

How Teachers' Perceptions Affect the Academic and Language Assessment of Immigrant Children



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Introduction

- Recent research evidences inconsistencies in teachers' practice regarding skills assessment of L2 students.
- Scientific evidence supports that less experienced teachers have lower orientation toward multiple task-tests for non-native students. school teachers.

- Research questions: Whether school teachers as having different teaching training and unequal teaching experience with non-native students perceive differently a four-skills scale.

Methodology

Purpose of the study: This study intends to analyse the importance degree between the four skills/tasks: reading, writing, speaking and listening, in the perspective of school teachers.

H1 - identify the most revealing tasks for the establishment of items in proficiency and competency tests;

H2 - assess the knowledge and representations that these teachers have about evaluation tests, according to age (a) length of service (b), and experience with multicultural classes (c).

- The study involved 77 teachers aged between 32 and 62 years ($M=47$ years, $SD=7.4$), of whom 11 (14.3%) were male and 60 (77.9%) were female, with an average of 22 years teaching experience ($SD=6.7$). Teachers teach at nine schools/groupings in the district of Lisbon, Portugal

- This study demonstrates that teachers effectively value this type of skill less (writing skills according to the audience) and for this reason it appears as one of the items with a lower mean. It seems that for this kind of task, Foreign Language teachers value it less than the Portuguese language teachers, and in the same proportion regarding the valuing of grammar rules.

FLs teachers are the ones who undervalue these two aspects of writing the most, when they should be the most sensitive to the grammar question and sociolinguistics of the audience. However, these data are in line with a meta-analysis study conducted by Graham and Peri (2007) who identified the priorities of teachers in the writing teaching tasks as being teaching strategies and 'peer assistance' to the detriment of grammar, pre-writing activities and processing aspects in texts written by the students. According to studies conducted in the eighties (Scarcella, 1984), L2 writers have major problems in writing for specific audiences, which is related to "attention engaging" (p. 671) during the writing task. One cause may be related to the subject's incomplete proficiency in Mother Tongue (Khuwaileh & Shoumali, 2000) and to difference in cognitive processing (and therefore different strategies) in the contexts of Mother Tongue and L2 (Silva, 1993).

Implications for policy/Practice

The results presented in this study are an important contribution especially in two aspects: the analysis of teachers' perception of relevant tasks in L2 is pioneer in Portugal. On the other hand, it presents a corpus of results that corroborate and contrast those of previous international studies, with implications for education and concepts of practices that teachers from various scientific fields reveal about L2 teaching and the type of tasks to consider in tests and in the classroom.

Implications for policy/Practice

The data suggest that teachers may be developing inadequate practices and concepts, especially considering the differences according to scientific field and high school level; that they undervalue the grammar component of all skills to be developed by the students; that they overemphasize listening comprehension and its relationship with reading; that they follow closely a L2 teaching model (originally of American design, Horwitz, 1985) but only basic education teachers (for students aged 4-11 years); and that they have poor notions regarding L2 tasks and evaluation tests, in general.

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