

THE MODEL OF LISTENING CEFR-BASED TEST SPECIFICATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages offers a prevalent underpinning for the development of languages syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, assessments, and textbooks. This research aimed to design appropriate CEFR-based for languages English listening test specifications for S1 English Study Program. Descriptive qualitative interpretative was used as research design of this research. The data of this research consisted of the curriculum of English language education program which focused on listening courses of 5 universities in Jakarta. The data showed English language competence or ability for undergraduate graduates of English language study programs and abilities based on CEFR. The result showed that the five universities have the level of CEFR in A1 (9,7%), A2 (11%), B1 (7,3%), B2 (8,6%), C1 (5,9%), and C2 (0%) of CEFR levels. The result is a basis for the writer to design English listening test specifications that range from A1 to C1 alienated into Basic Listening, Intermediate Listening, and Advanced Listening. Based on that, the proposed test specifications were created. The writer adapts IELTS as the standardized test to determine the number of sections, question types, number of items, and time allocation.

Keywords: CEFR for Languages, English Listening Assessment, Test of Specification

INTRODUCTION

A standardized tool for measuring one's professional abilities is an inevitable requirement in today's age of openness. The professional world that is open to all people and citizens with different cultural backgrounds places a certain standard of professional ability. In this link that the Council of Europe establishes professional competency standards for several fields called the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In English education, standardized English language proficiency has long been a praxis of education in

Indonesia. Several tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, and TOEIC are familiar to Indonesian students.

The CEFR is relatively new when compared to the three types of standardized tests above. However, that does not mean that they did not then conform to the CEFR. The International English Language System (IELTS) views the CEFR as a set of multi-level proficiency descriptions applicable to any language had been recognized as a method of to benchmark the proficiency of language worldwide. (<https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/common-european-framework> downloaded February 18th, 2016). The Cambridge English Language Assessment Institute has managed particular research since the 1990s to map the nine IELTS score scales with six levels in the CEFR. John Trim was one of the researchers described the CEFR as a tool for reflection, communication, and empowerment, “a tool for reflection, communications, and empowerment” (Hawkey, 2005). Hence, CEFR is positioned as a mirror that reflects the image of the person standing in front of him, In this case, his ability to speak English and that image can be used to improve English language skills.

Comparing the score scale on a standardized test with other tests is not an easy matter. Many challenges must be faced because they are related to differences in design, purpose, and form (Taylor, 2004a). To function the CEFR as a framework, the CEFR must be deliberately not detailed (Davidson & Fulcher, 2007; Milanovic, 2009; Weir et al., 2009). This means that to use the CEFR as a reference in setting standards for English proficiency in Indonesia, one must first describe the general statements in the CEFR and compare them with the context of learning English in Indonesia. The use of CEFR as a framework for photographing language skills was also investigated for purposes other than the development of standardized tests. Giagkou, et al. (2015) examines the characteristics that can be used as criteria for distinguishing language skills at each level of the CEFR and applies them to the identification of language elements which are the main characteristics of Greek at each level. They analyzed linguistic elements such as conjunctions, subordinate clauses, and grammatical accuracy of 150 narrative passages and the use of these elements characterized each level of the Greek CEFR. Alanen et al. (2012) conducted a study to design and measure writing skills in a second language by referring to the language proficiency level of the CEFR. The CEFR adjustment for measuring writing ability was carried out by Hasselgreen (2013). He used the CEFR to assess writing learning outcomes among young learners. Previously, together with other colleagues, he measured the literacy ability of young students and linked it to the CEFR (Hasselgreen, 2011).

Another study related to the CEFR on writing skills was conducted by Pižorn (2014). He Specifically developed a CEFR-based score scale to measure the ability to write in a foreign language among young learners. Kusseling and Lonsdale (2013) used the CEFR to research French vocabulary. They assumed that the French vocabulary list is not made entirely on the basis of the corpus as in English. Then they recommended updating the vocabulary list through retaining, adding, and deleting.

Mastering a language in this case English is a complex thing. The Mastery of English does not only require mastery of linguistic or linguistic aspects, but also non-linguistic aspects such as culture and social and professional relations. Because it covers many aspects, Fromkin et al. (2014) specifically discussed it in one topic: What exactly does it mean to know a language?. The Mastery of English from the point of view of linguistics according to Fromkin et al. includes knowledge of the English sound system, words, and sentences. Hazen et al. (1996) used the term linguistic knowledge to describe knowledge of language. According to them, knowledge of English linguistics includes phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and speech variety. This English knowledge allows speakers to know how to produce and pattern English sounds so that they can speak with understandable pronunciation (phonetics and phonology), know to use the right words and the rules for communicating in English with grammatical sentences (morphology and syntax). or lexicogrammatical), know and understand the intended meaning in words, phrases, and sentences (semantics and pragmatics), and know how to use appropriate English according to the context of the situation when communicating (speech variety).

In general, the mastery of language as described above is divided into two groups, namely knowledge of language, which is broadly divided into grammar or grammar and vocabulary, and language skills which consist of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The word grammar in English is called grammar. In a simple perspective, English grammar is associated with structures related to sentence structure or tenses. However, in a broad perspective, grammar is understood as a whole unit in language.

Grammar is described as a rule that uses a language to form grammatical units such as sentences, phrases, and sentences, or as an explanation of how to combine the structure of a language with linguistic units such as words and phrases into sentences. (Richards & Schmidt, 2014). Grammar according to Huddleston and Pullum (2003) describes the principles or rules that produce the form and meaning of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Brinton (2010) described grammar as a rule or principle which is a system or structure of a language and by using that system or structure the language functions. Brinton

divided grammar into descriptive grammar or grammar that comes from language users and prescriptive grammar which requires the use of truth standards in language.

The second aspect of language acquisition is language skills which are generally grouped into listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. These skills are further broken down into macro and micro skills to detail the components of the mastery of each skill. This detail is a reference in the learning process which generally includes three aspects, namely learning, teaching, and assessing (learning, teaching, and assessing). These details are compiled and adapted from Brown (2003) in accordance with Richards (2014).

The mastery of language skills as described above which is indicated in detail through micro and macro skills illustrates two important elements. The elements are the form or language and the link or context of the language used to achieve certain goals in communication. The interaction between these two elements which we simply call the language used and the context of its use can be seen from the four language skills.

In English listening skills, the interaction of these two elements creates its own challenges. There are at least eight challenges (Dunkel, 1991; Richards & Schmidt, 2014) in listening that make this skill difficult to master. The first is clustering which requires the listener to be able to understand the words spoken in word clusters, no longer word for word, but in phrases, clauses, and sentences. The second (redundancy) is repetition that challenges the listener to recognize types of repetition, rephrase, explain, and insert spoken language content that has not been previously trained. The third relates to reduced forms, namely abbreviated words or combinations of words that may not have been heard during class learning which generally uses formal language from handbooks and is not summarized.

The fourth challenge is the performance variable which requires the listener's ability to be able to distinguish the hesitation in the speech being heard, the awkward beginning of the utterance, pauses, and corrections made by the speaker when speaking. Fifth is everyday language that challenges listeners to understand idioms, slang terms, abbreviations, and cultural elements that exist in the language used. The sixth is the speed of delivery or the use of language in communication which requires the listener to be able to follow the speed of speech. Seventh, suprasegmental aspects such as stress, rhythm, and intonation that require listeners to correctly understand prosodic elements of spoken language which are usually much more difficult than understanding other, smaller phonological elements. The last is the interaction that positions the listener to be able to balance the flow of language interaction from listening to speaking to listening. These eight challenges must be a concern for students, learners, and compilers of English tests.

The second main topic in this literature review is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and hereinafter referred to as CEFR. In Indonesian the CEFR can be matched with the general European framework for a language reference or a simply outline. The European framework of the reference for languages was created by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe) in 2001 to provide a common basis for syllabuses, curriculum language textbooks etc. throughout Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). This framework, as the Council of Europe hoped could enhance international cooperation in the field of modern languages, facilitate the mutual recognition of language qualifications acquired from different learning contexts and help students, teachers, subject designers, testing bodies/institutions, education administrators position and coordinate their efforts.

CEFR has been used in many countries especially in Europe and Asia and the involvement of countries from other continents is an acknowledgment of the framework that is considered as this standard. In 2007, at the Council of Europe's Intergovernmental Language Policy Forum, representatives from America and Asia showed great interest in this framework (Valax, 2011). In addition, the Mexican Ministry of Education or Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) launched a CEFR-based language certification with English learning that must refer to the CEFR guidelines (Despaigne & Grossi, 2011). In Turkey, the School of Foreign Languages at the Izmir University of Economics conducted a case study to improve its students' foreign language skills and knowledge and developed a new teaching program based on CEFR as a case study (Ustunluoglu et al., 2012). They explained that many countries in Asia and Europe, even the United States and Canada adopted or adapted their language teaching curricula to the CEFR and that China and Korea assessed high school graduates and their curricula with reference to the CEFR. CEFR generally categorizes language skills, any language, into six levels. The six levels start from the lowest level, namely A1 to the highest level, namely C2. Based on the discussion on mastery of English and the European framework above, there are several steps that must be taken to develop test specifications. First, identify and define indicators of mastery of language skills so that the targeted communication competencies can be achieved and measured clearly. Second, identify and define indicators of language acquisition for each level. Third, compare the indicators of mastery of language at each level of the CEFR with the objectives of the English study program, especially the profile of the profession that the graduates will be engaged in. Finally, determine the level of ability based on the CEFR that can be achieved by graduates.

The discussion of tests and measurements cannot be separated from the use of related terms, but differ in level and scope. The term will be easier to see when it is paired with the English term, namely test, evaluation, and assessment. In simple terms, these three terms can

be described as a pyramid with evaluation at the base position, assessment at the middle position, and test at the top position.

The test for placing the top position of the pyramid has the narrowest or smallest scope. This is very possible because the test functions as a method to measure a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a certain realm (Brown, 2003). So, when we talk about tests, we are talking about mid-term or end-of-term tests. Assessment, on the other hand, covers a wider area and includes tests, participation, performance, presentations, papers, portfolios, attendance, homework and other things that can be used to make an assessment of a person or a student. Evaluation occupies the broadest domain and includes tests and assessments. In addition, to conduct an evaluation, the method of collecting data or information can be done through interviews or questionnaires.

In this study, the test is the target so that this discussion refers to matters related to the test. The test as a method has a systematic procedure that includes, among others, test planning which is usually in the form of test specifications, test preparation, test trials to measure reliability, administering tests, assessing tests, and evaluating test quality (Brown, 2003). The specification of the test is the result to be achieved and in this study it is also known as the grid.

In preparing the CEFR-based English test specifications, several aspects must be considered. These specifications must be able to measure a special area of language mastery/skills because the nature of the test is different from assessment and evaluation. Second, the specifications of the tests that are prepared must refer to the characteristics of the proficiency test because it is clear that the specifications that are prepared are to measure English proficiency at a certain level. Third, the preparation of specifications must pay attention to quality aspects by paying attention to reliability, validity, and practicality.

There are several items of information that are an integral part of the test specification. These items are the basis for constructing the test and therefore should provide complete information that includes everything that is needed by the test taker. The points include: the type of test (test type), the elements of the exam (paper), the section (part), the name and code of the test (test code and name), section (section), number of questions (question number), language sub-skills (language sub-skills), material/situation (test material/situation), curriculum specifications (curriculum specifications), level of questions (question levels), types of questions (question types), number of items (number of items), value allocation (mark allocation) , and the allocation of time (Brown, 2003).

The type of test provides information about the type of test to be structured and its level, namely a proficiency test at the A1 level (level A1), for example. The test element is

the skill to be tested, for example listening and the part is sorting if the test specification is a combination of two skills, for example listening or speaking. The name and code of the test contains information about the name of the course or subject and the code if it is related to a certain level of education. The section shows part of a test, for example section 1 or A and the question number is the serial number of the test item. Test specifications are usually made in tabular form to facilitate grouping and understanding of the elements in it.

Based on the discussion above, this research was intended to proposed the test specification of listening course.

METHOD

In order to answer the research questions, Descriptive qualitative interpretative was used as research design of this research. The technique started with the framing of the research topic, and then moved on to a discussion of qualitative data collecting and sample concerns. We'll next go through typical data analysis methodologies before summarizing principles of good practice in descriptive interpretative qualitative research and making recommendations for more reading and study (Elliot et al., 2013). The writer clearly identified the data source by employing descriptive analytical interpretative (preferably identifying the specific parameters to be measured).

The data of this research consisted of the curriculum of English language education program which focused on listening courses of 5 universities in Jakarta. The data showed English language competence or ability for undergraduate graduates of English language study programs and abilities based on CEFR. The sources of research data were documents that could show the competency description of graduates (curriculum) and other documents that could explain and describe English language skills based on CEFR.

The data were the description of the listening courses in the curriculum of each university. Next, the data were extracted to see the material in the courses based on syllabus. The expected outcome in the syllabus was determined the level of CEFR in the following table below. The level of CEFR was the basis of the interpretation of the research that followed by the proposed model of test specification of Listening courses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The test specifications were arranged based on a syllabus consisting of various elements. These elements included goals, objectives, competencies, topics and subtopics, teaching and learning activities, and indicators of achievement. Not all listening syllabuses

from universities that were research subjects contain the main elements in the syllabus that should be. The name of the special course for listening skills also were different from one university to another as mentioned in the table below:

Table 1. The Listening Course Material and CEFR Level

University Initial	Courses	Material	CEFR Level
I	Listening for General Communication	sound recognition, general ideas identification – prediction: shorter dialog, stated specific identification: dialog, implied specific identification: dialog, and implied specific identification: monolog	B1
	Listening for Academic Purposes	determining main ideas, note taking, determining fact and opinion, determining supporting details and identifying advertisement, The First Day in Social Psychology Class, The Pace of a Place, business: Business Innovation, media Studies: Celebrities and the Media, media Studies: Communication Revolution, science: How Sleep Affects Thinking, The Influence of Geography on Culture, humanities: The Story of Fairy Tales, humanities: Architecture: Form or Functions?, Gender and Spending, science: Science or Pleasure: Choosing what We Eat and linguistics and literature: What's up with Slang. Grammatical components are simple present, comparison, state verbs and imperative language	C1
II	Basic Listening.	self introduction and daily activities. Intermediate Listening covers announcements, short monologs, descriptions, instructions, and practical dialogues dan Critical Listening and Speaking tentang news reports, narratives, expository passages; paraphrase, take notes and summarize intermediate extended discourse such as news reports, narratives, and expository passages	B1
	Intermediate Listening	* Not yet determined (New Universities)	
	Critical Listening and Speaking	* Not yet determined (New Universities)	
III	Listening 1	announcements (at airport, railway stations, etc), precise information, predicting and guessing, make judgments, forming a mental picture, following instruction and matching with their own experience and knowledge.	A2
	Listening 2	Listening 2 are listen for specific information, for prediction, for matching with a summary, for completing and note taking, for evaluating, comparing with own reaction, and rating and for particular information.	B1
	Listening 3, 4, 5	listen for fillers and judging attitudes, for matching with visual, completing notes, checking, following story, for extracting main issues, following the logic of a story, and order of events, for answering question, for specific information and for following a description	C1, C2
IV	Listening Comprehension 1, 2, 3	alphabets, getting the message, introducing people, describing people, giving direction, asking for and giving information, expressing likes and dislikes, talking about leisure time, talking about eating habits, talking about recent past, holidays and talking about future plans, introducing TOEFL – practice, idioms in daily conversation, strategy for structure and practice, strategy for written expression and practice, strategy for reading comprehension and practice and practice TOEFL	B1-C1
V	Listening 1, 2, 3	daily life dialogue, speech acts: regret, persuade, encourage enthusiasm, prevent and expressing expectations, asking and giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, expressing plans/goals, predicting, speculating, criticizing, giving judgments, functional/strategic texts in the form of messages, announcements, advertisements, descriptive texts, recount, narrative and reviews and songs and poems , complex dialogues about everyday life: suggesting, pleading, complaining, discussing the possibility or to do something and ordering, admitting mistakes, promises, blaming, accusing, expressing curiosity, and desires, expressing various attitudes, responding to the meaning contained in messages , advertisements, radio/TV comments, and lectures and the meaning of explanation, discussion, exposition, spoof, and review texts	B1-C1

Next, the materials of each university had been extracted into the level of CEFR based on its outcome or standard competence the result showed on the data below:

Table 2. The Overall Level of CEFR Each University

NO	CEFR Level	University I	University II	University III	University IV	University V
1	A1	9,94%	8.73%	16.434%	21,87%	5,78%
2	A2	13,17%	17.62%	14.44%	7,67%	7,89%
3	B1	7,83%	6.36%	4.56%	0,48%	9,00%
4	B2	7,44%	7.45%	5.65%	0,24%	8,11%
5	C1	5,06%	1.56%	1.23%	10,00%	1,44%
6	C2	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%

The data indicated that 5 universities of language program put C1 as the highest level of CEFR.

Discussion

Based on the general scope of material in the listening course material at five universities, the syllabus and test specification team decided to set the C1 CEFR level as an indicator of English mastery for undergraduate students of English education and literature. The writer should to compare the components obtained from extracting the current syllabi and CEFR documents in this stage after synthesizing the existing syllabi and identifying the CEFR. This component was not included in this phase due to the universality of global competency in previous syllabi and CEFR. As a result, the author compared just seven aspects that both had and aspired to position current syllabi according to the CEFR for languages. The analysis was done circumstantially by producing a table for each course, multiplying by the number of courses in an institution and the sum of the components. Listening skills developed up to the C1 level are divided into three courses, Basic Listening, Intermediate Listening, and Advanced Listening. In relation to the CEFR, Basic Listening included exam materials for levels A1 and A2, Intermediate Listening for levels B1 and B2, and Advanced Listening for levels C1 and C2. The resulting test specification consists of 9 columns. The first column is the section and question number (Part/Section/Question Number) and is followed by the Language Sub-skill column. The third column is the type of text /material/ situation (Text types/ materials/ situation) and the fourth is the curriculum specification (week/section). The fields of question levels (Question levels) and types of questions (Question types) are the fifth and sixth columns. The last three columns are the number of items (Number of items), value allocation per question item (Mark allocation), and time (in minutes) (Time allocation (in minutes)).

The specification of each level listening described based on proposed level of CEFR, the intended outcome and the topic. In the basic listening test, the proposed level proposed level is A1 and A2 which covers the interpretation of basic word and phrases, and recognition of simple question and announcement. The topic of the text included from the material of A1 and A2 Level, which consist of shopping, direction, favourites, and occupation. In the mid test, the highest level of knowledge is analysing. The test consists of 50 questions of 40 cloze test and 10 multiple question tests. In the intermediate listening test, the proposed level is B1 and B2 which covers understanding basic conversation of daily activity. The intended outcome of mid test is the student will be able to comprehend the core idea of conversation of daily activities. The highest level of midterm is analysing. The test consists of 50 questions of 40 cloze test and 10 multiple question tests. Next, in the final test of intermediate listening, the intended outcome is student will adept to interpret the key focus of complex speech, presentation and drama which has the highest level of knowledge is analysing. The test consists of 50 questions of 40 cloze test and 10 multiple question tests. Next is advanced listening, the proposed level is C1. The topic of advanced level includes academic, research circumstance and news. In mid test, the intended outcome of the test is student will be able to comprehend extended speech relating to the topic above. The test consists of 50 questions of 40 cloze test and 10 note taking tests. In the final test of advanced listening, the topic comprises colloquial, debate, idiom and slangs word. At this point, the intended outcome is student will be able to interpret the topic above. The highest level of knowledge is analysing.

CONCLUSION

Assessment of English language skills in college is different in several ways. This difference is caused by the absence of the same standard that is referred to by the English study program, both the English Education Study Program and the English Literature Study Program. Based on data analysis and research results from eight English study programs from higher education destinations in DKI Jakarta and West Java, it can be concluded that the test specifications relevant to the state of study programs in Indonesia, especially Jakarta and West Java are up to the C1 level in the Framework. European Reference for Language Mastery (CEFR for languages).

The C1 level in the CEFR requires four language competency standards. First, graduates have the ability to understand various long and complex texts and can recognize implied meanings. Second, graduates have the ability to express themselves fluently and spontaneously without showing difficulty in choosing the right expressions. Graduates have the ability to use language flexibly or flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and

professional purposes is the third competency. Fourth, graduates can produce clear, well-structured, and detailed texts on complex subjects that demonstrate controlled use of text organizational patterns and connecting and cohesive devices.

The specification of the test which is compiled to assess the ability of the English language equivalent to the CEFR C1 level is divided into four test categories. The listening skill test is divided into three groups, namely Basic Listening, Intermediate Listening, and Advanced Listening, each of which consists of specifications for the mid-semester and end-semester exams. The resulting test specification consists of 9 columns. The first column is the section and question number (Part/Section/Question Number) and is followed by the Language Sub-skill column. The third column is the type of text /material/ situation (Text types/ materials/ situation) and the fourth is the curriculum specification (week/section). The fields of question levels (Question levels) and types of questions (Question types) are the fifth and sixth columns. The last three columns are the number of items (Number of items), value allocation per question item (Mark allocation), and time (in minutes) (Time allocation (in minutes)).

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