The Seven-Sentence Diagnostic

Ten minutes, no preparation. Seven things to say out loud, the error each one hides, and a grid for marking which of your students break which.

Before the bell

Write these three lines in the corner of the board and leave them there for the whole lesson. Students look at them far more often than they admit.

I am ready. It is raining. She is a teacher.

The ten minutes

Min	Game	You	The class
0–2	**The demo round**	Read the three lines on the board. Say one of them wrong on purpose.	Writes all three down. Finds the wrong one.
2–6	**The seven**	Say each cue once, at normal speed. Do not repeat, do not help.	Writes one English sentence per cue. Numbers them 1 to 7.
6–7	**Swap and read**	Papers go one seat to the left. No names read out.	Reads a neighbour's seven out loud, exactly as written.
7–9	**The count**	Read the seven target forms. Count hands, not names.	Raises a hand for each of the seven the paper got wrong.
9–10	**Two for the term**	Mark the two with the most hands on the grid overleaf.	Keeps the paper. Nothing is collected, nothing is graded.

The seven cues, and the error each one hides

Say the cue, not the sentence. The wrong form in italics is what the first language produces — and the student hears nothing wrong with it.

- Tell me what this answer depends on. — *It depends of the weather.*
- Tell me how long you have lived in this town. — *I live here three years.*
- Ask me where I live. — *Where you live?*
- Tell me what your mother does. — *She is teacher.*
- Ask me for two pieces of advice. — *Give me two advices.*
- Tell me about the weather outside. — *Is raining.*
- Check that I am ready. — *You are ready, no?*

When to stop

Everyone got all seven	The cues were too close to the answers.
Nobody wrote anything	The cue is a request, not a line to copy. Demo again.
One student got none	Not a result. Sit with that paper later.
They correct each other	Let it run a minute. It teaches more than marking.

> Seven is the whole test. An eighth sentence turns it into a lesson nobody asked for.

Make It Your Own

Two of the seven will be yours, and they will be the same two all year. Mark them here, then fill one row a week with what you heard.

Your rules

The error	Hands up, out of the room	Heard again in week

Four things worth copying

- Count hands, never names. The number is the result; the name is not.
- Run it in the first ten minutes, before anything has been taught today.
- Two errors per term. A list of seven is a list nobody works on.
- Run it again in week six with the same seven cues. The two that drop are the proof, and they are the only proof your class will give you.

Why the same two come back

An error that comes from the first language is not a gap in knowledge: the student knows the rule and breaks it anyway, because the sentence was assembled before the rule was consulted. That is why correcting it in the moment does nothing, and why the same two come back in week six. What moves them is the form said out loud often enough to be assembled that way instead — a minute at a time, not a lesson at a time.

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