Developing language assessment literacy profiles for different stakeholders – needs, lacks and wants

Work-in-Progress

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Copenhagen
Overview

• Research literature on LAL
• Study
• Pilot results
• Next steps
Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

• Numerous definitions in literature

“The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardized and/or classroom based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals.”

(Fulcher, 2012, p. 125)

• Different degrees of LAL needed for different stakeholder groups

(e.g. O’Loughlin 2013; Pill and Harding 2013; Taylor 2009; 2013)
## Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

- Continuum model of LAL (Pill & Harding, 2013, p. 383)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>Ignorance of language assessment concepts and methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nominal literacy</td>
<td>Understanding that a specific term relates to assessment, but may indicate a misconception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional literacy</td>
<td>Sound understanding of basic terms and concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural/conceptual literacy</td>
<td>Understanding central concepts of the field, and using knowledge in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidimensional literacy</td>
<td>Knowledge extending beyond ordinary concepts including philosophical, historical and social dimensions of assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

- Taylor’s LAL profiles (2013, p. 410)
Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

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Research questions

1. What levels of LAL do different stakeholder groups think they need?
2. What levels of LAL do different stakeholder groups think other stakeholder groups need?
3. What level of LAL do different stakeholder groups currently believe they have?
4. What do different stakeholder groups believe they need in order to develop LAL to the target they have set?
Study

Large-scale online survey

• Simplified definitions of LAL dimensions

• 6 stakeholder groups
  – Language teachers
  – Language test developers
  – Language testing researchers
  – Applied linguists
  – Policymakers (educational politics, uni admissions, immigration, etc.)
  – Test takers
**Study**

- Sample item

### Knowledge of theory

Knowledge about models of language and proficiency as well as about the theoretical constructs of the language skills

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<thead>
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<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language test developers (professionals who create tests, write questions, develop scoring guides, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language testing researchers (professionals who conduct research on language testing matters)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied linguistics researchers (professionals who conduct research on language and language learning without a specialization in language testing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy-makers (government officials, immigration officers, etc. who might use language test scores for decision making)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test takers (learners who might need to take a language test)</td>
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</table>
Piloting of survey

Two aims:

1. to gather some provisional results to test the methodology
2. to elicit feedback on the survey itself to ensure that it was clear, coherent, and usable by stakeholders from all groups
Pilot results

N=52
11 countries
63% female, 37% male
Average Age: 28.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language test developers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language testing researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applied linguists</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policymakers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test takers</td>
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</table>
Pilot results

Knowledge of theory
Scores and decision making
Personal beliefs/attitudes
Local practices
Sociocultural values

Technical skills (construction)
Technical skills (evaluation)
Principles and concepts
Language pedagogy

Taylor
Teachers
Pilot results

- Knowledge of theory
  - Scores and decision making
  - Personal beliefs/attitudes
  - Local practices
  - Sociocultural values

- Technical skills
  - (construction)
  - (evaluation)

- Principles and concepts

- Language pedagogy

LTRaboutTeachers

Teachers
Pilot results

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Local practices
Sociocultural values

Teachers_ideal
Teachers_statusquo
Pilot results

• Generally, survey appears to be clear
• Stakeholder group definitions mostly clear, but label “policymakers” problematic
  “Policy-makers wasn't as clear, as the phrase "who might use language test scores for decision-making" also suggests people such as college admissions staff, and employers of NNS, and they aren't people I would normally label as policy-makers, but they are definitely test score users, which I think is what the question is getting at.”

• Knowledge dimensions “sociocultural values“ and “personal beliefs“ least clear, but still ok (?)
  – Sociocultural values (Knowledge of the social role and impact of assessment and the social and cultural values that shape each assessment practice)
  – Personal beliefs/attitudes (Ability to reflect on one’s own attitude towards language assessment)
Next steps?

Challenges to address before large-scale online administration:

• So far: Little input from policymakers
  – Because difficult to get hold of?
  – Because of problematic label?
    → Alternative: Score user? Decision-makers?

• What to do with individuals who belong to more than one stakeholder group? (e.g. test developers who also research, etc.)
Suggestions?
Comments?
Questions?

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Pilot results

• What additional training do you think you would need in order to develop to your ideal level of language testing knowledge for the group to which you belong?
  – Mostly statistical/technical knowledge

• How much time would you be willing to invest to arrive at the level of language testing knowledge that you indicated as desirable for the group you belong to?
  – Everything from 30 min to 4 years

• How would you prefer to receive this instruction or training (e.g. face-to-face, online, webinars, MOOCs, etc.)?
  – Predominantly face-to-face
Pilot results

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Taylor

Testers
Pilot results

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LTR about Policymakers

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(construction)

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Policymaker
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AL_ideal

AL_Status-quo