



Classroom Testing

Part I: Introduction



Valette, 1978

The content of the tests and the method in which grades are assigned, reflect more accurately than any lengthy statement of aims and purposes, the real objectives of instruction.



What is the purpose of classroom tests?

Classroom tests are in **instructional category**. Their purpose is:

- to diagnose students' progress,
- to provide feedback,
- to serve as a means of evaluating performance,
- to inform teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching, and
- to complete the instructional cycle for a given unit.

◆ Omaggio, 2000



Achievement Testing Formative Evaluations

Well constructed achievement tests:

- focus on skill development of students
- can be directed towards proficiency-based goals
- are more limited in scope than a proficiency test
- can provide opportunities to alter instruction



Proficiency Testing Summative Evaluations

Proficiency tests:

- describe language abilities of individual at a given point in time.
- are not attached to any syllabus or curriculum.
- are holistic in scoring.



Creating Assessments Our Dilemma

Magnan (1991) maintains classroom tests focus on discrete points of grammar and mastery of isolated components of knowledge and skill.

Do you think this statement is still true?
Explain your response.



What is our dilemma?

Magnan (1991) - Three main causes:

- Students/teachers prefer discrete point testing – more straightforward/objective.
- Teachers find it difficult/time-consuming to design and grade discourse-based and functional tests.
- It is difficult to find good models



What is our dilemma?

Walz (1991) analyzed 12 commercial testing programs and found some integrative sections that blended grammar and communicative language use.

The dilemma is how to blend form and communicative objectives.



How Should Proficiency Influence Our Classroom Tests?

Use the principles of proficiency testing, but limit the domain of content to the material in our syllabus.



Designing Classroom Tests

- Present language in context.
- Require students to use language beyond the sentence level.
- Require students to carry out realistic tasks.



Examples of Test Items Good or Bad?

Fill in the blank:

1. Je _____ mes devoirs avant 10 heures du soir. (finir)

2. Nous _____ un bon restaurant ce weekend. (choisir)

Multiple choice:

Los pantalones de Juana son _____.

a) amarilla b. moradas c) blanco d) azules

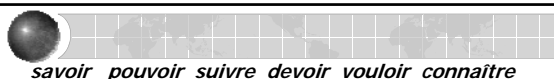
Important: Students must understand the meaning conveyed in order to do the task.



Writing and Reading Section Sample

Paul's friend, Marie from Normandie, is visiting Auburn for the first time. Paul told Marie the directions to Rose's restaurant, but Marie can't remember them! Now she is thinking to herself, trying to remember the directions.

From the list below help Marie complete her thoughts!



savoir pouvoir suivre devoir vouloir connaître

Zut! Je ne me souviens pas de la route! Je _____ cette rue, mais je ne _____ pas où est le restaurant. Je ne _____ pas me souvenir des directions. Alors, je _____ trouver une personne pour me donner des indications. Je _____ parler avec lui, mais je suis timide parce que je ne _____ pas bien parler l'anglais. Pardon Monsieur? Je _____ le comprendre, il _____ m'aider et il _____ où est le restaurant. Bon! Vouloir, c'est pouvoir!



to know, can, to follow, must/to have to, will, to know

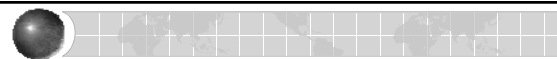
Dam-it! I don't remember the way! I _____ this street, but, I don't _____ where the restaurant is. I _____ not remember the directions. Therefore, I _____ find a person to give me some help. I _____ speak with him, but I am shy because I don't _____ how to speak English very well. Excuse me sir? I _____ understand him; he _____ help me and he _____ where the restaurant is. Well, if you want to, you can do it.

Key: Je connais, je ne sais pas, je ne peux pas, je dois, je peux, je sais, je peux, il peut



Questions to ask myself when creating an achievement test.

1. Did I embed the L2 features in situational formats?
2. Are my language-learning materials relevant to their communicative needs and interests?
3. Do my instructional activities as well as my test items resemble authentic language use?



What is a hybrid test?

Hybrid testing combines:

- Discrete points of grammar,
- Vocabulary,
- Discourse or pragmatic features, and
- Open-ended language use to complete a task.

Important: Use a variety of formats and tasks

