



**RUDIMENTARY TESTING AND
EVALUATION IN LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION**

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Abstract:

The students who learn English as a foreign language are considerably poor in using the language and it is common to come across a number of students committing mistakes while speaking, reading or writing in English. The reasons for defective or inadequate rudimentary learning may be due to (a) Pull of the mother tongue (b) Over-learning or over generalization of a rule (c) Inherent difficulty of a particular item (d) Defective teaching and, (e) Imitation of wrong models. Therefore, the teacher should keenly sort out the persistent and serious errors committed by majority of students by administering various language proficiency tests and should to try to evolve a systematic treatment of various learning difficulties of students. Hence, it is high time that more emphasis is laid on administering various kinds of tests for evaluating the language proficiency of students at rudimentary stage so that good communication skills may be fostered among the students at rudimentary level itself.

1.Introduction

The students who learn English as a foreign language are considerably poor in using the language and it is common to come across a number of students committing mistakes while speaking, reading or writing in English. Hence, at the rudimentary level, one of the most important tasks before the language teacher is in making the students first unlearn, and then re-learn, quite substantial chunks of the language, which they have learnt wrongly earlier. Therefore, the teacher should keenly sort out the persistent and serious errors committed by majority of students by administering various language proficiency tests and should try to evolve a systematic treatment of various learning difficulties of students. The main focus of this paper is on administering different kinds of tests based on essential aspects related to (i) Orthography (ii) Pronunciation (iii) Vocabulary and, (iv)Syntax. The reasons for defective or inadequate rudimentary learning may be due to (a) Pull of the mother tongue (b) Over-learning or over generalization of a rule (c) Inherent difficulty of a particular item (d) Defective teaching and, (e) Imitation of wrong models. Specific methods for (i) analysis (ii) classification and, (iii) correction of oral--written--lexical errors .Hence, it is high time that more emphasis is laid on diagnostic testing and remedial teaching at rudimentary level so that further learning of wrong language usage is curtailed and better command on communication skills is fostered among the students in future.

2.Test Performance, Not Knowledge

Tests conducted in the language class are performance tests. One should not aim at testing the student's knowledge of English grammar. One should conduct a test to know how the students produce, understand, and use English in communicative contexts. One should not be merely interested in testing how well the students remember the facts about English language. As language professionals, one must be interested in testing how well the students actually use English in communicative contexts.

3.Kinds of Tests

Achievement tests test the progress the students have made in reference to particular lessons. Students' level of achievement in terms of the structures and words taught through a lesson or a specific number of lessons is the focus of achievements tests. The drills and exercises given in a lesson gauge the progress of students even as these help him to understand, master, and use the content, structures, and words given in the lesson.

Proficiency tests, on the other hand, focus on the overall mastery of the students in English irrespective of the lesson. It may be described as a cumulative test, taking into account all the structures and words that a student may have been exposed to so far: a sort of final exam, a comprehensive exam.

3.1. Productive and Receptive Tests

Language proficiency tests may be of a productive nature where students are asked to produce - speak, read aloud, write - utterances, or perform tasks. These may be of a receptive nature where students are asked to read silently and answer multiple choice questions, which demand correct recognition rather than the production of the answer. More often than not, most well-prepared and widely-used TESOL tests are in the form of answering multiple choice questions.

3.2. Vocabulary Tests

Vocabulary tests are of several kinds. Beginner's vocabulary skill is tested through questions which expect a yes or no answer, or by asking them to perform a simple task. In multiple choice questions, "a sentence with a missing word is presented; students choose one of four vocabulary items given to complete the sentence. A third type, multiple choice paraphrase, is a test in which a sentence with one word underlined is given. Students choose which of four words is the closest in meaning to the underlined item. A fourth kind of test, simple completion (words), has students write in the missing part of words that appear in sentences" .Synonyms and antonyms may also be elicited. Testing the knowledge and use of subtle shades of meanings reflected in words somewhat synonymous is another useful test. Asking the students to use words in appropriate sentences is another exercise which has been traditionally used in language textbooks.

3.3. Grammar Tests

Limited response questions which ask students to perform certain tasks, multiple choice completion, simple completion of sentences, and cloze test are some of the test forms used in the grammar section. The grammatical structures offer an endless list of test items. Variety of exercise models can be used to test the students' mastery of structures.

3.4.Pronunciation Tests

Pronunciation tests focus on effective communication, not on perfect pronunciation. Pronunciation of individual sounds, phrases, or sentences is not any more highlighted. “One reason for this view is that even after much training, very few adolescents or adults ever achieve perfect pronunciation in their second language”. Oral repetition, multiple choice hearing identification, reading aloud, simple dialogues, and simple narrations are very useful forms to test the pronunciation skill.

3.5.Reading Tests

Reading tests range from reading aloud to reading comprehension. Students in the beginning levels need to be tested as to their ability to “read” the words, phrases, and sentences with appropriate pronunciation and sentence melody. This requires the mastery of the letter-sound correspondence and other phonological rules such as vowel reduction, placement of stress, and use of appropriate syllabic pauses. Reading comprehension, reading speed, and skimming techniques are other items of importance to be covered in reading tests.

3.6.Writing Tests

Sentence combining, sentence expansion, sentence reduction, copying, and dictation are often used in the beginning level tests in writing. Guided writing and changing the passage are also popular test forms.

3.7.Listening Tests

Picture cues have been found very effective in testing listening skill. One may provide a number of exercises on listening which can be profitably used to test the progress and proficiency in the listening skill. One should test the students only in forms that are familiar to them. One must not introduce new test forms during testing. However, one may combine several situations already familiar to the students and create new ones from out of the familiar contexts. One must also not introduce new vocabulary or idioms or new structures in the tests. All tests administered must be brief and focused upon specific language skills.

4. Conclusion

Hence, it is high time that more emphasis is laid on administering various kinds of tests for evaluating the language proficiency of students at rudimentary stage so that good communication skills may be fostered among the students at rudimentary level itself.

5.Reference

1. Baruah T.C. (1987) English Teachers Handbook. Penguin Publishers: New Delhi.
2. Ravi Sheory(2007) Essentials of Language Teaching. Oxford University Press.: New York.