FAIR ASSESSMENT FOR IMPAIRED TEST-TAKERS – PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Overview

- Context: accessibility and fairness
- Accommodation practise
- Research
  - Overview
  - Challenges
  - Issue of time extension
- Prospects: research and practical implications
Context: accessibility and fairness

Growing awareness and discussion

- Ethical and social dimension of language testing
- General rights and individual characteristics of test takers

→ Equal access and appropriate and fair assessment for Second Language Learners with disabilities
Accommodations

Definition:
- departure from established testing protocol
- required by an individual’s disability
  
  (APA/AERA/NCME, p. 101)

Goal:
- Demonstrate language skills to the best of ability
- Permit fair and objective assessment
  
  (Shaw & Weir, 2007, p. 20)
### Accommodations: categorisation scheme

| Presentation   | Large print  
|               | Braille papers  
|               | Human reader, screen reader, …  
| Response       | Response in test booklet  
|               | Amanuensis, …  
| Timing and Scheduling | Extended time,  
|               | Multiple or frequent breaks, …  
| Setting        | Change of location, …  
| Linguistic     | Simplifying language of test tasks  

Thurlow, Thompson & Lazarus, 2006
Squaring the circle?

- Effective inclusion
- Inconsistencies in (inter)national legislation
- Varying definitions, diagnostical tools
- Sound diagnosis
- Appropriate accommodation
  - Effective, valid, implementable
  - Unfair (dis)advantage
  - Real language ability

Political perspective
Diagnostic perspective
Perspective of Examination Boards
Test Taker perspective

Fair assessment

Perspective of Examination Boards

Test Taker perspective

Fair assessment

Political perspective

Diagnostic perspective
## A summary of research on the effects of test accommodations (NCEO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007-2008</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers of studies</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of accommodation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>Material / equipment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>Timing / scheduling</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other / multiple accommodations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
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A summary of research on the effects of test accommodations (NCEO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research purpose(s)</th>
<th>2007-2008</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect on scores</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions and preferences</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation practices</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test validity</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability categories</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific learning disabilities (SpLD)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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</table>
Research challenges

Heterogeneous research findings
- Inconsistent results between studies
- Content and target group specific design

Reasons (Pitonik & Royer, 2001)
- Small sample sizes, non-random student selection
- Diverse target group
- Combination of available accommodations almost limitless
Two fundamental research questions

1. *Does the accommodation alter the validity of inferences based on test scores?*
2. *Do non-disabled examinees also benefit from the accommodation?*
Time Extension

1. Does time extension alter the validity of inferences based on test scores?

- Most frequently employed type of accommodation
- Role of testing time
- Example: study on predictive validity (Cahalan et al., 2002)
Time extension and predictive validity

Cahalan et al., 2002:

- 241 students with disabilities and control group
- Correlation of SAT scores with 1st year college grades

No validity proved, problem of applied research design
Time Extension

2. Do non-disabled examinees also benefit from time extension?

Method: Between-group design
- Disabled vs. non-disabled test takers
- Accommodated vs. non-accommodated test versions

Several hypotheses, example:
- Differential boost hypothesis
Differential boost hypothesis (e.g. Sireci et al.)

- Disabled test takers do benefit significantly more than non-disabled (Lesaux et al., 2006)
- Promising theoretical basis

Sireci, Scarpati & Lee, 2005, p. 483
Prospects: research and practical implementation

- Generalisation studies
- Qualitative and mixed-method research, triangulation
  - Smaller samples, individual case studies
  - Impact studies (Taylor & Khalifa, 2013)
    - Stakeholders’ perception of accommodations
  - Interpretation
  - Appropriateness
  - Implementation

**Practical issues**: Information policy, preparation material, training for examiners, ressources of administrators
Prospects: research and practical implementation

- Refining instruments for decision-making process
- More research on specific learning difficulties
  - Diagnosing procedures / criteria
  - Impact on L2
- Using assistive technology
- Designing universally accessible tests (e.g. Ketterlin-Geller, 2008)
Literature


Literature


Literature


Thank you!

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