TAT Minutes November 17, 2004

Represented: Swahili, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, French, Turkish, Urdu

:-) Angela will bring Italian biscotti to the January meeting.

Survey of testing practices:

1st year Spanish  
- Final written, final orals, final presentations
- But no final orals in Summer

2nd year Spanish  
- Chapter Quizzes, Midterm & Final, paired oral final
- Graded with 10-point grade scale

1st - 2nd year Italian  
- No finals, chapter tests instead, final projects, oral presentation, written assignments

1st year German  
- 4th-week, 7th-week and final written and oral tests
- Uses scoring guides (1-6 holistic assessment scale similar to those used in university assessment & K-12 assessment)
- The test are task-based and allow students linguistic flexibility in completing the tasks

2nd year German  
- End of term oral assessment (interview)
- Four quarter quizzes
- Email partner project
- Testing to lower student apprehension, but finals that the 4 quizzes cover more than a final; course writing projects and group presentations

101 - 201 Turkish  
- Written & oral midterms & finals, plus final presentations

Russian (all levels)  
- Hybrid tests: achievement followed by pro-achievement task, with a written task on the midterm and an oral task on the final

Urdu  
- Regular quizzes, written final and final oral interview
Swahili

Two take-home midterms (with essay), cumulative take-home final (with essay), and final oral exam. Additionally, a journal project of weekly native speaker interviews- the last one being tape-recorded

3rd year French

Chapter quizzes; midterm and final with emphasis on oral comprehension and composition with specific grammar requirements, but no specific achievement section
- In Summer, weekly exams and compositions

Q & A:

1. Why bother testing?
   **Suggestion:** Identify goals before choosing/creating instrument.

2. Should comprehension Qs & As be in the target language?
   **Suggestion:** L1 questions and answers for non-native speakers

3. How do we get students to read the instructions
   **Suggestion:** Ask them to do it

4. Should we be cuing students (on the tests) about the grammar needed in achievement tests?
   **Suggestion:** Grammar cueing may be good for testing non-native speakers (it compensates for poor context recognition), but not for testing native speakers.

Testing should reflect teaching and learning- grammar driven curriculum should include grammar driven testing, content/context driven teaching should use content/context driven testing. Godfrey points out that our teaching is a combination, therefore so should be our tests. Achievement sections with grammar cueing encourage students, reminding them of what they know- and allowing the achievement section to serve as an aid to composition tasks. Remember, it is important to testing core competence instead of focusing on minutia.
5. How can we conserve labor?
**Suggestions:** Recycle exams periodically. For achievement exams, keep them secure (don’t let students take them away). Avoid multiple choice tests. They are very difficult to create, as most questions are too easy or too hard.

6. What should students know about exams?
**Suggestions:** Informing students of content can be motivational (beyond “all the contexts we’ve studied so far”). For global communicative tasks, scoring rubrics in plain language should be shared with students. Inform students of content in the beginning, have them check their preparedness as the term progresses.

7. What if I create bad test items?
**Suggestion:** ambiguity is the most common, be prepared to adjust grading for mistakes.

8. Should tests be cumulative vs. non-cumulative?
**Suggestion:** Use a combination during the term. Cumulative tests should focus on core communicative competence, not discrete grammar items.

**Other concerns:**
- Testing v. assessment
- Tests as learning tools (What are they assessing?)
- Take-home testing
- Oral testing and dictations standardization
- Group presentations in testing
- Native v. non-native teacher and learner expectations

**Survey results**
Your vote for the topic of your choice for next meetings indicated in order of preference:
1. Student final projects
2. Vocabulary
3. Integrating media in the classroom and curriculum
4. Integrating learning outcomes in syllabi and curriculum
5. Integrating literature and poetry in language courses.