



Information for Candidates Preparing for CILISAT Tests

CILISAT | Community Interpreter Language and Interpreting Skills Assessment Tool



Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities

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Background of the CILISAT

The Community Interpreter Language and Interpreting Skills Assessment Tool (CILISAT) is a provincially recognized testing system that allows potential interpreters to acquire professional accreditation and certification in any of the following 44 languages and dialects:

- Albanian
- Amharic
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Burmese
- Cambodian/Khmer
- Cantonese
- Dari
- French
- Greek
- Haitian-Creole
- Hindi
- Italian
- Japanese
- Karen
- Kinyarwanda
- Korean
- Kurdish (Kurmanji)
- Kurdish (Sorani)
- Lingala
- Mandarin
- Nepali
- Oromo
- Pashto
- Persian/Farsi
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Punjabi Gurumukhi
- Punjabi Perso-Arabic
- Russian
- Serbo-Croatian
- Sinhalese
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili (Central African)
- Swahili (East African)
- Tagalog
- Tamil
- Tigrigna
- Turkish
- Twi
- Urdu
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese

The CILISAT Test Format

CILISAT tests are designed to reflect, as closely as possible, the situations in which Community Interpreters are required to work. For example, Community Interpreters are most often sent to assignments that are in the format of an interview or meeting, during which they may be required to interpret certain documents (Sight Translate). For this reason, the CILISAT measures candidates' current ability to both Sight Translate and interpret a spoken dialogue. The test is comprised of two parts, as follows:

Sight Translation Tests

A spoken translation of two written texts:

- One from English into the selected CILISAT language
- One from the selected CILISAT language into English

Dialogue Interpreting Test

A spoken translation of a recorded dialogue:

- One dialogue requiring interpretation from both the selected CILISAT language into English and from English into the selected CILISAT language, during which the candidate must switch between the two languages and interpret for both parties in turn.

To improve your chances of a good performance, practice interpreting using the television or radio or by asking friends to role play a conversation using both languages. This will help you to correct any weaknesses before taking the test.

The Testing Process

The CILISAT test is supervised by a Test Administrator who sets up the equipment, provides test materials, records tests, monitors the process, and collects your recordings for marking.

Before you Start

Before starting the testing process, the Administrator will ask you to fill in a sheet called Data Form I.

The Administrator will explain the testing process to you.

After this, the test will begin.

Sight Translation Test

For the Sight Translations, you will be presented with two texts: one in English and one in the other language (except Oromo). For each text, you will be given up to 10 minutes to prepare. It is strongly suggested that you use the full time available to you. When you are ready, you can tell the Test Administrator to start recording.

Rules Governing Sight Translations

1. You are allowed to write down brief notes or make marks on the texts while you are preparing. Full sentences are not permitted and no more than 25% of the texts' words can be written down. The Sight Translation texts, containing your rough notes, will be collected by the test Administrator when you are finished. If you have translated full sentences and/or more than 25% of the words, your test will be cancelled at this point.
2. The use of dictionaries and/or cell phones is not permitted.
3. Do not read the original text aloud before you give the translation.
4. When you are stuck on a word, try to find the closest substitute appropriate to the context instead of searching for that particular word.
5. Translate absolutely everything written on the sight translation text (dates, numbers, abbreviations, etc.).
6. To improve your chances of a good performance, practice with various texts at home to get used to the format before your test date.

After the Sight Translation Test

When you have completed both Sight Translations, your Administrator will collect the texts. These will be sent to the marker. You will be given a five-minute break before moving on to the Dialogue Interpreting test.

Dialogue Interpreting Test

For the Dialogue Interpreting test, your Administrator will play a recorded dialogue of two people speaking: one person speaks in the selected CILISAT language and the other person speaks in English. After each person finishes a statement, a blank space is allotted and you will immediately interpret his or her words into the other language. Your interpretation will be recorded.

Before the Dialogue Interpreting Test

1. If you have not taken a CILISAT test before, your Administrator will play a sample dialogue for you. This will familiarize you with the Dialogue Interpretation format.
2. The test Administrator will select, at random, one of four possible dialogues and set up the recording equipment.

During the Dialogue Interpreting Test

1. The Administrator will play the selected test recording, and shortly after, will start the recorder so that your interpreting as well as the test dialogue will be fully recorded. You are required to interpret into the other language as soon as the speaker finishes each segment and pauses. During these pauses, you will proceed with your interpretations.
2. The Dialogue Interpreting test requires that you interpret with speed in the time allotted in the blank space. In an actual face-to-face interview, you may be able to request the other party to stop for you to interpret. During the test, you will not have this option.
3. You are encouraged to continue interpreting even if you have made some mistakes, missed something, or have not been able to complete your interpretation in the time allowed. Try to concentrate on what is to come and do better with the next sentence.
4. You are encouraged to take brief notes during the Dialogue Interpreting test, especially details which are difficult for you to remember accurately like numbers, names and dates.

Marking & Standards

The marking is based on your ability to accurately convey the meaning of units of the original text or dialogue, and whether or not you omit, distort or add things or meanings that are not in the original texts or dialogue.

The test measures knowledge and ability in five major competency categories (general vocabulary, technical terms, grammar, register, and audibility/pronunciation).

Mistakes are graded according to degree of seriousness: vital points, important points, and minor points. In order to be eligible for CILISAT certification, the candidate must score 75% or higher in the two primary testing areas. If a candidate scores below 70% in any of the test components - even if the candidate achieves an overall average of 75% or better, he or she will not be eligible for certification. All CILISAT tests are graded by trained and experienced markers according to a performance matrix which identifies two distinct threshold levels of skill - with two cut scores - as follows:

- A cut score of 70% represents minimal competence for entry into interpreter training.
- A cut score of 75% represents minimal competence for eligibility for a certificate.

Each CILISAT test is marked by two trained markers – one native English speaker and one native speaker of the selected CILISAT language – working independently of each other and thereby increasing inter-rater reliability.

Raters provide additional performance-related feedback that is given to the test coordinator and may be used to provide advice on remedial measures should candidates wish to improve skills.

You can ask the Test Administrator for the approximate time when the results will be available.

Good luck with your efforts!