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# Not Just Lip Service: Systematic Oral Testing in a First-Year College German Program

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A renewed demand for proficiency-oriented foreign language instruction offers us a chance to produce what we have claimed we want and know how to produce: an appreciable number of ordinary Americans reasonably conversant in foreign languages. As standards of proficiency we have now the ACTFL/ETS *Provisional Proficiency Guidelines*; and for oral proficiency rating there is the well-developed ILR model of the oral interview. What remains is application: 1) the earnest acceptance of practical proficiency as the primary goal of basic instruction; 2) the adoption of the *Guidelines* throughout the profession; and 3)—in my view the central issue—the adaptation of *Guidelines* and testing technique to programs which serve the ordinary student.

I describe here a large introductory college German course which was designed with proficiency as its "organizing principle." Since the autumn of 1980 the dominant feature of first-year German at Portland State University has been regular, frequent individual oral testing along ILR/ACTFL/ETS lines, with oral test performance the greatest single factor in grading. In the past four years about five thousand oral tests have been administered, each lasting about ten minutes. Students and staff consider the course an outstanding success, and proficiency-oriented instruction and evaluation have been or will soon be introduced into intermediate and advanced courses. The heavy investment of time and energy in oral testing has yielded other rewards and challenges. Chief among the benefits is the compensatory reduction in the labor demanded by the administration of conventional written tests.

## Genesis

While the introduction of proficiency instruction and oral testing in our first-year German course was effected rapidly, it was not a pedagogical caprice. For some time we had doubted that our students were actually acquiring true practical proficiency. As a first step we adopted a text which seemed to promise greater realism and livelier classes,<sup>2</sup> and we agreed to entertain major changes in the program.

During the summer of 1980, already somewhat familiar with what we then knew simply as "FSI" standards and testing procedures, we debated how they might be made the core of the first-year course, both as an evaluative tool and as an incentive to proficiency acquisition. The ideal was clear: regular individual oral testing, with commensurate effect on grading. But the construction, administration, and weighting of the tests

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posed many theoretical and logistical problems. To make the seriousness of our intent clear, we wished to base about half of the course grade on oral tests. Yet we soon decided that extremely frequent oral testing, perhaps ten tests per quarter, each counting five percent, would be neither practical nor productive. Humaneness, credibility, accuracy, and practical logistics demanded on the other hand that our first-year students be examined more often than once or even twice a quarter. We settled on an interval of two weeks, and thus committed ourselves to administering dozens of tests every week. We determined too that the oral tests would not be perfunctory pattern drills and pronunciation checks, but instead realistic conversational interchanges keyed to the course content.

### Program

*Students:* Portland State is an urban, low-tuition university which serves a diverse clientele. Many students have jobs and families and must therefore study part-time. Admission is not selective, and not a few students, whatever their intelligence, are deficient in academic preparation and skills.

*Curriculum and Staff:* First-year German at PSU is taught as an intensive two-quarter course. In the fall we typically schedule five beginning sections (GL150), which are compressed into three continuation sections (GL151) in the winter quarter. We open then two or three new beginning sections which in turn are followed by two concluding sections in spring. Total enrollment is about 125 in both fall and winter, in spring about fifty. The first-year instructors, two of whom have been trained at oral proficiency workshops, are all thoroughly familiar with proficiency standards and testing methods.

*Orientation:* Students beginning first-year German receive a five-page pamphlet which explains the course goals and the standards and procedures of evaluation. The chief message, repeated often in class, is that oral tests will comprise as much as 45% of the final grade (three regular tests each counting 10%, final test 15%). Together the many written unit tests and mid-unit quizzes on the eight or nine chapters covered per quarter count 30%, the written final 15%. Classroom performance makes up the remaining 10%. Thus a written unit test is worth but a fraction of a single oral test, and the ninety-minute written final carries exactly the same weight as the oral final, which is only ten to fifteen minutes long. Students are counseled to study accordingly.

Given the popular image of foreign-language instruction it is not surprising that some students seem to find our practice and policy disconcerting or even odd. It is indeed difficult to dispel the traditional notion that the written tests are the "real" tests and that language acquisition is a matter of book learning or pattern-drilling. But as our course questionnaire shows, most students appear to find the approach intriguing, challenging, and refreshing. Some are surprised to learn that regular oral tests are not conducted everywhere.

*Teaching:* The ACTFL/ETS *Guidelines* and the ILR oral interview procedure presuppose no specific teaching method. But clearly, the acquisition

of language proficiency is promoted by attitudes and practices which inspire initiation and creation, which encourage speed and precision in the production of essential linguistic features, which eschew abrasive, excessive error correction, and which foster the conviction that the new language might be used to conduct genuine human communication. Suffice it to say that oral testing for realistic communicative competence would be inappropriate were the classroom instruction not to emphasize the acquisition of that proficiency.

### Oral Testing

Sample test scripts and the transcript of an actual test are provided below. Here I shall describe the testing procedure itself and venture some advice garnered from our experience. Our conclusions generally confirm the patterns and precepts of the ILR interview model, though I shall point out two important differences.

Oral testing commences after about ten class hours. From a schedule of ten-minute slots scattered four or five per hour over a two-week cycle each student selects a convenient time which, we hope, will be maintained as a standing appointment throughout the quarter. The time which must be allocated to oral testing can easily be calculated. A total course enrollment of 125 requires, over a two-week testing period, at least thirty testing hours, or fifteen each week. Bookkeeping requires less than an hour per week. Test preparation time, once a test has been devised, is virtually nil; the "same" test can be used over and over within the cycle, for no test is truly the same from student to student. Content and style are adapted to fit each conversation, and over the two-week cycle standards are raised and new material is added to ensure that those taking the test late in the cycle will have no advantage.

Testing materials include an outline test script and a standardized evaluation sheet. The larger portion of the evaluation sheet is intended for observations made as the test is conducted. At the bottom is a grid for summary A/B/C/D/F grading of accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension; there is also a single space for an overall grade. Sometimes simple props are introduced. For both final oral examinations and for two of the second-term tests there are handouts which set up lengthier situations or tasks for which the student has a few minutes or even a few days to prepare.

Oral testing, then, requires little investment of funds or equipment. Far more critical is the testing environment. Our tests are conducted in a 14' x 14' room which was transformed into a testing center when our department moved to other quarters. Although colleagues in other programs have shown that oral testing can be conducted within the classroom or even outside in the hall, a fixed base for oral testing has obvious logistical benefits. It also fosters a welcome sense of territoriality and purpose.

The three regular tests of the first term are essentially alike: question-and-answer interchanges with a short task or situation. The first-term final test consists of several question sets (chief target: past tenses),

followed by a lengthy role-play which aims to check the major linguistic features of the entire term. Several days before the test the student is given a pamphlet with a stylized map of a German city, a simple bus/streetcar timetable, a copy of an actual menu, and an explanation that he or she is to come to the test prepared to act like someone who has lived several weeks in the city. The situation consists of an elaborate request for directions, the ordering of a complete meal, or both.

Second-term testing begins with a "poll" test. In its format it resembles the first-term tests, but it requires considerably more flexibility and sophistication. (See description below and outline script in Appendix.) The shift toward greater demand for speech initiation and creativity continues in the next two tests. One is a reverse interview (see Appendix) in which the student must inquire about the examiner's past, present, and future. The third test of the second term is an "information pass." The student listens to a tape-recorded telephone message and conveys its information to the examiner. Memorization and recitation are discouraged by counter-questions. The second-term final examination returns to the more conventional format. It is a straightforward interview which focuses on Intermediate-High behavior. Chief probe targets are extended narration, supported opinion, and hypothesizing.

Pedagogically, logistically, and psychologically the first oral test of the course is, for both parties, a sort of trial by fire. One should not underestimate the student's reaction to the prospect of having to face a perhaps unfamiliar examiner who insists on speaking German, and of having to function energetically in that language, under benevolent but evident pressure, for what may seem an interminable time—perhaps ten minutes. A few students resolutely resist oral testing; most accept it with good graces; some—not necessarily the best—relish the challenge and the personal contact.

An oral test should be an evaluation, not an inquisition. Unlike their teachers, students are not professional linguists accustomed to learning and using languages; nor are they trained horses who can simply be put through their paces. To be both humane and methodologically sound, oral test interviews must be fairly plausible, mannerly conversations. The examinee must be put at ease, and the examiner must constantly seek to maintain an attitude of unhurried purposefulness and to present the impression of friendly interest in the putative conversation. That is no easy matter, for during the test the examiner will be recording observations both as diligently and as discreetly as possible. He or she will also be plotting the further course of the interview, sometimes in the face of startling miscommunication ("Wie geht's heute?" "Ich nahm mein Auto."), or of awkward response content which necessitates a radical change of topic ("Wie alt ist Ihr Vater?" "Ich habe keinen Vater."). It should go without saying, but unfortunately cannot, that neither time nor proper technique permits hypercorrection, incidental teaching, lectures on diligence, or—much less—egoistic correction of the examinee's personal opinions (unless one is carefully aiming to elicit evidence of linguistic skill in stating and supporting opinion).

In short, the examiner must possess not only the virtues of the linguist, but also those of the diplomat, thespian, and congenial extrovert. Quite valuable here is realistic nonlinguistic behavior—actions, that is, which suggest that the examiner is more than a mouth, two ears, and a pair of hands grasping test forms and pencil. But exaggerated body language which tips off answers or substitutes for even rudimentary oral communication must be avoided.

The examiner should seek to maintain realistic tone and pace. Our experience argues that the rawest beginner can both listen and speak within the range of normal discourse, if the examiner carefully monitors vocabulary and structures (though without departing unreasonably from natural adult language), and if instruction has been given in the same manner. A briskly paced oral test leaves the examinee little time to reflect on errors and to "decorrect" initially correct utterances. To be avoided resolutely are both the hectoring "drillmaster" approach and artificially slow diction and exaggerated intonation. Neither is conducive to greater linguistic production. Above all, no student should be given the chance to fall back on that bane of true oral proficiency: word-for-word, rule-by-rule translation, whether it is remarkably facile or excruciatingly broken.

Among the subtler stratagems which make an oral test more productive, flexible and human(e) are pauses and short leading remarks, requests for amplification of unproductive or promising utterances, and—perhaps most artful of all—the creation of transitions. Such techniques can greatly aid one to determine minima and maxima of performance. More specifically, they help the examiner ascertain when the beginning student crosses the monumental border from Novice to Intermediate behavior.

The insistence that pauses can be both painful and extremely productive is a prominent feature of oral proficiency testing workshops. One must learn that less is indeed often more. The examiner who is too ready to help out by supplying vocabulary or patterns misses a grand opportunity to gauge both the limits and the resourcefulness of the examinee. But stony silence need not be the rule; conservative encouragement can work wonders. Leading remarks or equivalent paralinguistic stimuli can range from a simple "Oh," "Na," or "Und . . ." or even just a raised eyebrow or equivalent gesture, to more complex prompts like "Wie?" "Wieso?" "Warum sagen / sagten Sie das?" or a well-meant "Was / Wie meinen Sie (das)?"

Even after a few hours of instruction most students who fall back on English to express some everyday notion should not have to suffer a peremptory "Auf deutsch, bitte!" Nor should they be either satisfied or humiliated by the examiner's helpful or exasperated provision of a German equivalent. Much more fruitful are encouraging cues like "Das ist / heißt . . .," "Es gibt ein deutsches Wort (dafür)," or even "Das kann man / können Sie anders / mit anderen Worten sagen." Sometimes, though, one must resort to an English reminder in order to nudge along the reluctant student.

Although one may legitimately use and seek to elicit a great variety of linguistic material in quick succession, plausible transitions between

both single items and larger topics are essential. While they contribute to verisimilitude and comfort, they can also be used to prepare probes for more complex utterance. A special type of transition is the intentional abrogation of conventional conversational continuity, in other words an abrupt shift in focus which is, nevertheless, made plausible by context. In a restaurant role-play, for example, the examiner-waiter may interrupt a discussion of menu items with the quite natural question "Sind Sie Engländer(in)?" and then pursue the subject at considerable length. The technique can be used both to probe for specific linguistic items and to gauge the examinee's comfortability with the language as measured by ability to maintain two currents of conversation.

Our third oral test in the first chapter illustrates the value of the stratagems discussed here. In its middle section we pose simple questions about the subject's residential circumstances. Among the immediate targets are the basic vocabulary of house and home; associated dative prepositions ("nicht weit von der Universität," "mit einem Freund," "bei meinen Eltern"); the ability to manipulate verbs like "wohnen" and "leben" (and to avoid common errors like "Meine Familie \*lebt in Oregon"); and—significantly more difficult—management of the interrogative "seit wann" / "wie lange schon" with a continuation in the present tense rather than an imitation of the English present perfect. We then create a transition to a more complex discussion which might elicit modal verbs (the ability to express values, precepts and obligations); adverbial particles or separable prefixes ("zusammenwohnen"); subordinate clauses (conditions and temporal or causal sequence); and the vocabulary of marital status, including the troublesome idioms "heiraten" 'to get married,' and "verheiratet + sein" 'to be married.'

I am especially proud of the first test of the second quarter (GL151 #1), which was born of the fear that plausible transitions were well nigh impossible. The target material was immense in scope: reflexives, time phrases, future tense, wo/da-compounds, adjective endings, and pastime vocabulary. The solution was the expansion of the incidental role-play into the entire test, which became a bogus demographic poll. Under such conditions virtually any question may be asked, provided the proper atmosphere be created. From the "poll" test we learned that regular oral testing indeed prepares the student to accept readily all manner of oral test situations. Secondly, the test encouraged us to devise others which also departed from the conventional question-answer format and could thus help to shift communicative responsibility from the examiner to the examinee—a transfer of function which is consonant with the advancement from Novice- to Intermediate-level proficiency.

No oral test is perfect, though some are highly satisfying. Crises and downright calamities do occur. Sometimes one must struggle to carry out the testing of a mediocre student. Once or twice a quarter we must backpedal vigorously to deal with an examinee's extreme nervousness, dysfunctional silence, or even tears. One must know when to quit, but also when to push hard. My own image of a successful oral test is not necessarily that of a virtually flawless performance, but rather that of

spirited sparring at whose conclusion there is mutual regret at cessation, an evaluation sheetload of revealing linguistic observations, and increased amicability and respect between the participants. Put less dispassionately: I know that we are hitting paydirt when I observe in the examinee signs of intense mental and physical effort—a flushing of cheek and neck, a hardening of the jaw-line, perhaps a gulp—and when I feel in myself the inclination to press on with linguistic challenges on a level which the student can—though just barely—handle. A successful oral test should not be a genteel intellectual interchange, but rather a vigorous workout akin to those our colleagues in physical education departments demand from their students.

## Results

Teachers may overestimate the proficiency their charges have, or at least should have, attained. After all, the traditional first-year college German book "teaches," and thus we claim to "have taught," the past subjunctive, the full system of adjective endings, complex word order, and the to-us-oh-so-simple dative case. The impression of ambitious achievement is reinforced by the confident outlines of program goals and progress reports, and of course by the upbeat advertisements for instructional materials in our professional journals.

My estimate is that the common expectation and estimated achievement of "good" students in "good" introductory programs taught by "good" teachers is something like the magical ILR S-3 or ACTFL/ETS Superior. It is becoming clear that such an estimate is a wild exaggeration of what might be expected even under very favorable circumstances. Our own five years' experience in administering oral proficiency tests to top-notch high school students competing for the AATG travel prizes shows that the very best rate no higher than S2+/Advanced-Plus. Far more often they rate only S1+/Intermediate-High, although they have completed three or four years of coursework and have scored high on standardized written tests.

More cogent still are the results of our oral testing in first-year college German, which help establish both a sobering upper boundary of likely proficiency and an encouraging lower limit of what is realistically attainable in an ordinary introductory course. I am convinced that by the end of first-year German (100 classroom hours) our best students, even those with no prior exposure to the language, would rate S1+/Intermediate-High. Exiting "B" students are likely to be solid S1/Intermediate-Mid speakers, and the C+ if not the C students seem to have crossed the boundary from 0+/Novice to 1/Intermediate-Low. The ratings at the end of the first half of the course would be: A = Intermediate-Mid, B = Intermediate-Low, and C+ = Novice-High. My estimates are substantiated by confirmed ratings of formal oral proficiency interviews which I conducted with several first-year students as part of the follow-up to my participation in the ACTFL workshop conducted in February 1983 at Washington, DC.

I must point out two apparent discrepancies in method and attitude between our own oral testing and the ILR/ACTFL/ETS model which was

its chief inspiration. First, we seek to assign A/B/C/D/F grades to relatively short tests conducted at frequent intervals quite early in our introductory course. Moreover, although every test covers a wide range of features, those conducted early in the course focus on achievement, the production of rather specific linguistic items. Secondly, we aim primarily to ascertain the floor rather than the ceiling of performance. We do not vigorously seek to produce distinct linguistic breakdown with probes at levels which we expect with good reason to be well above those of examinees whose language competence stems solely from our instruction.

I would contend that such restrictions of range and intensity are not inappropriate to oral testing in introductory courses aimed at the general learner. One justification is sheer logistical necessity. Having ventured to declare oral proficiency to be the chief factor in both instruction and grading, we must conduct oral tests which clearly determine and—in an age of protest and litigation—document the degree to which precisely defined course content is mastered. Secondly, as proficiency evaluation experts have pointed out, low-level proficiency tests may well resemble achievement tests, since the material available for elicitation is quite limited. We know very well what our examinees, if they have no prior exposure to German, can and cannot produce. Thus the first two tests of the first quarter are fairly cut-and-dried checks of Novice-Mid features, though by the end of the first quarter we probe rather insistently for Intermediate-Low behavior, and at the end of the first year we approach a genuine proficiency test for Intermediate-Mid/High performance. Lastly, unlike interviewers whose main function is merely to test proficiency, we have a purpose which is both evaluative and pedagogical. Our oral tests are intended not only to measure linguistic performance, but also to encourage it, often enough among language learners who have lacked heretofore the incentive or the inclination to venture their best. It is essential that we dispel their fear that initiative will result only in penalties for errors, and that we inspire in them the prospect that reasonable success can be attained and maintained.

### **The Future: Refinements and Prospects**

After five years of proficiency instruction and oral testing, our first-year program has by no means reached a state of complacent fossilization. Methods, standards, and tests are still being refined, and the exploration of proficiency testing and teaching in other language modalities raises the prospect of major changes in the first-year program, and in more advanced courses as well.

Since introducing oral testing we have steadily simplified and objectified our written tests, in part to compensate for the extra investment of time and energy required by oral testing, but also because we feel that the oral interview is an economical and appropriate vehicle for measurement of linguistic creativity. Last fall we began conducting, early in each unit, brief vocabulary, dictation, and multiple-choice tests; a standardized mimeographed form is used, and each test takes less than a minute to correct. Since winter we have recomposed some unit tests as machine-

corrected multiple-choice examinations. We have also experimented with cloze tests, which are also easily corrected. Oral testing, then, permits a considerable and, more important, a legitimate reduction in conventional paperwork.

While we are quite pleased with the oral proficiency our students are attaining, for many years we have been concerned that they have not been learning how to listen and read, much less write, with reasonable competence. This year we will most likely reduce the oral tests to three per quarter, at three-week intervals, with a total grade weight of 35%. Regular testing of listening and reading comprehension as separate skills will be introduced, also at three-week intervals, staggered so that the student will have a test in one of the three modalities every week. We anticipate that both the listening and the reading tests will be multiple-choice tests of content and vocabulary, with the items classified and weighted by difficulty according to the respective *Guidelines*. Quite likely the aggregate weighting of the tests in each of the two modalities will amount to about 25% of the final grade. Such tests, like the oral tests, can be taken outside class; unlike oral tests, they might be administered and scored by student assistants or lab staff, or even by computer, which would reduce the instructors' paperwork burden and could free up considerable classroom time for real teaching.

More problematic is the testing of writing proficiency. I have experimented with short tasks or situations, for example a phone message outlined in English for relay in—not translation into—German. Such tests, I think, would not need to be "graded," or laboriously corrected error by error. They might instead be assessed for their overall quality according to the *Guidelines*, and then assigned a grade or score pegged to those standards.

### **Conclusions**

I am convinced that regular individual oral testing is beneficial and practical even in a large introductory foreign-language course. The periodic oral test demonstrates that quite early in the first year average students can be induced, led, taught, or inspired to carry on a sustained conversation in German at a satisfying level. Requisite are, first, teaching and testing practices which earnestly encourage the acquisition of oral proficiency. Systematic oral testing demands intimate knowledge of proficiency standards and elicitation techniques, orientation of staff and students, sheer hard work, and a commitment to both the "organizing principle" of proficiency and the principle of organization.

Some caveats must be uttered. While our testing program represents one way in which the ACTFL/ETS speaking guidelines and the ILR interview model of oral proficiency testing can be adapted to a typical introductory course, it is but *one* way. I am aware that our procedures may well not be practicable in other programs, especially at the K-12 level, though I think that equivalent evaluation is possible there too. It would be presumptuous of me to propose solutions, since I lack K-12 teaching experience. Nevertheless, participants in proficiency workshops I conducted

in 1983 and 1984 for K-12 teachers were able to suggest several tactics, among them mini-tests within the classroom and extra hours for testing before and after the official school day, with compensatory reduction in traditional written work. Indeed, some of the participants had long conducted such tests, though without orienting them to the *Guidelines* and interview model.

Secondly, our tests and evaluation methods are not exact equivalents of ILR/ACTFL/ETS proficiency tests and ratings. But they are suitable to their purpose, which is the encouragement and measurement of what I consider to be the first and most momentous success in foreign-language learning: the transition from virtual monolingualism to respectable Novice behavior and thence to the truly honorable Intermediate proficiency whose attainment should be the pride of both student and teacher. Until such time that scheduling, teaching load, class size, and teacher training permit formal, extensive ILR/ACTFL/ETS-style oral testing, teachers responsible for mass instruction may have to be satisfied with something less than the ideal. I don't mind.

### Notes

I became supervisor of first-year German at PSU in 1980, and bear the responsibility for what is presented here. But the alternation between the pronouns "I" and "we" is a testimony to an exemplary cooperation among colleagues. I salute therefore my fellow first-year German instructors Linda Parshall, Lauren Nussbaum, and Louis J. Elteto, the last of whom, Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages, has done much to spread the message of proficiency testing and teaching in our department and throughout the region.

\*Our first-year text is *Deutsch für alle*, 2nd ed., by Werner Haas and Gustave Bording Mathieu (New York: John Wiley, 1983).

### Appendix

#### A. Oral Test Outline Scripts

##### Symbols:

- / and ( ) = alternate and supplementary formulations  
 \* = material to introduce gradually during test cycle

#### GL150 Test #1 (after 10-20 class hours)

*Targets:* greetings, status nouns, low numbers, alphabet, similar survival items; verbs in present tense (maybe "wissen"?); nominative case (pronouns and articles); plural; question words. Indications of superior ability: response to "Warum?"; use of "gern"; ability to disagree or to correct misunderstanding.

1. *Guten Morgen / Tag / Abend. Wie geht es (Ihnen) (heute)?*  
 \**Geht es Ihnen gut heute?*  
 Maybe: *Ist heute Sonntag?* etc.
2. *(Und) wie heißen Sie, bitte?* [Find some feature of the name which might strike a German as difficult to spell.] *Wie schreibt man das? / Schreibt man das mit . . . oder . . . ?*
3. *Sind Sie Student(in)? / Sie sind Student(in), ja? Was studieren Sie? (Sind Sie [nationality])?*

4. *Wer ist / Wie heißt der Professor / die Professorin in der Deutschklasse? [If not yourself]?*  
 \**Kennen Sie \_\_\_\_\_?*
5. *Haben Sie ein Auto? Fahren Sie gern? / Gehen Sie gern zu Fuß?*  
 \**Es regnet, und Sie gehen gern zu Fuß? / Sagen wir, es regnet heute. Gehen Sie dann auch gern zu Fuß?*
6. \**Haben Sie heute / hier einen Regenmantel / Regenschirm (mit)? Warum (nicht)? Wie ist das Wetter?*  
 alternate: *Sehen Sie / Gibt es hier einen . . . ?*

##### Situations:

Set up one of the situations below; you may use German, but English can be appropriate too, if the student is not very good or if you want to avoid revealing target vocabulary and structures.

1. Ask for a description of the German class, or some other class—look for *Mann / Frau* or *Student / Studentin* plurals; good leading question: *Sind alle Amerikaner?* Also: *jung, alt, intelligent.*

2. "Was denken Sie?"—Explain that nation A often believes such or such about nation B; cite a few *Tatsachen* and *Klischees* from Unit 1 and encourage an expression of opinion. Look for expressions like *richtig / falsch, recht haben, glauben, zum Beispiel.*

3. Pretend that you meet me at a social occasion where German is the language of conversation. With you is someone of your own age whom you know well—a classmate, brother / sister, etc. Approach me with the appropriate remarks and then introduce your companion to me. Provide as much information as you can.

4. Asking / giving directions (\*use ONLY if Unit 3 has been begun or if the task is kept simple). Look for numbers, times, *nehmen* and *fahren*, and formal imperative.

#### GL151 Oral Test #1 (after 55-65 class hours)

*Targets:* simple past; reflexives; time phrases (definite, indefinite, frequency, *seit*, months); *da/wo*-compounds; future; *als/wenn/wann*; sports, hobbies; DDR; idioms (body parts); adjective endings (if Unit 11 is tested). Might be good to include some rapid, fairly complicated utterances to check comprehension.

1. The test consists of rather unconnected items. You may well want to prepare the student for that by using some stratagem appropriate to the series of questions—e.g., introduce yourself as a part-time statistician for some German demographic institute which is surveying Americans, or explain that you would like to ask some questions about personal life.

2. Try to make the *dafür / dagegen* item complex enough that the student will not be tempted to parrot back the original prepositional phrase.

3. No need to ask all the questions, especially if the student is very bad OR very good; but try to create smooth transitions between items.

4. Maybe include a *Warum?* item to check conjunctions.

*Seit wann studieren Sie an der Portlander Staatsuniversität?*

*Womit finanzieren Sie (sich) das Studium?*

*(Was werden Sie machen/tun, wenn Sie mit dem Studium fertig sind?)*

*Wann fängt Ihre erste Klasse an? Wann stehen Sie an diesem Tag auf?*

*(Sind Sie heute früh aufgestanden?)*

*(Haben Sie [gestern abend] Ihre Hausaufgaben für heute gemacht?)*

*Essen Sie ein gutes Frühstück? (or present perfect + heute)*

*(Machen / Machten Sie es selber?)*

*(Wie war Ihr Frühstück heute? Gut? / Hat's geschmeckt?)*

*Putzen Sie sich die Zähne davor oder danach / vor dem Frühstück oder nach dem Frühstück? (Insist on an answer with subject + verb)*

\**Welche Zahnpaste verwenden Sie?*

*Wie oft waschen Sie sich an Wochentagen / an einem typischen Wochentag die Hände?*

(Optional, for better students: *Trinken Sie viel Milch? Darin gibt es viel Kalzium. Haben Sie sich als Kind ein Bein, einen Arm oder einen Finger gebrochen?*)

*Sind Sie verheiratet?*

[if "Ja":] *Haben Sie Kinder? (\*Unit 11: Möchten Sie) / (\*Unit 10: Werden Sie) vielleicht einmal (noch) ein Kind haben?*

[if "Nein":] *Möchten Sie / Werden Sie vielleicht einmal heiraten?*

*Wie alt ist Ihr Mann / Ihre Frau? // Wie alt sind Sie? (or other family members) In welchem Jahr und in welchem Monat ist / sind X geboren?*

To check adjective endings:

*Haben alle in Ihrer Familie [color, size, etc.] Haar / Augen?*

(Or: *Würden Sie bitte Ihre(n) beste(n) Freud(in) etc. beschreiben?*)

(Or: *Haben Sie ein amerikanisches oder ein importiertes Auto?*)

(Or: *Trinken Sie [nur] amerikanisches Bier?*)

*Interessieren Sie sich für Sport oder Musik? (avoid other hobbies—too many vocabulary problems)*

(tougher: *Wofür interessieren Sie sich in der Freizeit / wenn Sie nicht lernen oder arbeiten müssen?*)

*Wie oft trainieren Sie / spielen Sie Musik pro Woche? Seit wann? (look for -mal, Stunde(n), seit)*

*Und jetzt eine politische / kulturelle Frage:*

a) *Sind Sie für oder gegen finanzielle Hilfe für Football als Teamsport an der PSU? Or: . . . Hilfe von dem Staat für Olympiasportler? Or: . . . Mädchen bei Little-League Teams?*

b) *Was wissen Sie über Wilhelm Röntgen, Bertha von Suttner oder Heinrich Schliemann (subjects of recent textbook readings)?*

c) *Wenn Sie an das 21. Jahrhundert / an die 80er Jahre / an die Zukunft denken, sind Sie pessimistisch oder optimistisch? Warum?*

### GL151 Oral Test #2 (after 65-75 classroom hours)

#### Examiner's Handout

The GL151 #2 test is a "reverse interview" test where students ask us the questions. Linguistic targets are question word order itself, future tense, adjective endings, and other intermediate skills. It's also a good chance to do some general checking of material up to Chapter 12.

As for grading, the F and D tests are obvious. An A student should be able to ask questions readily and in essentially correct form, with realistic intonation, and should be able to handle your incidental, off-the-cuff questions. In other words, the A student can fairly easily initiate and sustain a conversation which covers quite a range in topics and time. Unless distracted, the B student will be able to keep on producing, but the strain will be evident, and so will some definite error patterns. You can probably bring the B student to silence by using the full range of what has been presented in class so far. The C student will struggle bravely and will eventually get most of the job done, but will exhibit serious difficulties in communication and will not handle extra functions at all well.

*Students' Handout* (provided 5 minutes before test commences)

"Was dem einen recht, ist dem andern billig."

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

Your mission in this test is not to give information, but rather to OBTAIN it from your examiner. In plain terms, you will conduct a brief informal interview which will focus on personal background and related chit-chat. Read the questions below—take about five minutes. Then report for your test—you will have about five minutes also to ask your questions. You will be graded not only on how you handle the basic items outlined here, but also on your ability to follow up your questions, and on your small-talk, including suitable polite expressions.

NOTE: The actual number of questions you ask is less important than your ability to converse. Try to ASK the questions rather than read them. And, please, keep the content and format of the test confidential.

Greet your examiner, make sure he/she has time, and then find out:

1. what the examiner thinks of the weather; better or worse tomorrow?
2. whether the examiner had a good weekend, what he/she will do next weekend, and whether he/she would prefer to have longer weekends.
3. whether examiner is married, and if so for how long now.
4. children? If so, names and ages.
5. at which university/ies the examiner studied. When/how long?
6. how long the examiner has been living in Portland. (CAREFUL)
7. what the examiner will be doing this summer.

### B. Transcript of a First-term Final Oral Examination

The examinee was twenty years old and had not studied German before taking the course. The test was conducted after between forty and fifty classroom hours. Overall test grade: B (accent A/B, grammar B/C, vocabulary B, fluency B, comprehension B). Grades on previous oral tests: A, B+, B. Written test grade average: C. Course grade: C.

Idiosyncrasies: The examinee speaks quite slowly, or rather there are lengthy pauses between utterances which themselves may be at reasonable speed. There are many "uh"/"hmm" interjections, and the subject often echoes key parts of prompts to himself in a low voice.

The examiner conducted the interview, which lasted 11½ minutes, at nearly his customary conversational utterance pace, which is rather brisk.

Key features: Strengths—can create with the language, and will produce full-sentence utterances which are not echoes or simple transformations of prompts; attempts subordinate clauses (*daß, bevor, seit*); volunteers modal verbs; awareness and correct use of dative case (*aus dem Haus*); frequent subject-verb agreement; separable prefixes; imperative; less frequent vocabulary: *scheinen, stören, Bauch, allein*. Weaknesses—barest sense of past tense; genders often wrong; many articles missing; plurals not evident (but not carefully probed); verb placement; confusion of *Sie/du* address.

B+ examinees were distinguished from the present subject in both the precision and complexity of their grammar; most could produce, for example, the present perfect of several verbs and the imperfect of *sein* and *haben*. They, most A students, and even some C+ subjects spoke more rapidly. By comparison, a C- examinee spoke almost entirely in brief fragments, frequently omitted subjects when using verbs, volunteered virtually nothing, and was quite unable to field questions which the B examinee here comprehended readily and to which he responded reasonably well, if slowly.

Estimated ACTFL rating: Intermediate-low, but present sample not adequate for a truly reliable rating (chief gap: probe for ability to ask questions).

W = subject whispers to self; pauses are represented by two or more periods.

Examiner	Student
Schönes Wetter heute, nicht?	Ja. Es ist nicht klar.
Nicht klar?	Nicht klar.
Hat es schon geregnet?	Ja, in E [nearby town]
Regnete es, als Sie aufgestanden sind?	. . . (W: aufgestanden) Es regnet, bevor ich ausgestanden.
Um wieviel Uhr sind Sie aufgestanden?	. . . Ich . . . oh . . . (W: Let's see, wieviel Uhr) . . . sieben Uhr

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Can you put that in a whole sentence?

Ich . . hm . . . Es ist sieben Uhr seit ich aufstand.  
Es ist weit zu E.

Warum so früh?

Wir hatten [in der Klasse] einen Test um acht Uhr. Sie sind um sieben Uhr aufgestanden?

No no. Acht. Ich . . uh . . ich aufgestande . . Ich ha . . aufgestanden um fünf Uhr.

Das ist früh.

Ja. Meine Vater . . immer hat . . .  
Meine Vater . . immer standen um fünf Uhr auf.

Warum so früh? Haben Sie eine Farm dort?

. . . Ja. Ich Er mußst geh . . . gehen zu Omark [name of business] und er an fange arbeta um sieben Uhr und . . der Bus ist . . langsam.

Ja, ich verstehe das ganz gut. Sie haben nicht von Ihrer Mutter gesprochen.

Sie arbeta nicht aus . . . aus dem Haus. Sie ist Hausfrau.

Oh. Hat sie das gern?  
Haben Sie heute Frühstück gegessen?

Ja. Es schein zu mir, daß sie hat gern.  
Ja. Ich . . . Ja . . Ich . . . habe . .  
Cheertos? . . gegessen.

Das ist das deutsche Wort.  
Mit Milch?  
Oder mit Orangensaft?

Ja. Mit Milch.  
Orangensaft . . stör . . stört meine Bach Bauch.

Ich verstehe, was Sie meinen.  
Waren Ihre Eltern auch am Tisch?

. . . für das Frühstück? Nein. Ich esse allein.

Können wir von dem letzten Wochenende sprechen? Waren Sie zu Hause oder machten Sie eine Reise?

(W: Let's see. Letztes Wochenende)  
Ich . . Ich . . . stehe zu Haus.

Sie stehen zu Hause??  
Nein, Sie sitzen.  
Was machten Sie?

Ich stehe.  
Oh ja. Ich bleibe zu Haus.  
. . . Ich . . . hatte studier (?n).  
["hatte" = "had to"?]

Mußten Sie oder wollten Sie?

. . . mußten und wollten.  
Ich mußte studieren, aber . . ich . . . wollte. Ja, ich wollte, wollte . .

Ja, "ich wollte."  
Konnten Sie keine Zeit für Sport oder Hobbies finden?  
Warum nicht? Sie sind nicht klein.

. . . Ich . . . Sport gefällt mir nicht.  
. . . Ich . . . seit bin ich Junge, . . ich hatte nicht Sport . . spielen und . .  
so also ich bin . . . ich bin schlecht.  
. . . . . Es ist gemütlich.

Warum tragen Sie dann Sportschuhe?  
Das kann sein.

[pause, gesture toward handout with map, timetable and menu]

Haben Sie diese Information verstanden?

Ja.  
Vielleicht.

Hundert Prozent?

Dann machen wir eine Situation.

I will describe the situation in English and then we'll proceed with German. You're familiar with the city. . . .

Well, actually . . .

We'll pretend that you are. Here you are, right there at Opernplatz. Can you find that? You can use your map. There you are. It's freezing cold, and it's two o'clock in the afternoon. A little kid comes up to you and asks for directions to the Bahnhof. What do you say auf deutsch?

OK.

Ja.

OK . . . Gehen Sie . . dort auf die Bahnhofstraße, und wenn und wann . . Sie sehen Sackgasse . . dann . . dann . . . OK . . . dann auch der Bahnhof sehen.

. . . Ich weiß nicht. . . . Nein . . . Er ist . . . Er ist . . . zwei Straße weit.

Ist das sehr weit?

Oh, es ist nicht so weit. Gibt es einen Bus zum Bahnhof?  
Straßenbahn? Wann kommt die nächste?

Nein. Es gibt Straßenbahn.

(W: Let's see . . zwei . . OK . . . Straßenbahn . . Campingplatz . . Campingplatz? . . ist . . .)  
Oh, Opernplatz . . (W: Let's see), well . . Denn Denn es zwei Uhr ist, dann nächste Bus kommen jetzt.

Danke. Das ist das Ende von dem Test. [several minutes consultation in English]

### Joggers Way Behind Swimmers in Numbers, Poll Shows

Swimming is the country's most popular way of keeping in shape, according to a recent poll taken by the Carl Korth Institute for Cardiac and Circulatory Research in Erlangen (Bavaria). The survey shows that 65 percent of West Germans are athletically active on a regular basis, with 27 percent preferring to swim. Cycling was close behind, favored by 26 percent, followed by hiking at 18 percent. In fourth place were bowling, gymnastics/aerobics, table tennis, soccer and jogging. Only nine percent ski—five percent Alpine and four percent cross-country—and four percent play tennis. Of those interviewed, 13 percent said they don't exercise at all. The vast majority of these are women. "No time" and "no desire to" were the major excuses given for leading the sedentary life.