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
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)
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

R. Green & C. Spoettl,
University of Innsbruck, Austria
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)
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_tdtta@hotmail.com