Learner Assessment in MLE Projects

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Focus of this Presentation

What is NOT in Focus

- Overall design of a learner assessment
- Routine classroom assessment
- Formative or operational assessment
- Criterial assessment of individual learners
- Analysis of data and reporting of results

What IS in Focus

- Some initial considerations
- Language of assessment
- Oral vs. written assessment
- Choice of, or design of assessment instruments
- Who should be involved in the design of instruments?
- Translation vs. creation in the target language
- Content of assessment
- Data collection processes
- Assessing progress in learning L2 (or L3 and beyond)
Some Initial Considerations

- National vs local learning standards
- When it comes to national or international assessment, language is a necessary unit and medium of assessment (otherwise, such tests tend to measure knowledge of L2, not mastery of content)
- Level of linguistic homogeneity within the schools
- Purpose of assessment activity
- Are teachers L1 speakers of the target language?
- Are teachers proficient in the reading and writing of the language?
- Have local school children ever previously participated in an assessment of learning outcomes?
- Population of the target language
Language of Assessment

• AXIOM: In an MLE program, all assessment should be carried out via the language of instruction.

• Assessment of knowledge and skill of the L2 via the L2 is appropriate if L2 is a subject in the curriculum.

• General assessment via L2 is appropriate IFF the assessment question is readiness for instruction via the L2 in later years of education.

• Data enumerators (test administrators) should be native speakers of or have strong skills in the language of assessment.
Oral vs. Written Assessment

Oral assessments – pros and cons
• Can be done with younger children who have not yet learned to read
• Tend to be more reliable indicators of what children have mastered
  ❑ Take longer to complete often requiring a sampling scheme
  ❑ Best carried out in L1
  ❑ Somewhat more difficult to score accurately

Written assessments – pros and cons
• Easier to create
• Quicker to administer and score
  ❑ Somewhat uncertain reliability
  ❑ More prone to “unhelpful” inputs
  ❑ More vulnerable to being compromised
Choosing vs. Designing Assessment Instruments

**Choosing?**
- Minimal options: EGRA, EGMA (still must be adapted)
- National standardized assessment? (translation still needed)
- International standardized assessment? (translation still needed)

**Designing?**
- Customized to local curriculum (e.g., including modest L2 assessment)
- Can be tailored to program needs including general evaluation
- Can be written in the local language
Who Should be Involved in the Design of Instruments?

- An educational assessment specialist
- A linguist (or comparable person) with some knowledge of the L1
- 2-5 Education personnel from each L1 MLE project or unit
- The project manager if the MLE program is new or experimental
- A national assessment representative if the proposed assessment is part of a national assessment initiative
- A bilingual translator with proficiency in the L1 and the national language
- Technical personnel to handle keyboarding, formatting, script issues, etc.
Translation vs. Creation in the Target Language

Translation – pros and cons
• Content not so problematic
• Less technical expertise required
  ❑ Little to no potential for customization
  ❑ Good language expertise required in two languages
  ❑ Some potential for miss-translation of instrument content

Original creation – pros and cons
• Maximum flexibility in creation
• Maximum knowledge of the local context
  ❑ Requires more technical expertise and experience in design
  ❑ Avoids the issues in translation
Comments on the Content of Assessment

Content of assessment

• In the early grades (k-2), reading skill development, math and possibly oral L2 learning.
  • (Recommended for reading skill development: a language-specific adaptation of basic EGRA)
• In grades 3 and above, reading comprehension, math, L2 and possibly science and social studies.

Length of assessments

• 20 to 40 minutes for grade 2 and below.
• 60 to 90 minutes Grade 3 and above.
Data Collection Processes

- A general recommendation is that test administrators work in teams of two rather than working alone.
- Test administrators should be highly proficient in the local language.
- Test administrators can be from the local community if they have the needed skill to administer the assessments.
- Current teachers should NOT be test administrators.
- Explanations of how testing will proceed, whether oral or written, should be provided in the local language.
- Copies of instruments should not be submitted to schools prior to testing and copies should not be left behind after testing is complete.
- When testing is complete, all instruments from the same school should be bundled together and marked accordingly.
Assessing Progress in Learning L2
(or beyond)

**Oral assessments**
- The interview/conversation
- The picture/vocabulary test
- Various subjective strategies

**Written assessments**
- General knowledge of target language (vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing)
- Reading comprehension with graded material manipulating variables such as
  - Difficulty level of texts,
  - informational density,
  - level of abstraction,
  - use of allusions and figures of speech, etc.
Thank you for attending!

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