

Contribution of the Italian Group to Intersteno projects.
Distributed management for keyboarding competitions and
certification.

August 2004

Forewords

The purpose of this document is to recap the work done by the Italian group in contributing to the Projects proposed at the discussion of the Scientific committee and the related activities for improving the software for handling certifications and competitions in keyboarding ability. Moreover we deem useful to fully explain the philosophy of the software and how it works and how it can be used.

As already said since the beginning of this improvements, (January 2004) this work is to be intended as a contribution to the know-how of Intersteno which, in our opinion, can take advantage of presenting and using different means. We deem that it is to the Board of Intersteno to define and ask for an 'harmonisation' of the main features of each solution in order to have a correct and easy use of each software.

We hope that with a better understanding of the possibilities offered by various entities, it could be easier to avoid misunderstandings and possibly go ahead for a better development of Intersteno, who is, at the moment, the sole and unique entity able to manage a multilingual contest and certification based on 50 years of improvements in evaluating abilities in text writing.

The projects as proposed by Cees Van Burden - Coordinator of the Scientific Committee on 1st October 2003

Short descriptions of the proposed projects and suggestions who have to be the project managers and with which persons they have to co-operate.

Moreover a proposed indication of the priority of each project is given:

A = has to be done soon; B = needs more preparation; C = has to be done continuously).

Project 1 (learning to operate the keyboard efficiently)

* An inquiry shall be held into programmes and methods to operate the keyboard effectively, used in the countries of the National Groups of Intersteno - and if possible in other countries - by collecting information about the specifications of the used learning programmes and methods, e-learning included, (e.g how many persons are in a learning group and how old are they; how many hours are needed to learn how to type a text and how fast and perfect is the typist after a certain number of learning hours) in order to draw up a comparison between the two. three or four most effective systems.

* A test shall be organized answering the question, if the two most effective systems can be translated in other languages and, if so, under which conditions.

* The most effective systems shall be promoted by bringing to the attention of the proper authorities in the member countries as well as in other countries the importance for the modern society (the information society) of learning to operate the keyboard effectively at an early age. This promotion can be done by the Federation as well as by the National Groups and the individual members by informing them about the results of the test.

Project manager: Jaroslav. Execution: a working group under his direction. Priority: A.

Project 2 (international internet test on textprocessing under the patronage of Unesco and/or EU)

* Apart from the international contests in the field of wordprocessing for the world championships, an international test on textprocessing shall be organized worldwide on a regular basis through internet by Intersteno. This test shall be more geared to the everyday use of textprocessing systems than the ECDL.

* The regulations for this test shall be formulated by a test group in such a way, that participants have to meet minimum standards regarding the practical control of textprocessing programmes. Participants who meet these standards shall get a certificate of Intersteno (sent by e-mail).

* The test group draws up a plan for the execution of the test. This plan provides for a basic training module, leading to the final test. The test group builds a database in which schools, teachers and students who take part in the training and the final test are registered.

* This test shall be promoted worldwide in order to achieve, that as much candidates as possible participate. This promotion shall be done by e-mail, sent to every National Group and all individual members and to all proper authorities in member countries as well as in other countries that Intersteno is able to reach.

* As soon as a sufficient number of students in different countries (not only European countries) has passed the test, so that Intersteno can show the results, the competent officials of Unesco shall be asked to take the patronage of this Intersteno test and to stimulate its promotion worldwide. The competent committee of the EU shall be asked to do the same in Europe.

* Students wishing to take part in the training and the test, shall pay Intersteno a fee that have to be as low as possible, because the only purpose of asking a fee is to cover the costs Intersteno has to

make for organizing and executing this test. In its plan the test group draws up a yearly budget for this purpose.

Project managers: Gian Paolo and Jaroslav.

Execution: a test group under their direction. Priority: B + C.

Strategic lines (to be reviewed and improved)

We think that the goals set for these projects are based on the following points:

1 - Intersteno is a no profit organisation and has only cultural and practical interests as defined at the point 2.5 of its Statute namely

to encourage the maintenance of high standards of competence and performance of the above mentioned professionals and teachers during their professional life by using the most modern technical means and to encourage appropriate training and educational facilities and programmes for the above mentioned students, especially in developing countries

2 - Intersteno has a long experience in evaluating text preparation and has set up rules which are well defined, giving a fair picture of the keyboarding ability in many languages.

3 - Intersteno has the capacity of keeping contacts in many languages with country representatives all over the world.

4 - Intersteno has acquired a reputation of fair conduction of world wide competitions, the records are meaningful since they are based on a continuously updated rules and obtained in loyal competition with professional people of many countries

5 - therefore Intersteno has full capacity of being a certification board in the fields of the domain of its interests.

Contributions of the Italian group to these projects

1 - Investigation and spreading of information to SC Members about keyboarding software and experiences
Main contributions are available on www.intersteno.it (Scientific Committee menu).

2 - Improvements in the software for distributed management of keyboarding competitions and evaluation tests.

3 - Development of a Java module for training exercises and texts evaluation.

This module shows the various faults with different colours according to the typology of the fault (inversion - replacements - repetition of text - text missing). Evaluation is made according to the Intersteno rules and with reference to the keyboards for the specific language. 11 versions are now available on line.

3 - Following up of the 2004 Contest on Keyboarding. Only the Java module conceived by Marco Olivo was used since Interinfo Cèkia has not made its software available for this competition.

TRAINING AND BASIC EVALUATION MODULES FOR KEYBOARDING ABILITY.

Modules for evaluating the speed and accuracy in keyboarding are offered on Internet by various entities, normally with a limited quantity of texts mainly in English. Thanks to the activity of Interinfo Cèkia and the Italian group, Intersteno can offer a wide range of training exercise i.e. ZAV module (downloadable) and Java module (no download) which are available free of charge and are accustomed for many languages. We can count a total of at least 15 versions in order to take into accounts the differences of the keyboarding in the various languages. (This aspect is not considered by other entities which also do not handle such a high number of language versions).

DISTRIBUTED MANAGEMENT OF INTERNET KEYBOARDING COMPETITION

In order to handle the Internet competition which took place last year before the Congress of Roma, a database management was conceived by the Italian group with the goal of having real-time results and complete control over the carry out of the contest.

During the project phase we have foreseen several features to be implemented after the first experience, in order to have a flexible approach so that several competitions could take place at the same time, and the management of these competitions could be released to different entities within Intersteno group.

Moreover we have thought about the possibility to handle 'multilingual competitions' also for keyboarding. We know that, especially in Europe, the language knowledge is very important and this knowledge cannot skip the ability to write texts with traditional keyboards.¹

In the meantime we have therefore implemented and tested the above mentioned features which can now be put at the disposal of anybody wishing to have its own school, association or national competition.

Any entity within Intersteno is allowed to take use of this distributed management (available as at 1st October 2004), at a small fee that will be stated in a separate document.

The procedure to follow is very simple:

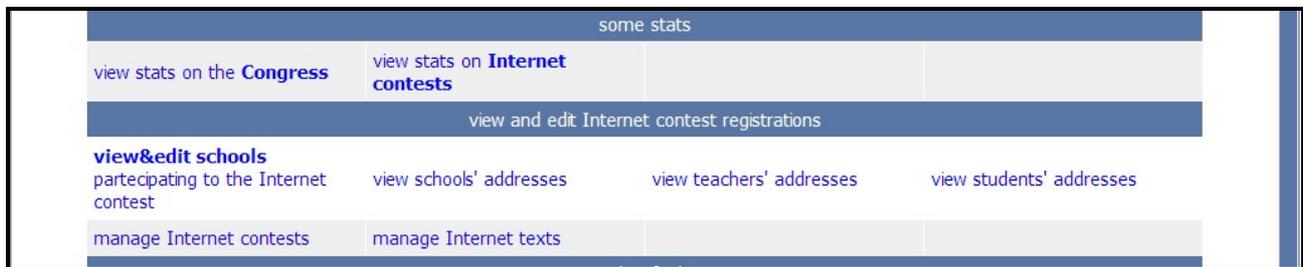
1 - you send an e-mail to manager@intersteno.it stating your name, the name of your/school organisation, full address, e-mail and telephone number

2 - within 3 days from receipt of your request, we will send you back an e-mail with an identification name and password. Using this data your can access to the member's area i.e. www.intersteno.it/members

(We have chosen this way, instead of a direct registration in the Internet page, which is obviously technically possible, since we want to keep under control who is using our software).

3 - You get this view

¹ This strategical goal is very important since with the 'New Europe' and changes in the Commission, we could think to present projects and get consent and money from European Union.



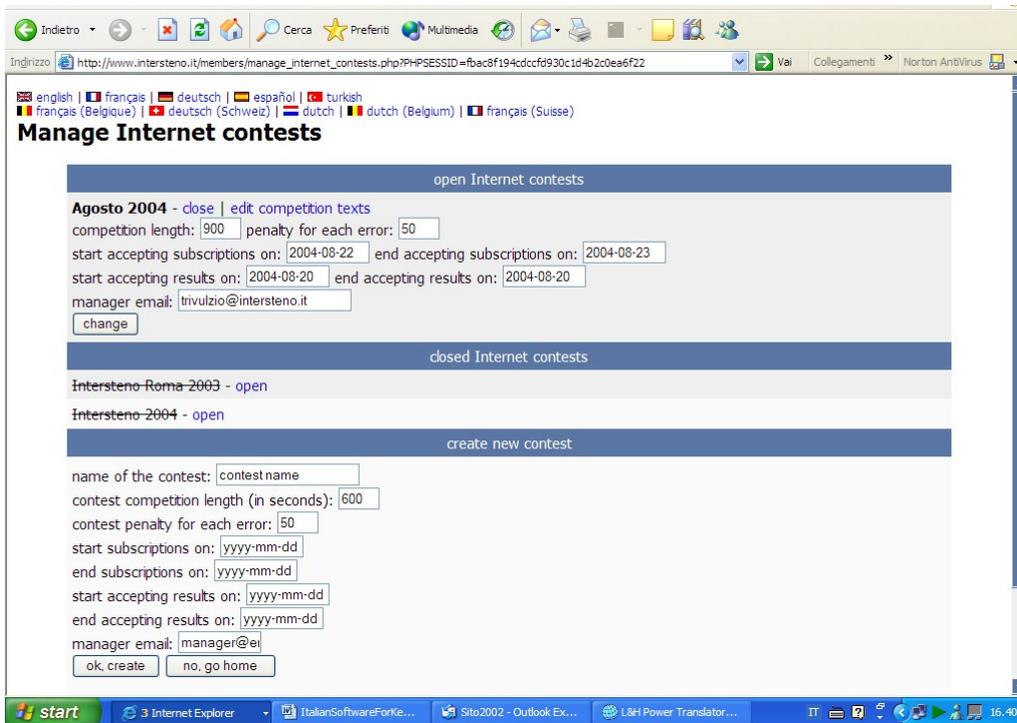
which permits you to enter the data for your competition by choosing 'Manage Internet contests'

We think that this information, which is in English and for which a translation will be given in a supporting document for Italian, German, French and Spanish, is easily understandable, in any case here is the explanation

- the name of the Contest
- the competition length (in second) ex. 5 minutes = 300, 20 minutes = 1200 etc.
- the penalty point for each fault (any values i.e. 10 - 50 - 100 etc)
- when subscription can be entered (year - month - day) i.e. 2005 - 05 - 15
- when subscription is over i.e. 2005.05.25
- when competition effectively begins (year - month - day)
- when competition ends (end accepting results) always year - month - day
- the e-mail of the person who follows the contest. This e-mail will appear in the training and contest modules for your competition, so that the competitors are going to ask you for any help.

When you have entered this information and you click on 'Ok, create', you have created your competition.

4 - at this point you get a more complete view, like this
(In this example you can view that we have created the new competition Agosto2004)

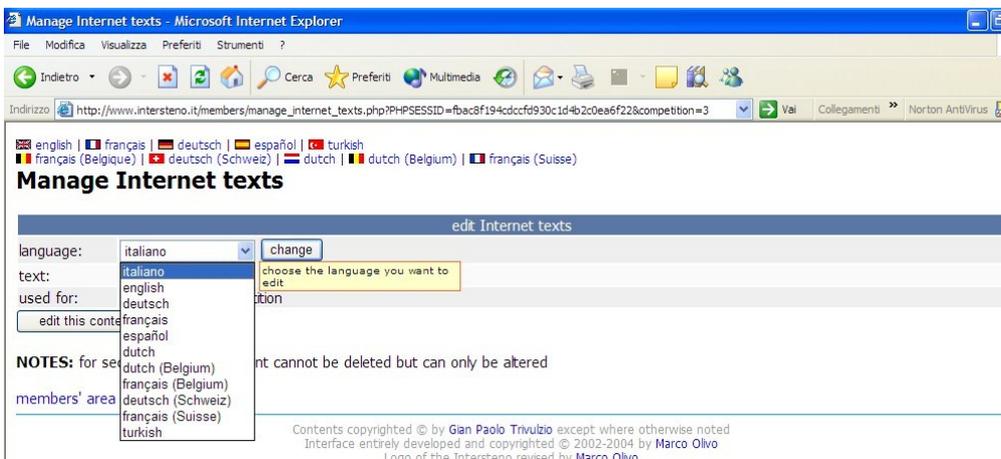


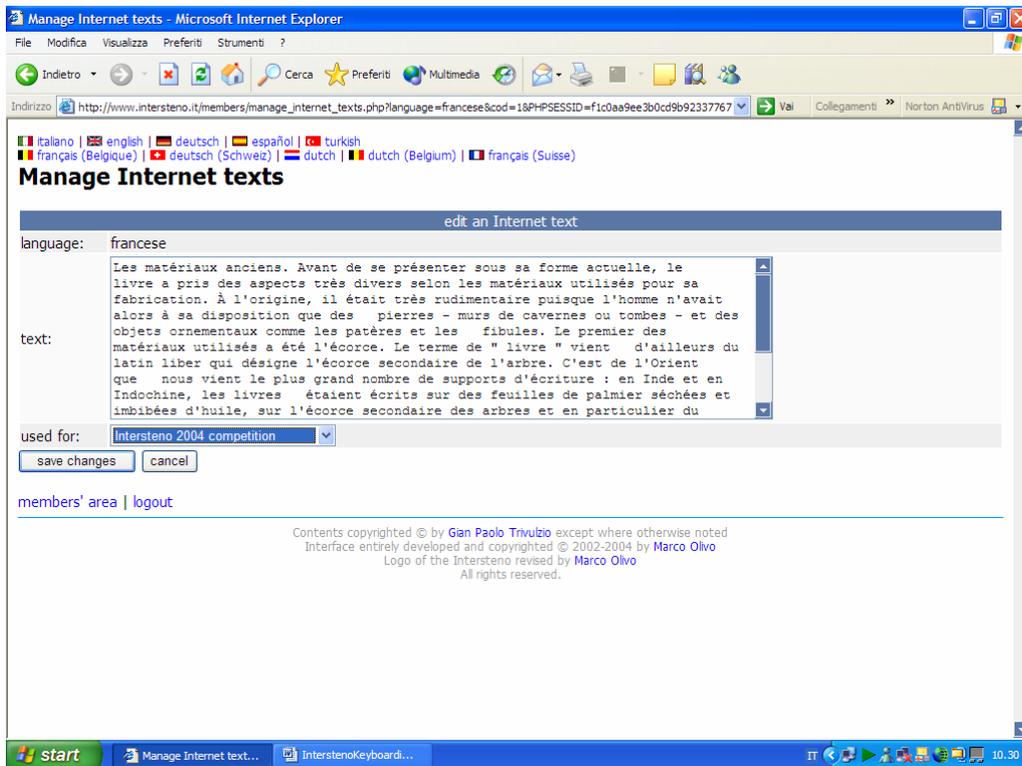
If the information is not correct (as this is the case since the date of accepting results is previous to that of registration) you can edit your information using the button 'Change'.

If the information is OK you can go to next point:

5 - insert the competition text or texts.

You click on 'edit competition texts' and you will have the following view





You choose the language and click on change. You will have a box in which you can easily insert (with copy and past - drag and drop) your text.

Needless to say, this text must have a convenient length according to your competition and your competitor's ability. In the training exercises we have texts of about 1000 strokes for the 1 minutes exercises and about 10.000 for the 10 minutes ones.

If your competition is a multilanguage competition,² you have to insert the texts for the relevant languages. Do not insert texts or information in the box for the languages that you are not using. In case of multilanguage competition, the classification list will contain the number of languages written and the sum of points.

Close

You can click on CLOSE in any moment if you want to stop visibility on the Web. This is convenient for preventing usage in certain day during the registration or competition period.

When you click on CLOSE the information about the contest are made invisible and the competition is listed in the CLOSED competition.

You can reopen and thus re-activate the contest, by clicking on the word OPEN which is placed near the name of your competition.

Working of distributed management feature on your web site.

If your school/association has a web site, you can easily create a link to our site and insert a page (which will be supplied by us) for getting the results.

Other activities.

² This feature is actually (August 2004) under test and is not yet on line. We will inform as soon as it is available.

It will be your duty to deliver information about this competition (we will in any case put the information in the Agenda of competitions) and its rules.

Registration of schools - teachers and students.

It will be available as usual. We suggest to enter the information of your school/association and get the ID pass and password for entering teachers, if only one school is involved in the competition.

We want to remember that the ID number and password of students are sent to the teacher, who has therefore full control of the situation and can decide when (and who) actually doing competition in his/her classes.

Additional management features

All features will be fully described in a document. As you have seen from the first view, there are statistical information and you can change (NOT DELETE) the information about students, teachers participating to your contest.

Teachers can insert, edit or delete their students.

Info about the server hosting the Italian web site, and related software

The server in which the software for distributed management and training texts is hosted, is very professional and high-quality.

Service is assured 24 hours for 7 days all over the year, the capacity is 300 mega (nearly half used till now).

No problems arose during the long and heavy period of the competition in 2003, the Rome Congress and the competitions in 2004. The response was quick even with heavy traffic.

We have tested sending results for several hundred students during 1 minutes, without problems.

The software of the Italian site www.intersteno.it is based on a data base structure. When it is accessed from a foreign country, one gets an automatic setting on the specific language if it is one of the 11 versions handled now by our site (i.e. in Wien we will see the German version - in Paris the French one - in Amsterdam the Dutch etc.).

If a language is not included in the list, the English version is shown.

The website was firstly released in June 2000, but a completely new software was prepared and tested starting from June 2002 in order to coop with the needs of the Intersteno Congress (registration - administration - competitions etc.).

From June 2002 up to end July 2004 this site had 105.829 visitors, who read 464.803 pages. Average visits per day is now about 100.

Certification of keyboarding abilities

What other entities are offering.

At least the following three entities are offering certification via Internet:

Typingmaster - www.typingmaster.com

Provemyspeed (linked to Custom Typing - web tutorial for keyboarding in Java) - <http://www.provemyspeed.com/intro/index.htm>

Opac testing software - This is a suite of more than 30 kinds of ability test, among which keyboarding. <http://www.opac.com/whatis.html>

Here is a brief overview for each of them.

Typingmaster

Typingmaster a leading company in software for keyboarding learning (also on Internet starting as April 2004 with Java technology), which offers several opportunities for testing:

1 - a simple test (free of charge) in English - Italian- French - Spanish - Suomi - Swedish

No previous training exercise.

There is very simple online evaluation which is also e-mailed (if requested)

The text can be chosen among 5/7. They are taken from tales or novels (in Italian and English they are very old style). One must strictly follow the text, the evaluation is made according to wrong words, if a word is inverted or omitted, the following ones are considered wrong even if rightly written. Text can be 1 - 2 - 3 minutes length. Results are also added to a general list which shows very high results (180 words per minutes i.e. about 900 strokes according to the American Standard).

2 - a complete test (in connection with Expert rating). (10 dollars payment)

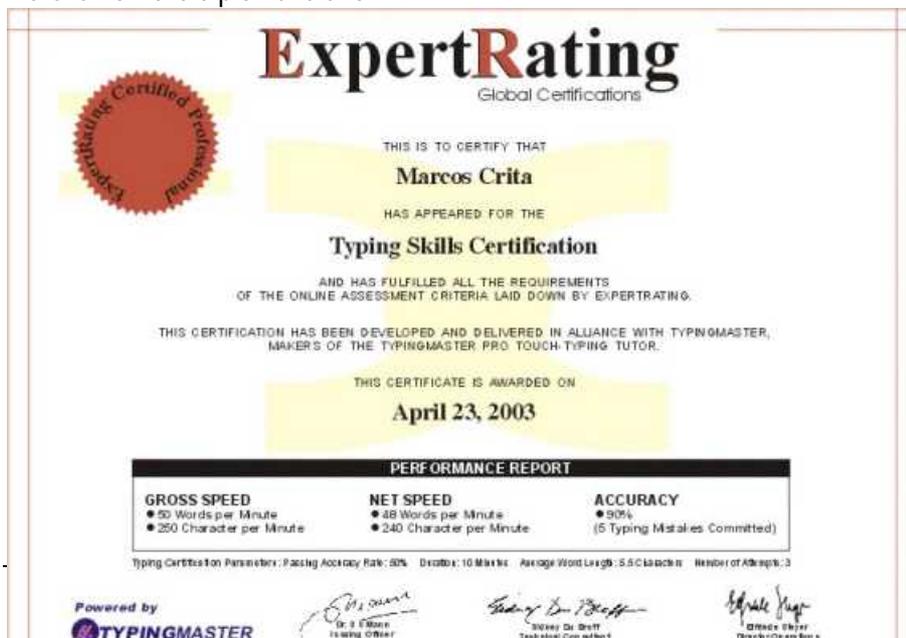
Trainings can be made with no limit

The test of the certification can be repeated 3 times, and the best result will be chosen for certification

Results are kept in a data base and can be seen using an ID number.

Results are e-mailed with a 'diploma' and the same diploma is sent by post all over the worlds.

Here is how the diploma is shown.



3 - On line software for keyboarding certification.

For schools, firms, organisation Typing master gives licence for using the software on line or sells it for installation on server for intranet or internet use.

The prices for the use of Internet module (only 1 test is possible at the same time i.e. concurrent tests) are as follows:

Period	Price	
1 week	\$19.90 USD	
2 weeks	\$29.90 USD	
1 month	\$39.00 USD	
3 months	\$99.00 USD	(\$33/month)
6 months	\$149.00 USD	(\$25/month)
2 months	\$199.00 USD	(\$17/month)

Software licence for installation on a server (intranet or Internet) cost ranges from 390 to 1990 dollars. The basic fee of 390 dollars is related to a so-called iExpress version which permits max. 5 concurrent tests at the same time.

A comparison chart of the features of these software is later on included in this document, with comparison with the Italian management software which can be shortly adapted to on-line evaluation for keyboarding ability.

Provemyspeed

This company offers on-line testing subject to payment of 6 dollars. The procedure is very similar to that of Typemaster, the main difference being a 'flexible' price policy i.e. the 6 dollars are referred to have certificate can only be downloaded, sent by e-mail or view on Internet. If a printed copy is wanted, the price is 19 Dollars for the first copy and 6 dollars for additional ones.

Texts have a length of 200/300 words. The number of words is calculated using the standard (for USA) ratio of 5 strokes (characters) per word.

Results are kept in a data base for 2 years, and can be viewed using an ID identification.

Only English texts are supplied.

Opac testing software

www.opac.com

Opac (Office Proficiency assessment & Certification) is a big organisation who investigated a lot on labour skills, and has prepared certification software for them. This Organisation is a spin-off of Biddle Consulting Group, established since 1974 which offers consultancy in labour market, training etc. (www.biddle.com). The area of interest is very huge covering 30 basic office skills. These abilities are divided by group:

Computer application tests (Window - use of Microsoft Office packages etc.)

Keyboarding tests (include also tests for numeric data entry also in specific environment like inventory list - mailing lists etc). The tests are graded for basic, intermediate and advanced level.

Clerical tests - Among which Transcript (from a cassette) and Minute preparation ('using handwritten notes the test taker must compose and format minutes of a meeting, according to a specific guide provided')

Financial tests - The definition is in my humble opinion a bit 'overestimating' since it is referred to the filling in of bank forms for deposit etc.

Professional tests - They are mainly related to medical and legal environments and include keyboarding and transcript abilities of specific tests with medical and legal wordings

Among these office skills, keyboarding is one of them. One can make a previous test downloading a software from their web site.

No information about the cost is available, unless you keep telephone contacts with them. It seems that this software is mainly intended for big corporations and schools and according to the information available on the web site, it his highly customizable

Intersteno project for keyboarding certification. What Intersteno could offer (reasonable goal)

Goal - To offer an online certification on keyboarding ability.

Using the distributed management software, we can foresee to improve the features in order to offer Intersteno certification like the ones offered by Typemaster and Provemyspeed.

As already mentioned, Intersteno can offer more than what Typemaster and Provemyspeed are offering since:

- 1 - training exercises are available both using Zav (downloadable) or Java module (no need to download)
- 2 - training exercises (and tests) are offered in many languages and related regional versions.
- 3 - the quantity of texts offered for training is huge, and moreover the texts are offered according to specific criteria (reached speed by Zav, random by Java). Therefore training is really a didactic approach to the test
- 4 - the criteria of evaluation follow the know-how and experience of Intersteno in 50 years of world championships

Before going into a brief description of the technical aspects involved and software improvements needed, it is necessary that two decisions are preliminary taken (at Board or Central Committee level)

- 1 - Intersteno really wants to offer this certification? A voting about Yes or No is important.
- 2 - Certification is offered to any person asking for it (like Typemaster and Provemyspeed) or it is offered through Intersteno representatives/schools/associations in a way rather similar to that of ECL?

If a positive answer is given to point 1 - we think that in about 6/9 month time it would be possible (with joint efforts made by Zav group and Intersteno Italia) to have an online certification.

The software improvements must be made in the following areas:

- a - registration of test taker (according to the way chosen as per point 2)
- b - handling of multiple texts by the same taker (if we chose this way)
- c - distributed management for nation/schools/association if this involvement is decided
- d - administrative software for fees (credit cards etc).
- e - software for handling the release of diplomas

Needless to say, this is a big Intersteno project in so far several entities must be involved as it is not feasible that only one or two persons take care of it.

For a better understanding I enclose a comparison between the software offered by Typingmaster and some comments about our possibilities.

Language	English	Test texts can be in any language, product in English	English French German Dutch Italiano Turkish Spanish and national versions for Belgium and Switzerland (11 versions)
Database integration	Not available	 integration through XML/HTTP interface	already done

* Subscription for 12 months

** in iTest Express max. 5 tests at the same time

Indication of faults	only per word and only red, if there is an omission or inversion of words the following words are counted as faults. No control of different types of faults.	The same	indication of faults according to the Intersteno rules, with different colours. These faults can be seen at the end of the test.
Training exercises	unlimited (no specification given)	the same	Very huge quantity of training exercises in 11 language version, free of charge and continuously updated

