

Going national, standardised and live in Austria: challenges and tensions

Rita Green & Carol Spoettl,
University of Innsbruck, Austria

Overview



- Project background
- Project training
- Project in progress

Background 1

- 2004 Austrian law changes
 - CEFR related learning goals per school year
 - All four skills
 - Exit level specified
 - B2 for L2
 - L3, L4 varied
 - BUT a curriculum change only
 - Exam regulations remained

Background 2



- 2005 model for exam reform submitted to ministry
 - by the University Innsbruck and BG/BRG Reutte
 - entitled "The Four Skills Matura"

- 2006 Round Table held at Innsbruck University
 - political stakeholders in Austria invited
 - BIFIE representatives
 - Universities
 - Headmasters
 - Schools inspectors
 - international support
 - Professor Charles Alderson (Lancaster University; Hungarian Exam Reform Project)

Background 3

- **May 2007 Government funds granted**
 - To develop a competence based school leaving exam
 - Only for a restricted number of schools
 - Only for listening and reading skills
 - To go live in 56 schools and two languages in 2008

- **To do this it was necessary to**
 - Establish a team in Innsbruck – started with 3 people
 - Select a team to be trained as item writers
 - 10 teachers of English ⇒ listening and reading
 - 5 teachers of French ⇒ listening only

Test development process

- Training began May 2007 and involved
 - development of test specifications and tasks
 - trials and data analysis
- Item writers:
 - representing different regions in Austria
 - initially teams of English and French teachers
 - later expanded to include Spanish, Italian and Russian teachers

Test development process

■ Benefits (Synergies)

- developed common test specifications across languages
- reached more realistic expectations of student performance
- enabled useful feedback from item writers as test takers
- established a common language (rubrics)

■ Challenges (Tensions)

- identifying sufficient test takers (trials)
- technological difficulties involved in developing listening tasks

Standard setting process



- First Standard Setting held Dec 2007
- Involving range of stakeholders:
 - school inspectors
 - headmasters
 - school teachers
 - teacher trainers
 - a member of the BIFIE
 - university teachers
 - external judges
- Led by Prof Charles Alderson, supported by Dr Spiros Papageorgiou

Standard setting process

■ Benefits (Synergies)

- promoted better understanding of the test development cycle
- encouraged common trust and respect
- provided valuable feedback to item writers
- offered insights from how other countries approach this process

■ Challenges (Tensions)

- teasing out the different roles the judges bring to the process (test taker, stakeholder)

Project Update



■ Live Matura 2009

- Test booklets developed for
 - Listening, reading and language in use
 - Keys and justifications provided
- Listening booklets developed for
 - 5 languages
 - 2 CEFR levels
 - B2 and B1
 - Three exam dates
 - Taken in English by 14,000 students
- Correction supported by a Hotline
 - 3 native speakers per language with training in test development
 - 1 SRP team member protocolling answers

Recommendations



- Develop tests across languages wherever possible
- Provide a Hotline
- Develop a web site with tasks, sound files, keys and justifications
- Carry out standard setting and include as wide a range of stakeholders as possible

SRP website



www.uibk.ac.at/srp

Contact details

carol.spoettl@uibk.ac.at

ritagreen_tdt@hotmail.com
