STATEWIDE TEACHER CERTIFICATION MODELS

Robert Shaefer, Arizona State University
David Rankin, California State University, Dominguez Hills
Sandra Murphy, University of California, Berkeley

Robert Shaefer opened the session with a brief history of the Arizona Teacher Proficiency Examination, a test required of all college students who declare themselves as interested in matriculating in the state's teacher preparation programs. The exam has sections on professional knowledge, reading, mathematics, and grammar. Shaefer reported that controversy had developed over the grammar section of the exam. One issue which had caused concern was the high rate of failure on this section of the examination. Quoting an article which appeared in the Arizona Republic in January, 1985 (p. A18), Shaefer reported that "the grammar portion was failed by nearly 55% of the Hispanics, nearly 70% of the Indians, and 59% of the Blacks. Anglo students fared better but still 36% failed the grammar portion of the exam."

Shaefer also described the dispute which developed between the Board of Regents and the legislature over using the total test as a screen for teachers entering teacher education programs, noting that legislation which went into effect in August, 1984 required that students, as well as college graduates seeking certification in Arizona, had to pass each portion of the basic skills test with at least an 80% score. Shortly before, the Arizona Board of Regents had mandated that students who failed the test but met all other university entrance requirements be granted conditional admission to the teacher education programs of the state's three universities. This policy placed the Regents in direct conflict with the 1984 law, which clearly stated that students wanting admission "must" pass the examination. The Regents were under pressure to either revise or accept the test and then remove the condition of temporary admission for students who fail the exam. The week before Shaefer's report, the Arizona Board of Regents adopted a new test for admission to the state's colleges of Education, the Pre-professional Skills Test, an examination developed and administered by the Educational Testing Service. Shaefer reported, however, that the State Department of Education would continue to use the Arizona Teacher Proficiency Examination for certification purposes.

Shaefer said that a twelve-member-technical panel made up of university and community-college faculty, including researchers who specialize in psychometry, found potential bias against minorities in certain features of this (e.g., determining whether exclamation points are used properly, and identifying words that sound the same but are spelled differently). Shaefer went on to discuss the implications of assessing grammar in general, and the confusion that can arise from mixing different meanings of the word "grammar."

Drawing on the work of Nelson Francis, Shaefer described three sorts of "grammar." He described "grammar one" as "the unconscious or implicit knowledge of our language which all of us use every day to carry on our communicative needs." In contrast, Shaefer described "grammar two" as "what linguists and grammarians are concerned with: 'A description, analysis, and formulation of formal language patterns.'"

Traditional, structural and transformational grammar serve as examples of this latter type of "grammar." The third type, or "grammar three," is "grammar in the sense of usage," or what Francis called "linguistic etiquette."

It is the third type of "grammar" that Shaefer feels has created problems. Shaefer pointed out that if one is testing something called grammar, one should have a rather clear idea of what one is testing for. Students he has interviewed about the Arizona teacher exam report having to supply exclamation marks, quotation marks, and hyphens, to distinguish between who and whom, and that and which, and to identify split infinitives. Shaefer said that the inclusion of such items indicates that the test makers are using items in grammar three when they really wish to test grammar one.

Shaefer questioned assumptions that may underly the testing of grammatical knowledge: 1) that if people know either traditional, structural or transformational grammar, they will be able to speak and write fluently, and 2) that if teachers know and teach structural, transformational, or traditional grammar they will be able to bring about fluency in reading and writing in their students. Shaefer then went on to argue that the concept of a single standard of correctness, or "classroom English," affects the perception of the American public and through the American public, school board members, members of boards of regents, and state legislators. He cited Gere and Smith (Attitudes, Language and Change, 1979, p.9) to describe a myth which influences the public's attitude toward what should be taught (and tested) in schools:

Myth 3A: 'Standard English' is a clearly definable set of correct pronunciations, grammatical structures and word choices. It is a 'standard' because it represents the widest usage and because it has been refined to be the most versatile and acceptable form of English.

Shaefer indicated that it is quite possible that members of the public and their representatives in various political organizations may employ test makers who believe in Myth 3A, while most of the linguistic research in the twentieth century indicates that myth 3A is simply not true. In concluding his address, Shaefer predicted that we will continue to have difficulty with test making in the area of grammar until the concept of "appropriateness" becomes a standard itself in American English and the fact of continuing language change becomes acceptable to a majority of Americans.

David Rankin also addressed the issue of statewide teacher certification models, providing a description of the development and content of the writing section of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), the teacher certification competency test required of most applicants for a first teaching credential or a service credential in California with the exception of certain exempt credentials (e.g., credentials for adult non-academic subjects or vocational subjects). The test is also required for the issuance or renewal of an Emergency Credential unless the applicant already holds a California teaching credential for which a baccalaureate degree is required.

The California State Department of Education was responsible for the development of the test and the initial establishment of the required passing scores. An (Continued on following page)
holistic scoring
and reader training

Speakers:
Bob Christopher, Ramapo College, New Jersey
Carol Sweedler-Brown, San Diego State University
Agnes Yamada, California State University, Dominguez Hills

Introducer/Recorder: Dick Worthen, Diablo Valley College

Bob Christopher opened the session with a description of holistic scoring. Holistic scoring of students' writing forces the evaluator to focus on the rhetorical aspects of the paper and encourages the designing of assignments that set up rhetorical contexts for tasks. It encourages consensus on standards and discourages idiosyncratic evaluations of essays. Papers are compared to each other in terms of the whole rhetorical performance.

The holistic process contrasts with criterion-referenced essay reading. Here papers are evaluated against a scoring guide. This insures somewhat more consistency from test administration to test administration. Theoretically, with criterion-referenced reading, all students could earn the highest score or all could get the lowest score. Actually the two methods are not mutually exclusive and in practice the two often merge.

The training of readers in a department affects more than the scoring procedures. It requires a commitment to achieving agreement. This in turn is a commitment to a means of achieving agreement. It is important that all readers know about and participate generously in preparation for the reading, in effect taking part in the "research" on composition. Reader training, the commitment to subjecting student writing to evaluation, is a precursor to evaluation of the curriculum, raising such questions as "How does the rating process affect course goals, content, and pedagogy?"

While faculties which have adopted holistic scoring as a means of determining success find it from the basic composition course tend to develop indigenous peripheral practices, most use something like the following as the core procedure. A Leader brings together the Table Leaders, experienced readers who are familiar with the procedure, for an intensive tuneup. Table Leaders will supervise a table of four or five readers. The holistic reading's preliminary activities consist of two stages: 1) the training of Table Leaders and 2) the training of readers.

Carol Sweedler-Brown and Agnes Yamada discussed these two activities in detail. At the first stage, the Leader brings the Table Leaders together and they read a large corpus of papers all written for the same assignment. Assuming the papers are to be graded on a scale of 1-6, all papers are read by each Table Leader and given a ranking number. The reader, of course, does not know the score given by other readers. Those papers that evoked the most consistent scores become candidates for the smaller group of prototype papers for each score. The group then discusses these papers and their characteristics. These six groups of prototype papers become the