

Communicative English Language Test: A Prospective Measuring Device For Tourism Practitioners' Employability

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Abstract

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Communication skill is an important element of tourism industry. Understanding of performance expectations are keys to the achievement of tourist satisfaction. Good oral and written communication skills are top skills important to tourism practitioners. The role and outcomes of English language provision in tourism vocational schools remains central to any discussion on graduate profile and the employability of graduates in the global marketplace. This paper describes the findings of research into the usability of communicative English test to measure the tourism vocational school students in Bali. By employing a qualitative research approach, the data was gathered through in depth interviews and direct observation. Findings show that communicative English test is highly valued by the English teachers to assess the students' English performance to ensure their employability in the tourism industry. Consequently, it is recommended that communicative English language test should be more intensively deployed in classroom to promote broader generic employability skills and competencies. The present paper also considers the implications for the English language tests for measuring tourism vocational school students' real communicative competence for their readiness to face the challenge of their tourism duties.

Keywords: Communicative; test; tourism; practitioners; employability

1. Introduction

Tourism in this millennium era has increased dramatically and the rural tourism destination has become a centre of attention among tourism professionals (Nguyen, 2011), in the same time the need of tourism employees becomes a high demand. This phenomenon creates a considerable pressure on English language teaching and language assessment which requires more focus towards the implementation of communicative language approach (Maba & Mantra, 2018). Additionally, teachers are required to be more

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democratic and more elaborate in making the teaching atmosphere more effective and continually making the students' actively engage in all classroom language activities (Astawa, Mantra, & Widiastuti, 2017).

In a general term, teaching can simply defined as a process that a teacher does to enable the learning of the students (Maba & Mantra, 2018). Teaching can not be separated from learning. Therefore, teachers are required to be able to facilitate students effectively in order to create effective learning where students play an active role in developing themselves to achieve various skills (Mantra, 2017). However, often a teacher, especially one who has not had much teaching experience chooses a random teaching method without knowing the underlying theories and without considering the characteristics of the students. If the teacher knows the principles of teaching, the teaching process then will be much better (Maba, 2017; Widiastuti, 2016).

This paper describes the essential communicative test which can be applied to measure the students' language skill to attain high possibility of employment within the tourism industry. Language learning is directed to improve communication skills, both oral and written in various communication contexts. Therefore, language teaching takes into account the principles of language learning and then implements it into various learning activities including language assessment that should be based on communicative activities too. The principles are the main foundations of language teaching practice. Consequently, the Implementation of the language teaching principles can be summarized as follows. Students will learn the language well when they have goals and interests, given the opportunity to participate in communicative language use in a variety of activities, if he deliberately focuses his learning on forms, skills and strategies to support the process of acquiring language, he is disseminated in sociocultural activities and direct experience with cultures that are part of the target language, being aware of the role and nature of language and culture, given appropriate feedback on their progress, and given the opportunity to organize their own learning. With the implementation of these principles in language teaching, it will facilitate teachers in teaching students to learn the language, especially the target language to be achieved.

With the use of communicative approach in teaching English in schools, the problem we face is how to form language tests to measure communicative ability. Communicative language test that really measure the students' language skill. Teachers then have to be

equipment with abundant language assessment principles to ensure high understanding of language assessment process to suitably in line with language teaching principles, in this communicative language teaching. Teachers have to test the language in its various aspects. According to Widiastuti (2017), the best language assessment should promote students' learning. Furthermore, Mantra (2017) argued that a good test should have three qualities, such as : 1) Validity, 2) Reliability, and 3) Practicality.

In line with Widiastuti (2016), a language test should be designed to have high degree of usefulness for the students' improvement in learning, therefore a language test should be strongly effective to be used to diagnose a student's strengths and weaknesses in learning (Djaali, et. al. 2012). Moreover, a test can also be used to measure or predict the potential or ability of a student. Other uses are often done mainly to measure the ability of students after conducting the teaching-learning process within a certain time (Gronlund, 2012). It has been argued that between language tests and language teaching methods there is a close relationship. Language skills and language knowledge of students are measured by language tests which are not much different from how language skills and language knowledge are taught to the students..

Understanding these phenomena, this paper presents several forms of language test which are designed to accommodate the communicative language teaching principles. These tests have been reviewed by selected English language teachers to ensure their suitability and practicality to measure the students' communicative language competence.

2. Methods

The present study made use of a Research and Development Design investigating the developmental process of communicative English tests construction. The stages of the communicative construction were mainly carried out in six steps of sequence, namely: (1) analyzing the relevant test models used by the teachers in tourism vocational schools, (2) planning competence and the standard to be measured, (3) designing the initial draft, (4) conducting test trial to the initial draft to limited number of subjects; (5) revising the initial draft based on the result of the test trial (6) re-examining the revised draft based on the results of the first trial. The steps Research and Development (R & D) guided this study in conducting

field study research to collect data on the test models. The data collected were then analyzed to construct a new model of communicative tests.

3. Results and Discussion

Communicative language teaching seems more humanistic: the centrality of more classroom activity lies in the student rather than the teacher-centered, and the teacher's role in this process serves as a facilitator; students are given greater freedom, autonomy, responsibility and creativity in the learning process. As a teacher facilitator coordinates student activities and should be able to ensure classroom activities to run well. In the teaching of reading and writing, the teacher may also play the role of ordinary teacher: presenting material, giving practice and evaluating and giving feedback. In communicative activities, teachers act as individuals who are expected to advise, monitor student's activities, determine training, and provide guidance.

It has been suggested that the way things are measured in this case the language test is influenced by the theory test or the method of teaching it. Communicative abilities require the following conditions, such as: (1) meaningful and authentic living situations, (2) motivating, (3) freedom of language, (4) freedom of creation and experimentation of language, (5) conducive classroom environment, and (6) priority to grace rather than criticism of error.

There are four types of listening communicative tests developed: dictation, paraphrase, note-taking, and summarizing.

No	Forms Listening Test	Aim	amount
1	L1: Dictation	Developing students' understanding of the words, phrases, sentences and context of the language appropriately	1 set
2	L2: paraphrase (paraphrase),	Developing students' understanding of listening by revealing what has been understood in their own words	1 set

3	L3: note-taking	Developing students' understanding of listening to what has been heard and noting the important things	1 set
4	L4: summarizing.	Developing a student's understanding of listening to what has been heard and written in summary	1 set

There are four forms of speaking Communicative test developed: Role play, Re-Telling Text / Story, Oral Interview. And Oral Presentation.

No	Forms TestsSpeaking	Aim	Total Items Test
1	S1: Role play	To know the ability of communicative language in a role playing activities.	1 set
2	S2: Re-Telling Text / Story	To know the ability of students in retelling what they have understood	1 set
3	S3: Oral Interview	To know the ability of students in communicating in the form of interviews	1 set
4	S4: Oral Presentation	To know the students' ability to convey their ideas in the form of presentation	1 set

There are six Reading communicative tests developed in this study: reading aloud, True or false, completion, matching, questions and answers, and matching test ites.

No	Kind of Reading test	Testing Objectives	Total Items Test
1	R1: Reading Aloud	To give students practice reading aloud.	30 Items

2	R2: True or False Test	To give the students practices in Reading for details and correcting in correct information	30 Items
3	R3: Completion Test	To improve students' understanding with the target language through reading completion test	30 Items
4	R4: Matching Test	To practice in matching correct responses to questions related to the topic.	30 Items
5	Answer Question Test	To increase students' skill in reading for detail information	30 Items
6	R6: Multiple Choice Test	To give the students practice in recognizing different mastery of reading comprehension.	50 Items

There are Writing Personal Letter), Writing Permission Letter, writing short messages, writing invitation cards, writing greeting cards, writing advertisement or announcement or Short Brochure, and Multiple Choice Tests.

No	Kind of Writing test	Testing Objectives	Total Items Test
1	W1: Writing Personal Letter)	To improve students' writing skills especially writing personal letter.	1 Items
2	W2: Writing Permission Letter	To build students' recognition of features of the genre of letter writing especially writing permission letter	1 Items
3	W3: Writing Short Message	To familiarize students' practice in making a short message.	1 Items
4	W4: Writing Invitation Card and Greeting Card	To give students practice in making an invitation Card and Greeting Card	1 Items

5	W5: Writing advertisement or announcement or Short Brochure	To give students practice in making an invitation Card and Greeting Card	1 Items
6	Multiple Choice Tests	To give the students practice in recognizing different mastery of writing abilities in writing completion test, rearrange the words into good sentence and rearrange the sentences into good paragraph.	50 Items

Discussion

Communicative Language Test is developed as a reaction to the need of communicative competence of the students which needs to be conducted in Communicative Language Teaching Process. As a matter of fact that this teaching principles have existed in the 1994 school syllabus in Indonesia which is called "Pendekatan Kebermaknaan" (Meaningful Approach). This communicative test refers to "the attainment language teaching goals rather than measuring the effectiveness of teaching methods or techniques. This test merely measures students' ability to communicate. Communicative language test requires students apply the skills they have appropriately and the worry of using inappropriate grammar is not worrying anymore for all language learners because the use of communicative function appropriately in real life situation becomes more priority.

In regard to Communicative language teaching, the test should be developed to suit the main principles of communicative teaching that is language for communication" and learning language through communication. In language for communication, the purpose of language learning is to enable the learner to communicate. So, a teacher must help students learn the rules of communication. To help students learn the rules of communication, the notional-functional syllabus must be prepared by teachers. With this kind of syllabus the learner will be able to develop "communicative competence" (the ability to communicate through language) and not

merely “linguistic competence” (the ability to use the rules of grammar to construct meaningful, grammatical sentences). In “Language through communication” the emphasis is on classroom activities which help learners to acquire the rules subconsciously. Therefore, the learners have to focus on meaning.

In this study, the communicative tests were developed based on the requirement of the School Curriculum, specifically the Core Competence (CC), Basic Competence (BC), Objective of Learning (OL), and Learning Indicator (LI) of the Tourism Junior High School Curriculum. This was done to ensure the agreement of the communicative language tests developed with the requirement of the School Curriculum, and to ensure that the communicative language tests fulfill the needs of both teachers and students. The communicative language tests based on the School Curriculum, the tests should be developed to assess the students’ ability in four language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

A good test must meet certain characteristics of a good test (Widiastuti, 2017). Characteristics of a good test include validity, reliability, objectivity, and practicability. The developed communicative English tests constructed for Tourism Vocational schools were designed in line with the curriculum requirements, especially core competence, standard competence, Learning Objectives, and learning indicators based curriculum for vocational high schools 2013. This is done to ensure that communicative tests were developed in accordance with the requirements of the School Curriculum, and to ensure that the communicative tests were developed to meet the needs of students.

There were four types of the Listening Comprehension Tests that were constructed to measure students’ ability in comprehending various possible activities in tourism industry. The forms of the tests are based on communicative language approach, such dictation, paraphrasing, note taking, and summarizing. The tests enable students to experience to comprehend various spoken texts in English. This is done to equip students with sufficient understanding of language use in conjunction to daily tourism duties. The audio recordings were done by native speakers to maintain the natural state of the English language sound in order to make students accustomed to English language sound.

Speaking tests in this communicative language tests were constructed in order students have the opportunity to maximally express themselves in variety language activities, such as Role play, Re-Telling Text/Story, oral interview and oral presentation. Those test

formats were chosen due to some particular reasons; firstly, speaking test should be developed to provide opportunities for the students to present themselves in oral activities. Secondly, the activities should activate *students to use* various elements of language being stored in their brains, the more they have opportunity to exercise them, the more fluency and accuracy they attained. Therefore, through utilizing students' ability to communicate, then it is not only measuring their ability to communicate but also experiencing them to engage with communicative activities subconsciously.

Speaking skill supports students' competence on other language skills (Mantra & Maba, 2018). A good speaker can set an example to be imitated by a good listener. A good speaker can make it easier for listeners to catch the talks. Speaking and listening is an oral spoken activity, both of which relate to the sound of language. In speaking someone conveys information through voice or sound language, while in listening someone gets information through speech or voice. Speaking and listening are two activities that cannot be separated. Speaking activities are always accompanied by listening activities, as well as listening activities are preceded by talking activities. Both are equally important in communication.

Every human being is required to communicate skillfully, skillfully expressed thoughts, ideas, ideas, and feelings. Skillfully captures the information, and skillfully conveys the information. Human life is covering various activities that require speaking skills. For example in the family environment, dialogue always occurs, between father and mother, parents and children, and between the children themselves. Outside the family environment also occurs between neighbors with neighbors, between friends, colleagues, college friends and so forth. There are also talks in the market, in supermarkets, in meetings, sometimes even arguments in a forum. All of these situations require our capability to speak skillfully.

Reading skill is very important skill for learners. Through the ability to read well, learners will be able to understand the texts well too. Reading comprehension is an activity that aims to gain in-depth information and an understanding of what is read. Reading comprehension is an understanding of meaning or purpose in a written text. This definition emphasizes the two main points of reading, the language itself and the graphic symbol of writing provide information in the form of reading text. Thus, a person who conducts reading comprehension must master the language or writing used in the reading text that he or she reads and can capture the information or the contents of the text. To be able to understand

the contents of a reading material requires the ability to read with a good understanding. Understanding is one of the important aspects of reading, because understanding a reading material can improve the reading skill itself or certain purposes can be achieved. Thus, the ability to read can be interpreted as the ability to understand reading material. The purpose of reading is for understanding. It is not for the speed of reading.

Several types of communicative test were developed to measure students' reading ability, those are reading aloud, true or false test, completion test, matching test, and answer question test.

Aspects of the skill to understand the contents of the reading are varied. Four levels or categories of reading comprehension, namely critical, inferential, literal and). The discussion of the level of understanding is described as follows:

Critical understanding is the ability to evaluate the material of the text. Critical understanding is essentially the same as evaluative understanding. In this understanding, the reader compares the information found in the text with certain norms, knowledge, and background of the reader's experience to judge the text. Meanwhile, inferential understanding is the ability to understand information that is implied in the text. Understanding text inferentially means understanding what implied information explicitly stated in the text. In this case, the reader uses information expressed explicitly in text, background knowledge, and personal experience in an integrated manner to create hypotheses or guesses.

A literal understanding is the ability to understand the information expressed explicitly in the text. A literal understanding is the lowest level of understanding. Although classified as low, literal understanding is still important, because it is needed in the process of reading comprehension as a whole. A literal understanding is a prerequisite for higher understanding. Meanwhile, creative understanding is the ability to express an aesthetic and emotional response to texts that conform to personal standards and professional standards. Creative understanding involves all the cognitive dimensions of reading because it deals with the psychological and aesthetic impact of the text on the reader. In a creative understanding, the reader is required to use his imagination to gain a new picture beyond what the author presents.

The students' ability in communicating in written forms were measured by developing test formats, such as writing personal letter, writing permission letter, writing short message,

writing invitation and greeting card, and Writing advertisement or announcement or Short Brochure. These types of writing tasks are very useful to exercise students' writing ability communicatively because they will employ the knowledge later in their employment. Writing is an active activity, productive activity that produces language (Mantra, 2017).. Viewed from the general sense, writing is the activity of putting ideas through the language media. The first activity emphasizes the use of language, while the second is the use of ideas. Both elements in the writing tasks performed at school should be given the same emphasis. That is, even though the task is given in order to measure language skills, judgments should consider the accuracy of language in relation to context and content. Thus, an assessment of the students' ability includes the ability to organize and propose ideas in the appropriate language.

Communicative language test is a test that is intended to reveal the communicative competence of the students. In language teaching, especially in a foreign language, language competence needs to be taught and specially taught because it can be viewed as a prerequisite for mastering the way to communicate effectively.

4. Conclusion

Communicative Language test is vividly important to be developed to measure student's English communication skill to have a higher opportunity to be employed in tourism industry. Having an excellence communication skill was proved to be more employable in various businesses including in tourism businesses, therefore student's English language skill should be continually developed to be maximally sufficient to meet the communication standard required for international communication in this millennium era. Communicative language test is one way to promote students' communication skill through engaging students in various assessment communicative activities.

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