

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pearson Unveils New Automated Test of Spoken Arabic, Developed for U.S. Defense Language Institute

Arabic Language Assessment Developed Using Patented Speech Evaluation Technologies

PALO ALTO, Calif. – Feb. 24, 2009 – The Arabic language is spoken by more than 300 million people worldwide. As Middle Eastern nations play an increasingly important role in our global economy, Arabic speakers are in high demand in international corporations and organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank and foreign aid agencies. Today Pearson unveiled a new automated test of spoken Arabic that will allow organizations to accurately and efficiently evaluate the language skills of candidates for employment or participants in language training programs.

The automated test is the result of a Pearson development project supported in part by the U.S. Defense Language Institute (DLI) Foreign Language Center in Monterey, Calif. The new language assessment, the Versant™ Arabic Test, is now commercially available for government agencies, corporations or universities to use for evaluating spoken Arabic language skills. DLI turned to Pearson because of its proven expertise in the development of reliable and technologically advanced automated language assessments.

Test takers are measured for proficiency in sentence mastery, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation in spoken Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). The Versant Arabic Test can be taken on any landline telephone or on a computer, with no scheduling requirement, and lasts about 15 minutes. Results are available online shortly after the test is completed.

“For security, diplomacy and economic development, an increasing number of government agencies, corporations and other organizations have recognized that it is important to have employees who are fluent in Arabic,” said Jared Bernstein, chief scientist, the Knowledge Technologies group of Pearson. “The Versant test of spoken Arabic will allow DLI and other organizations to get an accurate assessment of the language abilities of employment candidates or students in language learning programs. This efficient testing method, in turn, should help fill critical workforce needs.”

The patented Ordinate® speech testing technology powers the Versant line of language assessments, which are used by organizations such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security; multinational corporations for employment screening; world sports organizations, such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) for the World Cup; the Immigration and Naturalization Service in the Netherlands; and U.S. colleges and universities, for assessing bilingual abilities of teachers. Independent studies have demonstrated that the Ordinate automated scoring system is objective and reliable, and that test scores are as accurate as the best human-rated tests, including one-on-one oral proficiency interviews.

The Versant tests were developed based on years of research in speech recognition, statistical modeling, linguistics and testing theory. Over the last 11 years, more than 45 million test items have been delivered, responded to and automatically scored for individuals from more than 100 countries around the world.

For more information about the Versant Arabic Test, visit www.VersantTest.com or email sales@pearsonkt.com.

About Pearson

The Knowledge Technologies group of Pearson creates unique technology for automated assessment of speech and text used in a variety of industry-leading products and services. These include the Versant line of automated spoken language tests built on Ordinate technology, and WriteToLearn automated written summary and essay evaluations using the Knowledge Analysis Technologies (KAT) engine.

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For more information, press only:

Adam Gaber, Pearson, 212-641-6118, adam.gaber@pearson.com
Lisa Wolfe, L. Wolfe Communications, 773-227-1049, lwolfe@lwolfe.com

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Contact Us

*To try a sample test or get
more information, contact us at:*

US: 800.211.8378
Int'l: +1 650.470.3505
sales@pearsonkt.com

Or visit us online at:
www.VersantTest.com



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