

PHILOLOGY AND LINGUISTICS

DOI 10.51582/interconf.7-8.11.2021.018

Smuhliakova Maryna Kostyantynivna

senior lecturer

Department of Modern Languages

Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding, Ukraine

QUESTION TYPES IN DIAGNOSTIC TESTING IN ENGLISH CLASSES

Abstract. *The paper presents some specific features and principal methods of organizing diagnostic tests and typical questions and tasks suitable for assessing students' basic knowledge and skills in teaching foreign languages. Essential conditions of conducting testing in English classes are analyzed. The article also determines some effective ways how to improve both preparation and testing processes.*

Keywords: *diagnostic testing, skills, foreign language, level, test questions, assessment*

Modern social, economic and political changes in the world and in our country demand reforming the national education system and highlight the importance of quality education at all levels from primary school to higher educational institutions. As a part of this process, pedagogical monitoring and testing play a pivotal role in providing tools of quality education management.

One of the components of the process of teaching a foreign language is to test and evaluate the student's knowledge, skills and abilities. Skillful application of various types of assessments of students' skills allows the teacher to differentiate learning, and gives students opportunities to control their own learning and form the competencies they need in learning a foreign language.

A number of researchers such as R. Lado, A. Davis, W. Kokkota and others have devoted their works to the characteristics of different types of testing used in foreign language learning, but most of them focus on specific aspects of testing achievement and learning outcomes. But they underestimate the importance of diagnostic testing and its role in the process of learning a foreign language.

Therefore, we have defined the task of our research to determine the general features and some ways to use diagnostic assessment in the study of foreign languages and give some examples of question types that can be successfully used in diagnostic testing in teaching a foreign language.

P. Pimsler was one of the first researchers to emphasize the importance of "knowing your students in advance." In his recent study, "Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency," Ch.Alderson states that "diagnostic assessment of student knowledge is an important field that has lack of research compared to other types of language assessment such as testing students' knowledge or achievements", and gives his description of the main approaches in the field of diagnosis. [1. c. 178]

The most important aspect of diagnostic assessment is a preliminary analysis of the students' certain skills or competencies, which helps the teacher to obtain important information about the stage of learning, prepare new course material and anticipate students' challenges and plan the steps to prevent or overcome them. The information from this type of test helps teachers decide what to teach and which learners need help in which areas of language.[2, c. 41]

In his work, A. Tennant emphasizes that diagnostic tests are conducted at the beginning of the course and are often designed to cover a wide range of levels, which allows a teacher to conduct the same test for a large number of students and, based on the results, place them in different groups. [3, p. 11]

And, otherwise, a teacher might make wrong conclusions about students' knowledge if a diagnostic test is poorly constructed so teachers must be clear what misconceptions or understandings they are trying to uncover. [4, p. 16]

There are a number of different types of test questions aimed at evaluating and assessing students' knowledge and skills in a foreign language.

Multiple-choices

Davis thinks that multiple-choice tasks help the teacher measure what the students know and more complex concepts, as well. The main advantage of this type of questions is the duration as the question of this type can be answered fast. It allows the teacher to both save time for other tasks and assess students' mastery of many aspects during the short period of time. Although, the test questions of this type can

give objective results and can be easily scored, good multiple-choice questions are difficult to create and it needs some guides to avoid the mistake in the question such as distraction on the answer choices.

In this type of task there is one correct answer while the rest (normally from 3-4 answers) are distractors that give present incorrect answers.

However, the main problem with most diagnostic tests where multiple choice questions are used is that it is difficult to distinguish the students who really know the correct answer from those who are just guessing and lucky enough. So, this fact sometimes questions this type of assessment.

Most diagnostic tests are based on multiple choice questions only. One of the world's popular English language course "Speakout" suggests a multiple-choice format of 200 questions of a placement test that covers the grammatical structures and vocabulary in the six levels of this course.

Here is the example of a Multiple Choice task from this course:

Underline the correct answer, a), b), c) or d).

97. What would they do if they have any money?

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| a) were | b) didn't |
| c) won't | d) 'd |

98. I'd do more exercise if I time.

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| a) have | b) 'd have |
| c) 'll have | d) had |

99. be possible to reserve a table for tonight?

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| a) Can I | b) Could you |
| c) Would it | d) Will |

100. Could you a good film?

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| a) say me | b) recommend |
| c) tell me | d) advice |

101. When arrive?

- | | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| a) they did | b) did they |
| c) have they | d) does they [5, p. 3] |

There are a number of advantages of multiple choice questions. They are:

1. The results of the testing is fast and easy to organize and check.
2. The questions are usually structured and clear to understand.
3. This type of questions gives the teacher the opportunity to measure learning outcomes from simple to more complex.

4. The results are less dependent on guessing.

However, the disadvantages of this type of test questions are:

1. Compiling the questions might be a time-consuming process.
2. This type of questions gives limited information about the student's skills and knowledge.
3. It's sometimes difficult for a teacher to find appropriate distractors.

Word formation

In this type of test questions students are asked to use the word given to form a word that fits in the gap in the same line.

Here is an example of Word Formation test questions below.

Complete the text. Use the correct forms of the words in capital letters.

Last week I went to a very

- 1) _____ talk about a trip to the Himalayas. INTEREST

Some of the photos were

- 2) _____ AMAZE

The speaker said that he was really

- 3) _____ by the little rope bridges high above the ground. TERRIFY

The most

- 4) _____ part of the talk was when he described the last day. EXCITE

They were so

- 5) _____ that they nearly fell down. TIRE [6, p. 38]

True\False

This type of question is commonly used in diagnostic testing though it is not as reliable as others because random guessing produces the correct answer half the time. The identifying information (True/False) tasks test student's ability to find information in a reading passage or listening extract.

Here is the example of a True\False task:

Read the text below and decide whether these sentences are true or false.

1. Exotic types of wood are a bit more expensive than other ones.
2. Hardwood floors look much better when they are cared for properly.
3. Hardwood floors can absorb the sound.
4. Soft types of wood are less scratch-resistant than other ones.
5. Interior designers often recommend replacing your hardwood flooring when you change the style of your home.

Wood floors are really expensive. Materials can cost from \$3 per square foot for unfinished oak planks to more than \$12 a square foot for more exotic types of wood.

Hardwood floors are durable and homes that are more than 100 years old can still have the original flooring if they have been cared for properly. They just need sweeping or vacuuming and an occasional cleaning with a wood floor cleaner.

Hardwood flooring can be noisy when walking across it, and can be a nuisance to your downstairs neighbors if you live in an apartment complex. Placing an area rug over the floor is a good idea for families with children since it muffles the sound and acts as a cushion.

Hardwood flooring works with all styles of decorating, from traditional to modern. It is available in several types of woods, such as oak, cherry and walnut, and can be sanded and stained to suit the homeowner's taste. When your style changes, you can also change the look of your hardwood floors.

In addition to installation, scratched floors need to be finished. The softer the wood, the easier it will scratch and blemish. Hardwood floors in high traffic areas, especially when there are pets or children, will be prone to showing damage. Refinishing also creates dust from sanding and fumes from the polyurethane coating.

[7, p. 6]

Matching

The matching format is an effective way to test students' recognition of the relationships between words and definitions, categories and examples and help the teacher assess the student's knowledge of lexis.

Here is an example of one of the Matching Tasks:

Match the words with their definitions:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. an edge | a) delicate or faint; |
| 2. to measure | b) to determine the size, amount, etc.; |
| 3. to subtract | c) existing for an indefinite period; |
| 4. bare | d) a spot, mark, or discoloration; |
| 5. subtle | e) without the natural or usual covering; |
| 6. a stain | f) the border or margin of a surface, object, etc.; |
| 7. permanent | g) to calculate the difference between two numbers or quantities by subtraction. [7, p. 14] |

We have defined the following advantages of using this type of questions in diagnostic testing:

1. The testing is easy to carry out.
2. The results of the testing are objective and reliable.
3. It doesn't take long for a student to read the options of the answers that helps save time in diagnostic testing.

The disadvantage of this type of task is that some questions and answers are based on associations and, therefore, such a task doesn't give objective assessment results.

Short-answer question

In case the teacher has a bit more time for doing a diagnostic test and is aimed at getting more reliable assessment, there are short-answer questions that can call for one or two sentences or a long paragraph. Short-answer tests are easier to write but unlike other types of questions mentioned above, they take longer to score, than multiple-choice tests. For example:

Complete the following sentences with the information on topic 'Hardwood Flooring':

1. Hardwood flooring usually comes in...
2. Bamboo flooring is highly valued for...
3. It is recommended that...
4. Hardwood floorings can not be installed ...
5. Hardwood is especially prone to... [7, p. 25]

They also give the teacher some opportunity to see how well students can express their thoughts and evaluate their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. However, compared to essay responses this type of question is not so useful.

All of the examples of testing tasks mentioned above can help the teacher in assessing students' skills in a foreign language.

To sum up, typically, in traditional diagnostic tests students do not generate any language. As, thus, these tests are most often used to measure receptive skills. They offer a number of advantages as they are quick to administer and score. Moreover, scoring is relatively objective. However, they are disadvantageous in that high quality tests are difficult to construct and these tests fail to check the students' productive language skills.

Thus, diagnostic testing is an important means of assessing students' basic knowledge of a foreign language, the results of which can be a valuable resource for the teacher in selecting materials and planning classes that meet the purpose of the course and the needs of students.

References:

1. Фоломкина, С. К. (2006) Тестирование в обучении иностранному языку// Иностр. языки в школе. М.: 2006. — 289 с.
2. David Jaques, (1999) When Teaching Becomes Learning. Teaching Strategies in Higher Education. Effective Teaching, Effective Learning. Ed. by R.Fowkes, Hungary, 1999 p.26.
3. Tennant, A., (2021) Assessment matters: Diagnostic tests // <https://www.onestopenglish.com/assessing-learning/assessment-matters-assessing-skills/157382.article>
4. Quenette, J., Diagnostic testing and changes to teaching practice in Year 9 mathematics classes// Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, May, 2014, p. 121 <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au>
5. Williams, D., Speakout Placement Tests (2-nd edition) Pearson Education Limited, 2016. – 15p.
6. Fricker, R., Siuta, T., Success Pre-Intermediate Testig and Evaluation Book. Pearson Education Limited, 2007. – 78p.
7. Смулякова, М.К., (2020) Floor Coverings: навч. посібник / М. К. Смулякова ; МОН України, НУК ім. адмірала Макарова. – Миколаїв : НУК, 2020. – 64 с.