Learning & testing alignment - towards positive washback

Neil Bullock
ICAEA Workshop

The ICAO LPRs - 10 years on: Progress or Pain?
Dubrovnik April 2017
Caution! • Washback or Backwash?
An integrated approach

- Washback
- Test dominance
- Authentic real world communication
- Integrating learning & testing
- The workshop
Washback

- **ICAO9835**

- **Washback effect.** The influence of the format or content of tests or examinations on the methods and content of teaching and learning leading up to the assessment.
What is washback

- influences teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do (Messick, 1996)

- washback only linked to the intro and use of the test (Messick, 1996)

- connects the design and use of an assessment with what teachers and learners do in the classroom when preparing for that assessment (Green, 2014)
Does washback exist?

- reaction to external standardised testing (Bailey, 1996; Alderson, 1993)
- contrary to the principles of communicative approach, (Bailey, 1996)
- connected to outmoded teaching methods (Bailey, 1996)
- no empirical evidence (Bailey, 1996)
- little research in the field (Alderson, 1993)
The communicative approach

- related to the **behaviour** of the participants, (Bailey, 1996)

- **authentic** language situations and tasks (Shohamy, Bailey, 1996)

- **congruency** between test tasks and real life (Doye, 1991)

- the test induces in the educational system curricular and instructional changes that **foster development** of cognitive skills that the test is designed to measure (Bailey, 1996)

- **alignment** of valid test performance and valid learning content. (Fulcher, 2009)
Fine if things go as planned...
Fine if things go as planned...
However ...

- My students only want to pass the test
- I would be failing my students if I didn’t teach to the test
- All I want is my ******* Level 4, 5 or 6* delete where applicable
My students only want to pass the test. I would be failing my students if I didn’t teach to the test. All I want is my Level 4, 5 or 6.

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However ...
If we test without learning?...

Experience is a hard teacher. First comes the test, then the lesson.
How valid are the results?

“The doctor will see you now — I can’t promise that he’ll talk to you, but he’ll see you.”
How valid are the results?
How valid are the results?
Our objectives...

- **Authentic test** = real-life situation. (Doye, 1991)

- Parallel to the **real world** (Messick, 1996)

- Test = same tasks/features of **TLU** (Douglas, 2000, Paramasivam 2013)

- Learners ... fundamental **professional** language. (Feak, 2013)

- **Improved learning** of the construct (Bailey, 1996)

- **Authentic** test mirrors **curriculum** content & firmly linked to learning **goals** (O’Malley & Pierce, 1996)
Theory > practice – combined roles

- Test development
- Test administration
- Rater/Assessor
- Rater/Assessor Trainer
- ELPAC ELE

- Teacher Trainer
  - pilots PPL (A) & (H)
  - ATPL (BJ)
- ATCO (TWR/APP/ACC)
- Apron

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Airbus A319 Aborts take-off 21.12.2013 Bristol UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATC</th>
<th>EZY64LW surface wind 28015 knots, runway 27 cleared for take-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Runway 27 cleared for take-off EZY64LW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Tower EZY64LW stopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>EZY64LW roger are you able to taxi or do you need to stay there for a moment or two?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>We’d like to taxi to the end and vacate. EZY64LW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>EZY64LW roger taxi and vacate at the end of the runway and taxi holding point G4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Roger taxi to the end and vacate and taxi holding point G4 EZY64LW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>EZY64LW just for planning purposes are you planning on returning to stand or taxiing round for departure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>You’ll have to stand by on that we’re going to need to do some drills when we clear the runway and then it’ll become clear whether we need to go back to stand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>EZY64LW roger and do you require any assistance or do you need me to make any phone calls to people on the ground?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>At the moment no we’re fine as we are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATC</td>
<td>Ok no problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=55BLAtAvcRE
Effective communication

Blended learning skills

General plain language (EGP)
- non-domain specific lexical & grammatical forms,
  paraphrasing of ESP, negotiation, clarification

Semi-coded plain language (ESP)
- Technical lexis, delexical verb collocations, acronyms, initialisms, redundancy

Restricted (RTF)
- Radiotelephony

Language in Aeronautical Communications (Bullock 2015)
Assessment in the learning process

- Combining all the elements of communication (Bullock, 2015)
- Background Knowledge – underpins communication
- Pragmatic competence = mediator (Bachman & Palmer, 1996)
  - internal traits of TT vs external character of situation context
Learning literacy

NEEDS ANALYSIS

CURRICULUM, MATERIALS METHODOLOGY

REAL WORLD OBJECTIVE

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

LEARNING

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

FORMAL TESTING

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Test Development

- Test purpose
- Criterion
- Construct
- Test specification
- Item writing
- Operational validity
- In-service operation
- A posteriori validity
- Pre-test trials
- A priori validity
- Moderation

Fulcher 2010 / Bullock 2015

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Benefits - learning

- Skills for **real life communication** needs
- **Analysing** authentic communication
- **Aligning** learning /testing
- **Focus** on domains, skills, functions

Benefits - testing

- **Real life** task based items
- TTs a better **understanding**
- Rater/Assessors – **focussed** training
- **Documentation** linking testing to learning
Test Tasks
- Evaluate them for +/- effect / influence on learning

TLU authentic communication
- Learning task
- Test task
Recalibration

- Based on authentic TLU communication
- Learning oriented
- Learner oriented / Constructive Alignment
- Course contents > **beyond** the test: Real life
- **Valid** test tasks
- Testing & learning **alignment**
- Address all **stakeholders**
Thank you for listening!

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Linked-in
References:


