Language Skills Assessment: Electronic Test Application with Second Language Learners

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Second language learners are students at risk in what concerns developing literacy abilities, which may determine their academic performance in general. The purpose of this study was to develop a reliable electronic instrument to assess verbal behaviors, regarding the phonological awareness and specific language skills of second language (SL) learners. The general results gathered from the participants' achievement reveal that the older learners present higher competence than younger ones, exhibiting more structure and less interference at the phonological level. In this paper we aim at assessing specific skills related to perception and production skills, regarding the counting and spelling skills (considered in the last 10% of the battery) in second language context. The age of acquisition and the type of the first linguistic system could be the main factors influencing the verbal behaviors and determining the abilities regarding articulation and perception of sounds in foreign phonetic system. The general tests battery is presented as an important diagnostic tool applied to educable centers in a multicultural society. Considering this, the tests battery developed in this research is a complementary test for evaluation, in that it holds an important diagnostic tool of diagnostic evaluation, and simultaneously as an intervention program in teaching and learning, especially directed at students who are initiating the learning/acquisition process of Portuguese as a SL, for it may provide indicators to facilitate the process of attribution of proficiency levels by the teacher/educator, according to students' performance. The test configuration is based on the principles of organization by task level, which guarantees precision on sound stimuli hearing, conditioned writing tasks, time counting in each task (reaction time recorded), a considered data basis and immediate presentation of score at the end of the assessing test.

Keywords: Program of Intervention, Second Language Learning, Phonetic Deposition


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