

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.

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Thank you for attending!

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