point of delivery, more has to be known about the competence of the provider of the service. This is especially the case where potentially irreversible actions are to be taken. One would not, for example, allow a doctor to remove one’s tonsils purely on the grounds that he or she claimed to be good at the job.

Gonzalez et al (2012:106) refer to this element of quality assurance and trust as a “fiduciary responsibility” owed by judiciary interpreters to their clients (both the public and public agencies.) And in order to attain the standards required towards meeting this responsibility, “the field must offer high-quality, specialized professional training opportunities in terminology, ethics, protocol, and interpreting techniques.”

Professionals are practitioners of a body of expertise, who demand of themselves certain agreed competences and qualifications, as well as compliance with a certain code, in the interests of the clients who trust them to do a good job. Particularly where rights, freedom, property and life may be at stake, all parties who rely on the services of a judiciary interpreter need the assurances of competent, quality performance. Formal training is an effective means of transmitting and imparting the profession’s body of knowledge and expertise, so that competency standards can be applied and upheld, and clients assured.

2.4. Mentoring and Apprenticeship in Interpreter Training
Both Corsellis’ (2008:84)13 and EC DG Interpretation’s (2009:15)14 definitions of a profession include the element of sharing of “common expertise”.

While there is little doubt as to the fundamental value of formal training, to the individual, to the organisation and specifically to judiciary interpreting as a profession, alternative modes of training deserve consideration. Indeed, against a backdrop of emphasis on formal training for interpreters, particularly at university level, one finds nonetheless recognition of the in-house, on-the-job, informal training route.

As noted by Sawyer (2004:58) in regard to conference interpreting, while “there seems to be widespread agreement in the professional community of conference interpreters that graduates need to be well-equipped to work independently in the profession, […] a period of initiation into the specific demands of a given workplace is required and often provided through mentoring or other forms of in-house training.”

Indeed, mentoring and apprenticeship is a reminder of how training was in the past and how it continues to be. Sawyer (ibid:76) notes:

> Although leading interpreter education programs are situated in an academic environment, interpreter training has never truly left the realm of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship in some form was an important means of acquiring the skills and abilities necessary to interpret for centuries before the introduction of formalized training (Caminade & Pym 1998:281)15. Most

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13 Corsellis (2008:84): “A profession is a group of people who share a common expertise and who profess to a code of conduct and values that is designed to protect their clients, their body of expertise and their colleagues in their own and associated disciplines.”

14 EC DG Interpretation (2009:15): “A profession is defined as a group of people who not only share a common expertise but also ‘profess’ to a code of ethics (‘conduct’).”

15 Citation in the original
professional interpreters continue to be wary of distancing training from the apprenticeship mode, in which practical skills training takes precedence over the scholarly acquisition of abstract knowledge. […]

To put the issue in perspective, we are also reminded against misconstruing apprenticeship “as a weakness of interpreter education as an academic field, much less as evidence of a misconceived inappropriateness of situating training in the university setting.” As Sawyer points out (ibid:77):

> The need for highly developed intellectual skills and a broad education in order to interpret professionally is a received notion in the community of conference interpreters and the Interpreting Studies literature. It finds its expression, for example, in the recommendation of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) that interpreter education programs be situated on the post-graduate level.

But, more than practical skills training, mentoring and apprenticeship create an environment of collective learning – a “community of practice.” Thus, Sawyer (ibid:77) adds:

> Cognitive apprenticeship focuses on "authentic learning environments in which the cognitive demands in learning are qualitatively the same as the cognitive demands of the environment for which the instruction was preparatory" (Duffy & Cunningham 1996:184). In this event, "the emphasis is not on master-apprentice but rather on the learner as a member of a larger community of practice who, through legitimate

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16 Citation in the original
Mentoring and on-the-job training allows seasoned practitioners – senior interpreters – to share practical experience, time-tested insights and know-how with the apprentices – junior interpreters. With growing competence and confidence, the juniors themselves will soon contribute to this collective learning environment with their own experience, insights and know-how. This interactive, community-of-practice approach could potentially explain the informal on-the-job training of judiciary interpreters in Singapore.

2.5. User Satisfaction as Indicator of the Effectiveness of Training

In seeking to assess the effectiveness of the training of judiciary interpreters in the State Courts of Singapore, this study will rely on Stern’s (2012:1) approach of taking the prevalence of questioning of interpreters’ performance in court as indicator of quality. Quality of performance is then deemed to reflect the effectiveness of their underlying training.

In a study comparing interpretation services in international and domestic criminal courts, Stern (ibid) cites “[absence of] systematic criticism of interpreting” as indicative of “quality interpreting” in the international jurisdictions. By contrast, she cites the situation in the (Australian and Israeli) domestic courts where “the need to improve interpreting quality has been voiced in both journalistic and academic literature.” While interpreting is only “occasionally challenged” and its “general quality
[...] considered professional” in international courts, in the domestic courts “reports about interpreting quality have been discouraging,” including:

- “cases resulting in no conviction” due to “[un]satisfactory interpreter-mediated communication;”
- “challenges to poor interpreting [...] from the prosecution [...], defense, and judges;”
- the prosecution issuing a Statement to the court calling for “higher interpreting quality and courtroom monitoring of interpreting;” and
- “interpreters were replaced twice” in one case.

The soundness of relying on user perception as indicator of interpretation quality has indeed been called into question. Berk-Seligson (2002:202) calls it “highly flawed” to think that “the absence of objections by attorneys to interpretations of testimony is another good indication of accurate interpreting.” In the first place, such objections “cannot come from an attorney who does not understand the language of the witness.” And in the case of lay persons who “may have no comprehension of English at all,” they do not have “the ability to detect even grossly inaccurate interpretations.”

Likewise, Chiaro and Nocella (2004:281) contend that “the validity of surveys based entirely on the perception of quality by the end user is highly debatable.” They argue that, “[...] the end user, e.g., a delegate at a conference who is likely to be an expert in the subject matter at issue but unfamiliar with the language of the source text, can only partially judge the quality of the target text”

17 Italics in the original.
It is clear, however, that both criticisms hinge on the case of the monolingual user and cannot apply to a bilingual audience. Indeed, Berk-Seligson (*ibid*) acknowledges that “bilingual attorneys are capable of recognizing interpreting errors, and […] in fact they do frequently object to interpreter renditions of testimony.” Further, defendants with some degree of comprehension of English may be able “to follow a great deal of the English spoken in the courtroom” and thus may “have the capability of informing their lawyer of discrepancies between what the witness said and how the interpreter rendered it.” Elsewhere, Berk-Seligson (*ibid*:214) also highlights how “bilingual jurors sometimes intervene when they perceive mistakes in interpretations.”

Given their basis on the case of the monolingual user, the corollary of Berk-Seligson’s and Chiaro and Nocella’s arguments must be that perceptions of quality by a bilingual end-user are a compelling indicator of an interpreter’s performance.

In discussing the lack of consensus as to what is quality and “which factors influence the perception of that quality”, Kahane (2000:3) draws our attention to “what scholars agree on: that the criterion on which there is broadest consensus, namely sense consistency with [the] original message, is a hard one for listeners to judge, as they do not know both languages.” Elsewhere, DG Interpretation (2009:15) is right to point out that “[clients]¹⁸ cannot judge for themselves the quality of the work of the legal interpreter because they do not speak both the languages in question.”

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¹⁸ DG Interpretation’s (2009:15) definition of an interpreter’s ‘client’ includes everyone – even the judge, the prosecutor and counsel – who speak the language of the jurisdiction but not the other language in an interpreter-mediated interaction.
Again, it follows from both these remarks that the underlying argument cannot apply if the opposite case is true. In other words, where the listener (or client or audience) does “know both languages” and can judge sense consistency, their level of satisfaction must count as a measure of the “quality of the work of the legal interpreter.”

This question of facility in both languages is relevant to Singapore and to the State Courts. A policy of bilingualism and bilingual education since the 1960’s has produced a people who speak English and at least one local language – Malay, Chinese, or Tamil. As a result, court proceedings – in an adversarial judicial system – routinely involve judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and lay persons who understand English and at least one of the languages interpreted.

This is more likely to be the case with Chinese or Mandarin speakers, who form the majority of the population. But it is also possible with Malay speakers who form the next largest ethnic community, and with Tamil speakers who, interestingly, form a significant proportion of legal and judicial professionals in Singapore. As for lay persons, despite their dependence on the interpretation, their bilingual backgrounds may be sufficient for them “to follow a great deal of the English spoken in the courtroom” (Berk-Seligson, 2002:202) and to spot potential discrepancies in meaning transfer.

In such an environment, there is merit in taking user satisfaction as an indicator of quality and, by extension, of the effectiveness of the underlying training.
2.6. Recommended Competencies and Curriculum

By 'competence', we mean the combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and know-how necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions. This combination is recognised and legitimised by a responsible authority (institution, expert).


Competencies are among “several aspects [that] should be taken into account” in designing a curriculum for interpreter training, says DG Interpretation (2011:18). The recommended competencies “should include at least the following: language competence, intercultural competence, interpersonal skills, interpreting and translation skills, technological competence, information mining competence, professional ethics.”

Gonzalez et al (2012:106) note that “[to] assist interpreters in meeting rigorous and uniform certification standards, such as those employed in federal court, the field must offer high-quality, specialized professional training opportunities in terminology, ethics, protocol, and interpreting techniques.”

Driesen and Drummond (2011:140) note that to be certified in the United States, an interpreter “requires an in-depth knowledge of the respective working languages, complete mastery of the modes of interpreting such as consecutive (with and without notes) and simultaneous, competence in sight translation, an understanding of the legal procedural terminology as well as the application of a code of ethics.”
Gile’s (2009:8-10) four “components of Translation\(^{19}\) competence” offer another insight into the interpreter’s expected competencies. Besides a command of one’s working languages, Gile expects “sufficient knowledge” of subject matters, and “both declarative and procedural knowledge about Translation.”

Citing Anderson (latest edition 2009), Gile elaborates on what declarative and procedural knowledge means in the context of translation and interpreting.

Declarative knowledge is “the kind of knowledge which can be described in words”, including “knowledge about the marketplace, about clients, about behavioural norms governing relations between Translators and clients and between Translators and other Translators, knowledge about information sources, about tools used in Translation, about the clients’ specific expectations for each assignment etc.”

Procedural knowledge, on the other hand, is “the ability to actually perform actions,” as well as “technical skills” such as the application of “principles governing fidelity norms,” techniques for knowledge acquisition, “for language enhancement and maintenance, for problem-solving, for decision-making, for note-taking in consecutive, for simultaneous interpreting,” etc.

In the United States, the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (2011:9-15) has presented a set of Programme Content Standards for training in healthcare interpreting. The Standards advocate grouping of programme content into two areas

\(^{19}\) Capitalisation in the original. By “Translation” (with a capital T), Gile refers to the greater field covering both interpreting and translation.
– knowledge-related and skills-related – which mirror the declarative and procedural knowledge areas advocated by Gile (ibid).

Under the NCIHC Programme Content Standards, the knowledge-related content are: healthcare interpreting as a profession, language and communication, professional practice (including ethics and self-care), the health system (including concepts and terminology), culture (including the culture of biomedicine), and resources.

The interpreting skills content, on the other hand, are: message conversion (including memory skills and self-monitoring), modes of interpreting, interpreting protocols (including the role of the interpreter), cultural brokering, i.e. recognising and managing cultural conflicts, decision making, and translation in the context of interpreting.

EC DG Interpretation (2011:18) recommends that “reference […] be made to [among others] competences listed in the Final Report of the Reflection Forum on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training […],” i.e. EC DG Interpretation (2009:8). This list of recommended competences – reproduced in Appendix 8.6 – covers language proficiency, knowledge of the relevant countries and cultures, interpersonal skills and attitudes, knowledge of the legal systems, interpreting skills, and awareness and application of the Professional Code of Conduct. It represents a consensus of the opinion in the literature, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, of all the vital competencies of a judiciary interpreter.
One model that could be applied in programme design is the core curriculum recommended by EC DG Interpretation (2009:11). As an alternative to the academic Bachelor/Master route of interpreter training, the curriculum offers certain advantages that may be relevant to in-service judiciary interpreters like in the State Courts:

a) the practical and professional orientation of the curriculum makes it attractive to interpreters who may be less drawn to scholarly learning;

b) being ‘non-language specific’, the curriculum is suitable for interpreter populations, like in Singapore, that may be too small to support programmes in specific language pairs; it also means trainers can be sourced from all and not just certain language pairs;

c) designed to be offered part-time and in modules, with “people with existing professional […] commitments” in mind, the curriculum is thus suitable for interpreters like in the State Courts where manpower constraints make a full-time programme impossible.

“In summary,” as Sawyer (2004:58) concluded, “[the] goals and objectives [of an interpreter training curriculum] seem to fall into two general categories: the development of the knowledge and skills required to interpret and the development of an awareness of appropriate conduct and membership in a professional community.”

2.7. Community of Practice as a Learning Model

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of
engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope.

Wenger (2012:1)

It was “while studying apprenticeship as a learning model” in the late 1990’s that Wenger (ibid:3) and Jean Lave proposed the concepts of “situated learning” and “community of practice.”

Wenger elaborates on the concepts on the webpage wenger-trayner.com:

A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

This definition reflects the fundamentally social nature of human learning. It is very broad. It applies to a street gang, whose members learn how to survive in a hostile world, as well as a group of engineers who learn how to design better devices or a group of civil servants who seek to improve service to citizens.

In all cases, the key elements are:

The domain: members are brought together by a learning need they share (whether this shared learning need is explicit or not and whether learning is the motivation for their coming together or a by-product of it)

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20 Bold type in the original
The community: their collective learning becomes a bond among them over time (experienced in various ways and thus not a source of homogeneity)

The practice: their interactions produce resources that affect their practice (whether they engage in actual practice together or separately)

(http://wenger-trayner.com/resources/what-is-a-community-of-practice/
accessed 4 May 2014)

Elaborating on these key elements, Wenger (2012:1-2) explains that a community of practice “has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest” and that membership of the community “implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people.”

In pursuing their interest in this domain, community members “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information.” Thus they “build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.” Interacting and learning together make them a community – a community of practice.

A community of practice is also made up of practitioners, who develop “a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems – in short, a shared practice.” They accumulate this shared repertoire over time through their interactions with one another.

In its application, Wenger (2009:7) notes:
In organizations in the private and public sectors, communities of practice have provided a vehicle for peer-to-peer learning among practitioners. It enables them to develop the portfolio of capabilities necessary for the organization to achieve its mission. Communities of practice have always been there, of course. But having the concept makes the process discussable and then potentially more intentional.

Lesser and Storck (2001:836-837) highlight a number of ways in which communities of practice influence organisational performance. One of them is “decreasing the learning curve of new employees,” by making it easier for newcomers:

- to “‘get wired’ into the organizational memory;”
- to learn “the technical and cultural aspects of their new roles and responsibilities;”
- to gain “a broader perspective on their specific roles”, so as to “understand the larger context in which they perform their day-to-day tasks.”

Communities of practice “foster the development of mentor-mentee relationships” and relationships “between newer, more junior employees and established practitioners.” This allows newcomers to seek out seasoned seniors who could “provide them with insights and guide them in their career development.”

By facilitating access to organizational memory, communities of practice also prevent “reinvention of the wheel.” As Lesser and Storck (ibid:838) point out, “[perhaps] the most valuable contribution that communities of practice can make […] is the ability of members to more easily reuse existing knowledge assets.” This feature is in tune
with what Lederer (2007:18) says about formal training – that it helps “avoid would-be translators having to learn slowly by trial and error while looking for the most adequate strategies,” and offer them “shortcuts to competence.”

In the context of public service interpreting and translation (PSIT), D’Hayer (2012:243) strongly recommends adopting the community of practice as a flexible and dynamic training model for interpreters:

The concept of communities of practice allows thinking beyond the restrictive boundaries of ‘courses’ and ‘courses providers.’ One could imagine a large community of practice made of PSIT professionals within which one would find various communities of practice, some more spontaneous and intuitive than others. The first communities of practice that come to mind would be language-specific communities of practice for PSIT, or […] trainers of PSIT. When conceptualizing communities of practice, flexibility instead of rigidity comes to mind, partnership and cooperation feel natural instead of competition and isolation.
3. Method

3.1. Study Objectives

The aim of the study is to assess the effectiveness of the current informal, on-the-job training of Singapore State Courts interpreters, *inter alia* on the basis of the perceived quality of their performance, and in turn to propose a framework of formal instruction to enhance it.

The quality of the interpreters’ performance, as a reflection of the effectiveness of the underlying training, is assessed based on the level of user satisfaction with the service as perceived by the Respondents. One ambit of user satisfaction relies on Stern’s (2012:1) approach, which takes the prevalence of questioning of interpreters’ performance in court as an indicator of quality. The other measure is the degree of professional respect interpreters enjoy, again as perceived by the Respondents.

Considering the bilingual environment in which Singapore court proceedings tend to be conducted, involving bilingual judges, lawyers and prosecutors who speak both the interpreted languages, it is reasonable to take user response as an indication of the perceived quality of the interpreter’s performance.

Next, the Respondents’ opinions will be sought on the nature of interpreter training in the State Courts, and how adequately the training covers the list of recommended competencies in the literature.
Finally, the study seeks to understand the nature and extent of community-of-practice interactions among State Courts interpreters. Given their lack of access to formal training opportunities, the community of practice appears to be the primary means by which they share knowledge, learning and experience as part of an informal, on-the-job training process.

### 3.2. Study Method

The study will be based on the findings of a survey questionnaire, called Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training, to be administered on former senior court interpreters with recent work experience in the State Courts.

Owing to an unfortunate setback at the start of the survey timeline, which precluded access to serving interpreters, judges and other senior officers of the Singapore State Courts, the study depended instead on former senior interpreters who left or retired from the State Courts’ service within the last five years. Considering the very small number of interpreters who leave the service annually, this timeframe was deemed adequate to allow for a reasonable population of respondents while ensuring that insights and comments remain current and relevant.

A copy of the blank questionnaire, designed using SurveyMonkey (https://www.surveymonkey.com), is shown in Appendix 8.8 Survey Form for Former State Courts Senior Interpreters.
Five former senior interpreters agreed to take part in the survey. They met the author individually and in person, and wrote their responses or had them written out for them on a paper copy. The handwritten responses were then manually keyed into an online survey form. When data from all five Respondents had been entered, an automated analysis was run by SurveyMonkey.

The summary data and SurveyMonkey analysis results are elaborated in the next Chapter. A copy of the Survey Summary Data is shown in Appendix 8.9.
4. Study Summary Data

4.1. Survey Respondents

As discussed earlier, the survey population comprised five former staff interpreters who had recent work experience in the Singapore State Courts, having retired within the past five years.

All Respondents were Senior Interpreters – defined as those who have served for at least 20 years each. In terms of actual work experience, however, four Respondents had served 30-40 years each, while one had served 20-30 years. One Respondent added a personally-identifiable comment about his experience, and this has been blacked out in the survey summary data reproduced here in order to preserve anonymity.

As indicated earlier, all five left the service within the past five years following retirement. Two Respondents retired two to three years ago, one left one to two years ago and another less than a year ago. Considering that interpreter training practices in the State Courts have not changed significantly in recent years, the experience and insights reflected in their survey responses can be considered fresh, current and relevant.

Consistent with the lack of training opportunities, no Respondent had undergone any form of training in interpreting, save for ad hoc classes and workshops. They all held senior high school or equivalent diploma qualifications, which was the preferred entry
requirement at the time of their recruitment. Two held university degrees but these were obtained later in their working life and in disciplines other than translation or interpreting.

4.2. Survey Responses

The survey questionnaire seeks to elicit information and insights from the Respondents in three main areas:

1) the quality of court interpreting in the State Courts as reflected by:
   a) perceived prevalence of challenges against interpretation by three categories of court actors – lay persons, the Bar (including the Prosecution), and the Bench; and
   b) perceived degree of respect enjoyed by State Courts interpreters from the same categories of court actors;

2) in-house training practices and how adequately they cover the list of recommended competencies in the literature; and

3) the nature and extent of community-of-practice interactions among State Courts interpreters, through which they share knowledge, learning and experience as part of their informal, on-the-job training process.

Since the demographics have been covered in 4.1 above, the following round-up of survey summary data refers to the main questions, from Q6 onwards.
The first group of questions, Q6-Q8, aims to assess the quality of State Courts interpreters’ performance based on the perceived prevalence of challenges against interpretation, and the perceived degree of respect enjoyed, from three categories of court actors: Lay persons (accused persons and litigants), the Bar (including the Prosecution), and the Bench.

4.2.1. Prevalence of Questioning of Interpreters

Questions Q6-Q8 concern how regularly State Courts interpreters are challenged by different court actors over their interpretation.

The nature of interpretation issues that may become the subject of such a challenge is classified into three categories: Minor issue (no impact on evidence); Major issue (potential for retraction or correction); and Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement).

Response options are provided on a six-point Likert scale: Always (every day); Often (few times a week); Regularly (few times a month); Sometimes (few times a year); Rarely (once every few years); and Very Rarely or Never, as well as a No Comment option.

Table 1 shows the tabulated summary data, elaborated according to court actor.
Table 1 - Prevalence of Questioning of Interpreting Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court Actor</th>
<th>Nature of issue</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Very Rarely or Never</th>
<th>No idea</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bench</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Lay Persons**: On Minor issues, two Respondents felt that questioning of an interpreter’s performance occurs Rarely while three felt it happens Very Rarely. On Major issues, one felt it occurs Rarely while four thought it is Very Rare. Respondents were unanimous that interpreters are Very Rarely questioned by Lay Persons on a Serious issue.

2) **The Bar**: On Minor issues, three Respondents felt that questioning from the Bar does occur Sometimes, while one in each case felt that it is a Rare and a Very Rare incident. On Major issues, one in each case felt that it occurs Sometimes and Very Rarely, while three thought it Rarely happens. On Serious issues, two Respondents felt that questioning from the Bar occurs Rarely while the other three thought it is a Very Rare case.

3) **The Bench**: The pattern of responses in respect of the Bench mirrors the results for the Bar exactly. On Minor issues, three Respondents felt that Bench questioning of an interpreter’s rendition occurs Sometimes, while one in each
case felt that it is a Rare and Very Rare case. On Major issues, one in each case felt that it occurs Sometimes and Very Rarely, while the other three thought it Rarely happens. On Serious issues, two Respondents thought interpreters are Rarely challenged by the Bench and three thought challenges are Very Rare.

4.2.2. Perceived Degree of Respect

The second question, Q9, concerns the perceived degree of respect interpreters enjoy from the same three categories of court actors. The response options are: Almost nil; Some respect; Quite a bit; and A lot, as well as No idea/No comment.

Table 2 – Perceived Degree of Respect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court Actor</th>
<th>Almost nil</th>
<th>Some respect</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>No idea</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bench</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two Respondents felt that interpreters enjoy Quite a bit of respect from Lay Persons, while three perceived A lot of respect from them. When it comes to the Bar, four Respondents felt there was Quite a bit of respect, while one perceived A lot of respect. Respondents were unanimous that State Courts interpreters enjoy Quite a bit of professional respect from the Bench.
4.2.3. Expected Competencies

In this second group of questions, Q10-Q12, Respondents were asked for their perceptions as to the competencies vital for judiciary interpreting, the form of training received, and how competent they believe State Courts interpreters are in each of the competency areas.

Under Q10, Respondents gave their opinion on the importance of seven possible competencies. Selected according to the recommendations of the Final Report of the Reflection Forum on Multilingualism and Interpreter Training (EC DG Interpretation 2009:8, discussed under Chapter 2.6), the proposed competencies are: Theoretical Knowledge of Interpretation, Interpretation Skills, Proficiency and Cultural Knowledge in English and the Other Language, General and Domain Knowledge, Court Procedure, and Interpreter Ethics and Performance Standards.

In each case, Respondents were asked if they thought the respective competency is: Required; Useful to have; or Not needed; or otherwise if they have no comment. They were also asked to propose other competencies they thought might be necessary or vital for interpreters.
Table 3 – Required Competencies for Interpreters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Not necessary</th>
<th>Useful to have</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>No idea</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical knowledge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other language</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Domain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Procedure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics &amp; Standards</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were unanimous that three competencies are essential for State Courts interpreters: Interpretation Skills; Proficiency in English language and culture; Proficiency in the other language and culture; and Knowledge of court procedure.

In addition, two competencies (General and domain knowledge and Knowledge of ethics and performance standards) were deemed required by a strong majority of four out of five Respondents in each case, with the other Respondent opting for Useful to have.

Three Respondents considered Theoretical Knowledge of Interpreting useful to have, while two thought it is a required competency.

One Respondent proposed Public Speaking as an additional competency which he felt is between useful and required.
4.2.4. Training Methods

The question on training methods, Q11, allows multiple answers, i.e. Respondents can indicate more than one training method for each competency. Table 4 is elaborated according to training method.

Table 4 - Training methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
<th>Regular classroom</th>
<th>Learning interactions</th>
<th>Workshops</th>
<th>Self-Instruction</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>No idea</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting Skills</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Domain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Procedure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics &amp; Standards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Mentoring by a senior: Respondents were unanimous that State Courts interpreters acquire Interpretation skills and Knowledge of Court Procedure through Mentoring. Four Respondents out of five agreed that Mentoring is also relied upon for Knowledge of interpreter ethics. Two opted for it as a means for training in Theoretical knowledge of Interpreting, and one Respondent thought it is also used for gaining English and Other language proficiency. Respondents did not think Mentoring is used for developing General and Domain Knowledge.

2) Regular classroom instruction: Respondents were unanimous that this mode of training is used solely for developing proficiency and cultural knowledge in English and the Other language. No Respondent considered this as a training method for the other competencies.
3) **Learning by interaction with colleagues:** All Respondents agreed that this is the training mode by which Interpreters acquire four of the competencies (Interpretation skills; General and domain knowledge; Knowledge of court procedure; and Knowledge of interpreter ethics and performance standards). Four Respondents in each case also agreed it is the means for gaining the three other competencies (Theoretical knowledge of interpreting; and proficiency and cultural knowledge in English and the Other language).

4) **Occasional workshops:** Workshops were chosen by four out of five Respondents as the training method for building Interpretation skills. It was chosen by three in each case for Theoretical knowledge of interpreting and Knowledge of Ethics; and by two in each case for Proficiency in English and the Other Language; and Knowledge of Court Procedure.

5) **Self-Instruction:** Four Respondents in each case chose Self-Instruction for acquiring three competencies (Proficiency in English and the Other Language; and General and Domain knowledge). Two Respondents in each case chose it for Theoretical knowledge of interpreting, Knowledge of court procedure; and Knowledge of Ethics. And one Respondent thought it is also used for building Interpretation skills.

6) **No training at all:** One Respondent thought interpreters receive no training at all in theoretical knowledge. None of the Respondents thought there was an absence of training in respect of the other competencies.

**4.2.5. Perceived Competency Levels**

The last question, Q12, concerns perceived levels of competence among State Courts interpreters in the competencies earlier listed. The response options are:
Totally competent; Somewhat competent; Neutral; Somewhat lacking; Totally lacking; and No idea/No comment.

The results are elaborated below according to competency.

### Table 5 – Perceived Competency Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Totally competent</th>
<th>Somewhat competent</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat lacking</th>
<th>Totally lacking</th>
<th>No idea</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical knowledge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other language</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Domain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Procedure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics &amp; Standards</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Theoretical knowledge of interpreting:** Three Respondents thought State Courts interpreters are Somewhat competent in this area, while one is Neutral about the question and another felt they are Somewhat lacking.

2) **Interpretation skills:** Three Respondents felt State Courts interpreters are Totally competent in this area, while the other two felt they were Somewhat competent.

3) **English language proficiency and cultural knowledge:** With regard to English, two Respondents felt the interpreters are Totally competent while the other three felt they were Somewhat competent.

4) **Other language proficiency and cultural knowledge:** The responses are reversed for the Other language. Three Respondents felt the interpreters are Totally competent while the other two felt they are Somewhat competent.
5) **General and Domain knowledge:** Four Respondents felt interpreters are Somewhat competent, and one thought they are Totally competent in this area.

6) **Knowledge of Court Procedure:** The situation is reversed here, with four Respondents saying interpreters are Totally competent while one thought they are Somewhat competent in Court procedure.

7) **Knowledge of Ethics and Performance Standards:** Three Respondents believed interpreters are Totally Competent while two reckoned they are Somewhat competent in this area.

None of the Respondents believed State Courts interpreters are totally lacking in the competencies listed. One Respondent brought up an additional competency – public-speaking – which he felt is useful to have. He did not, however, assign the level of competency he perceived in this aspect among State Courts interpreters.

### 4.2.6. Community-of-Practice Interactions

The final question in the survey, Q13, concerns Respondents’ perceptions of the nature and extent of collective learning interactions among State Courts interpreters.

The nature of interactions are categorised by subject area: Sharing the ups and downs of the day, work experiences, language and cultural knowledge, knowledge of court procedure, and knowledge of court interpreting ethics. The response options are based on frequency of interaction: Everyday, A couple of times a week, Sometimes, or Rarely or never, and otherwise No idea / No comment.
The summary data are elaborated below based on subject area of interactions.

Table 6 – Community-of-Practice Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Interaction</th>
<th>Everyday</th>
<th>Couple of times a week</th>
<th>Sometimes, not regularly</th>
<th>Rarely or never done</th>
<th>No idea</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ups and downs of day</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experiences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court procedure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Sharing the ups and downs of the day:** Four Respondents thought interpreters interact to share this everyday, and one thought they engage in it a couple of times a week.

2) **Sharing work experiences:** Three Respondents thought State Courts interpreters interact to learn from each other’s work experiences a couple of times a week, while one each thought they do so everyday and sometimes.

3) **Sharing language and cultural knowledge:** Four Respondents thought they interact a couple of times a week to share language and cultural knowledge, while one thought they do so everyday.

4) **Sharing domain knowledge and terminology:** Two Respondents in each case thought they share domain knowledge and terminology everyday and a couple of times a week, while one thought they do so sometimes.

5) **Sharing knowledge of court procedure:** Two Respondents in each case thought knowledge of court procedure is shared a couple of times a week and sometimes, while one Respondent thought it is shared everyday.
6) **Sharing knowledge of Interpreting ethics:** In a repeat of the results for court procedural knowledge, two Respondents in each case thought interpreters share knowledge of ethics a couple of times a week and sometimes, while one Respondent thought they do this everyday.

No Respondent thought collective learning interactions were rarely or never done.

### 4.3. Respondents’ Comments

In addition to the required answers, Respondents were also asked to add comments to each question, and for the most part they did. The comments are reproduced below under the respective survey questions.

#### 4.3.1. Prevalence of Questioning of Interpreters

Four Respondents added comments to each question, Q6-Q8, in this group.

Regarding the prevalence of questioning by lay persons, under Q6, they wrote:

1) “never heard this happened"

2) “I have never heard of any problems raised by lay persons against the interpreter.”

3) “I have not heard lay persons raise an issue about the interpretation. Which is understandable, because they don’t know English very well.”

4) “the public generally have a lot of respect for interpreters”
With regard to questioning from the Bar, Q7 drew the following comments:

1) “lawyers do sometimes question the interpretation, but I’ve never heard of lawyer asking for interpreter to be replaced”
2) “Interpreters must make their interpreting decisions confidently, so that they can explain themselves when questioned.”
3) “Lawyers can be more critical because they have to fight for their clients. They will use their knowledge of both languages to monitor the interpretation and question it if they can.”
4) “It rarely happens, but when it does, the Judge would usually defer to the interpreter’s opinion of the correct translation.”

As for questioning from the Bench, under Q8, the four comments were:

1) “judges also very rarely have the interpreter replaced, but do sometimes ask if the interpretation could be put a different way. sometimes it’s because their understanding of the language is at surface level only”
2) “Cases of interpreter being replaced are very rare.”
3) “Some judges are quite impatient with some interpreters, not all, but even then I can recall only one or two cases of interpreter being replaced at the judge’s request, in all my years there.”
4) “I recall only a few instances when judges questioned the interpretation on a major point. Case[s] of interpreter being replaced by the judge are rarer still.”

4.3.2. Perceived Degree of Respect
The last question here is Q9, about the degree of respect enjoyed from the three categories of court actors. Four Respondents wrote:

1) “generally I think there is a lot of respect for interpreters, especially the senior ones”
2) “Generally I believe interpreters are well-respected for their performance in court.”
3) “We generally get a lot of respect from the Court and Lawyers, but some Judges can be impatient”
4) “Level of respect from the Bench and the Bar depends on the seniority of the people involved. The more senior interpreters tend to get a lot more respect from the more senior judges and lawyers.”

4.3.3. Expected Competencies

In this group of questions, Q10 concerns the competencies to be expected of an interpreter. Three Respondents wrote the following comments:

1) “Public-speaking skill is I think between useful and must-have. General knowledge is necessary, but certain domains may be useful to have, not so necessary”
2) “I believe English language proficiency has to be strong, since we interpret for the Court and our other language is our mother tongue.”
3) “Knowledge of court procedure must include knowledge of jargon and court language. The appropriate terminology and language must be used when interpreting into English for the court. E.g. you can’t just say...
‘sorry/excuse/pardon me, Sir’ when you need to interject, but you say ‘I beg the court’s indulgence’.

4.3.4. Training Methods

The second question, Q11, about the training received for each of the competencies, drew comments from all five Respondents:

1) “Public-speaking [training]: None at all. Interpretation theory: I don’t think we learn theory at all, but some of us take the trouble to attend conferences and read articles, so we learn from there.”

2) “We learn a lot from interactions with each other, and the knowledge is transmitted from one generation of interpreters to the next. We also learn from reading on our own; we have to keep up with current developments. In recent years workshops have been conducted occasionally on different topics.”

3) “Every junior interpreter is assigned to spend 1-2 months in each Court 26, 14, 23 (the busier courts) under supervision of a more senior interpreter, to observe and be observed.”

4) “1) Interpreters are encouraged to sign up for professional development short courses at Civil Service [College] e.g. in IT skills, handling of difficult clients, etc. 2) Also sent for occasional attachments to expose them to interpreting at other agencies, e.g. Parliament, Shariah (Islamic) Court, etc.”

5) “What we mean by theoretical knowledge is knowing how to interpret. We learn to interpret faithfully – not literally but according to the context. We learn that we must use the appropriate terms and language. Even if [we] speak well, but the language is not appropriate for the person, the interpretation will not work. If
necessary, we have to go all the way down to his/her lingo and all the way up to the Court's English.”

4.3.5. Perceived Competency Levels

The final question in this group, Q12, about how competent State Courts interpreters are in the respective competencies, attracted three comments:

1) “Public-speaking: this is a useful skill but not everyone realise it. Theoretical knowledge: we have some idea but not enough. The other skills, I believe we are competent enough, but there’s room for improvement”

2) “I think on average we are all quite competent in interpreting skills, language, general and domain knowledge, etc. I don’t think I can say we are fully competent, though. As for theoretical knowledge, I’m unable to comment because we don’t really know that much.”

3) “English here means English as used in Singapore. Interpreters are not expected to speak Queen’s English, and lawyers and judges understand this. For Ethics and Performance Standards, punctuality and professional appearance is very important.”

4.3.6. Community-of-Practice Interactions

There were four comments in response to Q13, about the way State Courts interpreters interact with one another in a community of practice:

1) “We don’t do this everyday, partly because we’re too busy and partly because maybe no new problem to discuss. But this is how all of us learnt the job over
the years, junior will ask seniors, seniors share experience, anecdotes, frustrations, ideas and give tips"

2) “General interactions about the ups and downs of the day, I believe we do that everyday of course. But sharing of court procedure, ethics etc, probably not so often because after a while there aren’t a lot of new issues to share except for juniors.”

3) “yes, I think this is exactly what we do and how we all learn from each other. Sometimes maybe too busy but some will still talk and share.”

4) “I don’t think we have time to do this everyday, but over the span of one week there will be breaks between work when we interact and ask each other for opinions and tips. In fact, aside from actual court work, much of our learning is done in this way. Individually, we also engage in self-reflection, and I think we probably do this a number of times a week at the end of the day or the morning. We reflect on the choices we made, and learn from them so that we can do better next time.”
4.3.7. Final Comments on Competency and Training

At the end of the survey, Q14 asked Respondents for concluding remarks on the training and competency of State Courts interpreters. Three responded with the following:

1) “Having attended translation conferences, I think we are lacking in foundations of interpreting, i.e. the basic knowledge about interpretation so that we know what it's all about. Overall we are doing a good job. We are always mindful of the Interpreter's Oath, which says to ‘faithfully interpret to the best of my knowledge, skill and ability and without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.’ Which means always do our job with integrity, don’t take sides, and use our best abilities and knowledge. The on-the-job training has been basically the same since I first started – mentoring, observing seniors, start with simple cases, move on to harder cases, and so on. There should be some improvements.”

2) “One difficulty we have is with Judges who have their own understanding of the interpreter's role in court. Some want us to interpret very literally, others want us to intervene and help the accused express himself.”

3) “1) Especially with big cases, we have the chance to find out more about the case and prepare accordingly, in terms of information, as well mentally and physiologically. 2) Generally I think our interpreters are competent and do a good job. This is not just a paying job. They are motivated and committed to learn, to share. In the end it means job satisfaction.”
4.3.8. Other Comments

In a comment to Q3 on length of service, one Respondent inserted some personally identifiable information regarding his experience. For the sake of anonymity, this has been ignored here and blacked out in the copy of the Summary Data shown in Appendix 8.9.

For Q4, highest level of educational qualification, one Respondent wrote: “I got my degree after many years of working.” Another commented that “Like everyone in my time, I was also tested at equivalent to 1st Year University level in English and the other language. We have to pass these examinations in order to be ‘certificated’ interpreters. My Degree was obtained while I was working as an interpreter.”

No comments were added in response to Q1 (last position held in the State Courts), Q2 (when retired from the Interpreting Service), and Q5 (any formal training in Court Interpreting).
5. Results and Discussion

Overall, the survey summary data presents a positive picture of the State Courts’ staff judiciary interpreters, albeit from their own perspective. Surveyed independently of one another, and each looking back to a career lasting on average about 30 years, the Respondents were almost unanimous and emphatic that State Courts interpreters generally enjoy the confidence and respect of their audience – not just ordinary court users, but also lawyers and judges.

Respondents were also emphatic that State Courts interpreters primarily rely on informal learning interactions with one another – a community of practice – as their means of training. The only form of formal training they have are language classes for one out of two grades of interpreters.

5.1. Prevalence of Questioning of Interpreters

Where the audience does “speak both the languages in question” (DG Interpretation, 2009:15) and is capable, at least to a degree, of judging “sense consistency with [the] original message” (Kahane, 2000:3), their response to the interpretation is a compelling measure of the quality of the interpreter’s performance. In the State Courts, over a span of several decades, the incidence of an interpretation being challenged by a (bilingual) judge or lawyer, on a matter serious enough to warrant interpreter replacement, is so low that Respondents had a hard time recalling one. This finding is consistent with an absence of “systematic criticism of interpreting,” Stern’s (2012:1) indicator of the quality of interpreting performance.
The finding also bears comparison with the situation in Malaysia where\textsuperscript{21}, as noted by Ibrahim and Bell (2003:217):

Interpreters – unqualified and untrained – are vulnerable to criticisms from both sides (the Bar and the Bench), challenged by witnesses and lawyers alike, admonished in open court by their superiors (who are professionally trained and command a much higher salary) and sometimes faced with accusations of corruption and partiality. Small wonder, then, that disaffection is rife in the service.

In the survey’s first set of questions, Q6-Q8, Respondents were unanimous that Lay Persons very rarely or never challenge an interpreter on a serious issue. Indeed, overall, the Respondents perceive challenges from Lay Persons occurring rarely or very rarely in all categories of issues. This is natural, as one Respondent commented, because Lay Persons “don’t know English very well” and thus depend on interpreters to help them follow the proceedings and put their points across.

The responses were more divided with regard to challenges from the Bar and the Bench. Interestingly, responses for the Bar and the Bench were in exactly the same proportions in all three categories of errors. For both Bar and Bench, Respondents thought that challenges against the interpretation on a serious issue occur rarely or very rarely. With regard to challenges on a major issue from both court actors, responses were somewhat divided, with one Respondent in each case saying they happen sometimes and very rarely or never, and three saying they rarely happen.

\textsuperscript{21} Malaysia has a similar legal system, similarly bilingual population, and shares common roots with Singapore in the field of court interpreting.
And again three Respondents in each case felt that challenges from the Bar and the Bench occur sometimes on a minor issue, versus one Respondent each who felt they are rare and very rare.

Comments from Respondents indicate what they think are the reasons behind this pattern of user response from the Bar and the Bench. They noted that “lawyers can be more critical because they have to fight for their clients,” and that “some judges are quite impatient with some interpreters, not all.” Lawyers and judges also leverage on their own bilingual competency “to monitor the interpretation and question it if they can,” as well as “ask if the interpretation could be put a different way,” even if “their understanding of the language is at surface level only.”

But Respondents were in general agreement on one point, that cases of an interpreter being challenged on a matter of interpretation serious enough to warrant interpreter replacement are rare or very rare. Indeed, four of the five Respondents made comments to this effect in addition to the obligatory questionnaire responses. One wrote that he has “never heard of lawyer asking for interpreter to be replaced,” while another noted that “the Judge would usually defer to the interpreter’s opinion of the correct translation.” And while “some judges are quite impatient with some interpreters,” a Respondent remarked emphatically that “I can recall only one or two cases of interpreter being replaced at the judge’s request, in all my years there.” Another Respondent “[recalled] only a few instances when judges questioned the interpretation on a major point,” adding that “[cases] of interpreter being replaced by the judge are rarer still.”
5.2. Perceived Degree of Respect

As to the degree of respect interpreters enjoy, the majority of Respondents believe there is quite a bit of respect from all three categories of court actor – three Respondents in regard to lay persons, four in regard to the Bar, and all Respondents in regard to the Bench. Four Respondents added comments, to the effect that interpreters are “generally […] well-respected” or enjoy “a lot of respect”. Interestingly, a couple of them qualified this by saying the respect tended to depend on the seniority of the interpreter, with “the more senior interpreters [getting] a lot more respect from the more senior judges and lawyers.”

5.3. Expected Competencies

For Q10-Q12, Respondents were asked for their opinion as to the competencies vital for judiciary interpreting, as well as the training received and how competent they believe State Courts interpreters are in each competency area. Their responses highlight potential inadequacies in certain competency areas, but also the role of the community of practice as their primary training vehicle.

Specifically with regard to Q10, Respondents generally appear convinced of the importance of the listed competencies. Six of the seven competency areas received unanimous or strong votes as required competencies – four by all five and the other two by four Respondents. A lone Respondent in each case considered General and domain knowledge and Knowledge of ethics and performance standards useful to have. As three Respondents noted in comments, “general knowledge is necessary,”
“English language proficiency has to be strong, since we interpret for the Court,” and “knowledge of court procedure must include knowledge of jargon and court language.”

But what is interesting is the Respondents’ reactions to the odd-one-out among competencies – Theoretical knowledge of interpreting. The question of theoretical knowledge provoked some reflection among the Respondents, and in the end only two thought it is essential, while the other three felt it is useful to have. While no comments were made here, comments were added to subsequent questions in this regard – perhaps the issue took some time to crystallise in the Respondents’ minds.

Knowledge of theory and practice, and their transmission, count among a group of “performance characteristics” that define a profession (Underwood and Wallace, 2002: no pagination). The Respondents' reaction to Q10 suggests a possible lack of understanding among State Courts interpreters of the nature and importance of a body of formal knowledge about their profession.

5.4. Training Methods

For Q11, Respondents were asked to indicate one or more training methods used by State Courts interpreters to acquire each of the competencies.

A quick glance at the figures in Table 3 shows Respondents gravitating towards Learning by interaction with colleagues, as the principal means of training for State Courts interpreters. Learning by interaction was unanimously chosen by
Respondents as a training method for four of the seven listed competencies (Interpretation skills, General and domain knowledge, Knowledge of court procedure, and Ethics and performance standards). And it was chosen by a strong majority of four out of five Respondents for three competencies (Theoretical knowledge, and proficiency and cultural knowledge in English and in the Other language).

In contrast, Mentoring was unanimously chosen by Respondents for two competencies (Interpretation skills and Court procedure) and by four out of five Respondents for only one (Ethics and performance standards).

As expected, regular classroom instruction – formal training – is reserved by Respondents for courses in language proficiency and cultural knowledge. Under the Judiciary’s court interpreter recruitment criteria, Language Officers (recruited on a senior high school diploma and without a university degree) are deemed to require a year’s formal classroom training to boost their competency in both languages of their language pair. Respondents were emphatic that formal training is not available for other competency areas.

Interestingly, strong majority votes also went to Self-instruction for gaining English and Other language proficiency and cultural knowledge, and for acquiring General and domain knowledge. In contrast, Occasional workshops was chosen by four of five Respondents only in the area of Interpretation skills.

From another point of view, opinions were again divided on the question of how Theoretical knowledge is acquired. While four chose Learning interactions as one of
the training modes, three also voted for Occasional workshops, two each went for Mentoring and Self-instruction, and one Respondent thought there was No training at all for this competency.

Some light might be shed on this by a comment which said, “I don’t think we learn theory at all, but some of us take the trouble to attend conferences and read articles, so we learn from there.” Another comment sought to explain it by saying “what we mean by theoretical knowledge is knowing how to interpret […] we learn to interpret faithfully – not literally but according to the context […] we learn that we must use the appropriate terms and language.” To Q12, a Respondent said “we have some idea [of theory] but not enough,” while another said “we don’t really know that much.”

5.5. Perceived Competency Levels

Table 5 on Perceived Competency Levels shows Responses concentrated on two of the choices, Totally competent and Somewhat competent, in all but one of the listed competencies. The only exception is Theoretical knowledge, for which the responses were spread between Somewhat competent, Neutral, and Somewhat lacking.

In their comments, two Respondents remarked that “we are competent enough, but there’s room for improvement,” and that “on average we are all quite competent in interpreting skills, language, general and domain knowledge, etc [but] I don’t think I can say we are fully competent.” One Respondent thought it relevant to qualify the rating for English proficiency by saying that State Courts interpreters are proficient in
English “as used in Singapore,” and that they “are not expected to speak Queen’s English.”

5.6. Community-of-Practice Interactions

In the previous set of questions, Respondents were emphatic that their competencies are primarily gained or developed through learning interactions with one another.

For Q13, however, Respondents qualified their remarks by saying the interactions do not occur on a daily basis, except when sharing the ups and downs of the day. Due to their busy schedule, most of their learning interactions occur a couple of times a week, when interpreters share mainly linguistic and cultural knowledge of English and the other language, Work experiences, and to a lesser degree Domain knowledge, Knowledge of Court procedure, and Ethics and performance standards.

As one Respondent noted, “I don’t think we have time to do this everyday, but over the span of one week there will be breaks between work when we interact and ask each other for opinions and tips – aside from actual court work, much of our learning is done in this way.” Another said “We don’t do this everyday, […] but this is how all of us learnt the job over the years […].” Yet another said, “Yes, I think this is exactly what we do and how we all learn from each other.”

Overall, the responses to this question nonetheless indicate a fairly active community of practice, which can be leveraged as part of an enhanced training framework.
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The competent court interpreter preserves the civil and constitutional rights of defendants and litigants, and as such, is instrumental to the fair administration of justice. Through facilitating the fair administration of justice in the courts, the court interpreter advances the principles of social justice for language minorities. Not only do competent court interpreters facilitate clear linguistic communication, but they also bridge the considerable cultural, social, and economic divide between LEP defendants and litigants and the judicial system.

Gonzalez et al (2012:26)

While far from rigorous, the approach taken by this study – surveying the self-perceptions of five former interpreters – offers the advantage of a broad overview of the performance of the State Courts interpreting service over a time span of roughly three decades. Interviewed individually and speaking freely, the survey Respondents generally corroborated each other’s perceptions of the low incidence of challenges against interpretation and of the degree of respect they perceive from judges, lawyers and lay persons over the duration of their long experience in the State Courts.

Their emphatic responses support a conclusion that Singapore State Courts interpreters are perceived to be competent. In turn, their competence can be deemed to reflect an effective albeit informal in-house, on-the-job training process.

22 LEP = Limited English Proficiency
On the basis of these findings, this paper presents the following proposals for a training framework to enhance the current on-the-job training of State Courts interpreters.

6.1. Aims and Scope of this Paper’s Recommendations

The aim of this study is to present a set of viable and practical recommendations that could enhance the current training regime in the State Courts. It is not the aim of this paper to design a training programme, but to recommend a feasible framework within which a detailed programme could be developed. To be feasible, the framework must take into account the realities and constraints under which State Courts interpreters work.

The State Courts interpreting service is constrained primarily by a tight manpower situation. It means that no significant number of staff interpreters can be released from duty to undergo training for any meaningful length of time. As full-time staff of the Judiciary, State Courts interpreters work a nine-hour day, five days a week, with additional deployments on alternate Saturdays and some evenings a month (in the so-called Night Courts). These work conditions preclude even short-term and weekly formal training programmes, as well as modular ones like the model programme recommended by EC DG Interpretation (2009:11).

On the other hand, the current training system is well-established and has proven itself as reflected by the survey findings. The current system features the following training modes:
• formal classes for newly-recruited Language Officers;
• informal on-the-job training, comprising mentoring and a community of practice;
• continuing education workshops held a couple of times a year on various topics.

Rather than attempt another training paradigm, the proposed training framework should take advantage of these features, and preserve and build upon them. This approach will find easier approval and acceptance by the State Courts and the interpreters themselves.

With these considerations in mind, the paper proposes a training framework built upon three strategies:

- Strategy 1: expand the scope of existing mandatory classes for newly-recruited interpreters;
- Strategy 2: enhance the current on-the-job training by giving it structure; and
- Strategy 3: equip a core group of interpreters to take the lead in the enhanced on-the-job training.

While no particular sequence is intended, the core group of interpreters who will lead the training of their colleagues will first need to be trained themselves in order to take on this role. Strategy 1 can be implemented right away.

6.2 Strategy 1: Expand the Scope of Mandatory Classes for New Recruits

The first strategy, targetted at newly-recruited interpreters, will leverage on the existing scheme of mandatory language classes. The scheme will be expanded to
cover other competencies beside languages, and be made mandatory for all new recruits, both Language Executives and Language Officers.

Currently, these half-day, twice-weekly classes are conducted at the Civil Service College (a college for the training of Singapore civil servants - www.cscollege.gov.sg). They typically run for about one and a half years, yielding some 500 training hours. The scheme could be reconstituted to offer the following competencies:

Module 1: Introduction and Theories of Interpreting; Professional Ethics and Performance Standards

Module 2: Interpreting Skills: consecutive without note-taking, sight translation, whispered simultaneous

Module 3: Language and Cultural Competence: classes to enhance language and cultural competence in English and the Other Language

Module 1 will provide new recruits with the formal, declarative knowledge of interpreting that will form the foundation for the skills they will be acquiring, and familiarise them with the standards of professional conduct and performance that all members of the profession are expected to uphold.

Module 2 will equip them with the skills they will need for court interpreting. In the classroom, they can focus on developing these new skills away from the distractions of court duties. They can then see how the skills are applied in the natural context of the courtroom on the days when they return to work.
Module 3 will raise the language and cultural competency of all newly-recruited interpreters. Currently, only Language Officer-grade interpreters are deemed to require training in this area.

While this strategy is currently targetted at newly-recruited interpreters, over time, as new recruits replace more senior colleagues, the Language Department will gradually be filled with formal-trained interpreters. In its implementation, including sourcing the faculty, the strategy calls for the State Courts to work with the Civil Service College.

6.3. Strategy 2: Enhance the Current On-the-Job Training with Structure

The second strategy, targetted at the general community of State Courts interpreters, will build upon the current informal on-the-job training and enhance it with structure.

The current on-the-job training is well-established, and all the current interpreters in the State Courts were trained in this way. Comprising informal mentoring and a community of practice, this training process has proven itself and adjusted to the manpower and time constraints of the interpreting service.

By riding on the current system, the enhanced training framework can remain within these constraints even as structure is introduced. Interpreters can benefit from a more deliberate community of practice in the natural context of the State Courts, and gain or reinforce their competencies without the extra man-hours that would have been necessary in a formal programme.
Structure will be introduced with set training objectives, progress milestones and an evaluation and feedback process in the mentoring activities, and a set agenda for the community of practice. In conjunction with this, Strategy 3 will train the mentors and a core group of community-of-practice leads.

A set agenda will see the community of practice going through its paces in a more organised and effective manner. Participants will take turns to research, present and contribute to topics such as the following:

- Interpreting as a profession; Theories of Interpreting; Court Interpreting issues; Professional Ethics and Performance Standards
- Aspects of Legal & Judicial System: aspects of criminal and civil law; judicial structures and personnel, trial procedure; legal terminology; legal language and register
- Domain knowledge and terminology, e.g. narcotics, medical, human anatomy, traffic investigation, in both languages
- Culture of English and the Other Language; Current Trends

Some of the topics, like interpreting theories and professional ethics, may be unfamiliar to State Courts interpreters, or they may feel they lack the expertise to discuss them. But the point of the community of practice is social, collaborative learning. The community builds its body of knowledge with insights and information shared by each participant, who contributes knowledge gained either from reading, research, educational events, or personal experience. New recruits will also
contribute by sharing the knowledge they gain formally through the classes under Strategy 1.

For the community of practice to have lasting impact, however, the fruits of this collaborative learning must be codified. Notes must be taken and maintained, and a wiki introduced to preserve and grow the knowledge. This will benefit future interpreter communities and facilitate possible research.

The community of practice should also leverage on the many information technology tools now available. Beside the wiki, the use of e-groups and social media and online broadcast communication apps such as Facebook, Skype and Whatsapp should be explored. Discussions could also be digitally recorded, and the recordings uploaded to the cloud through services such as Vimeo and Youtube. This way, participants could always access and contribute to the learnings, anytime and anywhere.

6.4. Strategy 3: Equip a Core Group of Interpreters to Lead the Training

The third strategy under the proposed training framework is to equip a core group of more senior and seasoned interpreters to lead, manage and nurture the mentoring and community-of-practice activities. Special training workshops will need to be organised for this purpose, covering topics such as the following.

Module 1: Community of Practice: introduction and rationale, managing, developing and nurturing a community of practice, community dynamics, use of technology
Module 2: Structured Mentoring: setting goals and progress milestones; monitoring and the feedback process

Initially, external faculty may need to be sourced to facilitate these workshops. Eventually, however, the core group of interpreters should possess sufficient expertise to lead the training, and in turn to share it within the community of practice.

6.5. Concluding Remarks

While a more rigorous survey could have been conducted to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the current training of staff interpreters in the State Courts, this study offers the advantage of a quick assessment based on three decades of Respondent experience. The findings strongly suggest an effective albeit informal and unstructured on-the-job training.

On the basis of these broad findings, the study has proposed preserving the current training while introducing a structure to enhance it. The study also recommends empowering a core group of interpreters to take charge of the enhanced training, codifying accumulated knowledge for the benefit of future training and research, and leveraging technology.

The proposed enhanced framework aims to bring improvements to the training of the judiciary interpreters by taking advantage of existing processes while observing current realities and constraints. However, the proposed framework does not have to be the only response to the training needs of State Courts interpreters. The hope is
that direct experience in a more structured and better organised training process, and
the window that it will open to the worldwide field of interpreter training, will trigger a
deeper re-thinking of training policies.

It would be most laudable if such a fundamental review leads to manpower
deployment considerations being aligned with, rather than allowed to sideline, the
training imperatives of Singapore State Courts interpreters.
7. References


Supreme Court. 2006. *Hall of Justice*. Singapore: Supreme Court


8. Appendices


Total Population 5.47m

- Citizens 3.34m
- PRs 0.53m
- Residents 3.87m
- Non-Residents 1.60m

Source: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Manpower

\[\text{8. The figures are based on stock numbers as of end June 2014.} \]
\[\text{Work Permit Holders are mostly in occupations which face difficulties in hiring Singaporeans (e.g. construction workers).} \]
\[\text{S Pass holders work in various industries such as retail, manufacturing, and healthcare (e.g. allied healthcare workers), as well as in social and voluntary welfare sectors as care-givers for the elderly.} \]
\[\text{Employment Pass Holders work in managerial, executive or specialised jobs.} \]
8.2. Organisation Chart of the State Courts of Singapore

(State Courts, 2014a:8)
### Case Load and Statistics

#### Case Load Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Load Profile</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal Justice Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal and Departmental/Statutory Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Charges</td>
<td>58,992</td>
<td>60,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental/Statutory Board Charges and Summons</td>
<td>128,587</td>
<td>114,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Charges and Summons</td>
<td>67,548</td>
<td>72,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coroner’s Court Cases</td>
<td>4,172</td>
<td>4,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magistrate’s Complaints</td>
<td>3,037</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civil Justice Division</strong></td>
<td>73,793</td>
<td>66,480</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originating Processes</td>
<td>42,490</td>
<td>37,650</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writs of Summons (DC &amp; MC)</td>
<td>37,944</td>
<td>32,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originating Summons</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>450</td>
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<td>Probate</td>
<td>4,022</td>
<td>4,400</td>
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<td><strong>Interlocutory Applications</strong></td>
<td>15,074</td>
<td>14,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summons*</td>
<td>10,344</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<td>Summons for Directions (O.25/37)</td>
<td>4,289</td>
<td>3,800</td>
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<td>Summary Judgment (O.14)</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>380</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment of Damages</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Small Claims Tribunals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Claims</td>
<td>13,434</td>
<td>11,900</td>
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(State Courts, 2014a:54)
State Courts Case Load Statistics 2013 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASELOAD PROFILE</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013&lt;sup&gt;30&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY &amp; JUVENILE JUSTICE DIVISION</strong></td>
<td>24,119</td>
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<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>6,609</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh Applications</td>
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<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enforcement of Maintenance Orders</td>
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<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variation/Rescission/Suspension of Maintenance Orders</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>1,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enforcement of the Maintenance of Parents Tribunal Orders</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enforcement of Syariah Court Orders</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>410</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family Violence</strong></td>
<td>3,347</td>
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<td>Fresh Applications for Personal Protection Order (PPO)</td>
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<td>Variation/Rescission of PPO</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breach of PPO</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Divorce</strong></td>
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<td>Divorce Writs</td>
<td>6,276</td>
<td>6,400</td>
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<td>Ancillary Matters</td>
<td>1,877</td>
<td>1,700</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>370</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originating Summons (Family)</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>530</td>
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<tr>
<td>Breach of Syariah Court Orders</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summons (Family)&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3,614</td>
<td>3,600</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Juvenile Court</strong></td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>1,340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juvenile Arrest Charges</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>1,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beyond Parental Control&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Protection Orders&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police Summons/Summons &amp; Tickets, and Other Charges</td>
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<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>360,248</td>
<td>343,760</td>
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</table>

Notes:
- Figures for 2012 were revised in 2013
- Projected figures
- Includes DAC, MAC, PBS, PS & other charges
- Excludes O.25/07
- Includes Divorce, Originating Summons (Family) and Adoption summonses
- Refers to number of juveniles

(State Courts, 2014a:55)
8.4. Sample Recruitment Ad for State Courts Language Executive

8.5. Sample Recruitment Ad for State Courts Language Officer

8.6. EC DG Interpretation’s List of Legal Interpreter Competences

Reproduced from EC DG Interpretation (2009:8), Professional Profile of the Legal Interpreter (bold type in the original):

The Reflection Forum has opted for the term ‘Legal Interpreter/Interpreting’ because it is more inclusive than e.g. ‘court interpreter’, referring to one specific setting only, or ‘sworn’ interpreter, referring to one specific stage in the profession of the legal interpreter while, on the other hand, it is not as broad as e.g. ‘Public Service Interpreter’, which also covers other domains such as health or social services. However, legal interpreting does include interpreting in all settings in the legal services, from police and customs investigations, pre-trial hearings or lawyer-client meetings, to trials, post-trial procedures, immigration hearings, European Arrest Warrant proceedings, rogatory commissions, etc.

One must not assume that even when a person masters both the languages to the level of complexity and accuracy required in the legal services, that this person can interpret. And a translator is not necessarily a good interpreter or vice versa!

A ‘Legal Interpreter’ is a trained, qualified professional providing interpreting to those involved in whatever capacity in a legal system whose language they do not speak, and who does so according to a professional
code of conduct in the interest of justice and in full awareness of good working arrangements with the legal services and other legal professionals.

To carry out this important task requires a professional profile that is built on the following competences:

**Language proficiency:**
proficient language knowledge and skills in both the language of the legal system and the foreign language. […]

**Knowledge of the relevant countries and cultures.**

**Interpersonal skills and attitudes:**
legal interpreters often deal with a great cultural and linguistic diversity of people, often in stressed and anxious circumstances, in difficult settings, thus requiring strongly founded communication and interpersonal skills.

**Knowledge of the legal systems:**
structures, procedures, legal professions, services, etc. General legal terminology and the specific terminology relevant to an assignment (e.g. family law, asylum, fraud, etc.).

**Interpreting skills:**
mastery of the various forms of interpreting (dialogue, consecutive, simultaneous, sight translation) and the appropriate supportive strategies (such as memory, note-taking, stress management, etc.).

Profound awareness, integration and application of the Professional Code of Conduct and the Guidelines to Good Practice.
8.7. EC DG Interpretation’s Recommended Curriculum

Reproduced from EC DG Interpretation (2009:11), Training (bold type in the original):

1. Curriculum in Legal Interpreting

Essentially, there seem to be two main trajectories that can offer training in legal interpreting.

There is first the academic Bachelor/Master curriculum offered in a number of higher education institutes. This has the advantage of leading to solid theoretical and practical skills and can cover the practice of legal interpreting in greater depth. Certainly a Master’s programme can meet the complexity of the diverse legal contexts and introduce the students to the more specialised fields within the legal system. The Master’s could also provide a stepping-stone for students wishing to do research and lay the foundation for the training of trainers in legal interpreting. It may also provide the basis for the pursuit of a career in other areas of interpreting, such as e.g. conference interpreting.

However, while such a higher education stream where it exists is to be commended, the reality is that it will be offered only in the main […] languages and has by necessity a wider academic remit than legal
interpreting only. It also lacks the flexibility to meet the language needs of our rapidly changing multilingual societies.

Hence a second stream seems to be needed, either side by side with the academic one or else as the sole provider of legal interpreting training [...]. This second stream could be ‘generic’, i.e. teach all the students, often representing as many as twenty or even more languages in one course, in a ‘non-language specific’ way. To do this efficiently requires advance testing, before admission into the course, of the students’ required proficiency in both the language of the country and their foreign language(s) and their aptitude for interpreting and the profession.

The training should be offered at a professional level in either academic or adult education establishments. The level of skills sought is that at First Degree or Bachelor level, though not, of course, in breadth of curriculum or length. It will usually be offered part-time, over an academic year, as almost all students are people with existing professional or domestic commitments.

Any curriculum should consist of classroom contact time (including adequate interpreting practice), observation visits and home study.

It is essential that the curriculum be taught by a multi-discipline group of tutors, consisting of both language and culture specialists, legal interpreting practitioners and legal professionals. Only such a team has
access to real-life legal situations and can emphasise the essential importance of the code of conduct.

The Forum would suggest the following core curriculum in legal interpreting:

**Module 1:** Introduction to legal interpreting and state of the art in the EU and the national practice.

**Module 2:** Resources and information.

**Module 3:** Language issues: legal language, terminology, the range of registers most commonly used in the legal contexts, oral genre-studies (e.g. interrogation, testimony, sentencing...).

**Module 4:** Knowledge of the legal system: structures, procedures, processes and personnel; knowledge of the relevant aspects of criminal and civil law, the main settings (asylum, police, court...) augmented by observation visits.

**Module 5:** Interpreting skills: dialogue, consecutive with and without note-taking, simultaneous and whispered simultaneous, sight translation. Mastery of the role of the legal interpreter (introduction, positioning, turn-taking, when and how to ask for clarification, etc.).

**Module 6:** Professional Code of Conduct and Guidelines to Good Practice (see below).

**Module 7:** Integrated practical skills through case studies, role plays, mock courts, etc.
Module 8: Professional issues: awareness of the national professional association(s), working arrangements, how to accept and prepare for assignments, potential health and safety issues, time, diary and financial management, the need for continuous professional development, etc.

[...]


8.8. Sample Survey Form for Former State Courts Senior Interpreters

Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Introduction

1 July 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently pursuing the degree of Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Interpreter Training at the Faculty of Translation & Interpreting, University of Geneva. This survey is part of a study on State Courts Interpreter training and competency, conducted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

The study seeks to assess the effectiveness of on the job training of State Courts interpreters, based on the extent of questioning of their performance in court and the degree of professional respect they enjoy, as perceived by senior interpreters like yourself.

The study also seeks to understand the nature of their training and what competencies are covered.

Based on the results of this study, I intend to propose a framework of formal instruction to enhance the current training.

Your willingness to set aside some time for this survey is truly appreciated.

Thank you!

NB. All except one question require an answer. These are marked with an asterisk (*).

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Thesis Supervisor:
Barbara Moser-Mercer (Prof)
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Switzerland
Barbara.Moser@unige.ch
Senior Interpreters' Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Questions

This survey seeks to assess Perceptions of Competency Levels and Training of State Courts Interpreters among Former Interpreters

**1. Which of the following general descriptions covers the last position you held in the Subordinate/State Courts?**

- Head Interpreter
- Senior Interpreter (more than 20 years of service)
- Interpreter

Add comment if necessary

**2. When did you leave or retire from the Interpreting service in the Subordinate/State Courts?**

- Less than 1 year ago
- 1 - 2 years ago
- 2 - 3 years ago
- 3 - 5 years ago

Add comment if necessary

**3. How long did you serve as an Interpreter in the Subordinate/State Courts (in total)?**

- 10 - 20 Years
- 20 - 30 Years
- 30 - 40 Years
- More than 40 Years

Add comment if necessary
Senior Interpreters' Perceptions of Interpreter Training

4. What is your highest level of educational qualification?
- O Level / A Level / Baccalaureate / Polytechnic Diploma or equivalent
- University Degree (Other disciplines)
- University Degree (Translation)
- University Degree (Interpreting)

Add comment if necessary.

5. Have you had any form of FORMAL training in Court Interpreting?
- None at all
- None, except ad hoc classes, workshops, etc
- Yes, longer-term courses (please describe)

6. To your knowledge, how often is an interpreter's performance in Court
QUESTIONED by LAY PERSONS (Accused, Litigants, etc) in the following categories of
error?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always (every day)</th>
<th>Often (few times a week)</th>
<th>Regularly (few times a month)</th>
<th>Sometimes (few times a year)</th>
<th>Rarely (once every few years)</th>
<th>Very Rarely or Never</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor issue (no impact on evidence)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major issue (potential for retraction or correction)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary.

7. To your knowledge, how often is an interpreter's performance in Court
QUESTIONED by the PROSECUTION or COUNSEL in the following categories of error?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always (every day)</th>
<th>Often (few times a week)</th>
<th>Regularly (few times a month)</th>
<th>Sometimes (few times a year)</th>
<th>Rarely (once every few years)</th>
<th>Very Rarely or Never</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Minor issue (no impact on evidence)</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary.
**8. To your knowledge, how often is an Interpreter’s performance in Court QUESTIONED by a JUDGE in the following categories of error?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minor issue (no impact on evidence)</th>
<th>Always (every day)</th>
<th>Often (few times a week)</th>
<th>Regularly (few times a month)</th>
<th>Sometimes (few times a year)</th>
<th>Rarely (once every few years)</th>
<th>Very Rarely or Never</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major issue (potential for retraction or correction)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary

**9. In your opinion, how much professional respect do Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters generally enjoy from the following:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Almost all</th>
<th>Some respect</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay Persons (Accused, Litigants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecution &amp; Counsel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary

**10. In your opinion, what competencies should a Court Interpreter possess?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Not needed / not necessary</th>
<th>Useful to have</th>
<th>Required / Must have</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical knowledge of Interpreting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation skills (sight translation, simultaneous whispering, consecutive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Domain knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Court Procedure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Interpreter Ethics and Performance Standards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify other competencies you believe the interpreter must have)
**11. In respect of those competencies, what form of training do Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters receive? (Please mark all that apply)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Monitoring by a Senior</th>
<th>Regular classroom instruction</th>
<th>Learning by interaction with Colleagues</th>
<th>Occasional workshops</th>
<th>Self-instruction</th>
<th>None at all</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical knowledge of Interpreting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation skills (sight translation, simultaneous-translating, consecutive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>English Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify other competencies if any and what form of training is provided):


Senior Interpreters' Perceptions of Interpreter Training

*12. How competent do you believe Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters generally are in those competencies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Totally competent</th>
<th>Somewhat competent</th>
<th>Neutral / No comment</th>
<th>Somewhat lacking</th>
<th>Totally lacking</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical knowledge of Interpreting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Court Procedure</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Knowledge of Interpreter Ethics and Performance Standards</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary
Senior Interpreters' Perceptions of Interpreter Training

13. A community of practice is defined as a group of people who engage in COLLECTIVE LEARNING. They share a concern or passion for what they do, and INTERACT regularly to share knowledge and LEARN from each other how to be better at their job.

How much do you believe Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters engage in the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Rarely or never done</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Sometimes, not regularly</th>
<th>Yes, a couple of times a week</th>
<th>Yes, everyday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE the ups and downs of the day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE work experiences in order to LEARN from them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE language and cultural knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE domain knowledge and terminology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE knowledge on court procedure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE knowledge on Court Interpreting ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary

14. Please enter in the box below any further comments you may have about the training and competency of State Courts Interpreters.

This is the end of the Questionnaire. Thank you very much for participation.
8.9. Survey Summary Data

Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q1 Which of the following general descriptions covers the last position you held in the Subordinate/State Courts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Interpreter</td>
<td>21.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Interpreter (more than 20 years of service)</td>
<td>88.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add comment if necessary
There are no responses
### Senior Interpreters' Perceptions of Interpreter Training

#### Q2 When did you leave or retire from the Interpreting service in the Subordinate/State Courts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year ago</td>
<td>20.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 years ago</td>
<td>20.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 5 years ago</td>
<td>40.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 8 years ago</td>
<td>20.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Add comment if necessary</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no responses.
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q3 How long did you serve as an Interpreter in the Subordinate/State Courts (in total)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 Years</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30 Years</td>
<td>29.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 Years</td>
<td>86.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 40 Years</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Add comments if necessary

1

Data: 7/6/2014 7:17 PM
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q4 What is your highest level of educational qualification?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCE A Level / Baccalaureate / Polytechnic Diploma or equivalent</td>
<td>60.00% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree (Other disciplines)</td>
<td>46.63% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree (Translation)</td>
<td>0.00% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree (Interpreting)</td>
<td>0.00% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Add comment if necessary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I got my degree after many years of working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Like everyone in my time, I was also taught an equivalent to 1st Year University level in English and the other language. We have to pass these examinations in order to be 'certified' interpreters. My Degree was obtained while I was working as an interpreter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Senior Interpreters' Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q8 Have you had any form of FORMAL training in Court Interpreting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None at all</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, except for classes, workshops, etc.</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, long-term course(s) (please describe)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Yes, long-term course(s) (please describe)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are no responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q6 To your knowledge, how often is an interpreter’s performance in Court QUESTIONED by LAY PERSONS (Accused, Litigants, etc) in the following categories of error?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minor issue (no impact on evidence)</th>
<th>Major issue (potential for retraction or correction)</th>
<th>Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always (every day)</td>
<td>Often (few times a week)</td>
<td>Regularly (few times a month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some times (few times a year)</td>
<td>Rarely (once every few years)</td>
<td>No (Never)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Rarely or Never</td>
<td>No answer / No comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Add comment if necessary</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>never heard this happened</td>
<td>7/2/2014 10:32 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have never heard of any problems reported by lay persons against the interpreter</td>
<td>7/7/2014 8:12 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have submitted a written complaint about the interpretation. It is not understandable, because they don’t speak English very well.</td>
<td>7/9/2014 7:51 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This public generally have a lot of respect for interpreters</td>
<td>7/6/2014 7:17 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q7: To your knowledge, how often is an Interpreter’s performance in Court QUESTIONED by the PROSECUTION or COUNSEL in the following categories of error?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Always (every day)</th>
<th>Often (few times a week)</th>
<th>Regularly (few times a month)</th>
<th>Sometimes (few times a year)</th>
<th>Rarely (once every few years)</th>
<th>Very Rarely or Never</th>
<th>No Idea / No Comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor issue (no impact on evidence)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
<td>61.50%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>26.00%</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major issue (potential for retaliation or correction)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Add comment if necessary

1. Lawyers do sometimes question the interpretation, but I’ve never heard of lawyer asking for interpreter to be replaced.
   Date: 7/2/2014 10:33 PM

2. Interpreters must make their interpreting decisions confidential, so that they can explain themselves when questioned.
   Date: 7/7/2014 8:12 AM

3. Lawyers can be more critical because they have to fight for their clients. They will use the interpreter as both an advocate for the interpretation and position if they can.
   Date: 7/5/2014 7:51 PM

4. It rarely happens, but when it does, the judge would usually defer to the interpreter’s opinion of the correct translation.
   Date: 7/6/2014 7:17 PM

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Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q8 To your knowledge, how often is an Interpreter’s performance in Court QUESTIONED by a JUDGE in the following categories of error?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Always (every day)</th>
<th>Other (few times a week)</th>
<th>Regularly (few times a month)</th>
<th>Sometime (few times a year)</th>
<th>Rarely (once every few years)</th>
<th>Very Rarely or Never</th>
<th>No Idea / No comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor issue (no impact on evidence)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>61.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>26.00%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major issue (potential for retraction or correction)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>22.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>26.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious issue (potential for interpreter replacement)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Comments:

1. Judges are very satisfied with the interpreter replacement, but no one knows if the interpretation could be put in a different way to understand the language had it been done differently.

2. Cases of interpreter having linguistic errors are very rare.

3. Some judges are quite involved with some interpreters, but if one case is not considered in all my years there.

4. I recall only a few times when judges questioned the interpretation on a major point. Cases of interpreters being replaced by the judge are rare.
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q9 In your opinion, how much professional respect do Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters generally enjoy from the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lay Persons (Assured, Litigants)</th>
<th>Some respect</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>No data / No comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepted: 5</td>
<td>Skipper: 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prosecution &amp; Counsel</th>
<th>Some respect</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>No data / No comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepted: 0</td>
<td>Skipper: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges</th>
<th>Some respect</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>No data / No comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepted: 0</td>
<td>Skipper: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

# Add comment if necessary | Date
---|---
1 | Generally, I think there is a lot of respect the interpreters, especially the senior ones. | 7/11/2014 10:30 PM
2 | Generally, I believe interpreters are well respected for their performance in court. | 7/7/2014 11:12 AM
3 | ve generally get a lot of respect from the Court and the community, but senior judges are the most important. | 7/12/2014 7:46 PM
4 | Level of respect from the Bench and the Bar depends on the seniority of the people involved. This was an interpreter to get a lot more respect from the more senior judges and lawyers. | 7/6/2014 7:17 PM

9 / 14
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q10 In your opinion, what competencies should a Court Interpreter possess?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not needed / not necessary</th>
<th>Useful to have</th>
<th>Must have</th>
<th>No need / No consent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical knowledge of interpreting</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>66.39%</td>
<td>33.61%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation skills (light translation, simultaneous interpreting, consecutive)</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>66.39%</td>
<td>33.61%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>66.39%</td>
<td>33.61%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>66.39%</td>
<td>33.61%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Domain knowledge</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
<td>73.08%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Court Procedures</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>66.39%</td>
<td>33.61%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Interpreter Ethics and Performance Standards</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
<td>73.08%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Other (please specify other competencies you believe the Interpreter must have)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Other (please specify other competencies you believe the Interpreter must have)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fluent speaking and listening between casual and formal renes. General knowledge is not necessary, but certain domains may be useful to have, not so necessary.</td>
<td>7/2/2014 10:33 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I believe English language proficiency and cultural knowledge are important in the Court and not other language in another tongue.</td>
<td>7/3/2014 8:10 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Knowledge of court procedures should include knowledge of legal court language. The appropriate terminology and language must be used when interpreting into English for the court. E.g. you can’t just say “tender your papers now, 39” when you need to interpret, but you say “I am the court interpreter”.</td>
<td>7/6/2014 7:07 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

**Q11** In respect of those competencies, what form of training do Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters receive? (Please mark all that apply)

![Chart showing various training methods]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical knowledge of interpreting</th>
<th>Teaching by a senior</th>
<th>Regular classroom instruction</th>
<th>Learning by interaction with Colleagues</th>
<th>Occasional workshop</th>
<th>Self-instruction</th>
<th>None (No response)</th>
<th>No idea (No response)</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership by a senior</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation skills (…)</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Domain knowledge</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Court Procedure</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Interpreter Ethics and Performance Standards</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Other competencies (if any and what form of training is provided)

1. Public speaking: none at all. (Interpreter theory, I don’t think we learnt theory at all, but some of us take the trouble to attend conferences and read articles, so I think from that point of view)

2. We have a lot more interactions with each other, and the knowledge/techniques that go into interpretation at the next level. We also have some reading on our own; we have to keep up with current developments. In recent years, we have conducted workshops on different topics.

3. Every junior interpreter is assigned to spend 1-2 months in each Court (English, French, Italian) to familiarize them with the Court’s rules and procedures. This helps in developing their skills and knowledge.

4. Interpreters are encouraged to sign up for professional development short courses at Civil Service e.g. IT skills, handling of difficult clients, etc. They also have the opportunity to attend training sessions conducted by other agencies e.g. Parliament, Citizens Advice Bureau, etc.

5. What we mean by theoretical knowledge is knowing how to interpret. We have to interpret faithfully and flexibly, but according to the context. We have to know the appropriate language and the necessary background knowledge for the language and the case.

---

11/14

MAS Thesis – FTI / UNIGE

Bashir Basalamah
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q12 How competent do you believe Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters generally are in these competencies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical knowledge of interpreters</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Somewhat competent</th>
<th>Neutral/No comment</th>
<th>Somewhat Inadequate</th>
<th>Totally Inadequate</th>
<th>No Idea/No Comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills (listening, simultaneously whispering, conversational)</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Language proficiency &amp; cultural knowledge</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Domain knowledge</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Court Procedure</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of interpreters’ Ethics and Performance Standards</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Add comment if necessary

1. Public speaking is a useful skill that not everyone masters. It requires knowledge: we have some ideas but not enough. The other skills, believe we are competent enough, but there is scope for improvement.

2. I think we are all quite competent in interpreting skills, language, general and domain knowledge, etc. I think we are fully competent. Although theoretical knowledge, we invite to comment because we don’t really know that much.

3. English here means English as used in Singapore. Interpreters are not expected to speak Queen’s English, and lawyers and judges understand this. For Ethics and Performance Standards, punctuality and professional appearance is very important.
Senior Interpreters’ Perceptions of Interpreter Training

Q13 A community of practice is defined as a group of people who engage in COLLECTIVE LEARNING. They share a concern or passion for what they do, and INTERACT regularly to share knowledge and LEARN from each other how to be better at their job. How much do you believe Subordinate/State Courts Interpreters engage in the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERACT with one another to SHARE the ups and downs of the day</th>
<th>Yes, exactly what we do everyday</th>
<th>Yes, a couple of times a week</th>
<th>Sometimes, not regularly</th>
<th>Rarely or never done</th>
<th>No idea / No comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE work experiences thatgehers LEARN from them</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE language and cultural knowledge</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE domain knowledge and terminology</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE knowledge on court procedures</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT with one another to SHARE knowledge on Court interpreting ethics</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Add comment if necessary

1. We don’t do this everyday, partly because we’re too busy and partly because maybe no new problem to discuss. But this is how all of us meet the job, over the years, junior colleagues, senior colleagues, experience, anecdotes, training sessions, etc.

2. General interactions about the ups and downs of the day. I believe we do that everyday of course. But sharing of common experiences, anecdotes, probably not often, because often a while there is a lot of time taken to phase except for the judiciary.

3. Yes, I think this is exactly what we do and how we all learn from each other. Sometimes we’re too busy but there will still talk and share.

4. I don’t think we have time to do this everyday, but over the span of a week there will be quite a common week when we interact and exchange stories for common events. In fact, there are actual court work, much of our training is done in this way. Additionally, we also engage in self-reflection, and I think we probably do this a number of times a week at the end of the day or the morning. We reflect in the chambers, and later in those so that we can do better next time.

7/7/2014 10:33 PM
7/7/2014 6:15 AM
7/7/2014 7:51 PM
7/7/2014 7:27 PM
Q14 Please enter in the box below any further comments you may have about the training and competency of State Courts Interpreters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Having attended translation conferences, I think we are lacking in foundations of interpreting, i.e. the basics knowledge about interpretation as that we know what it is all about. Overall, we are doing a good job. We are conscientious of the interpreters' Oath, which includes &quot;honestly, accurately, and correctly.&quot; We are also always on time, don't take odds, and use our best abilities and knowledge. The on-the-job training has been basically the same since I started: reviewing, observing senior, doing with simple cases, and so on. This should be some improvements.</td>
<td>7/2/2014 10:33 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One difficulty we have is with judges who have their own understanding of the interpreter's role in court. Some want us to interpret verbatim, others want us to summarize and help the lawyer assume himself.</td>
<td>7/6/2014 7:51 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1) Especially with big cases, we have the chance to first assist with the above and prepare accordingly, in terms of information, as well mentally and physiologically. 2) Generally, I think our interpreters are competent and do a good job. This is not just a paying job. They are motivated and committed to learn, to share, in the end if means job satisfaction.</td>
<td>7/5/2014 7:37 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>