What is Plurilingual Assessment?

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Aims

- Quick look at the different terminology to understand what “plurilingual” means
- Therefore, what does plurilingualism mean for language assessment?
- How can this be put into practice?
ALTE – Association of Language Testers in Europe

multilingual

SUSTAINING DIVERSITY

ALTE Members test

24 languages
from 21 European countries

and Institutional Affiliates
represent other 16 languages
from Europe and beyond.

ALTE supports the learning, teaching and testing of all languages, including regional and sign languages. ALTE’s quality standards were designed with this diversity in mind, and can help both the largest exam boards and those with only a few candidates per year.

All languages matter...

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multilingual

“The coexistence of different languages at the social or individual level” (CEFR Companion Volume, p.28)

plurilingual

“The dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user / learner” (CEFR Companion Volume, p.28)
“The ability to call flexibly upon an inter-related, uneven, plurilingual repertoire to:

• Switch from one language or dialect or variety to another
• Express oneself in one language and understand a person speaking another
• Call upon the knowledge of a number of languages to make sense of a text
• Recognise words from a common international store in a new guise
• Mediate between individuals with no common language, even with a only a slight knowledge onself
• Bring the whole of one’s linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression

(CEFR Companion Volume, p.28)
# Plurilingualism in the CEFR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can recognise internationalisms to deduce meaning of simple signs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand short, clearly written messages and instructions by piecing together what he/she understands from the versions in different languages</td>
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<td>A2</td>
<td>Can use a word from another language in his/her plurilingual repertoire to make him/herself understood in a routine everyday situation, when he/she cannot think of an adequate expression in the language being spoken</td>
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<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can extract information from documents written in different languages in his/her field to include in a presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>B2+</td>
<td>Can alternate efficiently between languages in his/her plurilingual repertoire in order to facilitate comprehension with and between third parties who lack a common language</td>
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plurilingualism

translanguaging

“The deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages” (Otheguy, Garcia & Read, 2015)

Hult (2019) argues that these two terms are, for the most part, interchangeable.
Some more terms…

Named languages

Loan words

Code-switching

Code-mixing

Heteroglossia

Transversal skills
The Multilingual Turn (May 2014)

- Away from idealised native speaker
- Away from siloed language lessons in schools
- Utilisation of plurilingual repertoires
- Embrace translanguaging in education
- Increased research and practice
Europe wants multi- and plurilinguals

2002 Barcelona European Council: “mother tongue plus two”

2018 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages

**Europeans and Languages**

**What young people say about languages:**

- 33%: I could not study in a foreign language
- 77%: I would like to learn a new language
- 8%: I already learned a foreign language but would like to improve it

**Statistics show that:**

- **First Foreign Language** is almost a basic skill
- **97% of pupils learn** English
- **Second Foreign Language** is not compulsory everywhere or can be dropped after 3-4 years
- **9%** of all 15-year olds in the EU speak a different language at home than at school

**Our goal:**

At the end of upper secondary school young people should be able to:

1. Fully use the language of schooling
2. Fully use another European language
3. Confidently use a third language

But what about plurilingual assessment?

“The contrast between the expanding use of multilingual practices in pedagogy, and the absence of multilingual approaches in assessment and evaluation measures is striking”
(Schissel, De Korne and López-Gopar, 2018)

“We want to encourage the development of plurilingual competence, but measuring it is a challenge that has not been resolved”
(Dunlea & Erickson, 2018)
But what about plurilingual assessment?

“Tests should match actual language practices and multilinguals use resources from their whole linguistic repertoire. If teaching is going in the direction of a multilingual focus, assessment should also follow the same path.”

(Gorter and Cenoz, 2017, p.43)
Plurilingual, pluricontextual language learner. Various educational, social, affective and other impacts on the learner’s cognition and language knowledge.

Source: ALTE Principles of Good Practice 2020
But what about plurilingual assessment?

- Can it be defined?
- How can this construct be operationalised into a test?
- How do you measure this diversity in standard ways?

"Each individual uses their different linguistic abilities in different ways in different situations." (Saville & Seed, forthcoming)

Ensuring assessors have similar plurilingual backgrounds to the test-takers, rewarding the test-taker appropriately, scoring reliably across multiple test versions (Brown, 2013; Lopez, Turkan & Guzman-Orth, 2017)
Why might we want to assess an individual’s plurilingual competences?

Because the real-life target language use demands it (contextual validity) e.g.

- Communicative operation in one named language
- Communicative operation across more than one named language
- Ability to use linguistic strategies to operate in language domains you don’t know, or only partially know
Communicative operation in one named language

An individual’s plurilingual competences can, and have to, exist with standard named languages, in order to communicate.

It’s OK to measure the proficiency of a standard language.

But we can test a standard language recognising an individual’s plurilingual abilities.
One day, Sam and Mary play basketball. They are very happy. Suddenly, basketball in the ocean. One hairun help they catch the basketball.
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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Pre-A1</th>
<th>A1 ALTE Breakthrough</th>
<th>A2 ALTE Level 1</th>
<th>B1 ALTE Level 2</th>
<th>B2 ALTE Level 3</th>
<th>C1 ALTE Level 4</th>
<th>C2 ALTE Level 5</th>
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1. Recognise plurilingual abilities

2. Don’t promote test in linguistic isolation

3. Practicality often demands individual tests but build a profile!

Oh that’s lovely, I can see how I can apply that in the tests we create!

Yes, but that isn’t really plurilingual assessment, is it?
Communicative operation across more than one named language (=Mediation)


Using plurilingual resources in content knowledge assessments


Assessing development of plurilingual competences

• Because plurilingual competences are specific to the individual, we need assessments targeted to the individual.

• Therefore, we might need to think about “assessment” differently to traditional methods of assessment.
Learning Oriented Assessment

Jones & Saville, 2016
Learning Oriented Assessment

Collate evidence of plurilingual development by:
• Language-neutral plurilingual curriculum
• Language learning diaries
• Observations and monitoring
• Portfolios
• Self-assessment

Use new CEFR descriptors to help describe someone’s plurilingual competences: *Plurilingual Comprehension; Building on Plurilingual Repertoires* and plurilingual Mediation scales
FREPA - A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures

More languages? – PlurCur! Research and practice regarding plurilingual whole school curricula

A digital future for plurilingual assessment

• Capturing evidence of plurilingual practices in action

“Internet-based adaptive language assessment should be able to accommodate our bilingual selves” (Garcia & Flores, 2014, p.162)

• Personalised to the learner and localised to the context
References


References


