

# EALTA Annual Conference 2013: The Impact of Language Testing and Assessment

Language tests and assessments have the potential to exert a major impact on individuals, educational practices, government policies and the wider society as a whole. Test impact can occur both before and after the administration of a test, and may be general or specific, long or short term, strong or weak, intentional or unintentional, and positive or negative, or both (Watanabe: 1997).

Before the mid-1980s, evaluations of test impact by researchers and educational institutions were generally confined to learning behaviour, teaching practice and curriculum development, and focused in particular on the desirability of teachers and students adapting their behaviour to conform to the requirements of the test. While this immediate pedagogical context remains fundamental to the analysis of test impact, the concept has since been broadened to acknowledge the more pervasive qualities of tests as tools to reform educational systems, to affect government policy-making, and even to enforce ideologies (Shohamy: 2001). The broader social consequences of tests have also been linked theoretically to evaluations of test validity, not least through Messick's (1989) consequential validity which relates "the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of score based inferences" to the social consequences of testing.

The need to unravel the complex interactions between the often multifarious and far-reaching effects of tests presents a key challenge for language testing researchers and practitioners and is the reason why it is the chosen theme for EALTA 2013.

We invite proposals which report qualitative and quantitative research into the following aspects of language test impact:

- the use or misuse of tests for educational innovation
- the impact of tests on teaching and learning
- identifying and understanding the source(s) of test impact
- the impact of tests on curriculum and materials development
- the intended and actual effects of tests
- the interaction between different effects of a test
- the social consequences of tests
- the use of tests in a political context