

CASE STUDY : Korean World Cup

Ensuring Quality Employees with Automated Language Test

The Korean Organizing Committee for the 2002 FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan was responsible for running one of the world's premier sporting events. The first Asian-hosted World Cup was expected to draw over 1.5 million attendees from around the world. The Organizing Committee had a significant amount of work to be behind the scenes to ensure that visitors received the experience they wanted. To run the event, more than 16,000 volunteer workers were needed at ticket counters, parking lots, stadiums, information kiosks, and first-aid stations. Many of these workers would need to communicate with visitors in a language other than Korean.

Need: Korean World Cup Organizing Committee Issues New Volunteer Requirement

Recognizing that English is the most commonly spoken second language worldwide, the Korean World Cup Organizing Committee determined that English would be the most useful common language for communicating with visitors from around the globe. Based on this understanding, the committee realized they needed to test the English speaking and listening skills of the event workers, so that the volunteers with the best spoken English skills would be assigned to the tasks where spoken communication with foreign visitors is most important. The Committee needed a quick, accurate way to administer and test their workers' English speaking abilities.

Challenge: Systematically Test English Speaking Skills Across Korea

To assign the appropriate workers to the most English-intensive tasks, the Committee needed a test to measure the English speaking and listening abilities of its volunteers. The challenge seemed overwhelming: the Committee had only one week to test thousands of volunteers who lived throughout Korea. They needed



quick results, but did not want to sacrifice accuracy for speed. Human rated tests were judged to be overly time consuming, too expensive and subjective.

Solution: Utilizing Automated Testing Tool Saves Time

The Organizing Committee found its solution in Versant – a fully automated, cost effective, highly accurate test that could be taken at any time from any location. Versant tests are easy to implement: a candidate takes a 15-minute test on the telephone or computer. The patented Ordinate® testing system makes thousands of measurements of the candidate's spoken responses to determine the candidate's ability to understand spoken English and speak it at a native conversational pace. Scores are available within minutes of completing the test, and are as accurate as human graders.

The Organizing Committee carried out the entire testing process in Korea over a one-week period. Local members distributed materials to volunteers at ten locations in the Republic of Korea. The tests were provided in numbered administrative batches, so that local committees could manage the distribution of test materials and carefully track the testing process. Because the test papers were printed with instructions in Korean and practice tests were made available on demand to all candidates, test administration was simple and straightforward, with minimal support required from the Versant team.

Results: Breaking Language Barriers Worldwide

With Versant, the Korean World Cup Organizing Committee was able to administer 15,000 tests to their geographically dispersed volunteers within one week. Candidates completed the calls with a minimal time investment, and the Committee did not have to spend excessive amounts of money on proctoring or human grading. The Committee felt confident that the scores they received were completely objective and accurate. The range and distribution of scores formed a clear and reliable basis for assigning volunteer workers. Following the successful use of Versant by the Korea World Cup Organizing Committee, Versant tests have been used for hiring and screening for numerous other international events including the 2002 Asian Games in Busan, South Korea and the 2005 World Expo in Aichi, Japan.

Ordinate Testing Technology

Ordinate, creator of the Versant tests, has been combined with Pearson's Knowledge Technologies group. Ordinate has been producing automated spoken language tests since 1996 and is the leader in the field. The patented Ordinate[®] automated testing system was developed to apply advanced speech recognition techniques and data collection via the telephone to the evaluation of language skills. The system includes automatic telephone reply procedures, dedicated speech recognizers, speech analyzers, databanks for digital storage of speech samples, and scoring report generators linked to the Internet.

Pearson's Versant English Test is the result of years of research in speech recognition, statistical modeling, linguistics, and testing theory. Ordinate scoring technology has been applied primarily to Pearson's own language tests, such as the Versant series, but also to customized tests. Applications of Ordinate technology include assessment of spoken English, children's reading proficiency, adult literacy assessment, and the collection and human rating of spoken language samples.



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