Enhancing the roles of test users and test takers in language testing

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Why involve stakeholders?

- Situates language testing in test use
  - Informs test development
  - Important in validity

- Direct impact and benefit
  - Builds mutual respect
  - Testing – learning cycle

- Assessment literacy
  - Embedded and sustained professional development
Outline of Presentation

I. Connecting to the testing cycle

II. Example 1: Rubric development

III. Example 2: Partnerships

IV. Conclusion
The Basic Testing Cycle

(Manual for Language Test Development and Examining, ALTE, 2011, p.20)

Figure 5 The basic testing cycle
The Basic Testing Cycle

(Manual for Language Test Development and Examining, ALTE, 2011)

Collect information about each test taker’s ability

Provide test takers and other stakeholders with the results

Figure 5 The basic testing cycle
The Basic Testing Cycle

*Manual for Language Test Development and Examining, ALTE, 2011*

**Test Development**

- **Decision to provide a test**
  - **Evidence**
  - **Developing the test**
    - **Aim:** Produce test specifications

**Test Use**

- **Assembling tests**
  - **Aim:** Produce live test materials
  - **Evidence**
  - **Administering tests**
    - **Aim:** Collect information about each test taker's ability
  - **Marking tests**
    - **Aim:** Provide an accurate and reliable mark for each test taker
  - **Grading tests**
    - **Aim:** Put the performance of each test taker into a meaningful category so the test result can be understood
  - **Reporting test results**
    - **Aim:** Provide test takers and other stakeholders with the results and any other information needed for an appropriate interpretation

**Figure 5 The basic testing cycle**
Example 1: Rubric Development (Becker, 2016)

• Research study to explore student engagement in rubric development

• Adult ESL writing course

• Experimental design with four classes
  – Class 1: Created their own rubric
  – Class 2: Practiced scoring writing with a rubric
  – Class 3: Saw a rubric before submitting writing
  – Class 4: Control group (no treatment)
Example 1: Rubric Development (Becker, 2016)

- Class 1 created a rubric:
  - Look at models: review good and poor work
  - Think about how writing should be assessed
  - Discuss and agree upon criteria
  - Articulate levels of quality
  - Create a draft rubric

- Class 2 practiced scoring with a rubric:
  - Review benchmark essays with rubric
  - Practice scoring with partner
Example 1: Rubric Development
(Becker, 2016)

• Summary writing task

• Results
  – Students who created or practiced with a rubric had significantly higher quality writing than other groups
  
  – Those creating a rubric also had significantly higher quality than those who practiced scoring with a rubric

• Implications
  – Learning through rubric sessions
Example 2: Partnerships

- Community-based participatory research (CBPR)
  - A collaboration of researchers and community partners through all stages of research
    
    "seeks to reconnect action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions of pressing concern to people". (Bradbury & Reason p.226)

- CBPR originates in applied health sciences

- Fits well with pragmatic approach in language assessment cycles
Community-Based Participatory Research (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008)

• Steps in CBPR:
  – Initial engagement of partners
  – Identifying research questions together
  – Data collection
  – Analysis and interpretation of data
  – Feedback and results, emphasis on application

• Promotes co-learning and capacity building among all partners
Community partner

- Rural school district with a dual language program (bilingual Spanish/English)

- Dual Language Program enrollment (2017-2018)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Defining Issues

• Partnership:
  – Dual Language Program Coordinator
  – Primary School Principal
  – University team

• Identified research questions together.
  – Reviewed dual language assessments as well as purposes and problems
  – Major question emerged
    • Ledd to two development projects
“How do we know our assessment system is working?”

Current assessment system in DL program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading in English and Spanish</th>
<th>(1) Curriculum-based measure of reading subskills in English &amp; Spanish</th>
<th>Grades K - 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic and language proficiency in Spanish</td>
<td>(2) Reading vocabulary, and writing, aligned to state standards</td>
<td>Grades 3 – 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(3) Oral proficiency assessment</td>
<td>Grades 2, 5, &amp; 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>English Proficiency</td>
<td>(4) Four-skills standardized English assessment</td>
<td>Grade 2-12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Validity & efficiency study of assessments in use
Project 1: Assessment of young learners’ oral skills in Spanish

- After tracking the assessments over two years, issues arose with
  - Standardized oral interview assessment delivered via computer
  - Repeated problems with Grade 2 (age 7)
  - 33% of learners did not have scorable performances

- Project underway:
  - Developing a young learner Spanish assessment with teachers
Project 2: Local norming

- School adopted a Spanish version of standardized English reading measure (curriculum-based measure)
  - Teachers reported concern in using the published norms
    - Norms are percentiles supplied by test developer
    - Test used to diagnose “risk” for reading difficulties
    - Over-identifying reading problems
- Project underway:
  - Collecting data to develop local norms for dual language learners
  - Follow up study of of local norm use and effectiveness
Challenges in Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders
- Dynamic changing contexts
- High need with time constraints

Partnerships
- Maintaining & sustaining
- Aligning needs and expertise
Conclusion

**Decision to provide a test**
- **Test development**
  - Developing the test
    - Aim: produce test specifications
  - Assembling tests
    - Aim: produce live test materials
  - Administering tests
    - Aim: collect information about each test taker’s ability
  - Marking tests
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- Reporting test results
  - Aim: provide test takers and other stakeholders with the results and any other information needed for an appropriate interpretation

**Figure 5 The basic testing cycle**
Conclusion

- Engaging stakeholders in language testing can:
  - Establish productive collaborations
  - Solve practical issues with assessments
  - Draw necessary expertise into the testing cycle
  - Build assessment literacy
  - Improve language learning
Thank you! lia-plakans@uiowa.edu