

Ambiguity in English Test Bias on Buku Jagoan: Langsung Lulus

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Abstract

This research aims to find the ambiguity found in the English test of the school final exam (Ujian Akhir Sekolah Dasar). The ambiguity which is considered as a test bias, may affect both validity and reliability of the test which in the end will affect the grade gained by the test takers. The data is gained from the test items printed in the book which is sold in the bookstore. Each item will be analyzed whether it has one correct answer or not. After the test ambiguity is found, alternative test items will be proposed in order that the test will be free of the test bias so that the test can be considered as valid and reliable.

Keywords: Ambiguity, English test bias, validity

1. Background of the Study

English is taught since the Elementary school in Indonesia. Even though English is not tested in the Ujian Nasional in Elementary school in Indonesia, the students have to still take English test in Ujian Akhir Sekolah Dasar as the marker of the final school grade. For that reasons, the students usually practice doing the English tests before the test. There are a lot of sources of the practice tests. One of them is from the preparation books being sold in all bookstores in Indonesia. The books are complete in term that the answer keys are also provided. The students can autonomously practice the test and at the same time can predict the scores by checking the answer keys.

It is considered urgent to analyze the validity and reliability of the test items found in the prediction books since many parents have already bought the books and asked their children to practice completing the tests and

at the same time see the answer keys provided. In case the tests are not valid and reliable, the students may practice the wrong English test and at the same time may gain the wrong English knowledge.

There have been many ways in order to see the validity and reliability of test. One of them is by analyzing the test bias. The test bias itself is defined as influences, apart from “the ability that is assessed” which may affect the different answers from one student to another (Bachman and Palmer, 2012). If there is bias, the test is automatically not valid and reliable. As a result, the test is not suggested to be used and at the same time is not ethical to be sold in the bookstore.

There are two main problems to be discussed in this study:

- What are the test biases, especially the ambiguity, found in the English test found in the preparation book entitled: *Buku Jagoan: Langsung Lulus UASBN SD / MI 2013*?
- What are the best alternative forms to replace the items which have the ambiguity?

2. Literature Review

The formal test like the English test at UASBN test which is delivered at the end of the learning period is usually called as summative test. It usually does not need any feedback from the person who scores the test. It provides grades only which can be used as passing grade (Ur, 2012). All tests have to pay attention to the validity and reliability of test. Brown as quoted by Brown and Hudson (2002) defines validity as “the degree to which a test measures what it claims, or purports, to be measuring”.

The validity and reliability can only be achieved if the test is free from test biases. Test bias itself, as earlier stated, is defined as “Difference in meanings of assessment records for individuals from different identifiable group. That is not related to the ability that is assessed. In other words, bias result in interpretations that is not equally meaning, relevant, or generalizable for individuals in different group” (Bachman and Palmer, 2012). In regards with the validity, Kopriva (2008) also adds that test is valid when it free from

other “influences” than what should be tested or in other words, the test is valid when it is free from the bias.

Bachman as quoted by Weir (2005), Bachman and Palmer (2012) and Gronlund and Henning as quoted by Srijono (2000) have agreed that Ambiguity or ambiguous statements in test items will affect the test validity. It means that the test may only have one correct answer.

Analyzing test bias is different from one kind of test item to another. Since the English tests in the Elementary schools in Indonesia is using multiple choice and sentence completion questions, only those two kinds of test formats will be discussed. According to Ur (2012), in multiple choice test, there must be only one correct and clear answer out of the four options available. In addition, the answer cannot be too obvious that it is the correct answer. Ur (2012) also discusses about sentence completion, another kind test item which is used in English test in Elementary schools in Indonesia. She argues that it is quite difficult to check since the students may answer what he/she likes. As long as it is acceptable, the answer is correct. That is why she said that sentence completion test item is rarely used since the correction is difficult.

3. Research Methods

The objects of this study is two parts of tests items found in the books entitled “Buku Jagoan: Langsung Lulus UASBN SD / MI 2013”. Part one consists of multiple choice test items. There are four distractors in each number. They are (a), (b), (c), and (d). Part two consists of sentence completion questions. There are 40 questions altogether in the test.

The methods in data gathering can be seen in the following figure.

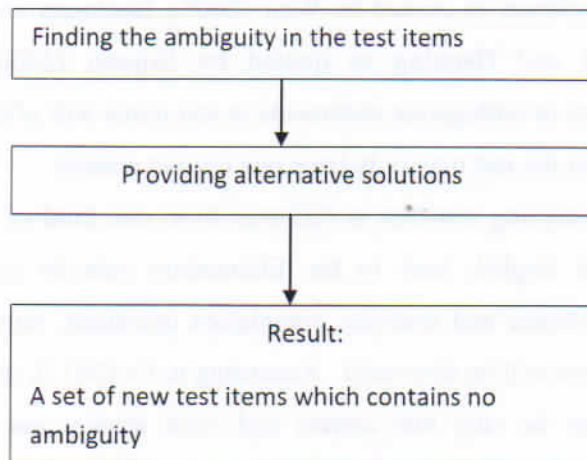


Figure 3.1 Methods of data gathering

4. Analysis

From the overall data, 30 % of the overall test has an ambiguity. The test is considered as ambiguity when the question, the distracter, the illustration, or one of them is not clear. There are usually more than possible answers in the multiple choice question. Moreover, the answer of the essay test is also too general. Below is an example of test item in which all distracters can be correct answers.


Test Item no. 6	Proposed Correction
The color of our hair is ... A. Pink C. Brown B. Purple D. Black	Look at the picture below!  The color of the boy's hair is..... A. Red C. Brown B. Grey D. Black

Table 4.1

As we know, the color of a person's hair is different from one to another. In Indonesia, the common color is black while in some countries brown, pink, or even purple are usual. In question number six, even though distracters A and B are a bit unusual, all options are correct in this test item. In order to make it more natural, distracters A and B can be adjusted. We can put a picture to support the question.

Test Item no. 10	Proposed Correction
My family always watches TV in the ... A. Living room C. Bedroom B. dining room D. Toilet	People usually sleep in the... A. Living room C. Bedroom B. dining room D. Toilet

Table 4.2

Although the stem is clear, there are more than one possible answers. In order that the answer is only one, the stem can be changed into the proposed one above.

Another test item which has more than one answers is number 13 as can be seen in the table below.

Test Item no 13	Proposed Correction
My grandparent have five... A. Nieces C. Grandchildren B. Nephews D. Sons	My grandparents have five... <u>including me.</u> A. Nieces C. Grandchildren B. Nephews D. Sons

Table 4.3

To make matter worst, the test item contains grammatical error. The subject does not agree with the verb. It should be "My grandparent has..." or "my grandparents have...". There must be additional information as proposed so that it is free of error. Moreover, it can be seen that there is only one correct answer.

Test Item no 17	Proposed Correction
Be quiet, please! A. Hati – hatilah B. Tenanglah C. Jangan marah! D. Jangan mengganggu!	<u>Be quiet, please.</u> The teacher says that when the students are noisy. The meaning of this sentence is... A. Be quiet, please! B. Take care

Table 4.4

Question number 17 above seems to have one correct answer (B). Unfortunately, when the context is different, for example when someone is being disturbed, it is possible that he/she said “be quiet” which in Bahasa Indonesia is “Jangan mengganggu”.

Test Item no 23	Proposed Correction
I think I must go home now. Good ... friends. A. Morning C. Bye B. Luck D. Night	At 10 am, the students say... A. Good morning B. Good afternoon C. Good evening D. Good night

Table 4.5

The answer key suggests that the answer is (C) Good bye. However, when question number 13 above is analyzed from different point of views, more than possible answers are possible. For example, when the speaker is going in the evening, it is also possible to say “good night”. It is, therefore, important to put the exact time such as 10 am in the question so that there is only one possible answer.

Test Item no 32	Proposed Correction
Teacher : OK, students, time is ,, !	When the class is finish, the teacher says: “Time is ...”

Table 4.6

The incomplete phrase “time is.... “ can be completed by many words or phrases, such as “Time is money”, “Time is up”, and many other idioms. It is necessary to put a clue so that the answer is clear.

Test Item no 33	Proposed Correction
Mother goes to the drugstore. She wants to buy...	My mother goes to the drugstore, she wants to buy... A. Vegetables B. Fruit C. Medicine D. Stationeries

Table 4.7

People can buy many things in a drugstore. The answer may be too many. Changing the test type into a multiple choice question may help in narrowing down the answer.

Test Item no 2	Proposed Correction
There is a big ... in front of my school. A. Truck C. Door B. Tree D. Table	There a big..... in front of my school. The leaves are green. A. Truck C. Door B. Tree D. Table

Table 4.8

The questions above have surely more than one answer. All of the distracters can be considered as the correct answers. By giving more explanation as proposed above, the questions has only got one answer (B).



Test Item no 30	Proposed Correction
<p>30. Look at the picture!</p>  <p>CD Images What season is it?</p>	<p>Look at the picture below! The weather is usually snowy.</p>  <p>What season is it?</p>

Table 4.9

The picture is not very clear; the season can be fall since the trees at the front do not have many leaves. It can also be summer due to the trees with many leaves at the back or even winter because the land is clear and looks white. The additional explanation as proposed above makes one possible answer only, which is 'winter'.

Test Item no 32	Proposed Correction
<p>Tino has a.... He went to the dentist this morning</p>	<p>Tino has a ... He went to the dentist this morning. A. toothache C. backache B. flu D. stomachache</p>

Table 4.10

Actually, the expected answer is 'toothache, but, people may go to the dentist for many reasons. If Tino is a retailer, he will go to the dentist when he has a new kind of medicine, for example. In order to avoid such a misunderstanding, change the question into a multiple choice question as proposed above.

Besides the multiple choice questions, the bias is also found out in the essay. It can be seen in number 26 as stated below.

26. *We keep the car in the ...*

Since there are more than one possible answers, it is suggested to convert the type of the question into a multiple choice questions as follows.

26. Budi parks the car in the...

- A. kitchen C. bedroom
B. garage D. living room

Moreover, the collocation is not really common. We usually say 'park the car', not 'keep the car'. An additional of picture will be beneficial.

Another test item in the essay which has too many answers can be found in number 40.

40. Why Indonesia only has two seasons? Write
with your own words!

Figure 4.1. Question number 40

Test item number 40 as shown above is better to be given in a Geography test. The form of the sentence is also a bit unusual. It should be:

- Why are there two seasons in Indonesia?
- Why does Indonesia have two seasons?

Since it is not a geography test, the question should be adjusted into:

- Write two seasons in Indonesia! What does the weather like in those two seasons?

5. Conclusions

Since 30 % of the test contains biases, it is highly suggested that the test are not used. If the test is still used, the students may find it difficult to answer, not because their English is bad, but because of the biases themselves. In short, it can be said that the test are not valid and reliable.

Moreover, the test cannot be used as an evaluation. Evaluating students by using test items which are not valid and reliable are useless and a waste of time. Many students will get the wrong and inappropriate result if the tests are still given.

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