

## The EALTA's third summer school, Siena 2014 – Evaluation Report

EALTA's third summer school, with the theme *Testing and Assessment for Learning Languages*, took place between July 28 to August 1, at the Università per Stranieri di Siena (Italy).

The summer school was attended by thirty-nine EALTA members from sixteen different countries representing different, partly overlapping, membership categories: teachers, teacher trainers, test developers and PhD students.

The programme for the week can be consulted on the EALTA website, together with the Powerpoint presentations used by the tutors, this summary of the questionnaires completed by participants, and some photos.

EALTA is very grateful for the generosity of the tutors, Professors Ildikó Csépes, Gudrun Erickson, James Purpura and Dina Tsagari, and of the organizers, who all contributed to making the Summer School a successful and appreciated event. Special thanks go to the Università per Stranieri di Siena (Italy) for hosting the Summer School.

The feedback questionnaire 2014 followed the format and content from previous summer schools. It was distributed on the last day of the Summer School and participants were asked to fill it in before leaving. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, the majority of which included four-point Likert scales. There were also six open-ended questions, and the participants were encouraged to comment on any aspect they found relevant.

The rate of return was 28 out of 39 attendants. The results are reported by providing response numbers for each question and alternative given. The overall impression is that the vast majority of the participants were positive or very positive to the different aspects of the summer school.

### A. Please, evaluate the quality of each of the following aspects of the summer school by circling one of the assessment options:

#### 1 Organisation:

very good 23 | good 3 | not so good | poor

- *Print all handouts and presentations beforehand.*
- *Next time perhaps consider parallel sessions so as to allow for more in-depth or extended work on the one hand for teacher-oriented work and, on the other, for testing, researching issues (more technical).*
- *Thank you to all organizers. They took good care of us.*

#### 2 Cost:

very reasonable 20 | reasonable 8 | expensive | too expensive

- *Incredibly good value for this amount of "professional expertise".*

- *Save for social dinner.*

**3** Locality:

very good 28 | good | not so good | poor

- *The best locality (Italy, Siena).*

- *Wifi issues, otherwise great location.*

**4** Length of summer school:

too long | quite long 2 | appropriate 26 | quite short | too short

- *Could have been shortened for 3 half days.*

**5** Length of sessions:

too long | quite long 2 | appropriate 14 | quite short | too short

- *Maybe not too many sessions a day.*

- *That felt just right.*

- *Some sessions attempted to squeeze in too much info. Pre-reading assignments (+sufficient time to read them could be a possible solution to avoid info overload).*

- *I think was a good balance of workshops and breaks.*

**6** Number of sessions:

much too many | too many 1 | appropriate 25 | too few | much too few

- *Actually I would have loved to hear more about the assessment of grammar and vocabulary.*

- *If possible, not more sessions per attendee, but more specific or extended sessions/workshops available.*

- *Good to have a shorter day at the beginning + end of the course.*

- *You could add one more session per day, perhaps until 6-6.30 pm.*

**7** Quality of sessions:

good 18 | mostly good 8 | mixed 2 | mostly poor | poor

- *Excellent. It was very useful to have handouts of the slides.*

- *I might prefer to have dual sessions for theory + practical aspects.*

- *Mostly good balance between theoretical and practical parts, sometimes too much theory immediately after the lunch.*

- *Some of the sessions didn't make references to research. However, they all reflected the vast experience of the tutors.*

## 8 Opportunity for participation and discussion:

More than enough 6 | appropriate 20 | too little 1

- *There were too much teacher fronted lecturing.*
- *I liked pair work and discussions in groups especially when we were grouped according to towns in Italy. All this gave us an opportunity to talk to people who have different teaching/assessing experiences in their working contexts.*
- *I wanted more time for developing materials and looking at examples.*
- *I really liked the interactive format of the sessions. Thank you very much!*

## 9 Tutors

good 23 | mostly good 4 | mixed | mostly poor | poor

- *Excellent. Really fantastic to have four!*
- *I would say great. Thank you!*
- *I prefer when the tutor first reads what's written on her/his slide and then comment it instead of speaking while I'm reading it, I also need the visual support as much as possible; very good and prepared tutors, very communicative tutors.*
- *Excellent! A good mix of lectures of workshops.*

## 10 Opportunity to learn

very much 15 | quite a lot 11 | not so much 2 | very little

- *Many contents were already familiar. Hoped to hear more about the latest research in the field.*
- *Good revision and new idea. Sometime we forget the basics in the hurry-scurry of everyday life.*
- *Very motivating.*
- *Both from the tutors and the participants.*

## B. What in particular did you find particularly useful for you personally?

- *Session on speaking assessment; session on large-scale assessment; session on assessing grammar.*
- *Many interesting topics for future research and implementation.*
- *Very structured and comprehensive introduction into the classroom feedback and assessment.*

- *Theoretical approach makes me better; practical approach can apply directly in class.*
- *I have learned a lot. I find all the lectures insightful and instructive. Working in group and discussing with tutors.*
- *Item writing and writing: would like to have done more of it or finished it. Portfolio and observations sessions: ditto and maybe with video content.*
- *Talking about self- and peer-assessment.*
- *Discussions with other colleagues from other countries; a range of topics in the summer school; I liked the overview of portfolios; analysis of reading comprehension homework.*
- *Revision of variety of approaches to testing + lots of new information + meeting colleagues from many different countries and different contexts.*
- *Differing ways to include assessment/feedback throughout the classroom activities; especially reading was important as I face the task of revising one syllabus for module + reading skills.*
- *The information given on "how" to value a test "for task". How I can change feedback to be a positive and useful element in my classes.*
- *Practical parts- discussion and sharing with other colleagues; revision of concrete testing tasks; possibility to see real teaching and testing materials; information about self- and peer-assessment, feedback and portfolio.*
- *Defining language ability like grammar knowledge and pragmatic knowledge.*
- *Focus on teaching, not just testing. Very useful material.*

**C. What in particular did you find less useful for you personally?**

- *Peer-assessment.*
- *ELP, as we do not use it.*
- *Hearing about all the "bad" examples of tests.*
- *Portfolio information; I have already had knowledge of it.*
- *I'm not a tester so - while interesting - will make less use of materials on large-scale tests.*
- *How not to write a good item in vocabulary test on reading comprehension.*
- *Talking about school and children and their problems was not very useful because I work with adults.*
- *Theoretical sessions.*

**D. What would you like to suggest for the next summer school?**

- *Teacher assessment literacy culture; professional development in assessment; designing; speaking/writing; rubrics/assessment criteria.*
- *Language teacher; teacher educator.*
- *More item writing techniques.*
- *A practical workshop on task design.*

- *Assessing writing + speaking (large-scale assessment); computer-based assessment; computer-based scoring.*
- *Assessment in CLIL.*
- *As mentioned before, pre-reading assignments, time to read them + also opportunity to discuss readings online (es. In moodle classroom) prior to event.*
- *I'd like to have more sessions about the flexibility of teaching and assessment. We mostly talked about one L1 group studying English. It would be good to discuss about groups, made of 5 or more different L1 students.*
- *Item analysis/writing; topic psychometrics (a long course, comprehensive).*
- *Maybe a free block of time where students could meet in small group to look further at theory or practice.*
- *Follow up in the embedded nature of assessment by means of e.g. Video material / good practice.*
- *Define some realistic and achievable goals for the learning of the summer school. Two of the tutors made comments about what we were not able to achieve during these sessions. Focus on designing test-items (reading, writing).*

**E. Do you have any suggestions for (a) topic(s) of the next summer school?**

- *Variety of topics with 3-4 sessions on each.*
- *Classroom assessment; unit achievement tests.*
- *Intro to SPSS for test statistics. Intro to IRT.*
- *Item writing; psychometrics.*
- *Examples of some electronic assessment tools.*
- *Task theory + task practice (for each category of assessment).*
- *Authenticity of tasks; external constraints on testing (policies); validity and reliability; standards, guidelines of good practice in testing; arbitrary cut scores?; standard setting.*
- *Assessing socio-cultural skills/competence; assessing writing skills (mostly academic).*

**F. General comments**

- *A fantastic school overall. Will come again. I will recommend to my colleagues.*
- *Wonderful experience; lovely people; useful information.*
- *Lovely! I enjoyed it, I learned, I'm full of questions and things I'd like to explore and change.*
- *Thank you to the organization committee and to the tutors. I really enjoyed the stay in Siena. Excellent choice of restaurant for social dinner!*

- *I like the handouts; the opportunity for discussion; coffee breaks with great food; lovely dinner. Nice people + delicious food; fantastic participants and even greater tutors; nice venue (university + the city). Thank you!*
- *Thank you very much for offering, organizing and leading the summer school. We became a close knit group of participants despite the fact we come from different regions (world) and institutions.*

**G. Please indicate whether you are:**

language teacher 19 | teacher educator 11 | assessment professional 5 | university/college 18 | teacher | researcher 5 | educational administrator 3 | other 3 (Please feel free to provide more detail overleaf)