

How fair is it to deliver your exams only in English?

Steve Dept, cApStAn
John Kleeman, Questionmark & Learnosity

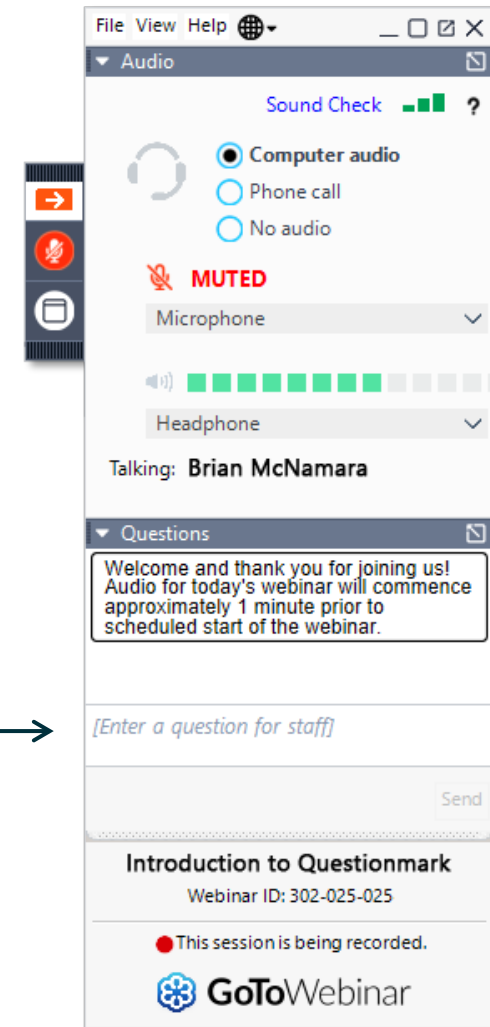


Before we get started...

Watch for an email after the webinar to:

- Download slides (PDF)
- View a recording

To ask questions, use
the "Questions" feature



| Speakers



Steve Dept

- Founder of cApStAn
- Linguist by training, but mainly a field practitioner
- 25y experience in linguistic quality assurance
- Developed translatability assessment methodology



John Kleeman

- Founder of Questionmark
- EVP at Learnosity
- 30y of experience in the assessment industry
- 2021 ATP Chairperson & current ATP Director



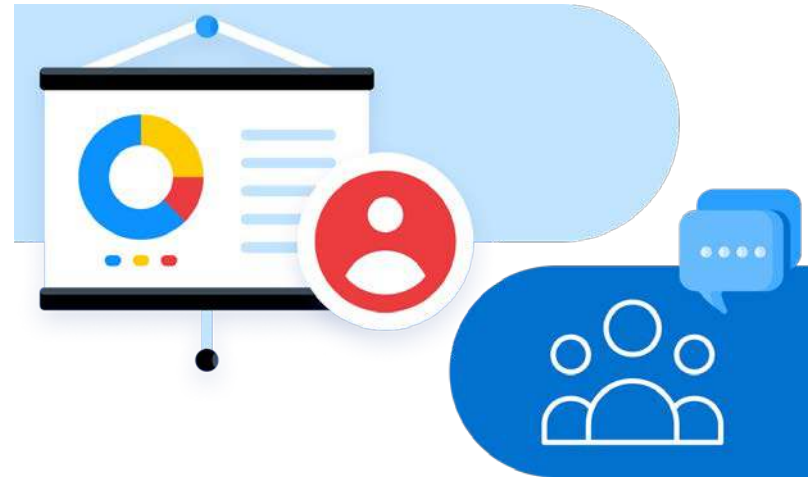
English and Americans Abroad

- English speakers famous for not speaking foreign languages
- Imagining others will understand them if they speak louder!
- Is the exam world different?



| Agenda

- Introduction
- The language challenge
- Outline of solutions
- Good practice:
 - Translating exams
 - On-the-fly translation
 - Reading thresholds
- Where to find out more
- Summary



| Let's start the discussion!

- What language challenges do you have?
(type your responses in the chat)



The Language Challenge

Challenges

Exams given only in English

- "I speak English very well, but it is not my native language"
- "I speak English a bit, but I am not fluent"
- "I don't speak English at all"

Even if exam is translated

- "That's all very well, but what about my language?"



Does everyone in the US speak English?

~22% or 67.8 million US residents speak language other than English at home

- 41.7m speak Spanish
- Over 1m speak Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog
- Many other languages

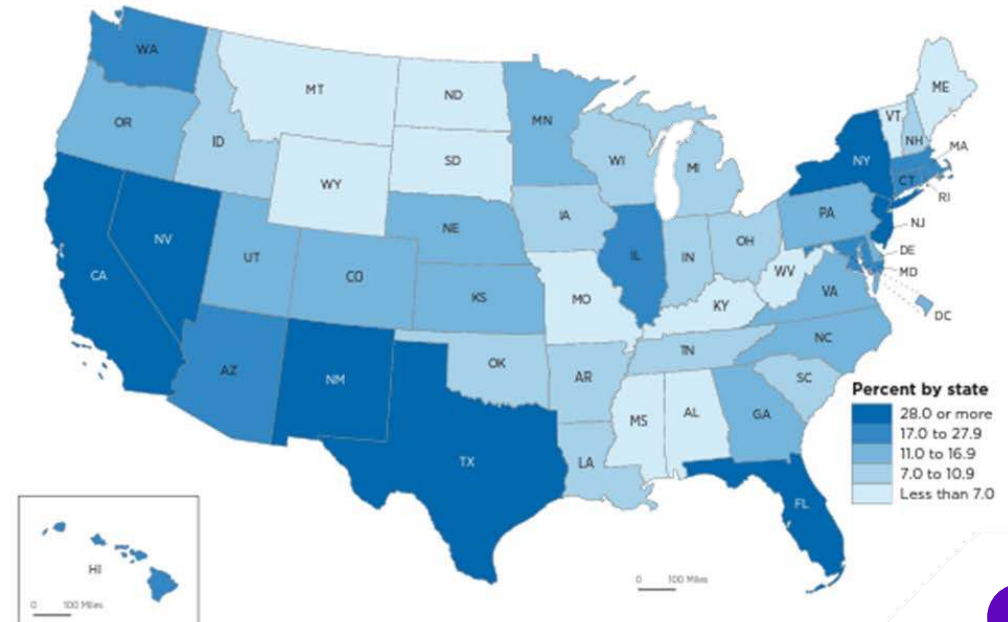
How well do these 67.8 million people speak English?

- 62% very well
- 19% well
- 13% not well
- 6% not at all



Figure 6.

Percentage of Population 5 Years and Over Who Spoke a Language Other Than English at Home: 2019



Note: More information can be found at <www.census.gov/acs>.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

| European Countries

France

88% of the population speak French as first language (BBC)

Germany

~87% of households speak predominantly German at home (2018)

Italy

~94% of people are Italian native speakers (2012)

Spain

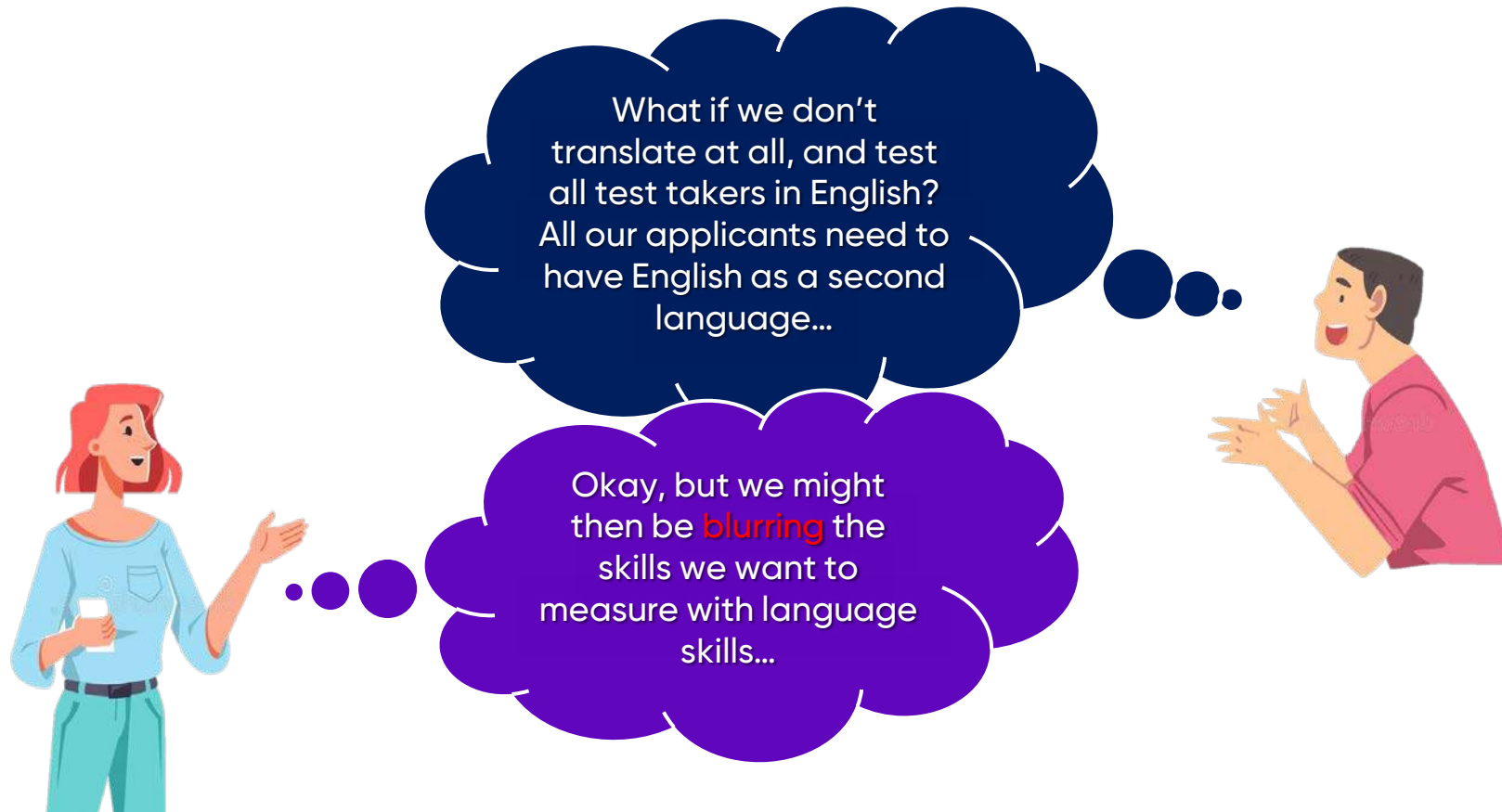
~72% of people are Spanish native speakers (BBC)

UK

92.3% main language is English (2011, England and Wales)



| Attention to Reading Proficiency Threshold



| Consensus View

Consensus that test takers moderately disadvantaged by taking a test in a non-native language

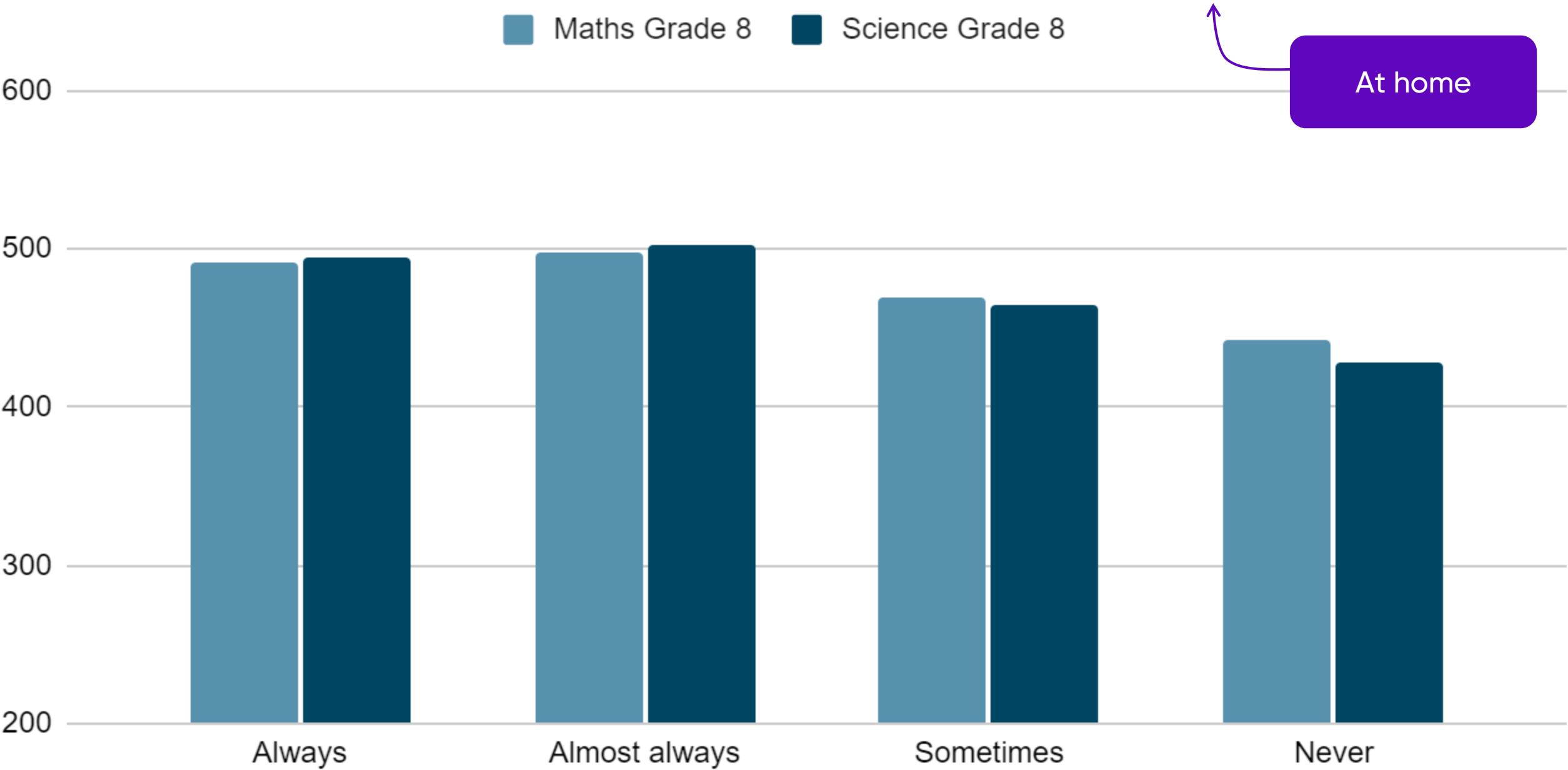
- Hard to be precise as non-native speakers may have had learning or other challenges as well
- Statistics vary by context and the amount of language used

Unless being proficient in the language of the test is part of the construct being measured, validity is threatened

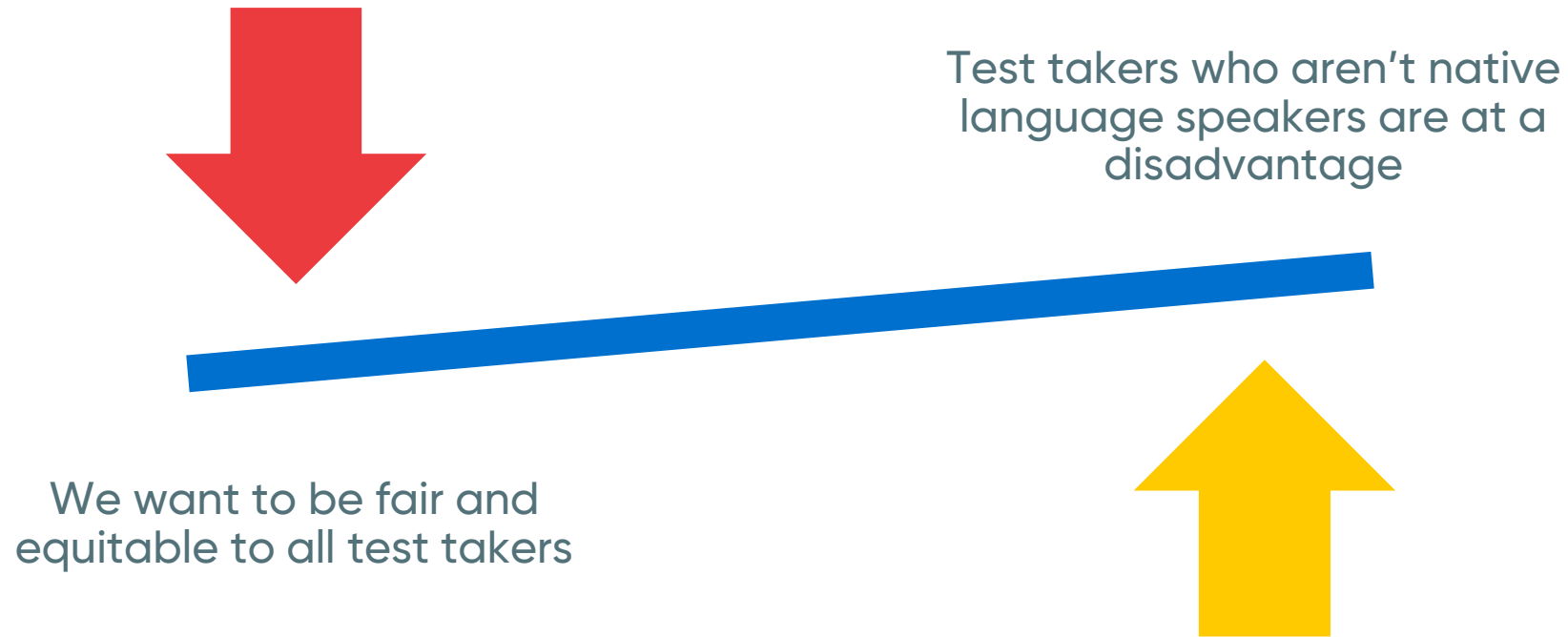
- Determining factors: reading load, extent to which language is idiomatic



TIMSS 2019 average scores: does test taker speak language of test?

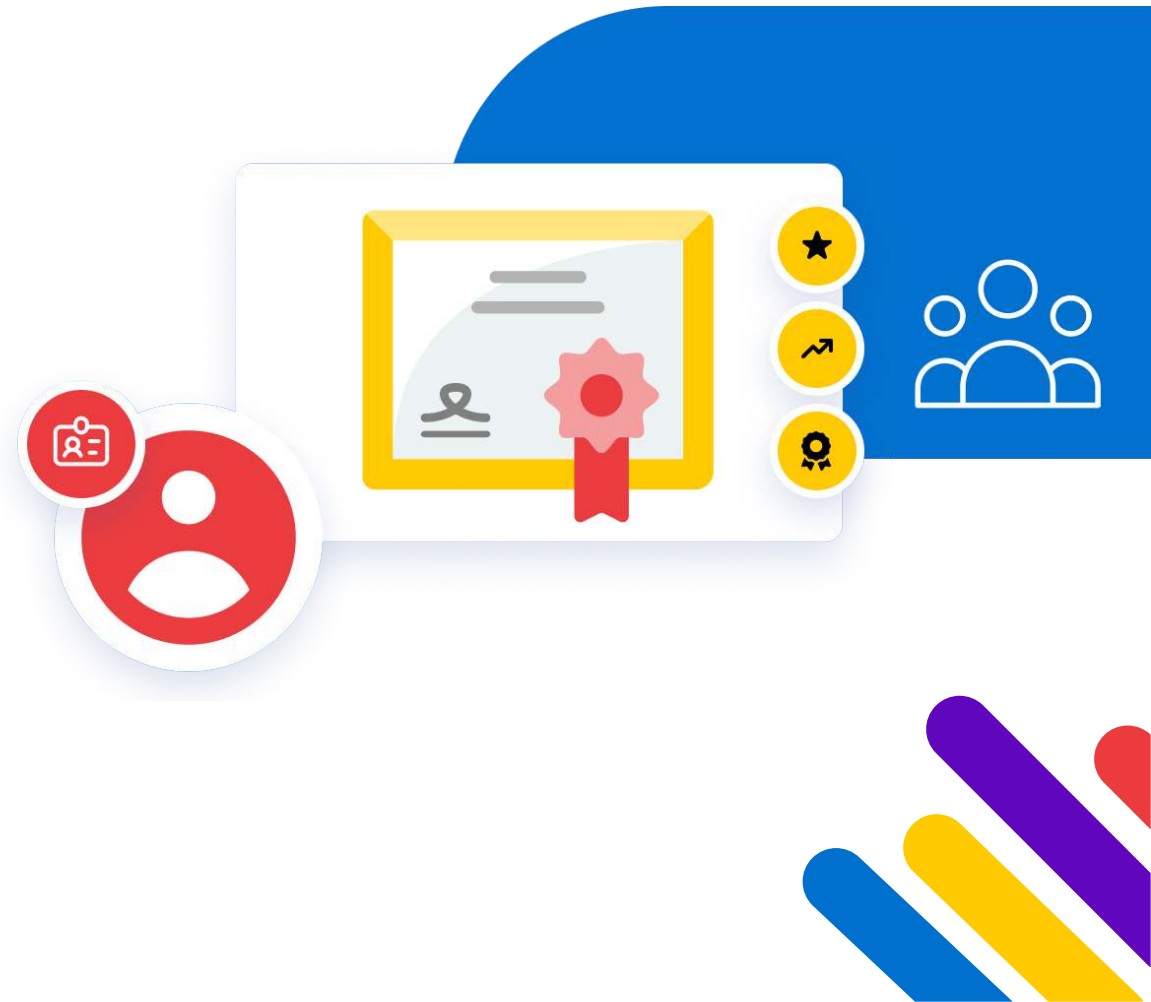


| The Language Challenge



| Why This Matters

- Tests and exams are a gate for life chances
- Most test sponsors have fairness as a core value
- Without an approach that deals with non-native speakers, are we being fair?



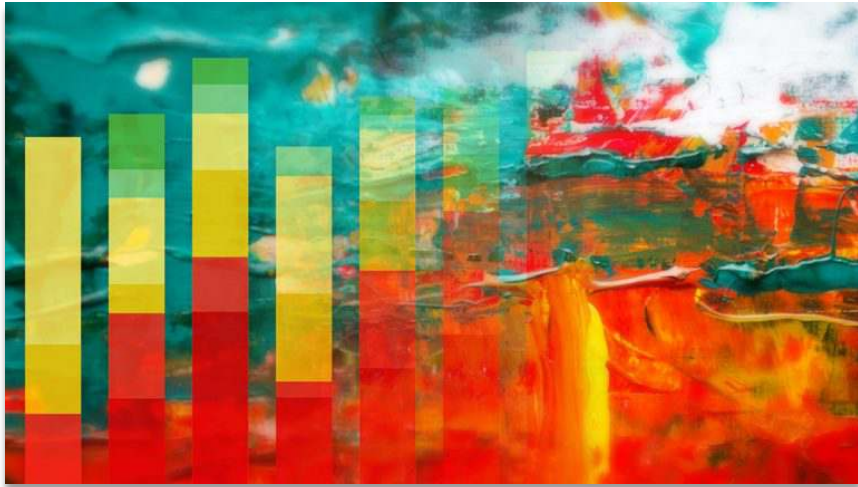
| The Benefits

Benefits to Test Sponsor of Improving Support for non-English Speakers



Outline the Solutions

CAVEAT – not a comprehensive list



1. Full translation
(entire test in L2, adequate QA)
2. Full translation (toggle between
L1 & L2, adequate QA)
3. On the fly translation (CBA*, MT*)
4. Lower reading proficiency threshold
5. Accommodations for L2 speakers

*CBA - Computer-based Assessment
*MT - Machine Translation



Good Practice:

■ Translating Exams

NCCA Standard 20

Evaluation of Items and Examinations

- " [...] evidence that translated or adapted examinations are testing the same construct as in the original (source) examination.
- Simple translation and back-translation are not sufficient.
- Programs should provide additional evidence regarding the processes (e.g., reviews by bilingual SMEs or dual language display of items) and/or statistical analyses [...]."



| Translating Exams – *Planning the Exam*

Start with purpose

- Why is test being developed?
- What is construct or domain being measured?
- What is done with pass/fail or test scores?

Identify target cultures/languages

- What population?
- What languages is it reasonable for them to take the test in?
- Are there different cultures, e.g. Indian ENG >< UK ENG >< US ENG)?

Seek advice

- Does the construct/domain have issues in any of languages/cultures?
- Do item formats need adjusting for languages/cultures (e.g. right to left)?

Design with this in mind

- Define objectives/topics
- Progress exemplar items
- Define translation process

Translatability assessment after initial design

- Check items and principles work before going onto full development



Piloting

- Build in a pilot to be carried out on a small(er) scale, e.g. a dry run in (some of) the target language(s)
- Or cognitive pre-test (need trained interviewers in target language)
- Finalise translation of test items before pilot
- Analysis of pilot results = a wealth of information
- Can be used to perform a focused linguistic and formal verification before going live



| Good Practice in Translating Exams – Summary

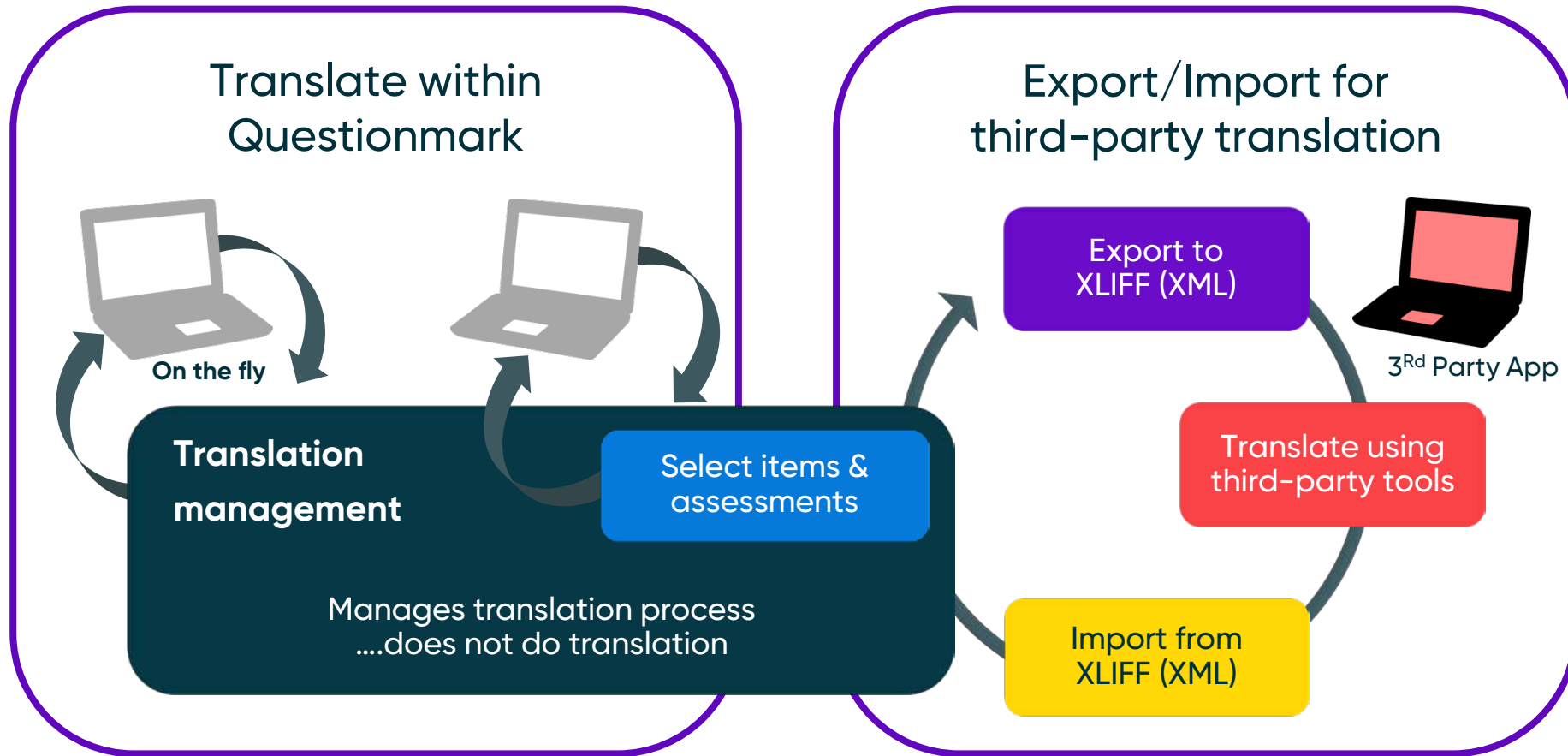
- Translation/adaptation should be embedded in test design
- Involve specialists at the earliest stages of a translation project
- Time spent optimizing the source version and preparing the translation/adaptation process drives quality of translated tests
- Export out of your assessment system to allow translators to work with state-of-the-art technology
- Organize independent quality checks of the translations



Multiple Translation Paths & Workflows



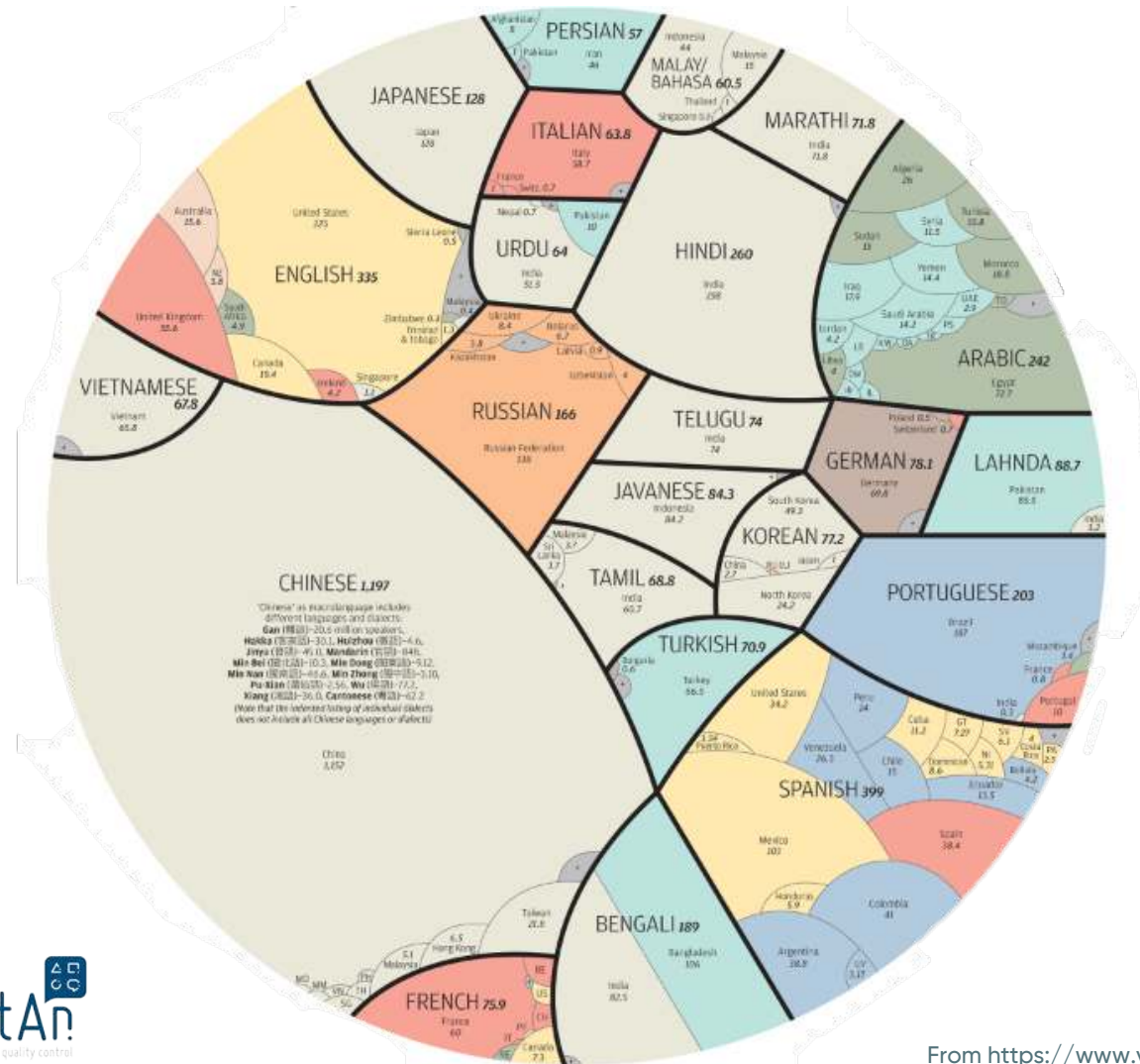
Questionmark Translation Management System



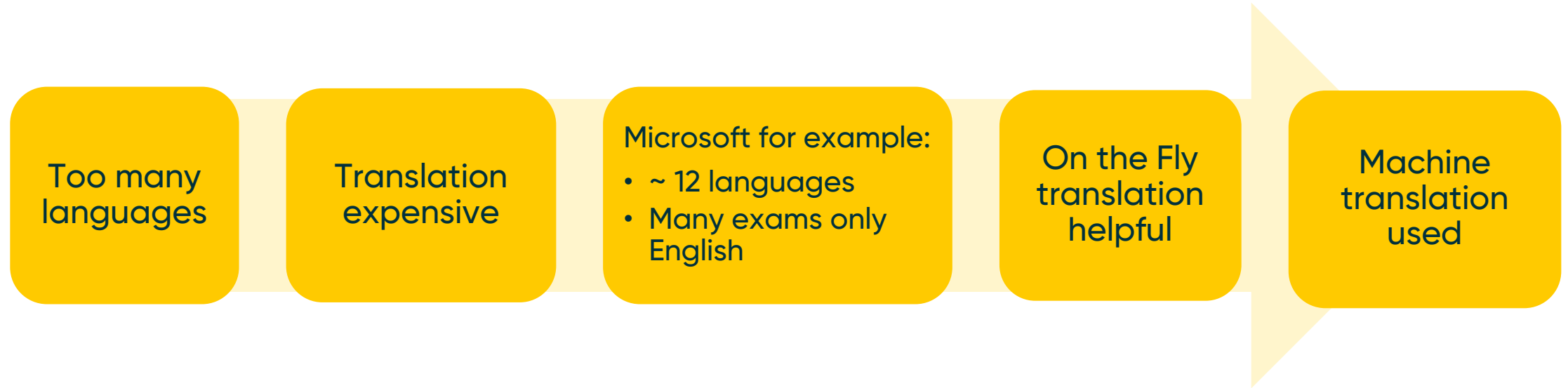
Good Practice:

| On the Fly Translation

Languages Spoken Around the World



| On the Fly Translation



Pros

- Allows test takers to see translations of phrases they are unsure of
- Works in wide selection of languages
- Helps makes exams fairer

Cons

- Online only
- Translations imperfect
- Small risk of translation being helpful to test taker (e.g. "How many sides is a hexagon" translated as "How many sides is a 6-sided shape?")



Candidate Disclaimer

As the original exam is provided in English and the translation is only provided as a support aid, it's important that candidate understands and agrees that relying on languages through machine translation may not be the most accurate translation.

It is important to include a legal disclaimer about non-accuracy of language at the start of an exam.

The screenshot shows the SAP Consultant Certification exam interface. At the top, there is a yellow header with the SAP logo and 'Consultant Certification'. Below this, a status bar shows 'May 18 2021' and 'Logged in as: SAPdemo@questionmark.com'. The main title of the exam is 'SAP Certified Application Associate - SAP Analytics Cloud: Planning'. A 'Translation' button is visible on the right. A modal window titled 'Machine Translation Disclaimer' is displayed in the center. The disclaimer text states that the official language is English and that machine translation is provided as a courtesy, but it is not guaranteed to be accurate. It also states that examiners who use machine translation do so at their own risk. At the bottom of the modal, there is a checkbox for 'By starting the exam you confirm that you have read and agree to the machine translation disclaimer, and that you will not use any external assistant materials or tools that are not provided by this exam.' and two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'Start'.

SAP Consultant Certification

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SAP Certified Application Associate - SAP Analytics Cloud: Planning

Machine Translation Disclaimer

The official language used in SAP Global Certification Online Exam is **English**. By using a machine translation, SAP provides the translation of the exams in other language as a courtesy to examinees for their convenience. Machine translation can only give you an additional help to understand the content of the exams in a language you understand.

It is fully automated and involves no human intervention. The quality and accuracy of machine translation can vary significantly from one text to another and between different language pairs. SAP does not make any promises, assurances, or guarantees as to the accuracy, reliability of the translations provided.

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Cancel Start

Next Question > Assessment Navigator Submit



Writing Good Test Questions

9 of 11

What term is commonly used to refer to a choice in a multiple choice question that is incorrect?

- ☐ stimulus
- ☐ distracter
- ☐ answer
- ☐ outcome



Translation

⬅ Previous Question

Next Question ➡

Assessment Navigator 📅



Highlight Question

Submit ➡

Good Practice:

Lowering Proficiency Threshold

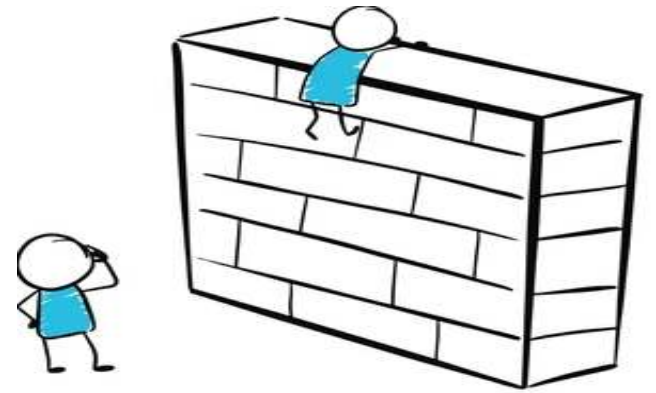
| Reading Proficiency Threshold

Concern:

- A too high level of English proficiency required to take a coding test may hamper correct measuring of programming skills.

Solution:

- Analysis and adjustment of the language proficiency level of the coding tests, to stay within a defined threshold.

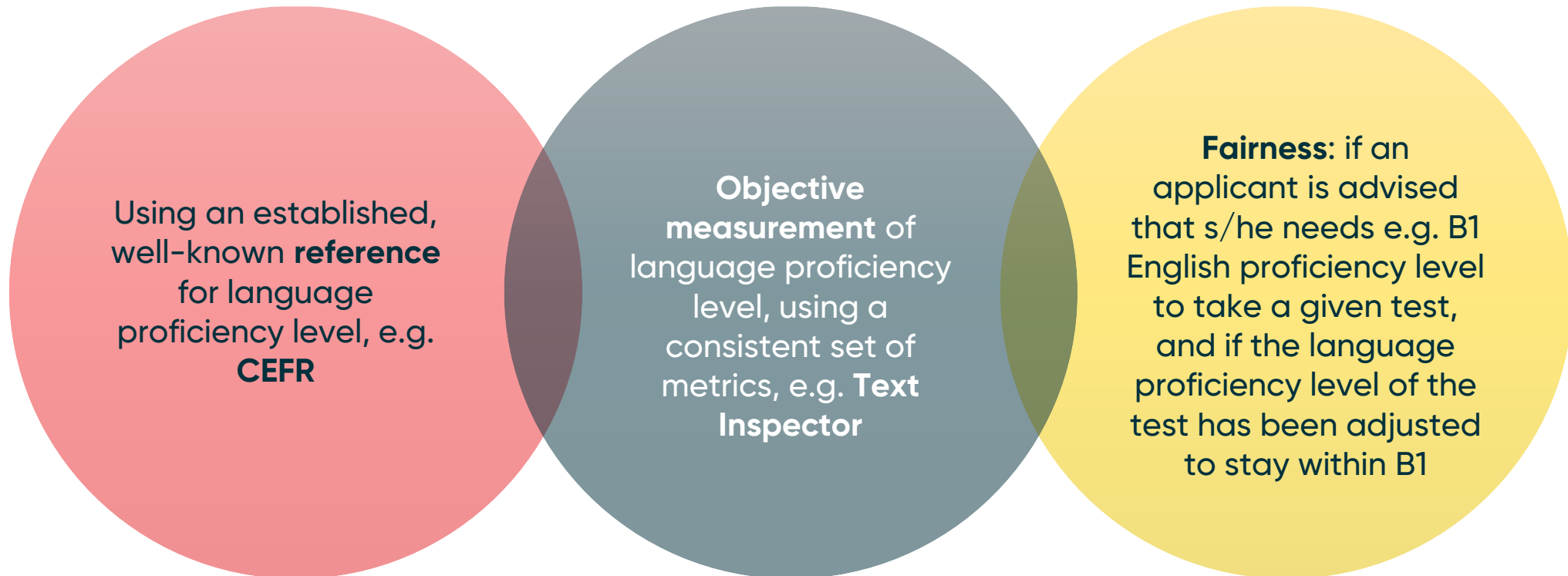


| Reading Proficiency Threshold

- Linguistic difficulty is measured objectively using standardized metrics (Text Inspector), taking care to exclude domain-specific terms (in this case IT) from the analysis
- A threshold is defined (e.g., B1 of the CEFR)
- To reduce the linguistic difficulty of tests that are above the threshold, a native English-speaking editor makes use of the following techniques:
 - Replacing difficult words/phrases with easier synonyms or paraphrases.
 - Breaking up long sentence into shorter ones, to improve readability.
 - Adding an explanation for any difficult “domain-agnostic” terms that cannot easily be replaced by easier synonyms.



| Reading Proficiency Threshold Best Practices



Good Practice:

| Accomodations

Accommodations for Non-Native Speakers



- Extra time
- Access to a glossary / dictionary
- Interpreter in the room
- Weighting scores depending on type of question (e.g. reading proficiency)



Where to Find Out More

Key Points

International Test Commission Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests

- <https://www.intestcom.org/page/16>

Recorded webinar by the authors "Translating Test Items: There's More to it Than Meets the Eye!"

- <https://www.questionmark.com/resources/webinars/translating-test-items-theres-more-to-it-than-meets-the-eye/>

Dragoș Iliescu (2017): Adapting Tests in Linguistic and Cultural Situations

- Cambridge University Press, New York ISBN 978-1-107-11012-0 DOI: 10.1017/9781316273203

PISA guidelines (OECD program for international student assessment)

- [PISA-2022-Translation-and-Adaptation-Guidelines.pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)

ITC-ATP Guidelines for Technology-based Assessment

- [Guidelines for Technology-Based Assessment v2022.11.08.pdf \(testpublishers.org\)](#)

Resources from the presenters' websites

- www.capstan.be
- www.questionmark.com / www.learnosity.com



Summary

| Key Points

Unless the construct your exam measures includes the English language, need to consider how to make exam fair for non-native/non-English speakers

No perfect solution, but several good approaches possible including full translation, on-the-fly translation and reviewing reading proficiency

Taking account of this makes exams fairer and may give wider reach and other benefits

There are business cases for Machine Translation, but risks and implications need to be evaluated carefully

For high stakes tests, sophisticated translation designs are needed to achieve comparability

Well-documented compliance with Standards and Guidelines remains a cornerstone of test adaptation



There is a difference between *"supporting languages"* on a platform and *"best practice"* in test or survey translation.

The cApStAn team help you bridge that gap.

A network of 700 experts (linguists and SMEs) in 120 countries

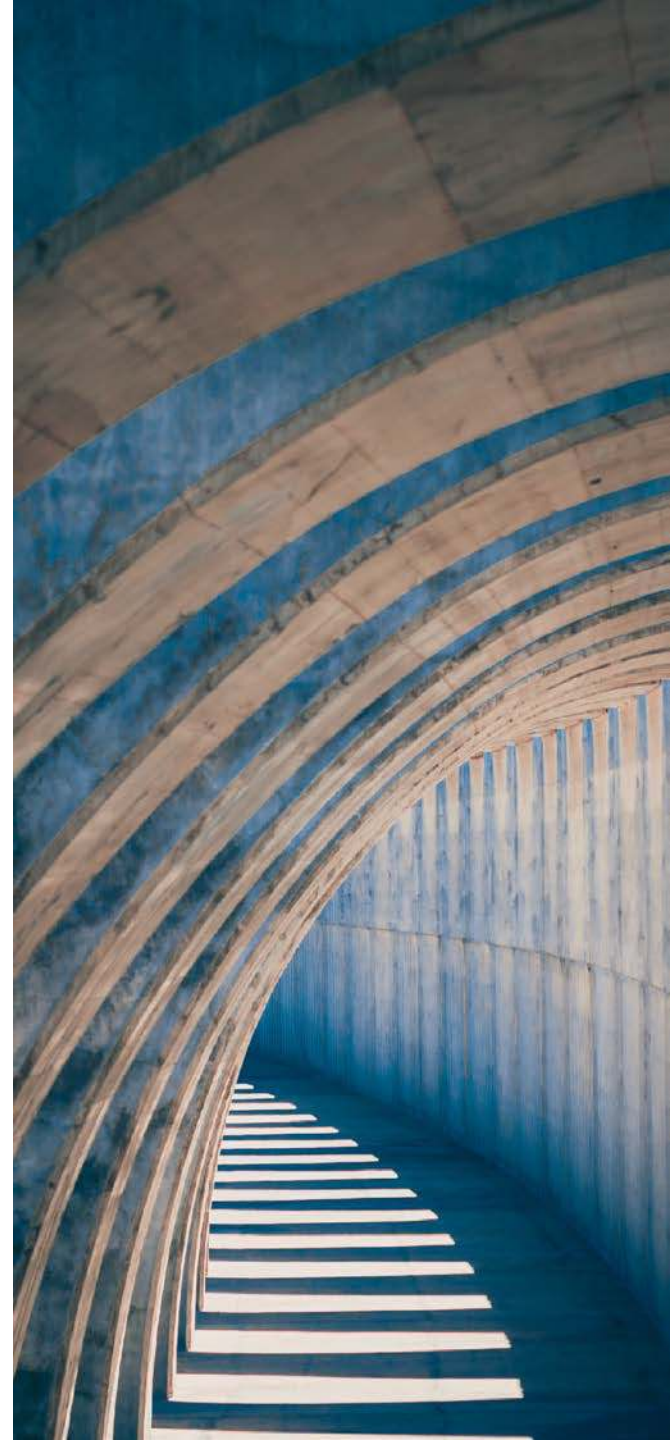
A team of 24 project managers | Highly reactive problem solvers

95+ languages / 270+ locales

Over 1.4 billion words processed

Known to shape, test and improve best practices in translation/adaptation

Sterling reputation in the global arena of multilingual assessments and surveys



cApStAn Linguistic Quality Control

Areas we work in

Examinations | International Large Scale Assessments | Screening Questionnaires | Professional Certifications | Psychological Tests

Industries we serve

Education | Talent Management | Certification | Technology | Market Research | Public Sector



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We're flexible

All the tools, tips and question types you need at your fingertips.

We're innovative

We're always evolving to give you the latest and best assessment tools – and winning awards along the way!

We're experts

We're a team that's obsessed with assessments, and we'll go the extra mile to help you.

We're secure

Trusted by Governments around the world, you can be confident in our ability to deliver assessments and store data safely.

We're collaborative

Whether its guiding you through the onboarding experience, or integrating with LMS, we'll work together on it.





600

Trusted by over 600 customers to run certification, training and compliance programs big and small.

30

Paving the way for more effective testing and certification worldwide for over 30 years.

80

Securely delivering assessments for more than 80 global Government departments.



Award winners

2022 ITCC Innovation Award winners for our Instant Translate tool.

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Q&A

Upcoming Webinars

An Ounce of Prevention: Proctoring and Test Security in 2023

Thursday, January 26th, 2023
11:00 AM EST (New York)
4:00 PM GMT (London)

[Register now](#)

Introduction to Questionmark's Assessment Platform

[Register now](#)

Tuesday Training with the Techs: Not Lost in Translation

[Watch now](#)

Questionmark's latest report

Lifting the lid on the true nature of
test cheating in organizations.

From misguided safeguarding measures to a lack of awareness of what constitutes cheating, The Test Fraud Fallacy outlines not only the severe consequences of test cheating but also the surprising approaches to proof and punishment occurring in multiple organizations.

Don't leave it to chance. Discover the true nature of test fraud and make use of our actionable resources to safeguard your workforce.

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