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The Consistency of Speaking and Writing Assessment with Their Syllabuses Implementation (A Case Study of 2nd year Students at English Department of State University of Jakarta)

Prayogo Hadi Sulistio and Ilan Iskandar
State University of Jakarta

Abstract

The study began at April 2010 and finished at July 2010. This study was aimed at investigating the consistency of speaking and writing assessment with their syllabuses implementation, at investigating the comprehensiveness of the syllabuses of speaking and writing courses, at investigating the implementation of the syllabuses of speaking and writing courses and at investigating the students’ response to the consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabuses implementation. The method used in this study is the case study. The sources of the data are syllabus, attendance list of form 05, lecturers’ interview, students’ interview. The analyses were carried to identify the consistency of speaking and writing assessment used according to the syllabus implementation, to identify the components of the syllabus. Also, the analyses were carried to identify the implementation of the syllabus and to identify the students’ attitude in term of the consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabus implementation. The result of the study shows that most of the syllabuses do not specify assessment elements used in the course. The implementation of the speaking and writing syllabus is already suitable based on the the analysis of attendance list of form 05, syllabus, lecturers’ interview and students’ interview. The consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabus implementation is already 100% consistent. Meanwhile, the consistency of speaking and writing assessment with their syllabus implementation in the students’ attitude may vary because there are some lecturers that students think still not consistent to the syllabus used and the contract made in the beginning of the class.

Key words: elements of syllabus, implementation of syllabus, consistency of speaking and writing assessment, students’ attitude to the consistency of assessment

Introduction

Language assessment has become a big issue in EFL classroom for thirty years because it plays an important role in monitoring the progress of language learning. Harris and McCann (1994: 2) explained that language assessment is a process of collecting information about the performance and the progress of the students in learning the target language. Besides, language assessment is also designed to investigate the language ability acquired by the students. According to Lynch (2003: 1) language assessment is a series of procedures which is used to investigate the aspect of individual’s language learning and ability in using target language. Thus, language assessment should be critically designed to measure the performance and the language skills of the students in EFL classroom. So, the teachers can monitor the progress of the students and identify the difficulties of the students in the learning target language.

Assessment of productive skills which occurs in the classroom should consider specific language skills used in real world context. As stated by Kitao and Kitao (1996: 1) language assessment has been developed from the traditional form which only assesses on one or certain specific language skills to the communicative form which assesses on how well students use target language to engage in communication context. Furthermore, Lynch explained that language assessment needs to combine language competence in formal class with real world language skills that the students require (2008: 2). In short, language assessment occurred in the classroom is a set combination of formal and informal language skills which are required for life in real world.

English language skills simply are divided into two major skills. The first are receptive skills which contain listening and reading and the second are productive skills which contain speaking and writing. According to Harmer (2002: 199) receptive skills are the ways how students get the message from the discourse they hear and see. In addition, Gabrialtos explained that receptive skills
help students to understand and interpret the text using their prior knowledge about language (1998: 52). From these explanations, it seems that receptive skills help students to understand and interpret the discourse that they see and hear.

Meanwhile, productive skills as explained by Harmer are the ways people communicate their idea so that it can be understood by the listeners and readers (2002: 246). It can be seen that productive skills help students to communicate their ideas into a speech or writing so that listeners and readers may understand it. In sum, receptive skills are closely related on extracting meaning from discourse, meanwhile, productive skills are related on communicating and transferring the meaning from discourse.

Language assessment of productive skills in English Department of State University of Jakarta is still under-research. There are three major factors which influence the assessment techniques used in writing and speaking classes. First, the comprehensiveness of syllabus components which contain information of the courses especially about what materials are given, what activities are maintained in the class, and how the lecturers can assess the courses. Second, the implementation of speaking and writing syllabuses in term of assessment techniques used by the teachers to measure students' competence. Third, the students' perspective in term of teachers' consistency toward the syllabuses about the materials given, the activities maintained, and the assessment proposed by the lecturers.

**Syllabus and Assessment**

To get complete information of the course, it is important to see its syllabus. As stated by Scroggins, Cain, Justice, et al (1995: 4) syllabus plays important role in higher education. It is because syllabus contains information about the course update and the basis of contract between the students, the teacher, and the institution itself in relation with the course. Besides, syllabus becomes main identification and standard to be used in teaching the course itself. Furthermore, course outline itself has several important components in relation with standard of the course. Scroggins, Cain, Justice, et al (1995: 4-6) explained that syllabus should contain the course objective and course content. Also, it must specify the materials, assignments, instructional methodology, time allocation, methods of evaluation or assessment, and references used in the course. Thus, these complete components which constitute course outline will give complete description about how the course being taught in the classroom.

Assessment in language learning is the activity to assess students’ proficiency starting from the beginning until the end of learning process to achieve certain goals which were planned from the beginning of the course and the main purpose of the assessment it self, according to Gronlund (2006: 16), is to improve students learning. According to Briggs, Woodfield, Martin, et al (2008: 7) assessment is the process of finding out about what students can do and where they may be difficulties in learning. Furthermore, there are some factors that make assessment important in learning process. First, assessment provides information on which to base the next teaching and learning activities. Second, assessment provides feedback for the learners to motivate the students. Third, assessment provides information to assist in evaluating teaching. Fourth, assessment provides information on which judgements are made about the program effectiveness. Besides, the assessment itself may occur in every different class settings by seeing students' activities in the class. According to Brown (2004: 4) assessment is an ongoing process that assesses students' proficiency by seeing students' activities in the class using target language. The assessment happens when the students give comments, answer to the teacher's questions, make oral presentation, and other activities that require the students to experiment with the language. Therefore, assessment is really needed in the classroom in every course so that the lecturer, the institution, and the students can also evaluate the teaching learning process, the evaluation of the students progress, and the effectiveness of the program.

Language assessment occurring in the classroom has certain principles which can help administrators or teachers to measure the effectiveness of language assessment itself in the classroom. According to Brown (2004: 19-28) language assessment has five principles. They are practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback. Practicality is the first principle which requires the assessment should be easily to do in the class. Reliability is the second principle which requires an
assessment should be consistent and dependable. Validity is the most complex criterion of language assessment. It requires that language assessment should be carefully and structurally designed according to the specific skill which is wanted to be assessed. Authenticity is the fourth principle which requires language assessment should be natural. It means that language and the tasks used in the assessment should be in the real-world context. Washback is the last criterion of language assessment. It refers to the effects the tests have on instruction in terms of how students prepare for the tests. Besides, there are several ways to use effective assessment in the class. Gronlund (2006: 18-22) explains the guidelines for effective students assessment for teacher usage in the class. First, effective assessment requires a clear conception of all intended learning. Second, effective assessment requires that a variety of assessment procedures be used. Third, effective assessment requires that the instructional relevance of the procedures be considered. Fourth, effective assessment requires sample of student performance. Fifth, effective assessment requires that the procedures be fair to everyone. Sixth, effective assessment requires the specification of criteria for judging successful performance. Seventh, effective assessment requires feedback to students that emphasizes strength of performance and weaknesses to be corrected. And the last, effective assessment must be supported by a comprehensive grading and supporting system. In sum, based on the previous explanations, it is really clear that assessment has some principles and guidelines to be considered in term of effective assessment usage in the classroom, so that lecturer can provide students with effective and good assessment which can clearly describe the students’ improvement.

Assessing Speaking

In relation to the assessment of speaking, there are several speaking types which come as a basis of designing speaking assessment in second language context. Because of the consideration of speaking types, the assessment will have clear purposes about what language features in oral language production and subskills of speaking itself that needed to be assessed. Brown (2004: 141-142) explains that there are five types of speaking. They are: imitative speaking, intensive speaking, responsive speaking, interactive speaking, and extensive speaking. Furthermore, Luoma (2004: 4) describes that assessing speaking is a process with many stages. At each stage, people act and interact to produce something especially in language usage orally for the next page. While the assessment developers are the key players in the speaking assessment cycle, the examiners, interlocutors, raters, and score users also have a role to play in this assessment. Besides, there are at least two main principles in assessing speaking that need to work on. They are construct validity and reliability. Luoma (2004: 7) also explains that construct validity in assessing speaking means ensuring the right things being assessed in terms of type of speaking that is assessed and reliability in assessing speaking means making sure that the assessment developed to give consistent and dependable results. As assessing speaking is a process with many steps, the assessment developers also consider some particular factors like the type of speaking being assessed, construct validity of the assessment, and also the reliability of the assessment.

The scoring approaches in the assessing speaking are not really different from writing. There are three approaches which can be used in scoring students’ speaking: holistic scoring, analytic scoring, and primary trait scoring. Holistic scoring gives only one score which represents the speaking. In contrast, analytical scoring gives various on various subskills being measured. Furthermore, primary trait scoring focuses on how well the speaking achieves the purposes of it. In short, speaking assessment in second language context should give clear description on how well the students use the target language to communicate orally considering the subskills and the type of speaking.

Assessing Writing

Assessing writing in second-language designed should be related on the sub skills of writing. In a big view, the assessment of writing itself is divided into “direct” and “indirect” assessment. As stated by Weigle (2002: 58-59) in direct assessment, the test-takers are directed to produce a sample writing based on the instructions given. Furthermore, Hamp-Lyons (1991a: 2 cited in Weigle 2002: 58) explains that there are five characteristics of direct assessment. First, the test-takers must write a text but the instructions given should cover the minimum numbers which
should be suitable with the test-takers proficiency. Second, the assessment designed should contain clear instructions (or prompt) which should be suitable with the time provided. Third, each of the text which has been produced is read by at least one or two trained raters. Fourth, the scoring should be graded in rating scales which contain the rate of score for every sub-skills of writing. Fifth, the scoring result should be in numbers rather than verbal description of the writing. Moreover, the indirect assessment of second-language focuses on measuring the knowledge of the test-takers by most often multiple-choice tests of grammar and usage of language in certain settings. It can be seen that there is one major different in these kinds of assessment. The process of learning in transferring message via text (as a basic purpose in writing) appears in “direct” assessment rather than “indirect” assessment because the indirect assessment itself focuses on grammar and usage of language.

Assessing speaking also should consider taxonomy of language knowledge that are being proposed by many expertise in the assessment area which is still relevant to writing. According to Palmer and Douglass (in Weigle 2002: 42) the taxonomy of language knowledge consists of grammatical knowledge, or knowledge of the fundamental building blocks of language, textual knowledge, or knowledge of how these building blocks are put together in form coherent texts. Functional knowledge, or knowledge about how language is used to achieve a variety of communicative functions, and sociolinguistics knowledge, or knowledge about how to use language appropriately in different social settings. Furthermore, language assessment especially in writing results two things. First, the lecturer gets the description about students’ writing ability in target language so that the lecturer can identify the difficulties in the learning process which hamper the students. Thus the lecturer can give alternative solution and appropriate feedback for the students. Second, the lecturer gets the score in number so that the lecturer can order the students in rank. Thus, in assessing writing, the assessment developers should consider many things before creating the suitable and effective assessment of writing. There are type of writing, skills of writing and taxonomy of language knowledge that need to be considered.

Problems and Purposes
Based on the discussion above, there are four questions addressed in this research consisting one main problem identification and three specific identifications, as follow:
1) How consistent are speaking and writing assessments with their syllabuses implementation?
2) How comprehensive are the syllabuses of speaking and writing courses?
3) How are the syllabuses of speaking and writing implemented?
4) How do students respond to the consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabuses implementation?

Purposes of the research are:
1. to investigate the consistency of speaking and writing assessment with their syllabuses implementation.
2. to investigate the comprehensiveness of the syllabuses of speaking and writing courses.
3. to investigate the implementation of the syllabuses of speaking and writing
4. to investigate the students’ response to the consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabuses implementation

Methodology
This research was conducted by using case study. Yin elaborated case study research investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (2003: 13). Furthermore, Zainal explained that case study research, naturally, explores contemporary real-life phenomenon through detail contextual analysis of a limited number of events, conditions, and their relationship (2007: 2). It can be seen that case study research investigates certain phenomenon happened in a certain place in temporary time.
Time and Place

This research was conducted at the English Department of State University of Jakarta in productive skills classes which are taken by the second year students, i.e.: Speaking I, Speaking II, Speaking III, Writing I, Writing II, and Writing III. The research started from May 2010 until June 2010.

Data and Data Sources

The data are the comprehensiveness of speaking and writing courses syllabus, the implementation of speaking and writing courses syllabus, the consistency in implementing speaking and writing courses syllabus, students' attitude to the implementing speaking and writing courses syllabus. The data sources are SAP, attendance list of Form 05 which contains materials given, time allocation, date, and the sum of students who attend the class, task and tests, lecturers being interviewed are seventeen from twenty three lecturers who are responsible to the speaking and writing classes, and students being interviewed are six persons from every class of the second year productive skills classes in English Department of State University of Jakarta. Various data are used to make data triangulation so that data collected are valid.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to get the data, researchers did data collection procedures as the following steps: collecting the SAP of Speaking 1, Speaking 2, Speaking 3, Writing 1, Writing 2, and Writing 3 courses; collecting the attendance list of form 5 from Speaking 1, Speaking 2, Speaking 3, Writing 1, Writing 2, and Writing 3 courses; creating interview; testing the interview; making interview to the students and lecturers.

Data Analyzing Techniques

After collecting the data, researchers did several steps to analyze the data, as follow: identifying the components of SAP used in Speaking 1, Speaking 2, Speaking 3, Writing 1, Writing 2, and Writing 3 courses; identifying the materials given, learning activities, assessment used from the attendance list of form 05 and SAP of Speaking 1, Speaking 2, Speaking 3, Writing 1, Writing 2, and Writing 3 courses; and identifying the materials given, learning activities, assessment used from the interview of the lecturers and the students of the courses.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The findings are presented into four parts. They are the comprehensiveness of syllabus components of speaking and writing courses, the implementation of speaking and writing syllabuses, the consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabus implementation, and the consistency of speaking of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabus implementation in students' perspective.

The comprehensiveness of the syllabus components of speaking and writing courses

From the SAP collected, there are some components are missing in several courses, as presented by the table below:
Table 1: The Comprehensiveness of Syllabus Components in Speaking and Writing Courses

The table shows that the comprehensiveness of SAP components in Speaking 1, 2, and 3 only fulfill 70% from overall components that should be inserted in SAP because the information about the instrument of assessment, the technique of assessment and the scoring system are not specified in the SAP. Meanwhile, Writing 1 and Writing 2 fulfill 90% from overall components that should be inserted in SAP because only the instrument of assessment of the courses is not specified there. In contrast, Writing 3 only fulfills 60% from overall SAP components because it does not specify the information about the learning activities, the achievement indicator, the instrument of assessment, and time allocation. Furthermore, there are similarities among SAP of Speaking courses. The SAP does not specify the information about the instrument of assessment, the technique of assessment and the scoring system. Meanwhile, the SAP of Writing 1 and 2 specify all information about the information that should be contained there. In contrast, the SAP of Writing 3 contains lack of information about the course itself because it only specifies six components from ten components that should be inserted there. So that, it can be summarized that the comprehensiveness of the syllabus components in speaking and writing courses is about 75%.

The Implementation of Speaking and Writing Syllabuses

There are three things elaborated in this finding. First is the implementation of learning materials from the syllabus in the classroom. Second is the implementation of learning activities from the syllabus in the classroom. Third is the implementation of assessment from the syllabus in the classroom. The main reasons of choosing the implementation of learning materials and learning activities is because assessment should cover learning materials that students learn with its learning activities. It is closely related to the validity of the assessment developed to assess the specific skills learned in the classroom. According to the analysis of attendance list of form 05, lecturers' interview and students' interview, researchers find that in Speaking I course the implementations of learning materials and learning activities from the syllabus are already suitable only one lecturer who does not give suitable learning materials and learning activities according to the syllabus and the implementation of the assessment itself already suitable, the lecturers in speaking I course usually use role play and interview as assessment technique. The assessments used in this course are based on the contract and syllabus used. Researchers find that in Speaking II and Speaking III courses that all learning materials and learning activities stated in the syllabus are already implemented in the classroom. The assessment used in these courses are role play, interview, presentation, monologue and speech. It is already suitable to the contract and the syllabus used in these courses.

Furthermore, researchers find that in Writing I course the implementations of learning materials and learning activities from the syllabus are already suitable only one lecturer who does not give suitable learning materials and learning activities according to the syllabus and the implementation of the assessment itself already suitable. The lecturers in Writing I course usually
use essay and performance task as assessment technique. The assessments used in this course are already based on the contract and the syllabus. In contrast, researchers find that the implementation of the learning materials and materials activities from the syllabus in Writing II course are already suitable to the attendance list form 05 and the interview of the lecturers and the students. Assessments used in this course are essay, performance test and portfolio. These kinds of assessment are already suitable based on the syllabus and the contract from the beginning of the classes. Besides, researchers find that the implementation of learning materials from the syllabus is already suitable according to the attendance list of form 05, lecturers' interview and students' interview. Meanwhile, there is no lecturers who implement learning activities from the syllabus in this course so that the lecturers overcome the learning activities with the contract in the beginning of the class even though there is no similarities in term of learning activities between one lecturer to another.

The Consistency of Speaking and Writing Assessments with Their Syllabus Implementation

Since the assessment from the syllabus elements in Speaking I, Speaking II, and Speaking III courses is missing, lecturers who are responsible to teach these courses make a contract orally in the beginning of the class. The contract contains the assessment instruments, technique, and scoring system used in the courses which can differ from one lecturer to another. So that, the covers the lackness of assessment used in the courses. Furthermore, researchers find that all the lecturers who make a contract about the assessment used in the beginning of the class are already consistent. The interview proves that the consistency of Speaking I, Speaking II, and Speaking III assessment are 100% consistent with the contract made between the lecturer and the students. Meanwhile, in Writing I and Writing II courses, the techniques used to assess and scoring system are already clearly stated, but assessment instrument used is still unclearly stated. So that, the lecturers make a contract in the beginning of the class about the assessment used in these courses. From the result of the syllabuses lecturers' interview, students' interview, and attendance list of form 5, researchers find that all lecturers who are responsible to teach Writing I and Writing II courses are already 100% consistent. So that, the consistency of speaking and writing assessment with their syllabus implementation is already 100% even certain element is missing but still the lecturers can substitute the missing syllabus element with a contract in the beginning of the class.

The Consistency of Speaking and Writing Assessments with Their Syllabus Implementation In Students’ Perspectives

This last finding is a result of data triangulation from the document (syllabus, attendance list form 05, daily activities, midterm test, and final test), lecturers, and students aimed to strengthen the validity of the data. Students’ opinions are used to compare the result of document analysis and lecturers’ interview. From the analysis of the attendance list of form 05, lectures’ interview and students’ interview comparing five consistencies. They are consistency of learning materials stated in syllabus with their classroom implementation, consistency of learning activities stated in syllabus with their classroom implementation, consistency of learning materials stated in syllabus with their assessments, consistency of learning activities stated in syllabus with their assessments, and the time allocation in the tests which in this case are daily activities, midterm test, and final test. Researchers find that the consistency of speaking I assessment with their syllabus implementation according to the students' attitude is already 88%. Furthermore, in Speaking II and Speaking III classes according to the students' attitude is 100% consistent.

Not really different from speaking courses. Researchers do the same analysis to the attendance list of form 05, lectures' interview and students' interview comparing five consistencies. They are consistency of learning materials stated in syllabus with their classroom implementation, consistency of learning activities stated in syllabus with their classroom implementation, consistency of learning materials stated in syllabus with their assessments, consistency of learning activities stated in syllabus with their assessments, and the time allocation in the tests which in this case are daily activities, midterm test, and final test. Researchers find the consistency of writing I with its syllabus implementation according to students' attitude is 92%. Furthermore in writing II
course according to students attitude is 100%. Meanwhile in writing III course, the consistency of writing III with its syllabus is only 79% according to students attitude.

Discussion

From the findings above, the comprehensiveness of the syllabus components in speaking and writing courses is 75%. Unfortunately, there is none of the syllabuses used in speaking and writing courses which covers all of the components. In Speaking I, Speaking II, and Speaking III syllabuses, researchers do not find the assessment used whether in assessment instrument, technique, or assessment scoring. It is really important to specify the assessment used so that the outcomes can be reliable and also valid. Besides, clear explanation about the assessment used in speaking courses can guide the lecturers to develop same instrument to assess the students. In contrast, writing courses have two problems in the comprehensiveness of their syllabuses. First, Writing I and Writing II syllabuses do not specify assessment instrument. So that, lecturers in these courses use various assessment instrument which is not the same with the other lecturers who are also responsible to teach the same courses. Furthermore, researchers find that there are no learning activities, achievement indicator, assessment instrument, and time allocation in Writing III syllabus. So that it only contains six elements from ten syllabus element that should be covered. The lecturers who are responsible to this course explain that there is still no agreement to specify those things which are missing from Writing III syllabus. In result, lecturers who are responsible to teach this course use various learning activities which are developed from various achievement indicators developed by the lecturers themselves. Lecturers also meet difficulties to provide assessment instrument through the parallel classes of the Writing III course.

The implementation of the speaking and writing syllabus is already suitable according to the analysis of attendance list of form 05, lecturers’ interview, and also students’ interview. Researchers find three major elements of the syllabus being implemented by the lecturers in speaking and writing courses. They are the implementation of learning materials and learning activities from the syllabus also the assessment used in the speaking and writing courses. Even though, researchers find in the Writing III syllabus which does not specify the learning activities, lecturers of this course overcome this problem with the contract in the beginning of the classes. Besides, the assessment used in the speaking and writing courses come up in the contract in the beginning of the class if the syllabus does not specify the assessment used in the courses.

In term of the consistency of speaking and writing assessments with their syllabus implementation, researchers find that the consistency is already 100%. Even, there are some syllabus elements are missing like in Speaking I, Speaking II, and Speaking III courses in which there are no assessment instrument, technique, and scoring system, all lecturers at the same time come up with the same solution to make a contract contains assessment instrument, technique, and scoring system in the beginning of the course which they should obey together with the students. Not really different for the speaking courses, researchers find that the lack of assessment instrument in Writing I and Writing II courses can be solved by making a contract in the beginning of the courses discussing about assessment instrument to be used. So that, the lecturers have responsibility to obey the contract and syllabus they discuss before and it make the lecturers consistent from the beginning of the class until the end of the class in term of assessment instrument and the syllabus used in the course. In Writing III course, researchers find that the same solution done by the lecturers to cover the missing syllabus elements. All lecturers in Writing III course make a contract to cover learning activities, achievement indicator, assessment instrument, and time allocation. So that, the lecturers in this courses can be consistent to the contract and also consistent to the syllabus used.

From the discussion, the researchers found that students’ attitude to the consistency of speaking syllabus in speaking I class is 88% or only 1 lecturer of 5 lecturers does not implement the components of learning material and learning activities. However, in the writing II and III classes, the lecturers are totally consistent with the syllabus. In writing classes the researchers found only in writing II that the lecturers are consistent with the syllabus. Meanwhile in the writing I is only 92% and in writing III is only 79%. From the discussion of the speaking and writing
courses covering 6 classes, there are 3 classes which are totally consistent with the syllabus, 2 classes from speaking classes and 1 from writing.

Conclusion

From the findings, researchers find that most of the syllabus being analyzed do not specify the assessment used in the courses especially in Speaking I, Speaking II, Speaking III, and Writing III courses. To overcome this problem, the lecturers of the courses make a contract in the beginning of the class to discuss the assessment instrument, technique, scoring system, and learning activities used in the courses. So that, researchers find that the implementation of speaking and writing syllabuses are already consistent according to the analysis of attendance of form 05, lecturers' interview, students' interview, and the syllabuses. Besides, researchers also find that all lecturers are already 100% consistent to the speaking and writing assessment to their syllabus implementation. Meanwhile, the result from the students' attitude in term of the speaking and writing assessment to their syllabus implementation may vary.

References


