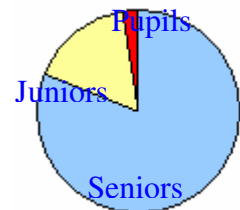




EXCELLENT RESULTS IN SPEECH CAPTURING COMPETITION IN PRAGUE

Jari Niittuimperä

World championship in shorthand/speech capturing was held 23 July 2007 in Prague. In the world championship we were able to witness for years the best results. Total 116 competitors from 12 countries enjoyed an honest competition in a friendly atmosphere. Altogether 94 of the competitors were seniors, 19 juniors and 3 pupils.



INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

A person who has won one of the available categories has won the championship of international competition. The following competitors won the international championship in Prague:

Senior category:

Josip Hanjś	Graphic	Croatia	A15	73 points	497 syll/min
Laura Brewer	Stenotype	USA	A14	26 points	391 syll/min
Attilio di Nepi	Speech recognition	Italy	B10	43 points	367 syll/min

Junior category:

Péter Leiner	Graphic	Hungary	C4	23 points	214 syll/min
Miriam Martin Garcia	Stenotype/keyboard	Spain	B10	26 points	367 syll/min

Pupil category:

Hana Belicová	Stenotype/keyboard	Cz. Rep.	C4	12 points	208 syll/min
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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 the used technology. The following competitors are the world champions:



Josip Hanjś
seniors



Miriam Martin Garcia
juniors



Hana Belicová
pupils

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

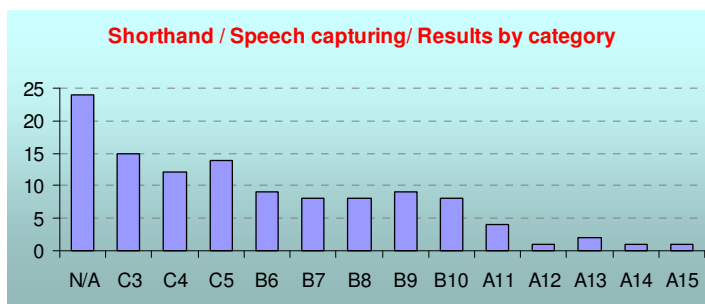
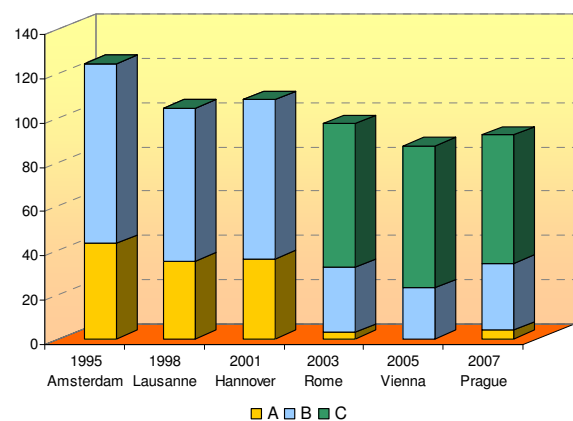
When I was asked to coordinate this competition last year, I had a mission: "To give competitors feeling of success." When I signed the certificates of the competition and as my last name is not one of the shortest ones, I for a while, but just for a while, considered if the competition text should have been much more difficult. My uppermost feeling was feeling of success.

First important step in arranging a competition is to choose a text. The text should be politically neutral, without specific technical terms and words that require a special knowledge on a specific theme or region. This choice may last weeks or even months. The text has to be long enough. Normally chosen basic text has to be modified because the final goal is to create a speech that somebody really could have made. This year the text considered different aspects of Europe's competitiveness. The text is available on Intersteno's site.

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, in Hannover result A7 and Vienna result B7 would now be A12. Below and right I will categorize results into B or A section if the competitor has succeeded three minutes of the section. So, A12 would still be B section but A13 would be in A section.

This year the results were excellent. In Prague we had four section A results, in Vienna we did not have any and in Rome three.

Section C was used first time in Rome. We may see that before Rome the number of A section results were much bigger than nowadays and also section B results are fewer. Reason for such a rapid change is not well-known.



In Prague there were 116 competitors, and 92 of them were classified. The success percentage was 79,3 % being in Vienna and Rome less than 76 %.

We gave feeling of success for quite many competitors this year.

It is also remarkable that this year the result A15 was written in Croatian and the speed followed column VI. The final

speed was 497 syllables/min which the highest possible in the competition. The competitor was Josip Hanjŝ from Croatia.

JOSIP HANJŝ - THE SENIOR WORLD CHAMPION

Josip Hanjŝ is a professional shorthand reporter. For 28 years he has used shorthand in several positions, from 1994 in the Croatian Guilds Chamber and earlier in the Croatian Radio and Television Network, in the News and Publishing Agency Vjesnik and in the Croatian Unions Association. In addition to the responsibilities in both Chambers he writes e.g. the minutes of the meetings of the Croatian Economic Chamber, the Croatian Writers Association and the Croatian Artists Association.

The minutes of the Croatian Parliament are no more based on shorthand. Josip Hanjš comments the minutes: "The quality of current minutes based on recordings is worse than during the time when the well-educated and experienced shorthand professionals had the upper hand in the business of recording the parliamentary verbal battles." He continues: "It happens that the chairmen frequently switch off the microphone while the speakers dispatch their blistering observations to their political adversaries so that much of their acrimony remains untranscribed."

He studied shorthand at the Economic School in Cakovec. Already in 1971 he won the championship in the Croatian secondary school shorthand competitions.

Josip Hanjš uses the Unified Shorthand system as accepted in Sarajevo in 1967. The system was originally designed for Serbo-Croatian, but he has constantly upgraded the system with such systems as Magdić, Škrebilin and Pišl as well as his own development ideas inspired by his everyday practice.



Josip Hanjš has attended in forty domestic competitions and seven World Championship competitions. He has achieved seven Zagreb Championships, eight Croatian Championships and two Yugoslavian Championships. The best result before Prague was in a domestic competition held in 1993 where the speed in the last minute was 460 syllables per minute. In Prague the speed was 497 syllables.

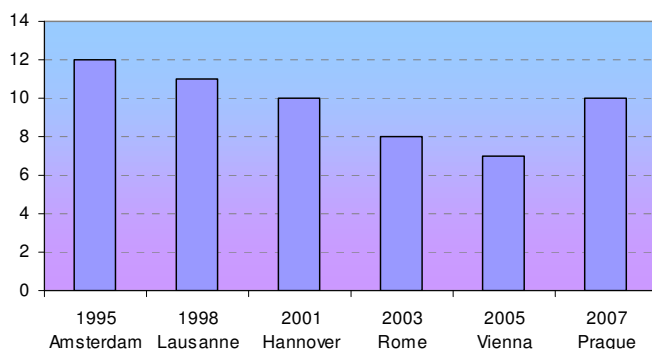
Josip Hanjš has competed between 1979 and 1995 in Belgrade, Mannheim, Sofia, Florence, Dresden and Amsterdam, the best result being the 6th place, 9 minutes (representing currently 14 minutes) and 418 syllables. Because Croatia was not member of Intersteno, Josip Hanjš did not compete in the competitions between Amsterdam and Prague.

Josip Hanjš lives in Zagreb, the capital of the Republic of Croatia. His 25-year old son Jasmin is due to get his degree in construction engineering within some months. Josip Hanjš tells: "He is absolutely disinterested in shorthand (can you imagine that!?)." His former wife Radmila is also a shorthand professional being employed as a business secretary in INA, the biggest Croatian oil company.

The above-mentioned Croatian secondary school shorthand competition and the result 200 syllables in a minute was the moment that determined the future profession of Josip Hanjš. And he recalls: "Believe me or not, I have never regretted my decision."

CHINA IN THE COMPETITION FOR THE FIRST TIME

Number of languages used in the competitions has decreased yearly. This year we reached again the level of Hannover. Competition texts were prepared for 10 languages.



The basic text was in English and all the others were translated from the basic text.

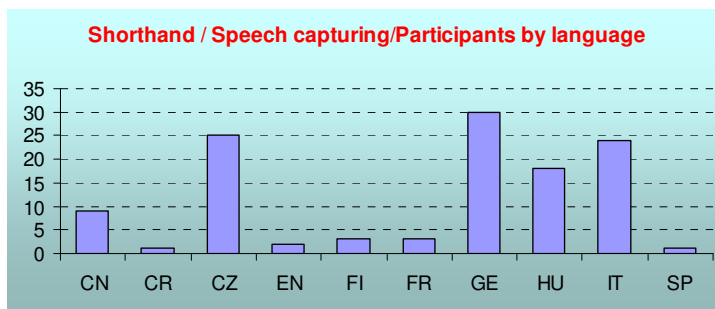
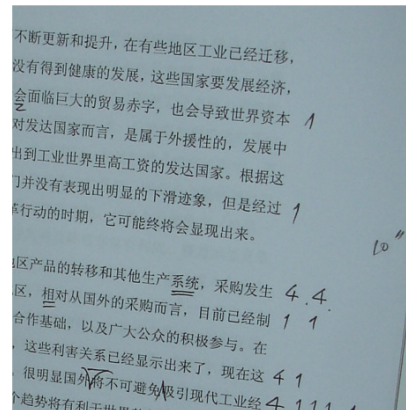
The translations of the competition texts were controlled beforehand together with Esko Latvamaa from Finland. The goal is that the texts equal each other as much as possible. Some modifications to most texts were made in cooperation with national groups. The biggest mistake was made by a national group that had unintentionally chosen a text from another competition.

The cause for the differences between the translations is most often that the speed of the texts had to follow one of the columns given in the rules. The biggest differences are in Chinese where some text was added to the end of the text because the length of the original text was below column I and in some other languages whose texts were above column VI.

Chinese was the first time ever represented in the competition. This was a challenge for the organizers. The language structure is totally different from the others. Secretary General of Beijing Stenography Association Liao Qing devoted to creating equal conditions for Chinese competitors. After discussions I had with Liao Qing, I assume that we succeeded quite well in this process.

Beforehand Chinese were worried about the speed of the dictation. Afterwards they were surprised how fast they actually were able to write. The best Chinese Fang Wang was in second position writing 13 minutes.

Beforehand Russian national group had the intention to take part in the competition, but they had short of time and decided to compete next time. Also Koreans were first interested of the competition. So, we have a possibility to increase the number of languages in the future.



From the ten languages most had chosen German. Also quite many local people took part in the competition. This is often the case as the travelling costs are not high.

NUMBER OF JUNIOR COMPETITORS INCREASING

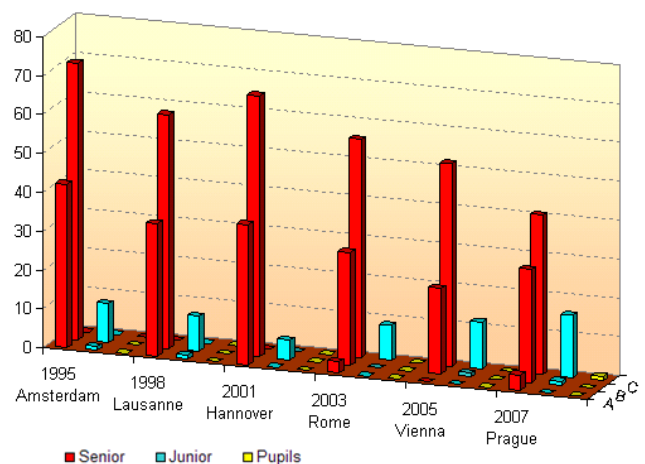
The number of junior competitors is increasing.

In Prague there was for the first time a possibility to compete in pupils category. There was only one participant but she was classified.

At the same time the number of senior competitors is decreasing, especially in sections A and B.

It is good that there are also younger participants because this is our future. I am, however, surprised that this competition does not attract so many older professionals. It gives good publicity for us.

But also in younger categories we may get excellent results. Miriam Martin Garcia is one good example of this.



MIRIAM MARTIN GARCIA - THE JUNIOR WORLD CHAMPION

Miriam Martin Garcia surprised in Prague all others but maybe not herself and her teacher. She is 20 years old and so still a junior, but would have been number 10 in senior category of stenotype/machine stenograph. This is not the only surprise. - She is also blind.

Miriam Martin Garcia says, however, that in the competitions she feels herself more equal than in other contexts of everyday life. In the competitions she only had to "listen and write" as she expresses the conditions.

Miriam Martin Garcia lives in Madrid and after the competitions she has been employed by a regional parliament Asamblea de Madrid. This is her first job. There she sometimes needs a sighted person to help her. She can move alone from one room to another without problems, but in the session hall she needs someone to walk her between the chairs to the stenographers' table. She tells that stenographing is not especially difficult for a blind person, because "the speakers often express themselves in a relatively orderly, clear and in a formal way, pretty close to that of writing". It is also normally quite easy to identify the name and the title of the speaker.

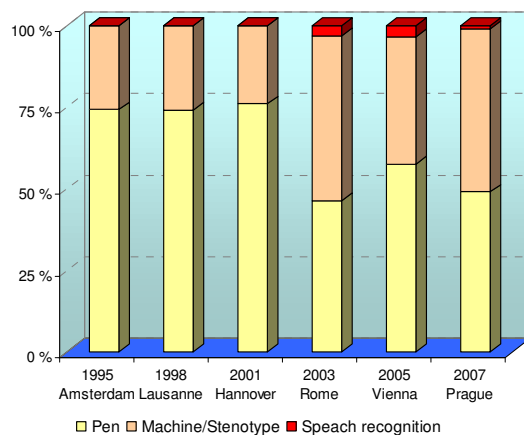


As a blind she needs a program called screenreader. She uses also JAWS for Windows (JAWS standing for "Job Access with Speech). To stenograph, she uses Melani's method with a Stentura machine and a program WinSteno Plurilingüe that recognizes her abbreviations. She started to study stenotype at Stenotype España, in Madrid, in September 2005. So, within two years she has achieved a remarkable speed. This was her first ever competition.

For Miriam Martin Garcia even the travel and the championship in general was a new experience. For her this kind of activity is very special. It allows her to be in contact with other sounds and environments in general and, over all, with other people and their experiences.

Instead of what was said in the beginning, Miriam Martin Garcia expresses: "The result was a complete surprise for me."

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 to compete for some reason after Hannover. Also the share of pen shorthandwriters has decreased.

Also speech recognition was used first time in Rome. The share of it is not very big, but anyhow they have been in the competitions since Rome. In Prague there was one competitor, but the result was fairly good.

ATTILIO DI NEPI – THE BEST IN SPEECH RECOGNITION

Attilio di Nepi is a freelance reporter from Rome. Mostly he reports in meetings of public assemblies. He has first learnt to stenotype by Michela system, but later on he turned to investigate the possibilities of speech recognition.



He uses Dragon Nuance version 9. He dictates on spot the speech of the speaker to a database of a computer. The accuracy percentage of the dictation is normally over 96 %. Of course, these errors have to be corrected

afterwards. Otherwise the reporting work is similar to other reporting, correcting the errors of the speakers and improving the style of the speech.

The best result before Prague was from Rome in 2003. Then he passed seven minutes being with speed 286 syllables per minute in third position in speech recognition category.

Attilio di Nepi states: "The results in Prague encourage me to improve my skills in this special activity."

PRELIMINARY CONTROL OF DICTATIONS

The biggest change in conducting the competitions was the use of digital recording. This was new to most national groups, but we succeeded relatively well as a whole. Some dictations were better than others, but all of them were of reasonable quality. All dictations are available from Intersteno's web site.



The organizing committee had hired very good active loudspeakers. Their quality was so good that I was surprised. I had listened all dictations from my computer loudspeaker beforehand.

In live dictation if one makes an error, this can't be corrected any more. One of the biggest errors is that the required speed has not been followed. This happens easily because the dictation is long. We know from history that that there have been even big deviations.

This time the dictations were repeated so many times that there were no mistakes. Also the speed was controlled and some adjustments were made, sometimes digitally. This was the first time as only digital recording was allowed. The result was so promising that there is no way back to the old system.

FEELING OF SUCCESS

There is a lot of work behind the competitions. The competitors have trained for a long time and there are many people who have been involved in the process before the competition. During the competition many people are involved in organizing the competition. I want to congratulate the competitors and thank all people involved.

Special thanks I would like to address to Esko Latvamaa who controlled the translations, Boris Neubauer whose experience in many languages helped to control the corrections and to make the results commensurate with each other, to Monika Disser who helped in updating the result database and to Joke Bakker who helped in many practical tasks.



I got the feeling of success. I wish that the others got the same feeling.