ALTE 51st Conference Day
Multilingualism and using language for specific purposes – the role of assessment

Language tests and the job market within the migration context: cui prodest?

Lorenzo Rocca
Cluj, 13 April 2018
Outline

- Tension between Language for Specific Purposes Tests (LSPT) and Tests for Migration Purposes (TMP)
- Tension between the Job Market (JM) and TMP
- Good Practices (GP) … to solve the tensions?
- Conclusions
Rationale framework based on 2 theoretical foundations:

2. LSPT has to be “precise” in terms of lexical, semantic, syntactic characteristics (Dudley Evans & St John 1996, Gledhill 2000)
2 assumptions into 1 concept

- LSPT “One in which test content and methods are derived from an analysis of a specific purpose target use situation, so that test tasks and content are authentically representative of tasks in the target situation [...]. Such a test allows to make inferences about a test taker’s capacity to use language in the specific purpose domain” (Douglas 2000: 19)
Authenticity (O’Sullivan 2008)

Situational
Parameters of Context Validity (Wier 2004)

Interactive
Parameters of Cognitive Validity (Wier 2004)

Test takers should be engaged in a variety of tasks related to a specific domain in which language ability and specific content knowledge interact in a way which is similar to the users’ real-life language use (as preliminarily analyzed).
TMP (81% CoE countries)

CoE Survey: 2013

*average level

- 8: A1*
- 23: A2*
- 26: B1*

- First Entering
- Resident Permit
- Citizenship
- KoS

Number of Countries

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Language tests for access, integration and citizenship: An outline for policy makers

Linguistic integration (host society)

- Language competence
- Intercultural competence
- Civic competence
KoS tests: 3 limitations

1. **Wrong rationale** based on the assumption that, by acquiring knowledge of norms and values, migrants will adhere to the values of the host society (McNamara 2009)

2. **Lack of interaction** between content knowledge and language ability: too often KoS tests remain abstract, far from the real-life language use

3. **Recurrences, not specific domains**: e.g. related to workplace (rights and duties of the worker, job contract and VAT, employee and self-employment, retirement system and safety at work, taxes and salaries, etc.)
TMP are not LSPT.
Impact study in Flanders
(Van Avermaet 2009)

- Data: 40 semi-structured interviews
- Employers, as well as employment agencies, said that language is the crucial criterion for obtaining a job, although, most do not ask for evidence of Dutch language or a certificate, preferring to assess the person themselves at the job interview.
Transnational project
(CVCL, CAPLE, Cambridge, Goethe 2014)

- Investigated areas: attitudes, beliefs and opinions concerning the language skills required both to seek the job and in the workplace
- 4 sectors: industry, construction, catering and services
- Data:
  - 18 host country employers’ questionnaires (HCE)
  - 333 migrant employees’ questionnaires (ME)
Think about a foreign person living in the host country and who is not working at the moment. In your opinion, what advice would be important for this person, to help him/her to find a job?
Be aware of the HC’s civic education

Have a certificate of attendance for an HC language course

Acquire a language certificate in the HC language

Describe additional professional experience on his/her CV

Know the customs and traditions of the HC

Always acquire the latest information about job vacancies

Respect the national laws of the HC

Avoid isolating yourself. Try to meet people and make contacts.

Know the rights and duties of workers

Be prepared to be flexible at work

Actively seek work by writing advertisements and sending out CVs

Attend professional training courses

Be determined and know how to cope with any problems that may arise

Know the HC language

Fundamental

Important

Not very important

Use the HC language as much as possible
How does your firm ascertain knowledge of language at the time of recruitment?
“We have no overview of all of the language certificates that exist. It is hard to judge what they mean!”

(Manager, Lacon Electronic GmbH)
ALTE CEFR SIG project
(Carlsen & Deygers 2016)

Survey - preliminary trends (13 countries):
- Access to job market is linguistically unregulated
- Lack of empirical studies in determining tasks and levels
- In very few contexts/ sectors LSPT seem to be used
  (Finland: civil services; Germany and Sweden: healthcare)
CUI PRODEST?
An alibi?

- Proficiency in the official language of the host country has a positive effect on migrants’ labour income in a range of 5% to 35% (Chiswick and Miller 2014, Adserà & Pytlikova 2016)

- Employed migrants in Italy (ISTAT, INPS 2017)
  - 979€ average month salary (vs 1362€ for native speakers)
  - 80% not qualified works (vs 40% of native speakers)
  - Caregivers: 75% of the overall (at national level)
  - Workers in foundries: 50% of the overall (at national level)
  - Pastors in Abruzzo region: 90% (at regional level)
Transnational project - ME

The occupational domain seems to enlarge:
• the gap related to reading and writing
• the risk of «return illiteracy»
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Not necessary</th>
<th>Not very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand instructions given orally</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>158</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak to your colleagues</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak to your superiors</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>322</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand written instructions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>327</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak to clients</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>320</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand written warnings</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>325</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand internal notices and warning signs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>326</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct telephone conversations</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a computer, tablet, mobile phone etc</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand price lists / menus</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill out forms</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand manuals / catalogues</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give orders / provide explanations to others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand warnings and audio/visual announcements</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>321</td>
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<td>Interact verbally with employees from other offices (public administration,</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banks, post offices etc</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write e-mails</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>321</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak to suppliers and representatives</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>316</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produce receipts</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write letters, registered letters etc</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use programs for calculation</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigate the Internet</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce a list / report</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write faxes</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe a menu</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe a sales proposal</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make orders online</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Functions ME: less writing, more listening
Greater London Authority (2013)

- GLA updated the integration strategy prioritising support for “low paid workers to improve their English language skills and move into higher level jobs” (2013a: 14)
- 60 one-to-one face-to-face interviews with migrants (average A2)

1. All respondents reported that they see value in improving their level of English, particularly in relation to work

2. Most had attended an English course, often on arrival in the UK. Few had persisted after finding work

3. Some recurrent obstacles for lifelong learning were identified: cost of courses, inconvenient location/timing, lack of information, lack of communicative opportunity at work
“Up to now, improving linguistic competences and working in the company have often been seen separately. Few models provide combinations of work and language training” (Settlemeyer 2017)

Promotion of virtuous combinations in the workplace or in classroom with the participation of experts from the job market (thus, more situational and interactive authenticity)
Program “Swedish for immigrants” (2017)

- Participation on voluntary basis and without any charge
- The program aims to take learners aged 16 and over from complete beginners to B1
- Sustainable language development was achieved through learning embedded into workplace routines, in particular within 2 large scale projects (SpråkSam and ArbetSam) providing formal learning in care and in Swedish language to more than 1,000 migrants in the Stockholm region
Piloting of the CoE toolkit in SPRAR (2017)

Refugees Asylum Seekers Protection System

- Second phase of the shelter
- Projects of social inclusion (from 6/12 months to 2 years)
- Compulsory language course providing:
  - the contribution of experts from the job market
  - stages in the field
  - the use of communicative scenarios

www.coe.int/lang-refugees
57 items, 15 scenarios

Most appreciated items
• 42 “Looking for a job”
EU funds: 2 programs
(EFI 2010-2016/ AMIF 2016-2022)

- Funds cover:
  - Cost of the course (with professionalizing modules)
  - Cost of the language certificate (where provided)

- Complementary services
  - Babysitting
  - Transports
  - Etc. …

Finally a space (or at least a chink) for MPT?
2 impact studies in Italy: EU EFI (2010) and EU AMIF (2018) projects

- In both the 2 projects: questionnaires and structured interviews after the exam session (A2 certification for adult migrants, as required by law) arrived at the end of a language course (involving experts from the job markets in activities both inside and outside the classroom)

- Thus, MPT as last moment within a continuum (closer link between teaching and assessment)
EU EFI project (2010)

- 645 respondents - The certification perceived as:

).. Appendix
Effect for the occupational domain

- I feel more secure when I apply for a new job 80%
- I speak more with colleagues 76%
- I make myself understood better at work 66%
- I am able to understand what my employer says 64%
EU AMIF project (2018)

- 375 respondents - A sociological representation:
10 respondents T2 (after 8 months)

- 2/10 said to live a better situation in terms of job (8/10 same situation)
- 5/10 declared to use more the HC language in the spare time
- 4/10 decided to remain involved in the educational domain (currently attending a B1 course at the same public school)
- 7/10 communicated to have more contacts with native speakers, but the quantitative data not always reflects qualitative data in terms of positive relations

6/10 admitted they lived more experiences of discrimination: maybe the better competence in the dominant language brought to more awareness also in perceiving the alibi?
CONCLUSIONS:
UP TO HERE, BUT NOT BEYOND
Compulsory TMP = instrumental use of HC language

679 LAMI Questionnaires (Pascoal 2014): “only” A2

I HAVE TO KNOW PORTUGUESE IN ORDER TO:

- Obtain citizenship
- Obtain residence permit (Temporary and Long term)
- Have access to the job market
- Have access to higher education
Reductionist vision in Italy

CVCL data (2017):

- 86% language courses (43,505) in public schools for adult migrants were related to CEFR band A
- 93% of migrant candidates (11,453) in the CELI exams asked the level A2, thus the one compulsory by law

“We are faced with an emergency vision that is reductionist and that has the effect of ghettoizing the migrant. A vision that does not take into account the responsibility of the public institution to outline further developments and levels of competence, effectively capable of inserting the migrant into the labor market” (Vedovelli: 2014, p.29)
TMP lead to exclusion?

- “The “critical language testers” (e.g. Mar-Molinero & Stevenson 2009; Shohamy 2006) highlight the changes in the field of language requirements from a “language and power” perspective. […] They identify an intention behind language examinations of regulating access to society or the attempt to preserve social cohesion by **freezing out certain groups**” (Pochon-Berger & Lenz, in [https://www.goethe.de/en/spr/mag/20424141.html](https://www.goethe.de/en/spr/mag/20424141.html))

- TMP are too oriented / flattened to the **law** in order to make migrants able to:
  - survive in the public domain
  - cover and maintain not qualified profiles in the occupational domain
Thank you!

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