Differentiated Assessment for Mixed Foreign Language Classrooms

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Mixed classes?

• Heritage learners + Non-heritage learners
• Students with different lg background
• Students with different levels of readiness
Why mixed classes?

• Limited resources (funding, instructors, sessions);
• Too small class sizes make it impossible to separate students;
• Nature of our diverse student population (heritage students with different linguistic background, non-heritage students)
Why focus on mixed classes?

• Mixed classes are more common than homogeneous classes in foreign language teaching.
• Efforts in foreign language teaching have focused mainly on L2 classes or HL classes separately (research, textbooks, materials, etc).
• There are many challenges to face in mixed classes.
Challenges in mixed lg classroom

• Students in mixed classes may feel that their specific needs tend not to be addressed.
  • HL find the pace too slow, become bored, and do not progress (Kagan and Dillon, 2003, p. 3).
  • Non-HL are intimidated by HL students’ proficiency (Mazzacco, 1996, p. 3; Valdés, 1995, p. 299).

• Making learning meaningful and accessible to all learners requires strategies and appropriate resources

• Fair evaluation of students with different ethno-linguistic background or readiness requires more effective assessment methods
Suggestion 1: Varied Tests

• Suggestion 1: Create different tests for different groups of students or different requirements for the same tests

Example 1:
Listening comprehension for non-heritage students
vs. reading/writing tasks for heritage students
X 2 (traditional vs. simplified Chinese characters)

Example 2:
Answer questions with Chinese characters
vs. in pinyin (a Romanized phonetic writing system) or English
Suggestion 1: Varied Tests

**Pros:**
- Equity
- test what students learn than what they already know

**Cons:**
- a lot of work for the teacher
- complaint of discrimination from students
Suggestion 2: Varied Grading

• Suggestion 2: Use the same test or task for everyone, but grade differently

Example: Focus on different areas after initial evaluation

Linguistic accuracy for non-heritage students vs. Content/Organization for heritage students
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong> (15 points)</td>
<td>The type of presentation is appropriate for the topic and audience.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information is presented in a logical sequence.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation appropriately cites requisite number of references.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong> (45 points)</td>
<td>Introduction is attention-getting, lays out the problem well, and establishes a framework for the rest of the presentation.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical terms are well-defined in language appropriate for the target audience.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation contains accurate information.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Material included is relevant to the overall message/purpose.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate amount of material is prepared, and points made reflect well their relative importance.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The subject is discussed in great details.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is an obvious conclusion summarizing the presentation.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation And Language Use</strong> (40 points)</td>
<td>Speaker maintains good eye contact with the audience and is appropriately animated (e.g., gestures, moving around, etc.).</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaker uses a clear, audible voice and delivery is poised, controlled, and smooth.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaker handles questions and comments from the class well</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good language skills and pronunciation are used. (Complete sentences, Correct Grammar, Choice of words/expression)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual aids are well prepared, informative, effective, and not distracting.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length of presentation is within the assigned time limits.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information was well communicated.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suggestion 2: Varied Grading

Pros:
- relatively easy for the teacher
- Students can focus on their weaker area
- More individualized assessment of students’ weakness and strength

Cons:
- can be subjective
- Need very accurate initial evaluation, which may take a long time
- Students may complain
Suggestion 3: Varied benchmark

• Create tasks that can be achieved using scaffolding strategies and simulate communicative interaction in social contexts

• Assess students’ proficiency improvement

(See Ohta (2005) for the application of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to the acquisition of interlanguage pragmatic competence).

Role-play: Business email communication

- Form pairs
- Set a social context
- Provide a communicative task that can be achieved at different proficiency level (open level: students can use lower degree of honorifics or higher degree of honorifics to achieve the same communicative task, reflecting the real diverse society)
- Allow students to be creative focusing on social tasks
- Allow students to see their peers’ texts through VoiceThread (text), or Blackboard’s forum
- Include a native speaker (TA) in activities
Email-Writing Assignment #7
(Business negotiation)

Role 1: Client:
Due by Monday night
You received a proposal and a quote from a representative of some company a week ago. You want to accept his/her proposal under some condition. Write back to him/her.

Role 2: Sales representative:
Due by Wednesday night
You receive an email from your client, who asked for the change of some condition in your proposal. However, it is significantly for difficult your company. Reply to him/her presenting an alternative idea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Description</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moncrie (Lived in Japan for one year)</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex (TA, native speaker)</td>
<td>A2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. K. (Intermediate)</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. G. (Advanced)</td>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. N. (Lived in Japan for one year)</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. L. (Advanced)</td>
<td>C2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. R. (Intermediate)</td>
<td>D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. M. (Advanced)</td>
<td>D2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. H. (Advanced)</td>
<td>E1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. G. (Lived in Japan for one year)</td>
<td>E2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. K. (Heritage learner)</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. S. (Intermediate)</td>
<td>F2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. J. (Heritage learner)</td>
<td>G1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. L. (Advanced)</td>
<td>G2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. M. (Lived in Japan when young)</td>
<td>H1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. H. (Advanced)</td>
<td>H2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Pros:
• Make students voluntarily observe and learn from their peers’ performance, simulating language acquisition in natural social contexts
• Make all students put efforts at varied levels
• Make each student to achieve slightly higher level of proficiency than his current level
• Encourage students to be creative while putting themselves in a real-life context
• Create bonding among peers through creative and authentic collaboration

Cons:
• Work only in advanced mixed class
• Face a difficulty in measuring proficiency improvement objectively based on different benchmarks
• Requires everyone’s participation
Dream Class?

• Mixed but balanced
• Motivated by learning, not by grades
• Supported by teamwork and collaboration
• Simulates authentic social interactions
Thank you!