

A MODEL OF INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT FOR *STRUCTURE I* SUBJECT AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL¹

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Abstrak

Pembelajaran tatabahasa (gramatika) bahasa Inggris pada semua tingkat pendidikan di Indonesia harus mendapat perhatian dan pelaksanaan yang baik. Di samping statusnya sebagai bahasa asing, fitur-fitur gramatikal dan sifat-perilaku ketatabahasaan bahasa Inggris sangat berbeda dari yang ada dalam bahasa Indonesia atau bahasa daerah lain yang menjadi bahasa ibu pembelajar. Salah satu bagian proses pembelajaran tatabahasa bahasa Inggris yang penting mendapat perhatian adalah asesmen; asesmen yang baik dan sesuai akan membantu pembelajar untuk memahami fitur-fitur gramatikal dan pemakaiannya untuk empat keterampilan berbahasa secara komunikatif. Asesmen pembelajaran tatabahasa yang baik dan sesuai menjadi semakin lebih penting untuk mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris karena mereka akan menjadi (calon) guru bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar dan menengah. Makalah, yang dikembangkan dari sebagian hasil penelitian untuk disertasi doktor², ini membahas sebuah model asesmen tatabahasa terintegrasi yang cocok dan baik digunakan untuk matakuliah Structure I pada tingkat perguruan tinggi. Data dan informasi terkait yang disajikan pada makalah ini didasarkan pada penelitian pendidikan jenis Penelitian dan Pengembangan (Research and Development). Analisis data menunjukkan bahwa model asesmen tatabahasa terintegrasi (an integrated model of structure assessment) dapat meningkatkan kemampuan mahasiswa untuk menulis kalimat dengan tatabahasa yang benar.

Key words: *English Structure, EFL, integrated assessment, sentences, writing*

A. INTRODUCTION

Learning outcomes, including the foreign language learning outcomes, are the result of the interactions between the teaching and learning processes, including the context of the instructional programs, with the student factors. On one hand, the teaching context is the environment set by the teacher and the institution, through the course structure, curriculum content, methods of teaching, and assessment. The student factors, on the other hand, may include prior knowledge, ways of learning, motivation, expectation, etc. Both student and teaching presage factors interact in particular and complex ways to produce an approach to learning, which produces its characteristic outcome (see Biggs, 1989). In this sense, learning outcomes are resulted in such a way as the effect of instructional programs and practical executions.

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There are many components needed in any instructional programs and learning processes. One of them is assessment. As a component of learning process, an assessment has an urgent function. An appropriate and regular assessment (especially formative assessment) can improve the learning process and in its turn it will continually improve the quality and quantity of student learning (see further Johnson and Johnson, 2002: 7-8) in all subject matters and the teaching of language is not the exception. In other words, the quality of learning outcomes can be improved through improving better and qualified assessment.

When an observation was done on the assessment of *English Grammar* classes, especially for *Structure I* subject at the English Department of Teachers' Training Faculty of Bung Hatta University, it can be reported that the lecturers had been giving the students many kinds of assessment, such as classroom exercises, homework, midterm test, semester test, and quizzes. The tasks given in classroom exercises and homework were also various, for example: recognizing grammatical features, sentence completion, using correct grammatical features, arranging words into a sentence, describing pictures based on the clues, and writing questions. Test items were dominantly in the form of multiple choices followed by a few items on error recognition, sentence transformation from affirmative sentences to negative sentences or questions or vice versa, and writing questions based on the underlined words or phrases. Quizzes were rarely administered and if one was done, the items were still dealing with error recognition or writing questions.

The task and test items mentioned earlier assessed the materials that the students had learnt, so they can be regarded to have content validity. They also fulfilled the criterion of practicality because they did not take a lot of time, funds, and energy to prepare, administer, and analyze. In terms of the form, they were objective because there was only one correct answer for each item or task. Although an analysis of test and task reliability was not carried out by the lecturers, the test and the task could be regarded reliable because the result of *Structure* assessment generally correlated to the students learning result on other subjects, like Speaking, Reading, and Writing. However, the assessment model of *Structure* that the teacher has used so far does not yet give a satisfying result. The students are still unable to use correct English grammar in their utterances or written composition.

It is assumed that the assessment models and items used for *Structure I* subject at the English Department of Bung Hatta University are still inappropriate seen from the effectiveness for increasing both students' competence and performance of the basic English grammar. Among the others, one basic question that should be academically raised is "what is an appropriate model for *Structure I* subject at university level?" This paper focuses its discussion on answering this basic question in order to offer a model of appropriate assessment academically and naturally used for *Structure I* subject at the English Department of Bung Hatta University. It is highly believed then that the model of assessment offered may be applicable for other universities with the same characteristics.

B. DISCUSSION

The Need for Learning English Structure for Indonesian Learners

Similar with the nature of other languages grammar, the nature of English grammar is concerned with the rules on the level of sounds, words or lexicons, clauses and sentences, and meaning (see further Lyons, 1990; Song, 2001). This nature is tied to a variety of features either universal or unique. If English grammar and the grammar of *bahasa Indonesia* are compared, for example, some differences as well as similarities are easily found. One of important differences

is that English is a *tensed language*, while *bahasa Indonesia* (and the majority of Malayan languages) are *tenseless language* (see Lyons, 1987; Jufrizal, 2010). Another difference lies on aspect, modality, and phrase structure. In English, aspect and modality are expressed in predicate; while in *bahasa Indonesia* they are expressed through lexical items. In addition, English phrase structure is arranged by having the modifier to precede the modified items, while in *bahasa Indonesia* the modified item precedes the modifier (see further Lyons, 1990; Saeed, 1997; Jufrizal, 2010).

Williams in Bygate et.al. (eds.) (1994:109–110) explains that there is a considerable difference between teaching grammar to non-native speakers and that to native speakers. Native speakers are competent in their language varieties. They know the forms and the meanings of language; there is a form-function fusion for them. In teaching grammar to a native speaker of the standard English, then, this communicative rule would not have to be taught – unless one wished to ensure awareness of it. The position of non-native speakers, however, is different. They would have to be taught the meaning associated with the structures. If learners are not taught or given the opportunity to learn, they will never know because the relationship between syntactic form and meaning is as arbitrary as that between lexis and meaning. Knowledge about the difference between *She didn't go* and *She doesn't go* needs to be possessed by non-native speakers because it is an important rule in communicative grammar. The possession of such knowledge helps people 'to say what they mean'.

Another important idea about the significance of teaching grammar in language learning programs is presented by Tonkyn (in Bygate et.al (eds.), 1994:6). According to him, it is widely believed that a formal grammar instruction can help to prevent the premature fossilization which an excessive emphasis on the performance of communicative tasks may bring. Besides, it can assist learners, especially adults, to learn more rapidly and efficiently. It may happen because adults can better understand abstract rules and draw logical conclusion for communicative purpose.

In accordance with the argumentations, Indonesian learners of English cannot avoid the case of grammar instructions. It becomes more necessary and academically needed for the students of an English teacher training institution, like the English Department of Bung Hatta University. It is almost impossible for the students to have better English language skills if they do not have the grammatical competence. In addition to their own communicative competence, good grammatical competence in English is really helpful for their career as the professional teachers at junior and senior high schools, then.

The Assessment in a Language Learning Program

A language learning program has many aspects to cover. Besides human resources, infrastructures, and academic policies, the availability of learning materials and evaluation design help to determine the success of the learning program. Therefore, evaluation program together with its equipment needs a so serious attention that learning achievement can be measured and the next programs can be planned. In this case, an assessment as a part of evaluation has an urgent role in the endeavor to gain the success of language learning program, either first, second, or foreign language learning program.

Basically, an assessment can be classified into two types, i.e. an assessment that requires the students to answer test items (test-based assessment) and an assessment that necessitates the learners to perform a task (performance-based assessment). Nowadays, the latter (performance-based assessment) has gained educators' and educational experts' attention because it is believed

to be able to overcome the weaknesses of test-based assessment. In addition, it is assumed that the performance-based assessment suits the principle of meaningful assessment; assessment that becomes an integrated part of learning.

Johnson and Johnson (2002:6) define performance-based assessment (also called performance assessment) as collecting information about demonstrations of achievement involving actually performing a task or set of tasks, such as conducting an experiment, giving a speech, writing a story, or operating a machine. In a simple way, Nitko (1996:239) states that a performance assessment is a procedure in which work assignments or tasks are used to obtain information about how well a student has learnt. Thus, based on the two opinions, it can be concluded that doing a task is the main element of performance assessment. As a consequence, performance assessment is also referred to as task-based assessment (see Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010:16). In this paper, the assessment to be discussed is a task-based assessment in the form of writing simple paragraphs.

The process of assessment development and use is a series of activities that occur in five stages: (1) initial planning; (2) design; (3) operationalization; (4) trialing; and (5) assessment use. In the initial planning stage the assessment developer determines whether he needs to use an assessment, and if so, whether to use an existing assessment or to develop one of his own. In the design stage the assessment developer implements specific activities that will produce a document that states what one needs to know before actually creating an assessment. The operationalization stage involves developing a blueprint, developing actual assessment tasks, and then organizing the assessment tasks into an overall assessment, following the blueprint. The trialing stage of assessment development involves trying out the assessment with a group of individuals, collecting information, and analyzing this information for the purpose of improving the assessment. Assessment use or operational use involves administering the assessment to collect information about someone's language ability in order to make the intended decisions (see Bachman and Palmer, 2010:139–145).

The development of assessment needs to consider the quality and academic function of the assessment itself. Johnson and Johnson (2002:12–14) describes the characteristics of a meaningful assessment. According to them, assessments have meaning when they (1) achieve a significant purpose; (2) have clear procedures, criteria, and rubrics that are understood by all relevant stakeholders; and (3) produce results that provide clear direction for increasing the quality of learning. The assessments that only provide achievement scores are meaningless because they have no implications for what the student should do to correct and advance his or her learning. Assessments will become more meaningful when the results are used to point toward the next steps in learning or instruction.

Assessment in a language learning program, especially in learning a foreign language, can be addressed to specific language components of skills. Grammar assessment is one example of specific language components that is academically needed in the English instruction. *Structure I* (as one name of subject) assessment, for instance, becomes more specific assessment needed in the grammar instruction of English. For the reason, developing a model of assessment for *Structure I* subject, say for university students, is highly helpful and recommended.

This article only discusses the research result on the development of an assessment model, especially that of classroom exercises and homework, that is relevant to (*English*) *Structure I* subject at a university. It is academically believed that when a relevant and appropriate assessment has been found, the learning process can be improved. In turn, the students' linguistic competence will develop optimally and finally their communicative

competence will be more satisfying. Linguistic competence is one of basic elements to build communicative competence and other relevant socio-cultural properties in having verbal communication.

Research Method

This research belongs to a research and development. It was carried out in the even semester of 2011/2012 academic year at the English Education Study Program of Teachers Training Faculty of Bung Hatta University. The research sample comprised 110 new students who were selected by applying purposive sampling technique. The development model followed was the modified version of Borg and Gall's (1979) which they used to develop a mini course. The development was applied to the assessment of *Structure I*, one of a series of English Grammar subjects offered to the students. The data of the research were collected by distributing questionnaires, conducting interviews, and administering tests.

The first stage of the research was pre-research and information collecting about the common implementation of *Structure I* assessment by the lecturers, its strengths and weaknesses, and suggestion for the assessment development. It was done by distributing questionnaires to faculty leaders, study program leaders, the lecturers who were teaching *Structure I*, and the students who had finished taking *Structure I* and conducting interviews with the lecturers to clarify some data. Based on the result of focus group discussion, it was decided that the assessment to be developed was writing a simple paragraph.

The second stage of the research was the researcher reviewed the teaching materials (books) used in the classroom, their strengths and weaknesses, and the form of tasks available in each book. Based on the result of the review, the researcher planned the modification of the tasks by omitting some considered less important and adding some considered powerful to train the students to use correct grammar in writing. In the third stage the researcher developed a preliminary form of product. It was done by scanning the selected teaching materials, adding the tasks in the form of identifying sentences at corresponding places and adding the task in the form of writing paragraph guided by probing questions at the end of each subchapter. In the fourth stage the developed product was validated by four experts. In the fifth stage the researcher revised the preliminary form of product by considering the suggestions given by the four experts. In the sixth stage the researcher conducted a limited field testing in the form of an experimental research. The researcher chose a pre-experimental design, especially one-group pretest-posttest design (see Gay et.al., 2009:253–255).

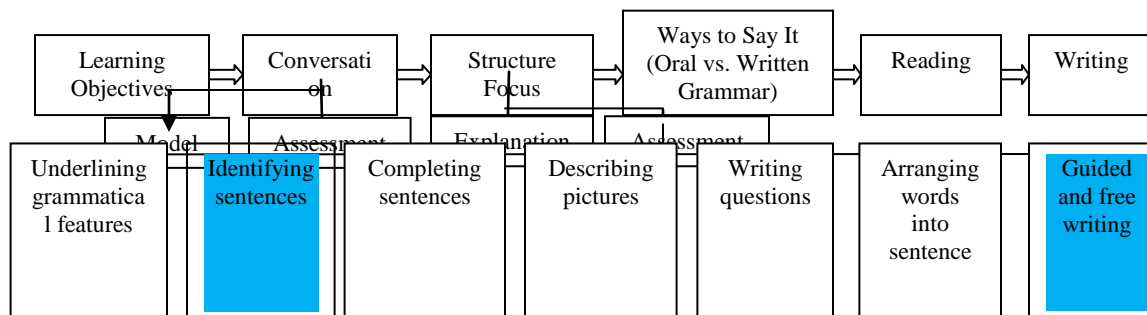
Research Result and Discussion

The series of stages in the product development was based on theoretical and practical considerations which became the framework of the research. Theoretically, the stages were based on the principles of forming and developing two competences needed in learning a language, including learning a foreign language, i.e. linguistic competence and communicative competence (see Stern, 1994; Brown, 2001, and Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010). In this research, not all types of linguistic competence were formed and developed. Sub-linguistic competence which became the main focus was grammatical competence, the competence to recognize and understand grammatical features which were learnt in (*English*) *Grammar* lectures outlined in the syllabus of *Structure I* subject. Meanwhile, the communicative competence which became the main focus was the ability to use correct grammatical features in writing simple paragraphs as a form of classroom assessment.

Such linguistic and communicative competences need to be formed and developed in the series of *English Grammar* subjects, beginning from *Structure I* until *Advanced Structure* as stated in the curriculum. The researcher believes that the two competences should be the target of development in the teaching learning process in the study program that educates students to be the candidate teachers of English as a foreign language. Based on the research results, there are five reasons why the two competences need to be formed and developed through the teaching of the series of *English Grammar* subjects, especially *Structure I*. The reasons are as follow: (i) there is a difference between English grammatical typology and *bahasa Indonesia* grammatical typology (and that of most students' mother tongues, especially of the students who were learning at the English Education Study Program of the Teachers Training Faculty of Bung Hatta University). It makes some of English grammatical features different from *bahasa Indonesia* grammatical features (and students' mother tongue grammatical features) (see Jufrizal et.al., 2009; Jufrizal, 2010); (ii) without enough knowledge about the concepts and features of English *Structure I* it will be very difficult for the students (university students) who will be the candidate teachers of English to gain linguistic competence and communicative competence (see Syarif, 2003; Refnita, 2007; Jufrizal et.al., 2009); (iii) a good linguistic competence will be the foundation on which to build communicative competence and language skills, like speaking and writing (see Brown, 2001; Purpura, 2004; Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010; and Kumaravadivelu, 2008); (iv) a language without good and correct grammar is not a standard language, while the language that a language teacher should teach must be standard, not contact language like pidgin or creole (see further Kamwangamalu (2010); McKay (2010); and Bianco (2010) (all in Hornberger and McKay (eds.), 2010:89 – 171); (v) Ideally, a teacher is a scientist as well as an artist and it is necessary for him/her to always learn to be a teacher (see Johnson, 2009:17); a language teacher should have enough knowledge about the grammar of the language he/she is teaching and be able to use it well. In this case, having linguistic and communicative competences is one of efforts to be a scientist and the model for the students.

Practically, the series of procedures in planning, developing, and revising the product was carried out by the researcher herself while product validation was done by the experts. The product revision which was carried out after product validation by the experts involved the following activities: (i) adding the learning objectives at the beginning of each subchapter (part) of teaching materials; (ii) adding a conversation task; (iii) adding more explanation on teaching material; (iv) adding some explanation on the differences between written grammar and spoken grammar; (v) adding a reading text followed by comprehension questions; (vi) rearranging and adding illustration/pictures; (vii) adding a free writing task based on the topic that had just been discussed; and (viii) correcting spelling errors. In short, the final product of developing the assessment model can be depicted in the following diagram:

Diagram 1. The Developed Assessment Model of *Structure I*



The provision of learning objectives at the beginning of each subchapter of teaching materials aimed at giving a guide to the students about what they are expected to do after learning. By this way the students will be guided from the beginning in order to come to the learning outcomes and assessment. Both the lecturer and the students will also be able to make systematic academic-decisions related to learning programs and the students' progress. This expectation is in line with the ideas proposed by Nitko (1996), Johnson and Johnson (2002), and Mousavi in Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) about the components that should be fulfilled by an assessment, i.e.: (i) information collecting; (ii) the information is about the quantity and quality of changes; and (iii) the information is used to make a decision or to evaluate someone or something.

A conversation practice (task) was offered after a conversation model and comprehension questions. It aimed at training the students to orally use the grammatical feature that had just been learnt. By this way the students had an opportunity to develop their communicative competence in a creative way based on the topic of teaching material. As stated previously, having abstract grammatical knowledge is not enough for the students (the candidate English teachers); they should be able to use it in language skills, either spoken or written. This way will lead the students to be good teachers –scientists and models for their students.

A more explanation on teaching materials was added to help the students more easily understand the grammatical features being learnt because they were completed with form, meaning, and function. An explanation on the differences between oral grammar and written grammar aimed at enlarging the students' knowledge that oral English has a different grammar from written English. This part can be regarded as a transition from learning materials which are more of oral to the learning materials which are of spoken in nature. The reading text and comprehension questions following it aimed at giving the students an idea about the use of English grammar in written form. It was the target of developing an assessment of grammar that should be achieved by each institution that teaches the language (see Thornbury, 2008; Purpura, 2004).

Finally, the task on free writing aimed at training the students to be able to write down their ideas without being guided with probing questions. Having this kind of revision, the learning materials became more interesting, comprehensive, and suitable with the communicative approach to foreign language teaching. This section of assessment was a new innovation as a result of this research and development. The free writing task initiated with various structured tasks related to the assessment on grammatical features was a new item of development created in this research. Although there had been another research on the use of sentence writing task to develop the students' grammar ability, the free writing task suggested as a new development item in this research cannot be found in that research.

The free writing task in the form of writing paragraph, initiated with various tasks which were more structured, as a new product of this research has four advantages either academically or pedagogically. First, the students had stepped on various tasks which were assessing their understanding and ability to use grammatical features in isolated sentences focusing on the form and the structure of language. Pedagogically, it was needed during the beginning period of learning grammar by nonnative speakers. It was suitable for the students who were the subjects (sample) of the research. Second, writing skill is a language skill that requires the students to use grammatical features correctly. Having to do this free writing task, the students need to use or apply their linguistic and communicative competences in a more serious manner. The two

advantages relate to the basic principles of pedagogical grammar (see Swan (1994) and Chalker (1994), both in Bygate et.al. (eds.), 1994; and Odlin in Odlin (ed.), 1994).

The third advantage was that in free writing task there was an opportunity for the students to cognitively think and practically use the grammatical features. This activity was very important to form and develop their linguistic and communicative competences in performing language skills, especially in writing paragraph. The fourth advantage was psychological in nature; the students felt content and satisfied because they had finished doing the work that belonged to their own—their own initiation and creation. Human beings, in general, basically have a sense of being content and satisfied with their own work, not to mention if it was finished after going through a series of long, difficult, and challenging efforts (see Stern, 1994:289 - 335; Steinberg et.al., 2001:185 – 186).

By these ways of developing a model of *Structure I* subject assessment, it is reasonably argued that this new model belongs to an integrated assessment; a model of grammar assessment which correlate with writing skill. Since it is a model for Structure I subject, so that the writing skill included is the basic (sentential) writing skill, as well. This integrated model of grammar (*Structure I*) assessment is different from those previous assessments used by lecturers of *Structure I* subject. In this model, the learners are academically informed and critically taught the features of English grammar. Then, they are guided to express and use their knowledge (grammatical competence) through written exercises. They are to do exercises and write sentences in correct grammar as they have learned.

The advantages of using this developed model of *Structure I* assessment were also shown and supported by the analysis of the data that were got from the limited field testing of the product. The developed assessment model helped the students not only to write more number of sentences but also to write more grammatically correct sentences. During the pretest of one hour duration the students could write 708 grammatically correct sentences out of 2531 sentences they wrote (27.97%), while during the posttest of the same duration they could write 2625 grammatically correct sentences out of 4971 sentences they wrote (52.81%). The result of t-test analysis (the analysis of significance) also showed that the students' gain scores were statistically significant.

Having the result, it is scientifically and statistically argued again that this integrated model of assessment is helpful and may be used in various ways based on students' levels. The developed model, in the form of integrated model, can be claimed as an appropriate and helpful model of assessment that may be used as a part of learning a foreign language program at university level. One more point that can be stressed here is that in general, the research results imply that the integrated model of English grammar (*Structure I* subject) assessment could improve the students' ability to write grammatically correct sentences.

C. CONCLUSION

The developed model, an integrated assessment as it is named, has fulfilled the main characteristics of a good assessment, such as validity, reliability, authenticity, practicality, and washback effect. Besides that, the up-to-date flavor of the product lied on the provision of free writing task after the students had gone through more structured tasks. This innovation of the free writing task is laying not only on its sole presence but also on its availability after stages of guided oral and written tasks. By having so, the students had a chance to develop their creativity by keeping trying to use correct English grammar. It can be scientifically remarked that (1) the students' grammar ability can be improved through the tasks that ask them to use grammatical

features, (2) it would be better to integrate grammar learning and assessment with the exercises of language skill such as speaking and writing, and (3) the improvement of learning outcomes could be done by utilizing an appropriate classroom assessment. Considering the fact that the developed model of assessment was effective enough to improve the process and the result of learning *Structure I*, it is suggested that similar model can be developed for more advanced subjects; *Structure II*, *Structure III*, *Structure IV*, and *Advanced Structure*. By doing so, this series of subjects could really help the students to develop and improve their linguistics and communicative competences.

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