Admissions and placement testing in the Japanese university context

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Forum

• Rie Koizumi (20 min talk + 5 min QA)
  – Background
  – TOEFL ITP & iBT for placement
• Mark Chapman (20 min + 5 min QA)
  – MELAB for admission and EPT for placement
• Michiko Nakano (20 min + 5 min QA)
  – WeTEC for placement
• Panel discussion driven by questions from the audience (15 min)
Background

• Japanese education ministry expert panel
• Intends to improve English education at schools
• Report to help students increase English proficiency
• Recommended using private external proficiency tests measuring 4 skills for university admissions
Background

- A smaller-scale panel is discussing how to use external tests effectively by examining test contents and creating a test conversion table.
- Increasing attention to a wider range of admissions and placement assessments in Japan
- Need to enhance language assessment literacy in Japan
Purpose of this forum

• To present and discuss a range of English proficiency tests for admission into university, and placement into level-appropriate English classes

• Issues: fitness for purpose and other aspects of validity within the Japanese university context
Purpose of this forum

• Emphasize the testing of speaking (S) and writing (W) as well as listening (L) and reading (R)

• S & W: typically under represented in admissions and placement testing

• Discuss issues on appropriate tests for admission and placement purposes among viable alternatives to traditionally used tests
Juntendo University, School of Medicine

• Goal of English education
• Foster future doctors’ English proficiency so that they can
  – Go abroad for clinical training
  – Perform medical examinations
• Admission: reading + writing (+ Center listening)
• Instruction: Focus on TOEFL (+ IELTS) and medical English
TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language Institutional Testing Program)

- Construct: English proficiency
- Use: Only for institutions: placement + α
- All multiple-choice questions
- (1) Listening (50 items, 35 min, 31 to 68)
- (2) Grammar (40 items, 25 min, 31 to 68)
- (3) Reading (50 items, 55 min, 31 to 67)
TOEFL ITP

• Score range: 310 ~ 677
• Standard error of measurement = 13
• Levels 1 and 2 (TOEFL and Pre-TOEFL)
• Get results within Min. 8 days (Min. 4 days using emergency service)
• Min. 2,900 yen per student
TOEFL iBT (Internet-based Test)

• Construct: English proficiency
• Use: admission + α
• Multiple-choice + constructed-response questions
• 4 skills
• (1) Reading (36-56 items, 60-80 min)
• (2) Listening (24-36 items, 60-90 min)
TOEFL iBT (Internet-based test)

• (3) Speaking (6 tasks, 20 min)
  – Independent & integrated
• (4) Writing (2 tasks, 50 min)
  – Independent & integrated
• Score range: 0-120
• 0 to 30 for each skill
• Standard error of measurement = 4.88
TOEFL iBT

• Need to take it at designated venues
  – ITP can be taken at each university.
• Get online results within 10 days
  (results via mails, 13 days)
• $230 per student
Use of TOEFL at Juntendo

• (1) Placement
• M1 classes by TOEFL ITP (M1 April)
Use of TOEFL at Juntendo

• (2) Requirement for advancing to M2

• TOEFL ITP (M1 Nov.): 475 or above

• OR TOEFL iBT (M1 Aug. to Nov.): 53 or above
Use of TOEFL at Juntendo

• (3) Program evaluation
• TOEFL ITP (M1 April vs. Nov.)
  – From 508.35 (SD = 47.17) to 522.66 (42.45)
• (4) Requirement for going abroad for clinical training
• TOEFL iBT or IELTS (by M5 Dec.)
Possible reasons for the moderate correlation between ITP and iBT

• Construct difference: 2 vs. 4 skills
• Test format difference: wider range of tasks and longer passages in iBT
• Changes in motivation: before vs. after passing the requirement for advancing to the next year
• Time interval: August vs. November
Program evaluation using TOEFL

• TOEFL ITP (M1 April vs. Nov.)
  – From 508.35 ($SD = 47.17$) to 522.66 (42.45)
Can we claim that the students’ test scores increased?

- 2 factors that affect score changes
- (1) Regression to the mean effect
  - Pretest scores more distant from the mean are probabilistically likely to cluster around the posttest mean.
- (2) Standard measurement of difference
  - Error caused by the lack of test stability
  - Used for comparing two scores of the same test administered in different occasions from the same person
Regression to the mean effect
Formula for expected posttest scores

• Expected posttest score
• \( M_y + r \left( \frac{SD_y}{SD_x} \right)(X - M_x) \)
Standard measurement of difference (SED) of TOEFL ITP

- 68% probability SED: 18.38 ($\sqrt{2} \times 13$)
- 95% probability SED: 36.03 ($1.96 \times 18.38$)
- If the score changes less than this value, the change may be due to measurement error.
Results at Juntendo

• Expected posttest score < Actual:
  51.67% in 2012  49.60% in 2013

• 68% probability SED < Actual
  24.17% in 2012  40.00% in 2013

• Both
  22.50% in 2012  36.00% in 2013
Issues of using TOEFL for placement and evaluation

• (1) Construct
• Program goal: increase 4 skills
• Better to assess 4 skills, easier to teach based on 4 skills (iBT)
  – TOEFL ITP does not include S & W.
  – Various S & W level students in one class.
• ⇔ cost, ease of administration (ITP)
Issues of using TOEFL for placement and evaluation

• (2) Use of total score
• Some profile variability in one class
  – E.g., Some are better at L and S; others better at R and W.
• (3) Teaching to the tests
• Narrowing the class content
Using test results effectively: Feedback to teachers

- Current + Future
  - Means and SDs of the total score & four-skill scores + Graphical displays
  - Verbal descriptions of features of each class
  - Identification of students who have large skill-gaps and may need special remedial activities
Conclusion

- Issues of using TOEFL for placement and evaluation
  - (1) Construct vs. cost
  - (2) Use of total score
  - (3) Narrowing the class content
- Using test results effectively by providing feedback to teachers