DESIGNING STUDENTS WORKSHEET: *A Sociolinguistics Approach for Testing Speaking and Listening*

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Abstract

This article discusses about an approach to create a good test for speaking and listening subject. The facts showed that many of the tests were created based on the teacher's needs, not yet based on the goal of the test itself. As we know, there are kinds of approach to create a good test to test language ability; speaking, reading, writing and listening. One of them is a sociolinguistics approach. This approach is introduced to make the students aware of the test. To apply this approach, teacher must prepare a well-designed worksheet for the students. The worksheet must be written completely related to the sociolinguistics approach. In this article, the writer will explain the way of how to design a worksheet for the students especially in testing speaking and listening.

Kata Kunci: *Designing, worksheet, sociolinguistics, approach, testing*

INTRODUCTION

Worksheet is one of the medias for practicing in language studies that can be used to test and evaluate the students' ability in any topics they have studied. The use of worksheet is regarded as an important media for teachers because some books are not yet completed and facilitated with the various exercises. But unfortunately, some of teachers at junior and senior high school could not write any kinds of representative worksheet for their students. They do expect very much to the writer of a book. In other words, if there is no exercise in the book written, no extra practices given to the students. This is an irony!

Actually, the available worksheet is expected to make several kinds of exercises for the students in order to know their understanding about the materials given. We may not only believe in the result of their oral test but also to believe in their ability on working with the worksheet. But, what and how

does a good worksheet look like? It needs probably the long answer.

Talking about worksheet, there are several kinds of exercises could be written down on it. But the real forms should be conducted as well as possible to facilitate the students with good and various questions. Examples, *True and False, Matching the word, Fill in the blank, Puzzle, Synonyms, Antonyms*, and many others.

In this paper the writer is going to discuss about it more intensively and deeply in order to get a good understanding for writing students worksheet. Then, this paper will answer these questions: 1) How does the test difficulty look like? 2) How to define test specification? 3) What should we do in analyzing students' needs? 4) What to do in formulating material of a test? 5) How to write good questions? And 6) How to score the test?

The areas of discussion would be begun from the fundamental theoretical framework. Then the writer will give comment on each point based on his point of view. And, the focus of this

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paper will be intended to the junior and senior high school teachers. It is also intended to the book writes who seriously focus on writing the worksheet.

As part of an attempt to work out a set of sociolinguistics principles, or axioms, which sociolinguistics investigations should follow, Bell (1976: 87-91), drawing extensively on the work of Labov, has suggested eight as worthy of consideration:

1. *The cumulative principle*: the more that we know about language, the more we can find out about it, and we should not be surprised if our search for new knowledge takes us into new areas of study and into areas in which scholars from other disciplines are already working.
2. *The uniformation principle*: the linguistics processes which we observe to be taking place around us are the same as those which have operated in the past, so that there can be no clean break between synchronic.
3. *The principle of convergence*: the value of new data for confirming or interpreting old findings is directly proportional to the differences in the ways in which the new data gathered; particularly useful are linguistic data gathered through procedures needed in other areas of scientific investigation.
4. *The principle of subordinate shift*: when speaker of non standard variety of language are asked direct questions about the variety, their response will shift in an irregular way toward or away from the standard variety.
5. *The principle of style-shifting*: there are no single style speakers of a language, because each individual controls and uses a variety of linguistic styles and no one speaks in exactly the same way in all circumstances.
6. *The principle of attention*: style of speech can be ordered along a single dimension measured by the amount of

attention speakers are giving to their speech, so that the more aware they are of what they are saying, the more formal the style will be.

7. *The vernacular principle*: the style which is most regular in its structure and in its relation to the history of the language is the vernacular, the relaxed, spoken style in which the least conscious attention is being paid to speech.
8. *The principle of formality*: any systematic observation of speech defines a context in which some conscious attention will be paid to that speech, so that it will be difficult, without great ingenuity, to observe the genuine vernacular.

TEST DIFFICULTY IN LANGUAGE TESTING

Flucher (2003) quoted that researching into task difficulty in speaking and listening tests has not used the classifications outlined, because they are related more to the classroom (to the kinds of interaction that promote learning) than the test. The former test expert, Swain (2001) has recently revisited the one, two and multi ways classification to argue that multi ways tasks can be used to provide score meaning on more complex constructs.

However, this does not mean that language testers should not frequently revisit the pedagogic literature for new ways of conceptualizing task difficulty in speaking and listening test. For examples, Pollit (1991) argued that in performance testing we make the assumption that all tasks are of equal difficulty, and suggested that performance test might be constructed of a sequence of tasks with increasing difficulty, in analogy with the high jump in athletics.

Skehan in Flucher (2003) has suggested that various (psycholinguistics) categories will affect the difficulty:

- Familiar information: the more familiar the information on which a task is based, the more fluent the performance will be.
- Structured tasks: where the task is based on a clear sequential structure there will be significantly greater fluency and accuracy.
- Complex numerous operations: the greater the number of online operations and transformation of material that are needed, the more difficult the task. This may impact upon greater complexity, but at the expense of accuracy and fluency.
- Complexity of knowledge base: the more open the knowledge base on which a task draws, the more complex the language will be produced.
- Differentiated outcomes: as a task outcome requires more differentiated justification, the complexity of the language will increase.

DEFINING TEST SPECIFICATIONS

In defining test specifications, Alderson et al. (1995:9) and Bachman and Palmer (1996:176) define test specifications as the blue print for a test, used by test and items writers to produce forms of the same test. Alderson point out, quite rightly, that these are different from what testing agencies or examination boards usually refer to as the test syllabus. The syllabus is normally towards the needs of test takers and teachers, where as specifications are used by the test writers.

The more detailed specifications for test and task writing relate to the overall format of a test, and to each of individual tasks that are included with in the frame work. These include:

- Writing many tasks that appear the same, that can be placed into a task bank for creating parallel forms of a speaking test.
- Investigating whether speaking tasks elicit the processes or language that was predicted by the task writers.
- Varying the form of items in future versions so that the test evolves in line with future validity studies and new discoveries in language acquisition and applied linguistics.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IN ANALYZING YOUR STUDENTS' NEED?

There are several steps you can do to analyze your students' need, they are:

1. Know the materials you have presented: you need to know all materials you have explained to your students along the teaching learning process. You may not give the test material to your students that you have not explained yet. If you did, there will be many mistakes made by your students. It does not become a valid test.
2. Grouping your students' ability: know how far your students can understand the materials.
3. Mapping their difficulties: in what topics or subjects they have many difficulties. For example, most of your students have difficulty in vocabulary building, then, you have to stress your test material about vocabulary.
4. Keep your focus on purposes of testing: never let your purposes go away without any purposes. Be consistent with your purposes stated at the beginning of the test.

WHAT TO DO IN FORMULATING THE MATERIALS?

If you would like to formulate the material of the worksheet, keep these principles in your mind:

- a. Limit your material of each part: when you would like to give the worksheet, you must write a strict limitation about the test. You may not write any questions you want, but you should follow a limitation especially to the materials you have given.
- b. Stressing any important material: make a stress of any important materials you may consider very important to your students, especially in developing their progress of the language mastery.
- c. Restate and write significant contribution that you expect from your students: you have to know what you want to get from your students. You should not stay away with a permanent model test.

HOW TO WRITE THE QUESTIONS?

When you would like to write the questions, you have to know some areas of writing questions in a worksheet, they are:

- a. To know your purposes of giving the worksheet: the questions that would appear probably like these, what do you want to get from the worksheet? Why do I give them these questions? Does it imply to the process of language mastery? And many others.
- b. Write various questions: you have to write many variations of questions related to the materials. There is no instant and permanent model with your questions. You may develop them into several models.
- c. Beginning from an easy question: never put the very difficult question at the beginning of your test. If you did,

your students will feel that all the test are difficult, and they will spend many times just to do number one for example. Psychologically, if the trouble comes early, we never feel save to think about others.

- d. Write a clear instruction: never forget to write instruction as clear as possible at the beginning of the test given. If you forget once, your students do not know what and how to do it.
- e. Good time allocation: give them enough time to answer the questions. So, they will not do anything in hurry.
- f. Improvisation for some questions: you may create any kinds of questions that relate to your students ability.

HOW TO SCORE?

There are many ways to score the test result. For examples, by giving each items 1 for a correct answer, or multiplying each correct answer by 2, 5, 10, and etc. But what you have to remember before scoring are:

- a. Write a permanent scoring system: the purpose of writing this permanent scoring system is to help you to know how far they can understand the materials. Never change your scoring during correcting the test result. If you did, the score will not be a valid one.
- b. Validity: make sure you have tested what to be tested.
- c. Write answer key: this could help you to check the correct and the wrong one of the test result. You can check the test in a very short time.
- d. Be consistent: never change any scoring systems for one test.

SOME NOTES BEFORE FINISHING A TEST WORK

What to do before printing the worksheet?

- Make sure all the test in your worksheet are related to the materials you have presented. You need to read all questions. Do the final checking for your questions.
- Final checking: you are to find whether any mistyping, numbering, instructions, and other mistakes you might find in the worksheet. This could avoid misunderstanding of your students.
- You may consider as well as possible about what parts of the test you should give first.
- Good quality printing: find a very good printing or copier to make it readable by all the students. Make sure no part of the copy is unreadable.

CONCLUSIONS

By following the rules above we do expect very much to be able to write a good worksheet for testing the students language mastery, especially in listening. But however, you may enrich your materials with any supporting various questions for the test. Something that you have to remember is to do peer collaboration with your friends. This can help you to check and recheck, or add it up with other opinions.

Here are the framework of designing students worksheet.

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