Planning for Assessment in Language Programs: A Practical Tool

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Mahalo, Obrigada, Thank You

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Key Points

- Language Programs don’t plan for assessment.
- Language Programs should plan for assessment.
- Assessments should attempt to nourish the body of linguistic knowledge.
- How do you do this?
- If it’s too late, what can you do?
Lack of Planning

- Emphasis on implementation
  - Successful implementation = successful program?
- CEFL and ACFTL proficiencies, but no provisions for assessment
- UNESCO
Lack of Planning: Dangers

- Cessation of funding:
  - Evaluations are increasingly required by nonprofit funders as verification that the nonprofits are indeed helping their constituents.

- You might not be doing what you think you’re doing:
  - Evaluations can identify program strengths and weaknesses to improve the program.

- Waning community support:
  - Produce data or verify results that can be used for public relations and promoting services in the community.

- Hurts legitimacy.
Lack of Planning: East Timor

- 2012 – MTB-MLE (UNESCO)
  - Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education
  - 3 languages, 12 pilot schools
  - no formal assessment in ToR
- 2013 – first call for assessor
- 2014 – second call for assessor
- 2015 – problems with consistency, legitimacy, and politics
**Linguistic Theory**

- Assessments are often not linguistically or theoretically sound.
  - Move Forward (NGO)
- They could be a tool to add to the existing body of language literature.
- Track age and level appropriate development.
  - Must be appropriate to the goals of the program (literacy, acquisition, etc.)
The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment
The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment
1. Context:
   ◦ define the situation before the program begins,
   ◦ identify the goals and assess the needs of the community,
   ◦ attempt to diagnose the problems underlying the needs, and
   ◦ identify the external factors that will affect the program
Multi-level program assessment

1. Context

2. Input
   - discover potential resources,
   - learn about other programs/activities in the community that might collaborate
   - identify and describe potential stakeholders in the program
Multi-level program assessment

1. Context
2. Input
3. Process:
   ◦ identify strengths and weaknesses of the program plan and implementation,
   ◦ provide information to stakeholders and
   ◦ keep a record of the implementation process and its impact on the community
Multi-level program assessment

1. Context
2. Input
3. Process
4. Impact:
   ◦ relate the outcomes of the program to the original situation,
   ◦ the goals and needs identified by the community,
   ◦ the objectives described in the program plan,
   ◦ and the resources that were available to the program
Multi-level program assessment

1. Context
2. Input
3. Process
4. Impact

Where do you get this data?
- Interviews, surveys, meeting notes, proposals, budgets, anything from which you can glean intent
The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment
Community member attitudes
  ◦ Above all, they deserve to know how the program is going.

Outsider attitudes
  ◦ Decision-makers sometimes come from outside and it is important to keep track of their perceptions.

Teachers’ performance
  ◦ Teachers need to feel supported and looked-after.
The Toolkit

- Multi-level program assessment
- Multi-level community assessment
- Multi-level linguistic assessment
Learners’ knowledge

- **Traditional Benchmarks**: listening, speaking, reading, writing

- **Linguistic/Acquisition Benchmarks**
  - Phonological development
  - Morphological development
  - Grammatical stuff: Relationships, hypotheses, passives
  - Discourse competence and constructing dialogues
Learners’ knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
  - Phonological development: Pronunciation and lexical recall
Learners’ knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
  - Phonological development
  - Morphological development: Ownership, location, plurals/classifiers
• Can you tell me where the ball is?

• Can you tell me where the lamp is?
Can you tell me how many people are on the bus?
Learners’ knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
  - Phonological development
  - Morphological development
  - Grammatical stuff: Relationships, hypotheses, passives
Can you tell me what’s happening in this picture?
• Cinto got a new ball today. What do you think he will do tomorrow?
Can you tell me what’s happening to the cat in this picture?
Learners’ knowledge

- Linguistic/Acquisition benchmarks
  - Phonological/pronunciation
  - Morphological/ownership, location,
  - Grammatical stuff/relationships, hypotheses, passives
  - Discourse competence and constructing dialogues
Can you tell me what these people are saying to each other?
Other Toolkit Components

- What do you need to do assessment?
  - Getting started and setting goals

- What do you do with the data?
  - Organizational tips for spreadsheets, basic analysis tools, basic statistics

- How do you make recommendations?
  - Really carefully!
Each part of the assessment ought to be considered for use, but varied to fit context.

- Scoring - to grade or not to grade?
- Level-appropriate tasks
- Culturally-appropriate tasks
Conclusion

- Program assessments can be fun! Really!
- They can also be useful to the broader linguistic community.
- (Free, non-copyrighted) Assessment materials are scarce, but I’m working on that.
- Eventually everything will be hosted on my website. (Interview materials are ready now)
  - melodyannross.me
References, Works Cited and Sources:

- Malone, Susan. 2010. Planning Mother Tongue Based Education Programs in Minority Language Communities. SIL. Dallas.
References, Works Cited and Sources:

- MTB-MLE Network. (cite this website somehow)
- Pinnock, Helen. 2009. Language and Education: The Missing Link; How the Language Used in Schools Threatens the Achievement of Education for All. CfBT Education Trust and Save the Children Alliance.
Obrigada ba tempu!