

PEDAGOGICAL DIAGNOSTICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Language teachers may have always known that identifying their students' strengths and weaknesses early in a foreign language course would, in theory, greatly facilitate their efforts to tailor instruction to the needs of specific students, or at the very least help them plan class activities appropriate for the class's overall skill levels. Of course, this piece is one of many instructional concepts that are far simpler to discuss than to implement.

Keywords: Pedagogical diagnostics, assessment, observation, survey.

INTRODUCTION

A recurring issue is that while students' strengths and limitations may become obvious as they finish their regular schoolwork during the semester, by the time you truly understand what the students require, it is often too late to do anything about it. This is why famous foreign language experts, such as the late Paul Pimsleur, began to highlight the significance of "knowing your students in advance" (Pimsleur and Struth, 1968). J. Charles Alderson has released *Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency*, in which he advocates for a stronger emphasis on diagnostic evaluation in both research and practice. The consequence is that diagnostic assessment is a critical field that is less established than other forms of language evaluation, such as proficiency and accomplishment testing. Alderson does, however, manage to compile a list of characteristics that most people believe describe most diagnostic techniques. This list, which comprises the following elements, can help us tune in to what diagnostic evaluation is all about:

Approaches to diagnosis...

- Identify strengths and limitations in a learner's knowledge or language use;
- Focus on deficiencies, which leads to remediation in subsequent instruction
- Enable detailed analysis and a report of responses to items or tasks
- Provide feedback that can be acted upon
- Are based on content covered in instruction—or content soon-to-be covered
- Are less likely to be “authentic” than are proficiency tests; more likely to be discrete-point, focused on specific elements.

Let's go over these essential elements one by one to assist explain our ideas regarding diagnostics. Diagnostic testing, in a sense, begins where proficiency testing stops. That example, if pupils do poorly while attempting to utilize the target language, you should try to figure out why. Were they unfamiliar with the necessary terminology? Did they lack the appropriate modals? Were they unable to correctly pronounce certain sounds, words or groups of words? This information may sometimes be obtained from a sample of a student's writing or speech. Sometimes such samples provide merely indications, and you must create tests that target the grammatical or lexical components that you feel are troublesome. In doing so, you will need to make decisions about which forms are truly difficult and significant, as well as bear in mind what you are prepared to teach. Because this is a personalized method, you must make a decision about how much time you will have to address the difficulties that you identify for all of the children in your class. You can't correct everything for everyone, but you can often identify a few areas that are creating substantial issues for a specific student, and you can frequently discover crucial language characteristics that most, if not all, of your

students are struggling with. To put it another way, you can't test everything, so you'll have to be picky. Early in the semester, one method for selecting information for diagnostic testing is to sample what is presented in various chapters of the text. Another technique, if you believe the content in the book is already sorted from least to most difficult, is to prepare diagnostic assessments by sampling mostly from the middle or end of the text. Then you can administer similar assessments at the end of the course to see if your remediation was indeed successful.

If you wish to infer that a certain grammatical point is a weakness, you must include multiple examples of that grammatical point in your diagnosis. If you choose a four-option multiple-choice format, remember that a person has a one-in-four probability of just guessing the correct answer. Furthermore, you should usually test the same argument in several scenarios. A classic example would be a "voiced consonant" (e.g., b, d or g as opposed to p, t or k), which some students appear to have no trouble with in word initial position, or between two vowels, yet consistently miss in word final position.

You will frequently be able to uncover trends based on your own language training, but you will need to convey these patterns (areas that require attention) to your pupils in the form of a report. Ideally, you would review this report in a one-on-one meeting, but that is not always practicable. Creating a student profile for each student is a related notion. You must have a plan, a list of steps that you and your pupils can follow after an issue has been identified. If it's a pronunciation issue, you might send them to the lab to complete practice activities with the sounds in concern. You may also provide students extra homework activities that target their areas of difficulty, or even allow them to perform homework assignments suited to their requirements instead of all of the generic homework tasks. Focusing on topics you know how to resolve is part of being selective in sharing feedback (you can't report everything). It will be based on "content soon to be covered" at the start of the course. Following that, it might be either recently covered or shortly to be addressed—diagnosis can be a continuous element of the course. In theory, diagnostic material might also be based on theory, although second language acquisition researchers are currently working on that! Diagnostics are less likely to be "authentic" than are proficiency tests; more likely to be discrete-point, focused on specific elements. Language usage in proficiency examinations should be as realistic as possible, but when trying to figure out "why" a certain performance is poor, you almost always have to look at language forms. As a result, many individuals believe that diagnostic assessments are more effective for beginners than for experienced students.

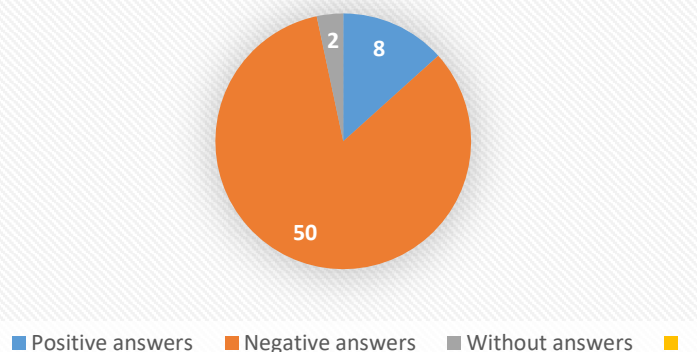
Methods

During the research we have tried to get a questionnaire from teachers and students. There were 60 English teachers and 400 students (202 students in experiment groups, 198 students in control groups). Observation and questionnaire were the main methods in pre-stage of our research.

Results and discussion

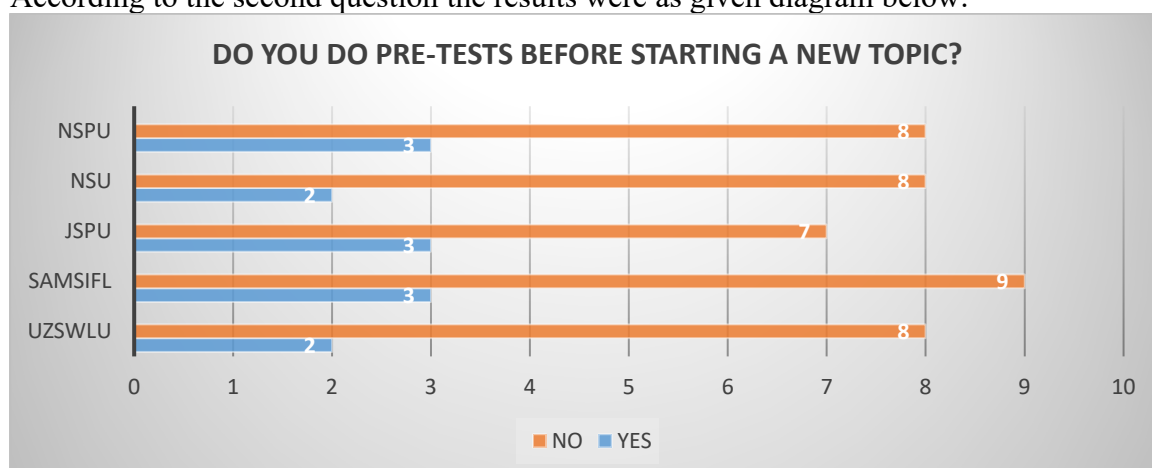
There were five questions in questionnaires. According to the first question of teachers' questionnaire the results were made as following:

Do you know about pedagogical diagnostics?



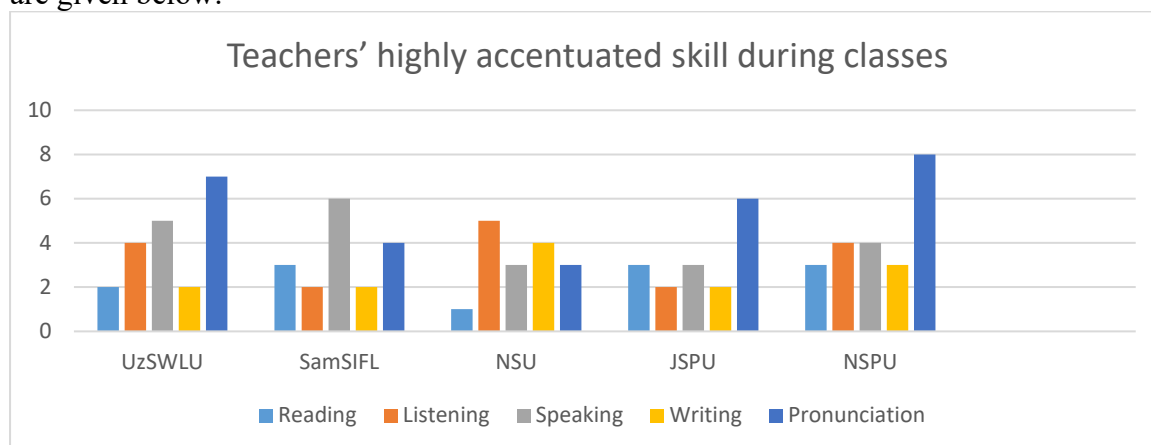
As you see there were lots of teachers (50 teachers) which have never heard about pedagogical diagnostics, 2 teachers did not answer for this question, 8 teachers tried to give the definition to the question, but not enough ideas about the term.

According to the second question the results were as given diagram below:



As diagram shows most teachers do not take pre-tests before new topics, since it is very essential in diagnosing students' knowledge on a new topic before and after it.

Next question was about teachers' highly accentuated skill during their classes, and the results are given below:



As results show teachers try to work on students' speaking and pronunciation skills during their classes.

Conclusion

Normally, the capacity to employ certain linguistic forms indicates knowledge of the forms, but not always the other way around. For example, if someone regularly utilizes accurate tense and aspect morphology, he should do well on a discrete-point grammar examination emphasizing those forms. Other students, on the other hand, may successfully answer multiple-choice questions based on their mastery of these forms, but they may fail to employ these forms effectively when writing essays or delivering oral presentations. If students do badly on a "performance" test (in a "presentational" mode), you may wish to administer a paper-and-pencil test to determine whether they have concept understanding of the forms they are failing to generate effectively. If they do not have the information, you might consider providing explicit education. However, if they show knowledge of the forms when quizzed but fail to use these forms appropriately in using the language, you could design authentic activities (e.g., writing email messages or leaving phone messages) for demonstration and practice of the forms in contexts where the meaning was (hopefully) clear. To summarize, pedagogical diagnostics is critical in foreign language teaching and learning.

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