CEFR-linked test development in academic context: teachers’ perspective

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Overview

1. Background

2. LAL promotion project

3. Survey and its results
Background

- Language Centre of Masaryk University, Czech Republic, Brno
  - 9 faculties with LAP and LSP courses (Eng, Ger, Fr, Sp, Ru, Latin)
  - 60 LSP and LAP instructors = test developers
  - 70 LAP and LSP courses -> 240 end-of-course tests
  - relatively high-stake tests
CEFR and MU Language Centre

- 2006 – official decision to relate courses and tests to CEFR
- 2008-2011 – CEFR familiarization workshops
- 2012-2015 – test development project with ambition to link LC tests to CEFR
What a Manual says …

Linking of a test to the CEFR cannot be valid unless the examination or test that is the subject of the linking can demonstrate validity in its own right.

(Manual, p.9)
From alignment to promotion

- pre-scientific / intuitive approach to test development
  - no uniform requirement of language assessment literacy (LAL) in both pre-service or in-service training

- 2012-2015 project to develop competence-based tests applying good practice in test development
  - project to promote language assessment literacy
LAL project

Series of LAL workshops
1. Test development cycle (May 2012)
2. Test specifications (June 2012)
3. Test item development and moderation (September 2012)
4. Basic test stats (June 2013)
5. Standard setting (June 2013)
7. Benchmarking – writing (February 2014)

Followed by an implementation phase
- May 2012 – October 2012 – test specs developed
- October 2012 – March 2013 – test item development+moderations
- March 2013 – October 2013 – pretesting, stats analysis
Survey 2013

- 2012-2013: first development cycle
- June, 2013: survey among instructors=test developers
- anonymous
- 53 respondents out of 60; 88%
Questionnaire structure

1. Perception of a new form of assessment
2. Relation between teaching and testing
3. Practical issues
Q1: Try to compare a new form of assessment with the previous one in terms of these aspects:
Q2: Regardless of the previous form of tests, the newly developed tests

- are theoretically well based
- are good measuring tools
- have a positive impact on stakeholders
- contribute to conceptual work
- are competence-based
- contribute to team work
Free answers

- developing new tests is based on specifications and with relation to CEFR while old tests were developed based on “feelings and impressions“.
- profound realization of CEFR levels per se and their features
- comprehensive familiarization with CEFR
- familiarization with good testing practice
- necessity to revise and clarify differences between CEFR levels
- application of testing principles as [in the past] everybody did what he / she considered appropriate
- I ticked demanding for preparation but it does not necessarily mean worse. More thorough preparation implies more demanding which leads to far better outcomes.
Free answers

- awareness of mistakes I should avoid when developing a test
- sometimes more demanding but because of moderations which are time-consuming, but very effective
- team work, discussions
- ancoreing the tests to CEFR
- tests are more transparent and objective
- positive feedback from students
- testing all four skills
- more fair on students
- fair approach students
Free answers

- extremely time-consuming
- time-consuming,
- time-consuming, time-consuming …
- lack of team spirit of my colleagues and their inability to work in a team
- too tight rules
- inflexibility
- sticking to details
- bad organization and coordination
- useless work
- bad allocation of time and money
- bad communication
Q3: Was the new form of assessment necessary?

0 – totally useless  
10 – absolutely necessary

% of answers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14
Findings

• LAL workshops + expertise
• Transparent, fair, objective tests
• CEFR – a useful tool

• Resources
• Coordination
• Sustainability outside the project
Thank you for your attention

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