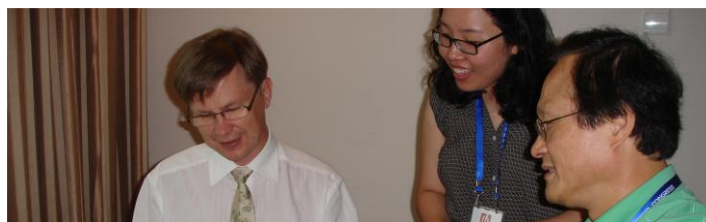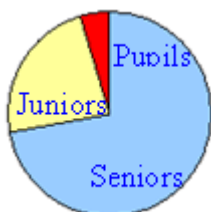# EXCELLENT RESULTS IN SPEECH CAPTURING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS PEKING

Jari Niittuinperä

The World Championship in Shorthand/Speech capturing was held in Peking, China on 17 August 2009. A total 176 competitors from 15 countries came together for the first time outside of Europe to catch a glimpse of Chinese culture and produce some of the best competition results seen in years.

Altogether, 126 of the competitors were seniors, 42 were juniors, and eight were pupils.

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

A competitor who wins one of the categories is crowned champion in the international competition. The following competitors won the international championship in Peking:

Senior category:

Erika Vicai	Graphic	Hungary	A15	11 points	463 syll/min
Wang Li	Stenotype	China	A15	8 points	412 syll/min
Armando Covello	Speech recognition	Italy	B12	43 points	419 syll/min

Junior category:

Péter Leiner	Graphic	Hungary	C3	5 points	195 syll/min
Li Jingyi	Stenotype/keyboard	China	B12	39 points	349 syll/min

Pupil category:

Wang Lu	Stenotype/keyboard	China.	A14	52 points	391 syll/min

The complete result list is available from Intersteno's home site.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

World champion titles are delivered to the competitors with the best result regardless of technology used. The competition in the senior category was tight, but in the end all the world champions came from China:
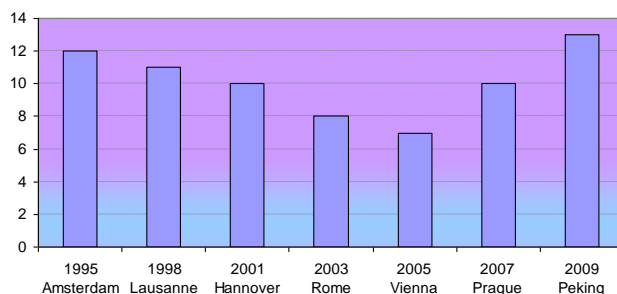

Wang Li
seniors

Li Jingyi
juniors

Wang Lu
pupils

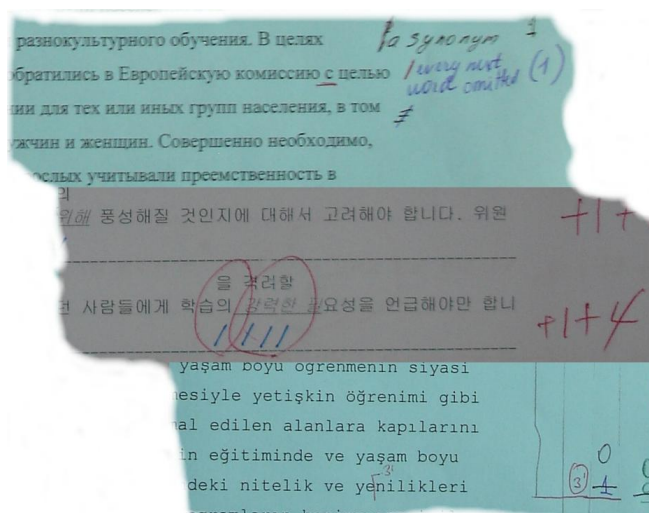## KOREAN, RUSSIAN AND TURKISH IN THE COMPETITION FOR THE FIRST TIME

When the council of Intersteno decided to have a competition in Peking, people doubted that many competitors would come from outside Asia due to high travel costs.

However, in total 13 languages were represented – the most since Amsterdam 1995. In addition, there was one person who would have liked to compete in Slovak, but the request for the text came so late that we could not arrange the translation.
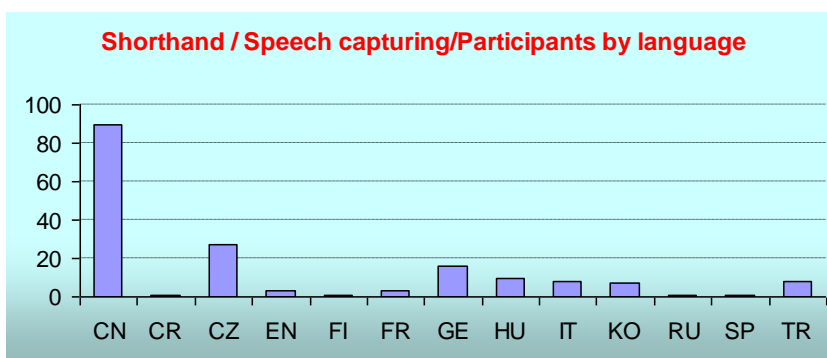
Typically, the number of participants from the host country or neighboring countries is high. Last time in Prague most competitors where Czech. In Peking about 60 % of the competitors where from China, 16 % from Czech, and 10 % from Germany.

This year we were delighted to also see competitors from Russia, Korea and Turkey. The Russian competitor achieved result B8 with only 8 penalty points, the two Koreans achieved result B8 with 20 penalty points, and the best Turkish result was C5 without penalties. For the Turkish competitor this was the best possible result, as the Turkish basic text only contained section C. As a summary, the results for the newcomers were fairly good. Congratulations to all.

The basic text was in English and all the others were translated from the basic text. All the texts are visible from Intersteno's home site.

All the translations of the competition texts were controlled beforehand, for the first time in the history of Intersteno's competitions. All language versions were again translated into English by Google and the translations were compared. Several amendments were made during this process. The translations were closer each other than ever before.
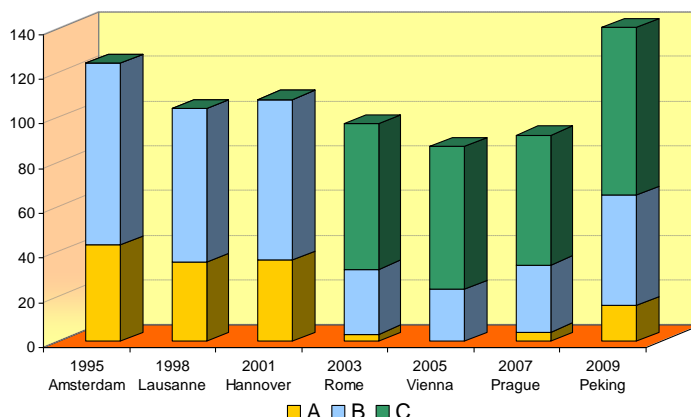
MORE AND BETTER RESULTS

The competition text should be politically neutral, without specific technical terms and words that require special knowledge on a particular theme or region. Finding a text for a speech capturing competition is a big challenge and may take time because the text is very long. And long texts tend to be specific – or at least parts of them. The final goal is to create a speech that somebody really could have made. I have normally chosen international texts
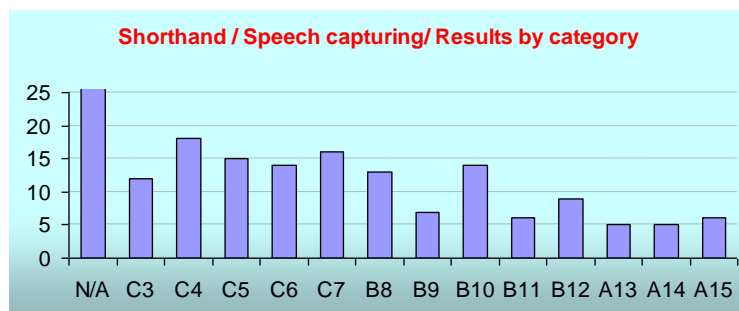
to avoid locally specific terms. However, competitors should know at least some big international bodies, like European Union, and biggest countries. This year the text was about adult education in Europe.

The results have been expressed in a different way from year to year. For comparison I have used the notation of the latest competition. For example, Hannover result A8, Vienna result B8 and Prague result B13 would have been A13 in Peking.

This year the results were excellent. In Peking we had 16 section A results, while in Prague we had 4. The last time we had as many section A results in was in Hannover, eight years ago. Hungarian Erika Vicai, who was the best of the graphic stenographers, did not consider the text to be easy.

Section C was used for the first time in Rome.

In Peking there were 168 competitors, and 133 of them were classified. The success percentage was 79,2% - the same as in Prague.

It is also remarkable that this year there were six A15 results in five languages. The highest speed was that from Croatian Josip Hanjš, at 471 syllables a minute.

ERIKA VICAI – RESULTS BY TRAINING TOGETHER

Erika Vicai was the best graphic stenographer. She was born in 1971 and has been a stenographer in the Hungarian parliament since 1990. She first studied in a secretarial school, after which she had a private teacher. Currently, she is also Hungarian champion with a result of 460 syllables a minute. She in fact got the same result (463) in this competition.

Erica Vicai has competed for a long time in Intersteno. She was the world champion in the youth category in Brussels. In the senior category her best result before Peking was fourth. She got the position both in Lausanne and Leibtzig.

All three best results in graphic shorthand were from Hungary. All of them are from the Hungarian parliament. They train together and have special trainings. One of the team at a time is responsible of preparing and dictating a text. The text can be very challenging for the stenographer: the speed may be high, the spoken language may be linguistically wrong or there are other mistakes or can be spoken in dialect. And the final outcome should be excellent language.
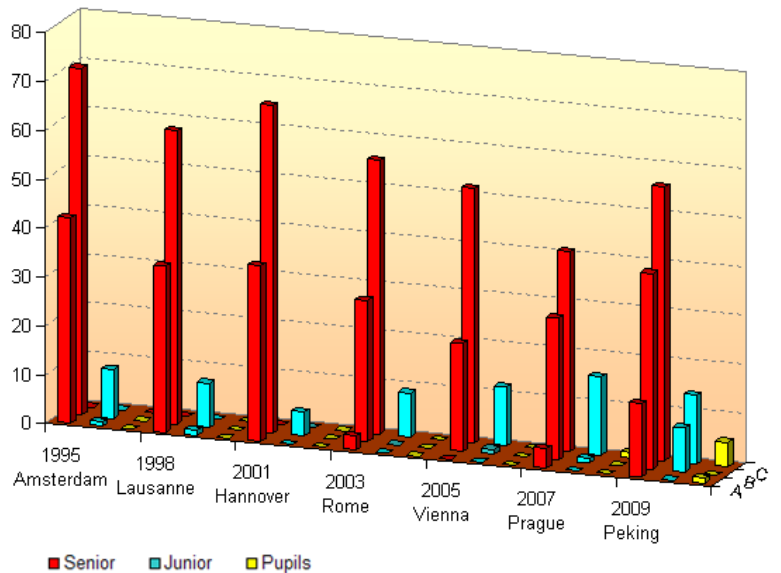
NUMBER OF PUPILS INCREASING

About 80 percent of the classified competitors were seniors.

In Prague there was for the first time a possibility to compete in a pupils' category, but there was only one participant. This year there were eight, of whom six were classified.

Czechs and Chinese have invested in youth stenographers. They have several competitors both in the junior and pupils' categories.

WANG LU - BEST SECTION A RESULT EVER IN PUPILS' CATEGORY

Chinese Wang Li was the best of all machine stenographers. However, this year I would especially like to mention the best machine stenographer in the pupil's category, Wang Lu. She achieved an excellent result in the pupils' category. Before this year, in this category there have been no results in sections section and A. Even in the junior category section A results were passed only in Amsterdam and Lausanne, but Wang Lu as a pupil succeeded to write a remarkable A14 with a speed of 391 syllables a minute.
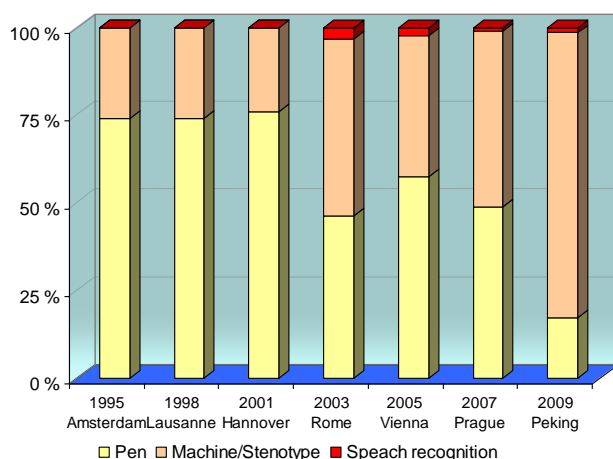

Wang Lu was born in 1997, so she is only 12 years old. She lives in Tianjin China. She started training stenotype in Tianjin Federal Training School on February 2004. So, she has practiced for more than three years. It took her about half a year to learn the system. After that she has practiced full-time.

Though her age is low, the Stenography Professional Committee of ISPSC has given Wang Lu the title of "Senior Stenographer". In China, before the Intersteno Competition, there was a trial competition. In this competition Wang Lu was the third among all competitors.

Wang Lu says that this excellent result encourages her to further develop her skills.

ALSO SPEECH RECOGNITION USED IN THE COMPETITION

As described above, from Rome competitions onward the number of senior competitors and the number of category A results has decreased. Before Rome there was a generation that competed with each other and they stopped competing for some reason after Hannover. Also, the share of graphic shorthand writers has decreased.

Also, speech recognition was used for the first time in Rome. The share of it is not very big, but anyhow they

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have been in the competitions since Rome. In Peking there was one competitor, but the result was fairly good.

ARMANDO COVELLO – NEW RECORD IN SPEECH RECOGNITION

Armando Covello was born in 1966 in Palermo, where he still lives today. He is a professional shorthand reporter and has worked in the Sicilian parliament since 1987.

Already as early as 14 years old he started to study graphic shorthand. He has won several gold medals in the National Championship of Montecatini Terme and in Pesaro.

Also, Armando Covello has competed in several World Championships in shorthand/speech capturing. Before Peking his best results were from the graphic shorthand category. Previously, world champion titles and medals were given for each section separately. He achieved second place in section B in Amsterdam and Hannover with a speech slightly above 300 syllables a minute.

In 2004 he started the first experiment with speech recognition using ViaVoice per Windows pro edition release 10 in the Sicilian parliament. The first time he used speech recognition in the real time competition was in Prague in 2007. In Peking he used speech recognition in the speech capturing competition. He managed to write B12 with 419 syllables in the last minute, better than any other beforehand with speech recognition.

Armando Covello states: "I'm very happy with my gold medal in China, but now I am thinking ahead to improving myself for new important results in speech recognition in the World Championship in Paris in 2011". – A good challenge for all competitors.

CONTROL OF TRANSLATIONS, DICTATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

In Prague for the first time we had all the dictations recorded digitally beforehand. It is not so easy to follow required speed accurately. We know from history that there have been some large deviations. Also, in live dictation if one makes an error, this can't be corrected any more. In Peking the quality of dictations was much improved compared to those in Prague, and many of them are of a professional quality. We are starting to learn the use of the recording tools.

This year the biggest change in conducting the competitions was the comparison of translations. All translations were translated by Google and a lot of fine-tuning was needed to ensure equal conditions for competitors.

Later on the corrections were also controlled. So, I am sure that we have got as equal conditions for every competitor as possible.

I want to thank the several assistants for their help during the competitions. I have not calculated the accurate number of assistants, but I estimate that you were altogether about 50 experts enabling this huge process

And I want to congratulate the competitors. Let's meet again in Paris.

Jari Niittuinperä