Lessius

Aptitude for interpreting: assessing what is not there (yet)

Heidi Salaets

Šárka Timarová

EALTA, Turku 7th June 2009

Overview

1. Interpreting skill
2. Admission testing and aptitude
3. Survey on admission testing
4. Previous research
5. Lessius research
6. Results

- interpreting is a specific type of very proficient bilingual behaviour
- consecutive:

  Speaker: It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to present my paper at the annual EALTA conference.

  Interpreter: It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to present my paper at the annual EALTA conference.

- simultaneous:

  Speaker: It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to

  Interpreter: It is a great pleasure for me to have

  present my paper at the annual EALTA conference.

  the opportunity to present my paper at the annual EALTA conference.

Purpose of admission tests

= select candidates with aptitude for interpreting

Aptitude

= ability to acquire the consecutive and simultaneous interpreting skills within a period of time afforded by the length of the training programme to a criterion level

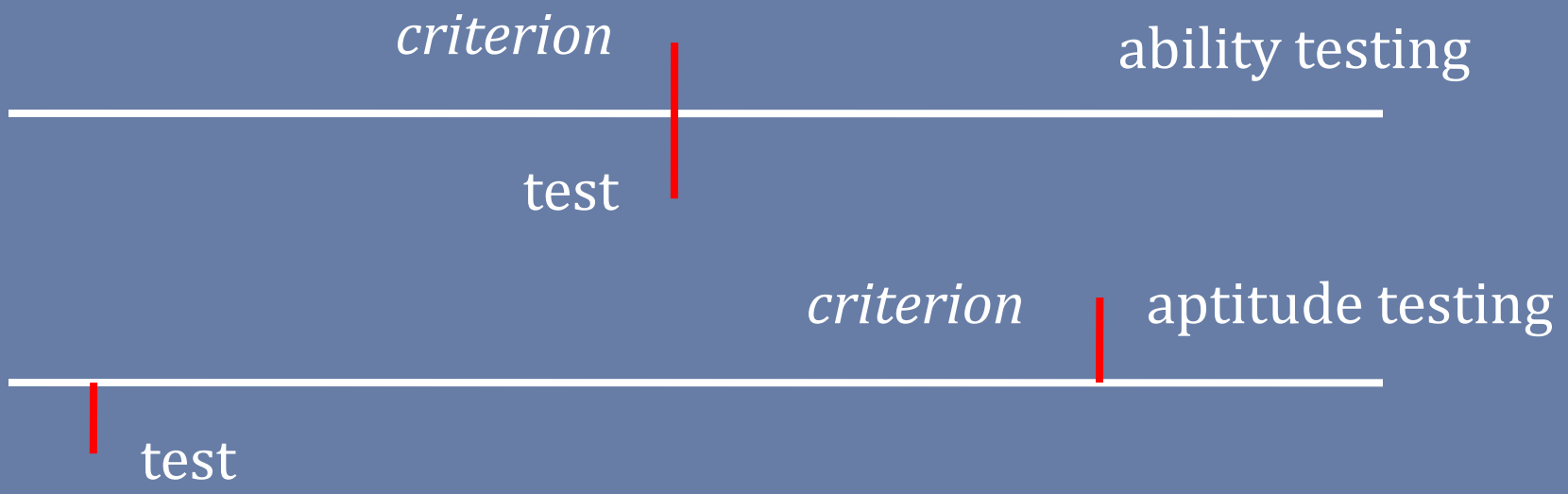
- criterion: ability to provide interpreting of a quality acceptable for entry into the profession

(Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas, 2009, based on Carroll, 1962)

Testing for Aptitude

Admission testing and aptitude: how can we tell someone will be able to acquire the skill?

- need to find predictors of *future* skill



Admission Testing

Skill	Test	Number of Schools
Language	consecutive	14
	short speech	9
	interview	7
	summary	7
	translation	7
Communication	short speech	11
	consecutive	10
	summary	6
	interview	5
Comprehension	summary	8
	translation	8
	consecutive	5

Admission Testing

Course	Applicants	Students (% of applicants)	Passes (% of admissions)
Course A	80	20 (25%)	8 (40%)
Course B	200	60 (30%)	30 (50%)
Course C	20	12 (60%)	6 (50%)
Course D	30	10 (33%)	5 (50%)
…	…	…	…
Total	**1813**	**420 (24%)**	**242 (56%)**

Previous research

- Gringiani, 1990
  - SSLMIT, Trieste, Italy
  - non-binding nature of aptitude tests
  - 7/25 “failed” students completed programme successfully
  - 8/17 “admitted” students withdrew without completion
- similar study reported by Tapalova (1990)

Developing new tasks

- Gerver, Longley, Long, & Lambert (1989)
  - rigorous research into student selection
  - develop more objective admission tests
  - explore various types of tests aimed at the interpreting skill
  - correlate these experimental tests with end of year interpreting exams

Developing new tasks

Table 2.
Correlation coefficients between the seven tests from Table 1 which discriminated significantly between students who passed and those who failed the interpreter examinations.

Test	TM2	LM1	LM2	ED	Cl.1	Cl.2	Syn	Sim
Text Memory 2								
Logical Memory 1	0.42 *							
Logical Memory 2	0.31	0.78 ***						
Error Detection	0.16	0.23	0.30					
Cloze 1	0.05	0.26	0.34	0.83 ***				
Cloze 2	0.31	0.44 *	0.50 **	0.69 ***	0.69 ***			
Synonyms	0.07	0.65 **	0.61 **	0.65 **	0.69 **	0.82 ***		
Simultaneous	0.21	0.25	0.45	0.40 *	0.56 **	0.44 **	0.43	
Consecutive	0.35	0.48 *	0.63 ***	0.43 *	0.37	0.46 *	0.50 *	0.5

** P 0.01; *** P 0.001

Predictors of the Interpreting Skill

- replication of Gerver et al.
- tests in mother tongue (Dutch)
- conference interpreting postgraduate students in Belgium

- 9 interpreting ability tests
- 3 personality/learning ability tests

Interpreting ability tests
-logical memory (2x) -text memory – summary (2x) -cloze (2x written, 1x audio) -synonyms -error detection

Personality and learning ability tests
-motivation -learning styles -mental flexibility

- participants in Belgium:
  - Conference interpreters (9)
  - Master in Interpreting (23)
  - Bachelor students (104)

  - no end year interpreting results for students that are not accepted (2 cases)
  - simulation of selection at Masters level and Bachelor level
    - for Master: only consecutive is taught (no sim)
    - for Bachelor: only check reliability of tests because no simultaneous or consecutive interpreting training

Text Memory (TM) - Summary

- 500 words text
- Dutch
- audiorecorded – 4,5/5 minutes
- listening without notes
- 5 minutes to write down a summary of what they have heard
- scoring model: summary made by colleagues (with written original)

Save the tuna

Urgent measures to save falling stocks of tuna in ……THE…… world's second-biggest tuna fishery, the eastern Pacific, must be ……LAUNCHED…… at a key international meeting this week, conservationists are ……DEMANDING……

Closures of the fishery, both by area and by ……TIME……., must be brought in to protect tumbling Pacific ……POPULATIONS…… of skipjack and big eye tuna, leading environmental groups warn.

Healthy living switches off genes that promote cancer

That **an** healthy way of life can prevent cancer is well **knowing**. It is also becoming **dark** that clean living can help those who already have tumours to survive, and may even prevent the disease **of** coming back. A **figure** of studies have **showed** these effects in breast cancer and colon cancer. But how they really work at a molecular level remains a **certainty**.

grammar vocabulary

Discrimination of pass and fail

Test	Gerver et al. (1989)	Salaets and Timarova
Text Memory 1	×	×
Text Memory 2	✓	×
Logical Memory 1	✓	×
Logical Memory 2	✓	×
Cloze 1-2 10th word - audio	✓	--
Cloze 3 10th word audio French	×	--
Cloze 1 semantic	-	×
Cloze 2 10th word	-	×
Cloze 3 10th word –audio	-	×
Error Detection	✓	×
Synonyms	✓	×

Discrimination of pass and fail

Test	Gerver et al. (1989) (overall)	Salaets and Timarova (consecutive)
Text Memory 1	×	✓
Text Memory 2	✓	×
Logical Memory 1	✓	✓
Logical Memory 2	✓	✓
Cloze 1-2 10th word - audio	✓	--
Cloze 3 10th word audio French	×	--
Cloze 1 semantic	-	×
Cloze 2 10th word	-	×
Cloze 3 10th word –audio	-	×
Error Detection	✓	×
Synonyms	✓	×

Discrimination of pass and fail

Test	Gerver et al. (1989) (overall)	Salaets and Timarova (simultaneous)
Text Memory 1	×	×
Text Memory 2	✓	×
Logical Memory 1	✓	×
Logical Memory 2	✓	×
Cloze 1-2 10th word - audio	✓	--
Cloze 3 10th word audio French	×	--
Cloze 1 semantic	-	×
Cloze 2 10th word	-	×
Cloze 3 10th word –audio	-	×
Error Detection	✓	×
Synonyms	✓	×

Gerver vs Lessius

1977	2007
30 students	9 candidates /7 students
age: 21-35	~ 23
language: EN/FR, native	native (NL)
motivation: real admissions	research project
metrics: scale	pass/fail

Predictors of the Interpreting Skill

Test	Gerver et al. (1989) (combined)	Lessius (consecutive, simultaneous)	Charles
Cloze written	-	×	simultaneous
Cloze audio	✓	×	×
Synonyms	✓	×	×
Error detection	✓	×	simultaneous
Logical memory	✓	consecutive	×
Summary	✓	consecutive	×

Predictors of the Interpreting Skill

Mean scores (with standard deviations) on each test achieved by CU and LUC students

Test	School	
	Charles University (N = 21)	Lessius University College (N = 9)
Cloze 1 (written, key word blank) max score = 35	32.1* (2.35)	24.0 (4.00)
Cloze 2 (written, 10th word blank) max score = 50	33.1 (7.96)	30.9 (7.34)
Cloze 3 (audio, 10th word blank) max score = 50	37.2 (4.78)	35.0 (6.18)
Error Detection max score = 51	30.2* (4.72)	40.3 (3.91)
Synonyms	34.1* (6.43)	20.0 (4.85)

Lessius

Thank you for your attention!

heidi.salaets@lessius.eu

sarka.timarova@lessius.eu

ASSOCIATIE K.U.LEUVEN