Designing Prototype Product of English Test Book Materials for Indonesian Tertiary Students

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Abstract: English proficiency test is significantly pivotal for tertiary students as they prepare for their after-school work-life experience. In this case, students are obliged to obtain fair knowledge of global issues but also local-based phenomena students may be familiar with on a daily basis. Besides, competency in English contributes to one's acknowledgement in building a career or pursuing higher education. That is why many educational institutions in Indonesia require students to obtain a school-leaving English proficiency certificate. In regard to this phenomenon, designing English test materials that accommodate students' needs in accordance with particularly required competencies is prominent. This present study further examines the test specification construction results developed as an initial study of a standardized English proficiency test implemented in a private university in Indonesia. As a part of research and development project research, this current study focuses on developing a prototype product of English test materials including the design of the test book. The product results of this study are elaborated in four stages of test materials covering two skills of English proficiency test.

Keywords: English Proficiency test; materials development; test book; text-based instruction.

INTRODUCTION

English language testing is as important as English language learning as it is supposed to depict one's ability in mastering certain aspects of language use. As how materials for language learning are prepared, language testing materials need to be comprehensively well-prepared by keeping in mind why the test is developed and how the test is administered. English tests are developed for many purposes such as measuring level of proficiency, determining students' graduation or placement course, and transferring knowledge and experiences where the language is used ([1], [2]). Of those objectives, English proficiency test is one of English tests mostly developed and administered as it is employed to objectively measure the language use ability and preferably required by test-users. Whether for pursuing higher education or building career, the use of test results becomes obligation that have to be completed. In regard to this issue, many tertiary educational institutions come with idea to develop their own proficiency test in order to meet the professional requirement. Standardized test of academic English proficiency (hereafter, STAcEP) is a mandatory English proficiency test for all students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo regardless the students' major

or field of study. The test is specifically designed to measure students' understanding of general English. Notifying the preliminary study conducted prior to the test development, the test is administered to facilitate students in preparing professional requirement once they leave the university. STAcEP is a part of English Certification Program that comes with preparation class where the students are obliged to enroll before taking the test. Specifically, the development of this test is underpinned by need analysis study concerning the institutional vision of the university regarding accomplishment of diploma supplement and mandatory of obtaining school-leaving certificate.

According to [1], [3], standardized English test is supposed to be developed by referring to CEFR, the same reference used by the general language proficiency tests. CEFR-based proficiency test broadly provides its test-takers with plenty types of questions, task focus, topics and source of text that objectively assess students' general understanding of various contexts in form of text. That is why the aforementioned form of test is considered as text-based instruction and the materials provided in test preparation shall be constructed under the same intention. In some cases, students or test-takers may make use the available materials to facilitate them in preparing or accomplishing the test [4]. While the available test preparation materials offer generalized materials related to American context, British context or other foreign contexts and contains test items with the same theme, the current institutional proficiency test requires students to not only obtain fair knowledge of global issues but also local-based phenomena students may be familiar with on a daily basis. For some cases, the use of English as international language in expanding circle, what students need to learn is not always related to the way how the native speakers use the language. Instead, it tolerates dialect and idiolect [5]. As an effort to comply with this necessity as well as accommodate the institution's learning output, the requirement of test book materials offering items related to intended test is pivotal to conduct.

Plenty of studies showed that high-stakes English test offers wide range of English-related knowledge that still considers cultural-related context [6]–[8]. However, few of them clearly depict the involvement of local-related theme as well as adjustment of its development. Students as test takers may obtain new knowledge in learning English in expanding circle country becomes challenging as they require essentials for taking different type of English test other than high-stakes English tests [9]–[11]. Besides, how the materials for the test are developed as the test specification suggested is not mainly discussed, especially for local, institutional English proficiency test in which the generated materials from high-stakes English proficiency test may not be applicable. Therefore, this present study intends to briefly elaborate the construction of institutional English proficiency test administered for university students. It aims to provide elaboration on materials presentation in an English test book used in current English test.

METHOD

Communicative approach is the method employed to construct STAcEP test book materials in this present study. Communicative approach in language testing development generally involves contextual text-based items instead of literal word construction. In this case, text-based test items require ability to comprehensively understand both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects within the whole texts. Besides, it obliges students to provide responses towards oral or written tasks in various genre of texts [12]. Thus, test materials development involving text-based tasks is covered under this approach. Text-based tasks accomplishment hold urgent emphasis on actual practices in

which the tasks within the test are able to arranged, implemented, and assessed effectively [13]. Text-generated tasks constructed in test specification scaffold the assessment framework that involves various topics of texts provided in the test. In assessing language competency, the use of texts is considered pivotal and beneficial as they provide authentic materials and information students can connect [14]. Text-based tasks in communicative approach consists of three stages, namely: objective setting, language contextualization, and practices and knowledge transfer [15], [16]. While objective setting focuses on intended final output of the tasks, language contextualization refers to materials elaboration covering focus of the texts, language features, and task exemplification. Moreover, practices and knowledge transfer cope with tasks presentation under certain topics studded with certain test items of particular types of tasks whether it falls under spoken or written responses. Analyzing these three variables is the preferred way in facilitating students cope with testing materials to be accomplish.

The texts elaborated in this study are primarily extracted from adapted texts generated from various sources focusing on designated theme presented in the test specification. The test materials were developed for all first-year students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo. This study uses aforementioned three stages of theoretical framework of text-based tasks of communicative approach as the main research instrument. The data are taken from documentation observation on the preliminary study and library research of respective materials. Furthermore, the texts used as data are article reports taken from various sources including journal articles, online news, and authentic materials with particular topics that is in accordance with test specification. They are thus examined in terms of materials overview, language focus, vocabulary building, and students' practices. These terms are used in the design of present text-based tasks of communicative approach in language testing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the analysis, it is asserted that English test book materials development specifically covers two main findings. The details are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of English test book materials development

Results	Details
Test specification as the syllabus	1. Underpin the development of the test 2. Highlight the materials involved in the test book

Materials organization of the test book	1. Objective setting
	   a. Implies the output of particular discussed tasks
	2. Contextualization
	   a. Represents the whole materials display
	   b. Consists of texts display, grammatical features, vocabulary building, constructed instruction, exemplification of particular text-based tasks
	3. Practices and knowledge transfer
	   a. Provides direct practices on certain tasks
	   b. Implies students' capability in understanding the instructions

As referred to Table 1, test specification involved in this test book materials development is generated from research finding reported by university test developer (Gestanti). Both the test speci-

fication-based syllabus and the materials organization for STAcEP test book materials development are descriptively elaborated in this section.

Test Specification as the basic syllabus

Test specification plays the same role as syllabus in language learning. It mainly underpins detail information of test usefulness, content and format, technical features, and standard of the test [17]. Test specification is included in the analysis process as it emphasized on what the test is about, what it covers, and what students will achieve when they accomplish the test [18]. Thus, the materials for the test book are developed according to the test specification. The current English test in intended to provide text-based general understanding of English language competencies for university students. The test book is used as supporting references given to students during preparation course prior to the test. In other words, it can be inferred that test book materials development underpins the referred test specification in order to meet the test requirement.

Broadly speaking, test specification is displayed in two forms: Listening and Reading Comprehension. Each skill contains of topics, topic of questions, format of questions, and number of questions. The justification is taken from consideration of former study conducted under test development theory [17]. Simply, table 2 showed the general preview of test specification.

Table 2 General preview of Test Specification

Listening Comprehension	Reading Comprehension

As displayed in Table 2, it can be seen that the current English test focuses on language comprehension that is integrated in local-related theme. It means that the language aspects including finding lexical resources, structuring sentences, generating main ideas and supporting ideas are considered from local-related issues. It is in accordance with practical objectives of institutional English test as intended in former studies [17]. Related to test book materials development, the aspects covered in test specification are implemented into several discussions set accordingly in materials organization. For instance, while topics of texts are represented in learning objectives and materials overview discussed in each chapter, topic of questions and format of question are elaborated in sample exercises and practices. In addition, number of questions represents the amount number of test items being questioned in the practices. Such elaboration facilitates the whole development process in which the offered materials in the test book comprehensively beneficials the test takers in preparing the test through the test book.

Materials Organization of the Test Book

The second finding focuses on how the text-based tasks and materials are organized in the test book. As stated in research methodology, the present test book materials developed in this study is constructed using text-based tasks accomplishment framework. This framework mandates test developer to analyze text types, language features, exemplification, and instruction for each task. Regarding this finding, the results are analyzed according three primary aspects: objective setting, language contextualization, and practices and knowledge transfer.

The first aspect is objective setting. Objectives are supposed to show what output the students will get once they accomplish the discussed tasks or materials. This English test book generally consists of ten chapters: the first five chapters focuses on Listening and the rest five chapters discus Reading skill. Each chapter elaborates one part of text and tasks being tested. In this test book, the objectives are clearly stated in the initial part of the chapter. Learning objectives carried the focus on what students may obtain once they complete the phase. It is pivotal since being able to aware of what students will obtain after completing designated tasks allow them visualize their learning process and pursue compatible strategies [19]. Along with the objectives, indicator of current chapter is also provided. Result regarding this first aspect is shown in figure 1
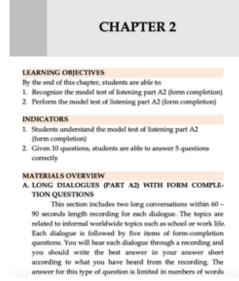

Figure 1. Preview of initial presentation of test book

The second aspect analyzed in developing the test book materials is contextualization. As the word suggests, contextualization refers to the determination of certain context involved and represented in the texts and the tasks. In this case, contextualization is represented in the presentation of the whole content of materials discussed in each chapter [20]. It mainly consists of elaboration of discussed text and tasks, the intended instruction, grammatical features, and vocabulary building that are deliberately provided to support what students need to achieve in the actual test. As the focus of contextualization is to make students familiar with various contexts and are able to generate ideas based on certain context, whether it is spoken or written texts, are put right after the learning output and adjusted according to the test specification. For instance, in chapter two, the tasks should

be accomplished is Listening with long dialogue spoken text integrated with form completion questions. The text provided in chapter two follows the topic justified from test specification.

Apart from certain type of text, grammatical features and vocabulary related to the tasks are thoroughly conveyed. Grammatical features are inevitable part in language learning as it explains how the many aspects of language are constructed meaningfully and accordingly. It offers additional understanding on how students generate ideas from the provided questions as well as put ideas together and construct the answer [21]. Following the grammatical features or in this case called as language focus, a number of practices are available for students. The involvement of initial practices aims to enforce students to see through the … yet significant aspect in language testing. In addition, vocabulary is another essential part of language learning ad language testing [22]. In the test, materials on vocabulary mastery are not displayed separately. Instead, it is integrated in certain type of questions that assess students' ability to grasp meaning or provide responses according to the context [23]. Moreover, questions on lexical resources are included in the test both in listening and reading tasks. That is why, tasks focusing on building students' vocabulary mastery are presented in the test book. Similar to language focus, vocabulary building also comes with practices to enhance students' engagement within the task. To create a clear perception, results fall under contextualization aspect is illustrated in table 2.

Table 2 Results on test book materials development regarding contextualization

Text or materials display	Language focus (grammatical features)	Vocabulary building

The last aspect being analyzed in the development of English test book materials is practices and knowledge transfer. Knowledge transfer offers the enhancement of what is learnt into actual practices. To meet this purpose, a set of students' practices covers questions with the same amount number of questions stated in the objectives and test specifications. Knowledge transfer facilitates students grasp general information about the text, understand what is being asked and apply the re-

sponses given in other contexts. The form of practices is structured as the same as the form of actual test so that students as the test takers could experience the actual environment of the actual test. Moreover, it is placed in the end of each chapter in order to allow students study the sample texts and questions before completely try out the practices.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, language testing requires many aspects to cope with. Therefore, supporting materials provided prior to the test becomes significant. English test book materials development is carried out to bridge the gap between test requirement and intended achievement. Employing text-based task accomplishment, the findings show two main results: the use of test specification as the basic syllabus and the organization of materials. Furthermore, the organization of materials is set by highlighting three aspects: objective setting, contextualization, and practices and knowledge transfer. Each aspect is elaborated accordingly in order to convey thorough comprehension of particular topic, text, and task included in the test. The three phase of text-based tasks accomplishment have been clearly stated in the materials. However, the exploration of test specification seems require further supporting details so that its relevance may completely fit the test requirement. Thus, further study focusing on analyzing the significance of test specification towards the materials alteration is necessary to be conducted.

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