

ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE TESTING
AS APPLIED TO MALAY LEARNERS

by

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. THE STUDENTS

The one-year intensive course in English as a Second Language at the Mara Institute of Technology prepares post-secondary Malay-medium students who wish to enter professional or semi-professional courses the following year. These courses are conducted through the medium of English.

Malay-medium students are those who have had their primary and secondary schooling through the medium of Malay. English-medium students are those who have had their education through English.

These Malay-medium students have had an average of 3 hours of English a week during their primary and secondary schooling. Their average level in English proficiency at the beginning of the "Intensive English course" is that of a below-average second-year secondary English-medium student.

2. THE INTENSIVE ENGLISH COURSE CURRICULUM

The course is formally organized into the following units:

- A. Sixteen hours a week of (i) Communication Arts, (ii) Writing Course, (iii) Reading - mainly Reading and Comprehension, and (iv) Communication Arts - "Language through Literature."

B. Nine hours a week (depending on pre-choice of professional course) selected from Basic Accounting, Business Mathematics, Rudiments of Business, Additional Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. All these subjects are taught through the medium of English.

In addition to the above, there is the less formal "Extensive Reading Programme" - outside-lecture hours reading of books in English from the Intensive English Course Library or the Class library. Almost every class (a group of about thirty under one teacher) has a mini-library. This is usually the result of a joint effort of that class and the teacher. Feedback - progress in English through this "Extensive Reading Programme" can be obtained through summaries and reviews (oral and written).

3. OBJECTIVE OF COURSE

The English proficiency level aimed at is that of a good final-year secondary English-medium student (High School Senior). In practical terms, it means being able to follow lectures and participate actively at par with English-medium students. In the broader Malaysian context, it includes the use of English (1) as a medium of instruction in educational institutions (2) as a language of communication (both oral and written) in the working life of Malaysians, and (3) as a language of society - an alternative to the National Language, Malay.

4. TEACHERS AND FACILITIES

Almost all the lecturers at Mara, especially those of English, are bilingual in English and Malay.

The teacher/student ratio for English classes is a manageable 1 to 30 maximum.

Among the facilities are language laboratories, a well-stocked Intensive English Course Library, with reference books for teachers, texts and extensive reading materials for students. As mentioned earlier most classes have their own mini-libraries.

The motivation of these students is generally high since they have to make or break within a year. The student ratio of Malay-educated to English-educated at 1 to 10 + and the extensive use of English even out of the class-room, provide a helpful study environment for these students.

5. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Practically all the lecturers have had little or no formal or organized training in Language Testing. This included the writer prior to his coming to the United States. He had often been involved as a coordinator/examiner/test-writer, and will probably continue to do the same on his return to Malaysia.

With homogeneous students, all having the same native language background and with teachers bilingual in both the native and the target language, we find an ideal situation for the specific application of good principles and techniques of language testing, especially the contrastive analysis

approach, and this is what I intend to discuss and illustrate in connection with the Final Test of the above-mentioned Intensive English Course.

The study, I hope will contribute some suggestions towards improving language testing at the above and similar institutions in Malaysia.

6. SUMMARY OF APPROACH

First, a review of the most relevant literature discussing the main ideas, attitudes, and principles connected with Language Testing will be made. Next, a comprehensive four-test format, based on good principles of language testing discussed in the previous section will be presented. Item-writing and analysis of items in connection with guidelines in language testing forms a third section. Finally, a section on scoring completes the discussion.

SECTION 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE (TOWARDS AN IDEAL TEST)

Much has been written about Language Testing, but what seems most relevant to my present study may be grouped under:-

1. That which revolves around the question -
"What does it mean to know a language?"
2. Contrastive Analysis and Language Testing
3. Characteristics of a good test

1. Bernard Spolsky (1968) states:

Fundamental to the preparation of valid tests of language proficiency is the theoretical question of what it means to know a language. There are two ways in which this question can be answered. One is to follow what John Carroll (1961) has referred to as the integrative approach..... The second is to follow what Carroll called the discrete-point approach.

These two alternative approaches are defined in practical terms John Upshur (1971) as follows:-

DISCRETE-POINT APPROACH:

The view of language proficiency which is implicit in virtually all language courses is that proficiency consists in a definable set of subskills which can be individually taught, that the mastery of these instructional objectives is sufficient for one to attain proficiency. Course materials are designed so that all students have opportunity to attempt tasks which reflect all objectives, the mastery of which produces proficiency.

INTEGRATIVE APPROACH:

The alternative view of language proficiency holds that it is not possible to specify any set of subskills or elements which constitute proficiency. It holds, rather, that some skills can compensate for the lack of others, that the analytic elements of language interact in ways that are beyond our current abilities to describe, that proficiency is not a matter of how much language one knows, but is properly described in terms of how much he can communicate - regardless of how many linguistically defined subskills he has mastered.

Upshur is here paraphrasing Spolsky (1968), who believes:

... we should aim not to test how much of a language someone knows, but to test his ability to operate in a specified sociological situation with specified ease or effect. The preparation of proficiency tests like this would not start from a list of language items, but from a statement of language function:

Detailed instructions on how to prepare discrete-point tests are found in such standard texts as Lado (1961), Valette (1967), Harris (1969), Clark (1972) and Heaton (1975).

Besides Bernard Spolsky, some exponents for more integrative testing, especially with their advocacy of the "cloze procedure" are Taylor (1953), Anderson (1971 and 1972), Oller (1972), Oller and Conrad (1971).

The cloze procedure as invented by Taylor (1953) is constructed as follows:-

Certain words of a passage are systematically and mechanically deleted (every nth word - 5th or 6th etc.) and replaced by blanks usually of uniform length. The subject has to replace the missing word in each blank. The number of words he replaces correctly indicates his degree of comprehension of the passage.

The cloze procedure is an integrative test in that, it requires integrative skills to be able to fill in the blanks with a variety of sub-component parts of the language and that on one's own accord (no choices to select from), to reconstruct the mutilated passage into a meaningful integrated discourse. One requires at one and the same time, in the words of McLeod (1965):

... a familiarity with the grammatical structure of English, an understanding of lexical meaning and, if the passages selected are concerned with a variety of experiences familiar in a given culture, they reflect to some extent 'social-cultural' meaning.

If I were to use the cloze procedure in an important test, I would use it mainly for function words e.g. prepositions, adverbs, particles, and articles. This would be a variation - a modified cloze similar to that used by Oller and Inal (1971). The main reason for using it in this less integrative form is that function words are more predictable than content words. There are fewer alternatives to choose from in function words, therefore the scoring would be more objective than in the case of content words. In the latter case a subject may be unfairly penalized if his "vocabulary tendencies" are not the same as the author of the chosen passage, especially if only the exact word method is employed.

Regarding the notion that function words are more predictable than content words, Oller and Inal (1971) has this good example:

...It is easier to supply the word "of" for the context "The faces _____ the men were" than it is to supply "men" for the context "The faces of the _____ were."

There appears to be unfair penalizing with reference to content words in Oller and Conrad (1971). Here, the scoring was by the exact word scoring method. Consider the following:

Some believe that the chief function 1. (of) even a liberal arts college is 2. (a) vocational one. I feel that the 3. (vocational) function of a college, while important, 4. (is) nonetheless secondary. Others profess that the 5. (chief) purpose of a college is to 6. (produce) paragons....

A case could be made for an acceptable synonym in 6. (produce) - make or 5. (chief) - main, principle. However these responses would be unfairly penalized because of the exact word scoring method.

An alternative to the exact word scoring method is full marks for exact word and half the marks for a contextually acceptable substitute. But then there might be controversy as to what is acceptable.

Besides there are other ways of testing content words - discrete-point wise through multiple choice type items, and certain highly contextualized supply or completion types; integratively through full sentence answers in essays and other written work.

John Oller (in Oller and Inal - 1971, Oller and Conrad - 1971, and Oller - 1972) is perhaps the most outspoken protagonist of the integrative approach. In advocating the cloze procedure and a more integrative approach in language testing, he shows his opposition to the discrete-point approach as evidenced by the following passages in Oller and Conrad (1971):

Modern linguistics from Bloomfield to Chomsky has focused attention on the form and syntax of verbal elements largely excluding the consideration of extralinguistic and social context. The developing theory of pragmatics and other schools of thought in psycho-

linguistics are to the contrary approaching problems of language use and learning on the basis of the assumption that the contextual considerations are in all likelihood more important to matters of usage and learning than are the structural features of verbal elements which have held the spotlight for the better half of this century.

Referring to a discrete-point item such as a multiple choice question requiring the use of a third-person singular verb in the present tense with a third-person pronoun Oller says:

The major problem with such tests is that we have great difficulty in knowing how important a given discrete-point error is. Must the student know the third person singular in order to function effectively in English? Another problem is adequate coverage. What totality of discrete skills must the student possess?

One implication I see from the above is that Oller would accept a syntactically deviant form of English. Of course one can "function effectively" without knowing the third person singular of the verbs in the present tense - a common error with students in ESL. But one can also communicate "effectively" in pidgin English e.g. "he likee me mucha". Would Oller also accept this?

It would indeed be very poor acquisition of a language if a student could communicate only in a syntactically, phonologically, and lexically fractured manner. If a person wants to acquire a language, or if a language is to be taught, it should be as close to native proficiency as possible.

We should know (1) the rules of syntax - grammar and structure, (2) its phonology - the sound system, (3) its lexical items - the meaning and usage according to context. These are the major component parts of a language.

The degree of proficiency of each component part or sub-

section of it can be objectively and therefore reliably tested by the discrete-point multiple choice test item.

The objectivity of this type of discrete-point test item stems from this: The subject has merely to select from given alternatives, usually in a pre-determined contextualized situation which is in accordance with the discrete-point purpose of the test. In contrast to this, the examinee in the integrative cloze procedure has to reconstruct the passage by filling in the blanks of his own accord - subjectively. No alternatives are provided. The setting is relatively uncontrolled contextually, for it is a passage where every nth is mechanically deleted regardless of what part of speech it is - noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition etc. Regarding the question of adequate coverage surely this problem exists and perhaps more so in integrative testing. The very word integrative implies a wider coverage of aspects of language than the sum of discrete-point items.

When testing vocabulary from the discrete-point of view, for instance, we may find ourselves under constraints of time and space, and hence limit ourselves to those lexical items that are considered to have the greatest utility value for our students. Or in the testing of grammar, those structures that received the most emphasis during a given course and required continual review, may be given high priority. Can this sort of necessitated coverage be effected in integrative testing?

Anyway, is this "adequate coverage" a real problem? Every form of testing, discrete-point or integrative, or a combination of both, is but a sampling process of that "infinite" mode of communication - language.

I do not intend to argue for or against either form of testing. The two complement each other. Knowing the grammar and structure of a language, being able to produce meaningful strings of sounds in it, knowing the meaning and the use of lexical items in context, are all essential to communicating not merely "effectively but what is more important correctly in that language.

Proficiency of these component parts or subskills that go to make up the language may be tested objectively (Page 9 & 10) in the discrete-point approach. Through the discrete-point approach we can also effect a substantial coverage in the testing of subskills (Page 10). Functional considerations (Spolsky - 1968) and contextual considerations (Oller and Conrad - 1971) are also important and may be tested in the integrative approach. It is my intention to reflect both views in the Format of the English Test for Mara Malay-medium students. In short I am one with John Upshur (1971) when he says:

It is not my purpose to argue for either view about what should properly be meant by second language proficiency. There can be no question but that one does not communicate in a second language without having learned something of the language. And certainly instructors are concerned to know whether their attempts at teaching actually produce learning. On the other hand, there is ample evidence - usually anecdotal, I will grant - that although two students may seem to

have learned the same number of words and sentence patterns and have comparable pronunciation, one appears much better able than the other to communicate in the second language. There is good reason, therefore, for both kinds of proficiency testing.

2. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND LANGUAGE TESTING

Contrastive analysis as John Lotz (1968) says, is the close and scrutinizing comparison of two related items. He adds further that "it is a systematic comparison of certain groups of elements in two (or more) languages, without any reference as to their genetic relationship, typological affiliation and so on."

Freeman Twaddell (1968) in his down to earth manner gives from the pedagogical point of view an effective description of "contrastive studies" - another name for contrastive analysis.

The production of contrastive studies is beautifully simple in theory: Experts in phonology and grammar (and to some extent the lexicons) of two languages find comparable sub-systems which are potential conflict points for the learner. The nature of those conflict points is described and the extent of the conflict is delimited. Then writers of textbooks who have other skills than linguistic expertise can be guided in making decisions of sequencing and recurrence. The specialist classroom teacher or the supervisor or curriculum specialist can learn from the contrastive studies how a given structure should be made available for mastery by the learner.

Applying the above pedagogical view of C.A. to language testing, we could state it as follows. The examiner, through a comparative study of the two languages, finds in the phonology, grammar, and certain aspects of lexicon especially if it is culturally loaded as in idioms, certain comparable sub-systems which could be potential conflicting points.

These are usually manifested as "negative transfer" or "interference". With his knowledge of these potentially conflicting points and reinforced by a study of actual performances in connection with these trouble spots, he can then devise test items around these problem areas. By having "interference" coloured distractors in multiple choice items, for instance, an examiner can to a certain degree find out the extent of interference in a subject, indicating the degree of attainment or proficiency. A lot of interference indicates low-level proficiency and no first language interference indicates near-nativeness.

Interference (First language interference) or negative transfer is discussed by John Carroll (1968).

In the psychology of learning, facilitation and interference phenomena are considered under the generic concept of transfer - transfer of learning or transfer of training. Facilitation and interference are spoken of as representing positive or negative transfer, respectively.

The error a student makes are not random or haphazard:

The errors he makes when he tries to respond in the second language show that those responses contain strong components of, or are modeled on, the responses of his native language.

With reference to the word 'contrast' in connection with Contrastive Analysis, Rivers (1968) considers it important to distinguish it from 'difference' for pedagogical purposes. She says that if one language has a highly developed tone system and the other has not, the tone system would constitute an important difference rather than a phonemic contrast. She gives another example of two languages, one highly synthesized and the other highly analytic. The difference here is such

that comparing specific elements does not give sufficient information to be pedagogically helpful. Rivers says that such a situation - a case of difference, is best taught as an integrative whole without referring to the details of an alien system. But where there is contrast she continues:

.. native-language interference will be a constant problem: the student's native language habits will tempt him to follow the pattern of his own language at that point (e.g. using the foreign-language adjective and noun in his native language pattern of noun + adjective), and a repetitive practice alone will not be sufficient to free him from this tendency when he is trying to express himself in communication.

She goes on to discuss the need to get the student alerted to the specific points of interference, so that by conscious practice and watchfulness he can produce the target language forms with ease and accuracy.

In connection with C.A. and first language interference, Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin (1965) noted that, for pedagogical purposes a heirarchy of difficulty must be established among language correspondences.

Very briefly, Heirarchy of difficulty as applied to language use refers to types of choice of operations to be made in language correspondences. The most difficult from the learner's point of view would be that where the target language has an obligatory choice but there is no such choice in the native language. The least difficult is that of obligatory choices in both languages. Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin (1965) suggested eight degrees or magnitude of difficulty.

This idea of heirarchy of difficulty has been discussed by, among others, Rivers (1968) and Di Pietro (1971).

All that Rivers said above is very well and good as seen from the pedagogical point of view, and that with reference to the earlier stages of second language learning. This heirarchy of diffuculty is also, as mentioned, a pedagogical approach and is especially applicable to the earlier stages of language learning. But with reference to the Final Test of students who are expected to be at an advanced stage of language acquisition, a somewhat different perspective is required. We should I think, first use our ablility to find language correspondences which are potential conflicting points, through our knowledge of both languages. This is reinforced by our awareness of a heirarchy of difficulty. Finally, we should especially make an analytical study of as wide as possible of the students' performances (both oral and written) particularly in the last months of the course. These should point out to us the main problem areas and provide us with materials for testing through the Contrastive Analysis approach.

Two writers who take an almost opposite view of Contrastive Analysis are Eric Hamp (1968) and Freeman Twaddell (1968). This is suggested in the very titles - Hamp's "What a Contrastive Grammar is not, If it is" and Twaddell's "The durability of 'Contrastive Studies'".

Hamp questions the validity and significance of Contrastive Analysis. He seems to see it as something undefined - amorphous. It seems to me that Hamp's questioning of the validity and significance of C. A. is its lack of entity of clear-cut categorical rules or principles - its lack of "formalizing."

He shows this by his semi-facetious reference to its different alternative terms and though he half concedes that:

In sum there can be no doubt that contrastive observations can be made about two languages,

still he concludes:

The problem lies rather in formalizing this obviously correct notion, and this in a useful relation to other observations.

On the other hand Freeman Twaddell considers the simple, unstructured comparisons of C.A. as assets rather than liabilities contributing towards the durability of C.A. He states:

Such contrastive analyses are rather simple, even rather gross, comparisons of relevant portions of the two languages. Such low-level statements are nearly immune to the fluctuations due to varying theories and speculations about 'learning' or the 'real' nature of language or performance or competence.

There are some formal printed contrastive studies... More numerous, more pervasive and probably more efficacious are the unpretentious tacit or unstructured comparisons implicit in many teaching materials of the last quarter century.

These contrasts are gross and obvious, if it is to be pedagogically worth while to pay attention to them. Herein lies the potential durability of contrastive studies. The corresponding danger to durability lies in the temptation to formulate the obvious in recondite terms, the gross in subtleties.

Twaddell's down-to-earth practical article on contrastive analysis seems to me a refreshing contrast to Hamp's fault-finding one.

Harris (1969) states that C.A. besides being applied to every aspect of language - phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon, is also applied to cultural patterns that are thought to affect language learning and use.

Harris, in his low-key manner, also gives the main reasons for the use of C.A. in language testing:

When one is designing a test of English for subjects who all share the same first language, contrastive analysis is undoubtedly useful in helping to estimate the probable relative difficulty of various patterns in the target language, in this case, English. Not to use contrastive analysis in such a situation would appear to be missing a rather good bet.

Using the idea of negative transfer or first language interference, we have seen is one way of applying C.A. in language testing.

Besides Carroll (1968), the idea of transfer/interference in language learning has been discussed by such pedagogically oriented linguists as Lado (1957, 1961, 1964), Rivers (1968) and Di Pietro (1971).

Another way of applying the contrastive analysis approach to language testing is TRANSLATION.

Rivers (1968) analyzes translation as an excellent form of contrastive technique. Translation, because it entails a thorough knowledge of areas of contrast in form and function is suited more to the advanced student than the beginner.

It is true that translation in which the exact meaning is transferred from one language to another demands, much more than does speech or original writing, a thorough knowledge of areas of contrast in form and function. It is for this very reason, however, that it is unsuitable as a technique for teaching the details of the language, while being a very profitable and challenging exercise of the student's control of the language at an advanced level.

In the light of the above, translation can be considered an applicable testing mode for my study, for the students concerned are expected to be at an advanced stage of English learning.

Translation is a good integrative teaching or testing mode, as it entails dealing at one and the same time, with different but often integrated aspects of two contrasting languages.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEST

Validity, reliability and practicality are the three main qualities that make a good test.

VALIDITY: Heaton (1975) defines validity simply by stating that a test:

....should measure what it is intended to measure and nothing else. If a test does this, it is said to be valid.

Harris (1969) tells us that it should be appropriate in terms of the objectives, and that the content validity (the degree to which the test instrument coincides with the objectives of the course) should be based on a careful analysis of the course. He also tells us:

...to the extent that the analysis accords with the views of recognized authorities in the skills area and the test then reflects such an analysis, it may be said to have content validity.

RELIABILITY: A test is reliable if we can depend on the evidence it provides. This is essentially what every textbook

on language testing (from Lado - 1961 to Heaton - 1975) says, though each might describe and emphasize differently the aspects that go to make up this dependability. The main factor affecting the reliability of a test is the adequacy of well-chosen tasks. In general, the greater the sampling of well-set tasks of the students we have, the better we can gauge their achievement or proficiency.

PRACTICALITY: A test is practical if it is usable or applicable to a particular situation. The four-part comprehensive test battery at Mara, covering many aspects of language, and including many different modes, will undoubtedly not be feasible for such a world-wide test as TOEFL. Neither will the C.A. approach, for as Harris(1969) puts it:

In many second-language teaching situations, however, we are confronted by the practical need to prepare a "universal" test - one that can be used with students of disparate backgrounds. In these situations, contrastive analysis can play little or no part.

But the situation at Mara is to the contrary. We have the right candidates, the manpower, the facilities, to give a comprehensive test in which the contrastive analysis approach is part and parcel of this test. The students are homogeneous, possessing the same native language, Malay. The teachers, or in this case, the examiners, are bilingual in both the native language and the target language. The teacher/student ratio is 1 to 30 maximum. This does not place too heavy a load on scoring. Lecturers, who are native speakers of English

coming from Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, can be consulted in matters of item-validation and correctness. They can also be of help as readers in the Aural and Lecture Comprehension parts of the test. This is a practical consideration, because the subjects have to be accustomed in their student life and later in their working life to all kinds of English accents other than the "Malaysian English Accent" they will hear most often.

SECTION 3

PLAN OF THE TEST

1. GENERAL PLAN OF THE TEST

In light of what has been discussed in the previous section and based on the Intensive English Course content, the Final Test of English as a Second Language for students at Mara will take the form of a four-test format.

These tests aim at reflecting the course content and its language objectives. They aim too, to be comprehensive, including:-

- (1) Passive/recognition/decoding aspects of language skills, which I associate largely with the discrete-point testing approach.
- (2) Active/production/encoding aspects of language communication connected largely with the integrative testing approach.

Discrete-point testing, which is mainly objective and designed for substantial coverage of subskills (pages 9 & 10), may be effected through such modes as the multiple choice item or completion/supply types in which the test objective(s) and contextual setting are deliberately highly defined and limited.

Integrative testing may be effected through a wide range of test modes including correction of errors, in sentences or passages, translations, and essays.

These tests also reflect the belief that the more well selected samples of a student's performances we have, the more reliably can we assess his knowledge of the language and his ability to function in that language, in other words his degree of proficiency.

2. FORMAT OF TESTS

NOTE: Test models of Papers I, II, and III will be found in the Appendix.

PAPER I - Oral-Aural Test

1. Aural Comprehension
 - statement/question - 15 items
 - dialogue - 15 items
 - (multiple choice type)
2. Lecture Comprehension
 - about 6 minutes simulated lecture with 10 questions (multiple choice)
3. Reading - Oral Production
 - 2 passages (graded - for rate and fluency)
4. Comprehension - Oral Production
 - based on the passages read (5 questions)
5. Oral Instructions or descriptions
6. Scored Interview/conversation

Total: 100 marks

PAPER 11 - General English (Written Test - Reading Comprehension, grammar/structure and vocabulary)

1. Reading Comprehension of 4 passages
 - 200 to 300 words
 - sentence answers and multiple choice
2. Grammar/structure
 - correct form in context
 - modified cloze - mainly function words
 - multiple choice
3. Vocabulary
 - completion/supply; paraphrase
 - multiple choice
4. Recognition and correction of errors
 - identify errors; recast word/phrase/sentence
5. Translation
 - present day Malay passage to be translated into English.

Total: 100 marks

PAPER 111 - The Writing Course (Written Production)

Five pieces of written work (100 to 250 words) selected from the following:-

1. Letter Writing
 - job application, excuse, thanks, complaints, ordering of goods etc.
2. Note Writing
 - memo, post-card, telegram
3. Report Writing
 - newspaper report, minutes of a meeting, book review etc.
4. Writing of notices and advertisements
5. Gists and summaries

6. Paragraphs and short compositions

7. Instructions and directions

Note: The selections will be based on priorities in practical utility with reference to the classroom and future career.

Total: 100 marks

PAPER 1V - Language Arts (Language through Literature)

Comprehension and Comment on selected books:

1. Multiple choice

2. Comprehension and comment questions requiring sentence answers

3. Short essay type

Total: 100 marks

SECTION 4

TEST WRITING AND ANALYSIS OF ITEMS

In this section I shall discuss the writing and analysis of items (mainly multiple choice items) in relation to some important guidelines in language testing.

1. The dialogue form should generally read and sound like spoken English. This form is a very useful mode for testing the various aspects of a language, e.g. vocabulary, structure, and idiomatic usage. It is applicable in both the Oral-Aural and written forms.

Constructions usually found only in formal writing should be avoided. Abbreviations should be used wherever they normally occur in speech. Distractors that may be acceptable in another English dialect should, of course, be avoided.

Poor item: (Aural Comprehension - dialogue - idiomatic usage)

- (1st voice) "I think that you have already spent quite a lot. Do you think you can manage this month?"
- (2nd voice) "It is quite all right; I will get by."
- (3rd voice) "What does the second speaker mean?"

- A. He has a lot of money.
- B. He has enough money.
- C. He has very little money.
- D. He will get more money.

The above dialogue is too formal for spoken English. An aural comprehension dialogue item, since it must be heard,

unaided by the printed form, should sound like natural spoken English, with all the attending interjections, and perhaps even false starts, etc. This is what it is like in real life. Many examiners, however, would leave out false starts: The reason is that these might be considered additional or burdening elements that could distort the main objectives of the test item. I would include false starts if I thought these were of real value in making the dialogue realistic.

The above dialogue can be improved as follows :-

- (1st V.) "Say, you've spent quite a bit already.
Think you can manage this month?"
(2nd V.) "It's O.K. I'll get by."

The multiple choice answers in the above item can be in formal written English, because in this part is found the written statement, expressing comprehension, of what was heard in the spoken form.

An example of a poor test item in the dialogue form (used to test structure in a written test, e.g. Paper 11 of the above test) is the following:-

"This morning, Awang could not come on time."
"_____ at 6.00 a.m., he would
not have been late."

- A. Had he got up
- B. He had got up
- C. He gets up
- D. He got up

As spoken English, the above is too formal. The following would be more acceptable:-

"(Look), Awang couldn't come on time this morning."
 "Yes, I know, but he wouldn't have been late, if
 _____ at 6.00."

- A. he'd got up
- B. he gets up
- C. he'll get up
- D. he's getting up

We should be careful not to present dialectal or colloquial forms as distractors. In other words distractors should be non-English in reference to the context. To avoid having distractors that contain forms which may be acceptable in another dialect, we should get native speakers to review our items.

Poor item: "Say, what'll happen next?"
 "Well, he's _____ for the girl."

- A. gonna look
- B. going to look
- C. go for looks
- D. go to look

Americans, I think, would consider A as colloquially O.K. It should therefore be replaced with a distractor that all native English speakers would reject e.g.

- A. go looking

Another example: "Anything wrong, John?"
 "Yes, I've _____ myself into some trouble."

- A. got B. gotten
- C. gets D. get

"gotten" is good American English but not good British English. Therefore replace "gotten" with e.g. "getting".

One way in which we could use the dialogue to test vocabulary would be to put the distractors in the question, and the response merely picks out the right choice:-

"When you said you liked John's repartee, were you referring to his dancing, his visit, his conversation, or his manners?"

"His _____" (Pick one only)

2. In general, it is better to confine the problem(s) - (what you want to test) to either the "lead" or the choices, but not to have problems in both. The main reason is that the test item might be too difficult to be of any real use. This refers particularly to lexical-definition/comprehension items. Poor item: (Aural Comprehension - Vocabulary)

(1st V.) "Heh Abdul, seen the headlines, in today's "Star"?"

(2nd V.) "Sure, - TOWERING INFERNO IN THE HEART OF SUNGAI HITAM."

(3rd V.) "What did this TOWERING INFERNO probably refer to?"

- A. a tremendous conflagration
- B. a nocturnal catastrophe
- C. a sadistic recrimination
- D. a heart-rending calamity

The above is a somewhat exaggerated case to demonstrate the point that placing impracticalities (problems) in both the lead and the choices serves only to drive the examinee to the desperation of sheer guessing, thus completely defeating the purpose of the test item.

The above can easily be improved. Leaving the dialogue as it is, the choices, still at about the same level of difficulty, can be made more manageable as follows:-

- A. a tall building on fire
- B. a tower just completed
- C. a skyscraper just completed
- D. a tower well lit-up

(alternatively)

- A. a huge fire
- B. a big explosion
- C. a big fight
- D. a huge exhibition

The above is the word-plus-definitions arrangement.

The following is the reverse arrangement -- definition-plus-test words.

Poor item: the art of savouring (appreciating) culinary
 delights

- A. nutrition
- B. gastronomy
- C. gourmand
- D. dietetics

In this arrangement the problems should be in the choices and not in the definition. Reference to any dictionary might clarify matters. It would be illogical I think if the definition in a dictionary is as difficult or more difficult than the word it is defining.

In the definition above, the last three words, whether taken singly or as an expression, would cause as much comprehension problems as the test words in the choices. We could revise the definition as follows:-

the art of enjoying good food

The alternatives as can be seen in the above two sample items should be of approximately equal difficulty. They should also as far as possible be found in the same general area or type of activity.

Poor item: where rivers meet

- A. confluence
- B. test-tube
- C. container
- D. monkey

Here the correct answer, "confluence", may be arrived at by either or both of two ways (1) by eliminating the three

easier ones, or (2) by having seen the word "confluence", in readings connected with rivers. Weaknesses in test items such as this last one is also connected with the problems of non-functioning and mal-functioning distractors and the question of too much context - both will be discussed shortly.

The following revised choices for the above, all connected with water, would probably improve the item.

- A. confluence
- B. deluge
- C. cataract
- D. estuary

It would be better if the alternatives for each item be of roughly the same length, or arranged in alternate pairs. We cannot really say how each examiner would react to visual factors like an extra long word among three others, e.g.

to summarize or to repeat briefly.

- A. recapitulate
- B. refer
- C. reset
- D. relay

As Harris (1969) mentions, some may suspect that it is the right answer. Others may think it is a trap set by examiners and therefore avoid it. Anyway, rather than have these extraneous visual factors, which may only encourage "gambling", it is better to arrange the alternatives in a more balanced manner e.g.

gargantuan

- A. huge
- B. slow
- C. plain
- D. round

putting off a job to another time

- A. procrastination
- B. levity
- C. circumspection
- D. tolerance

With reference to the alternatives of such multiple choice

type items as above, Harris (1969) states:-

Items should be kept free of extraneous spelling problems. That is, no attempt should be made to mislead examinees with distractors that look or sound like possible right answers.

Harris next proceeds to give what he calls a bad item:-

to cook by exposing to direct heat

- A. roost
- B. strew
- C. fray
- D. broil

Harris disapproves of the above item as follows:-

The above item, though deliberately exaggerated for the purpose of emphasis, illustrates a common tendency of some less experienced item writers. Excessive trickiness is simply not necessary in language testing, and what is more important, it will generally becloud the issue by combining two or more kinds of problems in a single item - in this case, lexical meaning and spelling.

The above item appears to me to be a good item which tests spelling ability indirectly. The alternatives have the qualities discussed earlier. They are all monosyllabic words and are not wildly disparate. But what is most important, it is definitely not "excessive trickiness" to expect the great majority of the examinees to be able to distinguish the spelling differences between such short words as:

- A. "roost" and (roast)
- B. "strew" and (stew)
- C. "fray" and (fry)
- D. "broil" -

And I disagree with Harris when he states that so-called "excessive trickiness"

will generally becloud the issue by combining two or more kinds of problems in a single item - in this case, lexical meaning and spelling.

This last remark seems to indicate a rather rigid discrete-point approach.

Except that they should be either in the lead or in the choices, I do not see why an item cannot have a combination of two or more problems, connected with a particular word or phrase.

I look at it this way: Knowing a word entails the mastery of an intricate and inter-related combination of problems connected with that word. Let us take the word "break" as an example. What would be considered a fair mastery of the word?

At a fairly low level, the level seen in the above item, the spelling difference tells us that "break" is not "brake". We then have to know that one meaning or definition of "break" is to smash into pieces - as of a cup. We know that break has an adjective form "breakable" and a noun form "breakage" - vocabulary. We can distinguish its various tense forms and their use according to context - grammar/structure. We ought to know the most common idiomatic forms of break - "break out", "break down", "breakthrough".

A fair mastery of such a word should prepare an examinee for a test item which combines such problems as spelling, meaning and idiomatic forms. Besides, in such items as above we are only testing the passive mastery of the word. Another way of looking at the validity of testing a combination of problems in a test item is this: We usually test a word in some context, as this is the natural way of using a word. The very fact of putting it in a context, i.e. surrounding it with

other words, increases the problems many times over. The examinee has to know this word in relation to other words surrounding it. We thus come to the third general principle of good testing.

3. Although it is usual to contextualise a test item, too much context will give the item away.

The following example should be sufficient to illustrate how too much context in a multiple choice item will give the item away.

Poor item: It is hazardous to drive fast on a winding road.

- A. rewarding
- B. wonderful
- C. exciting
- D. dangerous

An examinee with a modicum of intelligence will connect "drive fast" and "winding" with "dangerous". So the above item might merely test intelligence, and not the aspect of language - vocabulary, which is the main purpose of the item.

The above can be improved by recasting the sentence lead to "Ahmad was given a hazardous assignment." Here the test word is put into a context without giving it away.

Similar to the fault of "too much context" is the giving away of a comprehension question by requiring an examinee to merely match a question with some answer in the passage.

Passage: "....Crop production not infrequently suffers from the destructive effects of drought or flood..."

Poor item: "What does crop production not infrequently suffer from?" or (worse still)

"Crop production not infrequently suffers from what?"

This kind of question is a mere stimulus to echoing answers.
A better question for the above would be:

"What often cause poor harvests?" or

"What are poor harvests often caused by?"

Either of these questions entails knowing synonyms of the words involved ("not infrequently" = "often") and interpretation ("crop production".....suffers" = "poor harvests").

4. Distractors that are either non-functioning or mal-functioning should be avoided. Non-functioning distractors are those that practically no one will choose. Mal-functioning distractors were found on pages 28 and 29, where the alternatives were so difficult that the examinee would be driven to sheer guessing, thus defeating the purpose of the test item.

In the following multiple choice item, two distractors could be considered non-functioning:

Fast driving is considered to be hazardous.

- A. challenging
- B. easy
- C. dangerous
- D. comfortable

An examinee with just a little thinking will dissociate "easy" and "comfortable" from "fast-driving". So why have these non-functioning distractors, when they will reduce the alternatives to only two, besides occupying time and space?

The distractors could be revised thus:

- A. challenging
- B. difficult
- C. dangerous
- D. exciting

The following - the beginning of an introductory section to an article on Language planning may be used either as a

Reading Comprehension test item or a Lecture Comprehension test item. The lecture comprehension, which would be modelled after the TOEFL lecture comprehension test, aims to test proficiency in following lectures in Malaysian higher institutions of learning.

Our age is an age of planning. Planning manifests itself not only in the huge, all-comprehensive five- or ten-year plans of totalitarian states but also in every commercial enterprise. It has even penetrated into the most intimate aspects of life such as the much-discussed family planning.

Belief in planning has its roots in the current conviction that man is able to mould not only his individual behaviour but also the patterns of society and culture.....

Two of the distractors in a multiple choice question on the above passage can be considered non-functioning:

The passage informs us:

- A. We all have the same kinds of plans.
- B. People do not plan a lot, at the present time.
- C. People plan a lot, at the present time.
- D. People do not plan the number of their children.

A is absurd. B and C are opposites. Logic and reading of the passage tell us that C is more likely the correct answer. D is a questionable distractor, but the possible non-comprehension of "family planning" might make it a passable distractor.

A better question would probably be:

Based only on your reading of the passage, identify the false statement.

- A. A common planning period is five years.
- B. Large-scale plans are often carried out by one-party governments.
- C. People do not plan the number of their children.
- D. Planning results from humans believing that they can live their own kind of life.

5. The contrastive Analysis approach should be used wherever applicable. Contrastive Analysis is particularly applicable to the Final Test of English as a Second Language at Mara. As mentioned several times, the students are linguistically homogeneous. And since the lecturers are bilingual in the native language and the target language, they can devise test items using the C.A. approach.

I find the C.A. approach to testing the area of subskills in the performance of the above students, most applicable in grammar/structure, e.g. verbs, tenses, articles, prepositions, prepositions, and lexicon - especially idiomatic usage. The test modes used can be multiple choice type or the supply/completion type - largely the discrete-point approach. For more integrative testing, I would include the modified cloze, the correction of errors in sentences, and translation from Malay to English.

Here are a few samples of students' written performances which I think show the effect of first language interference discussed in Section 2. Such samples may be used as aids in testing through the C.A. approach. These samples were from a below-average class of the above students, in the fourth month of the first semester. I have seen these kinds of errors even well into the second semester, especially with prepositions. I shall provide notes in those parts of the samples that I think are most affected by this interference.

Samples: (Written - taken mainly from Book reviews and Letter writing)

1. "The story not so difficult to understand."

Note: Leaving out the copula.

"Orang ini (ø) pandai."

Person this (is) clever.

2. "This story was happened at one village called Mountain Top."

Note: "was happened" shows a possible confusion of the Malay past aspect of time - "telah belaku" = "already happened", has become, for this student, equivalent to English "was happened".

"one village": This is probably the transfer of the adjective "satu" = one, or the abbreviated form "sa".

"sa orang" = one person; "sa buah rumah" = (literally) one "fruit" house.

3. "Don quixote was hero in this story."

Note: Here the definite article "the" is left out. There is no equivalent of "the" as a determiner in the Malay version of this structure.

"This story" = "cherita ini" (cherita = story, ini = this) except for the reverse order - noun + determiner - which has not been a large source of interference, may be considered as a case of partial positive transfer or facilitation.

However, interference may arise in the use of the plural forms of "this" and "that" - "these" and "those". In Malay "ini" = this, and "itu" = that remain the same whether referring

to singular or plural forms e.g.

"kapal	ini"	"kapal-kapal	ini"
ship	this	ships	these
"budak	itu"	"budak-budak	itu"
boy	that	boys	those

A better example of positive transfer or facilitation would probably be the Malay dative form in the following context:

"Ahmad	akan	beri	buku	nya	kapada	Ali."
Ahmad	future	give	book	his	to	Ali."
	aspect				(dative	)

4. "Cordelia was married with king of France."

Note: 1) In Malay it is "married with" = "kahwin dengan",
not "married to"

2) Leaving out the article as in 3. above.

5. "When she maided she agreed to.."

Note: "maided" - This might be a case of confusion over the use of such phrasal verbs as "berjanggut" = possessing a beard = reaching the stage of growing a beard = becoming a man.

6. "In front library got very busy road."

Note: It might be a case of interference based on the following Malay structure:

"Di	hadapan	perpustakaan	ada...
In	front	library	"is" ("got")

"ada" in the above sentence is used as a copula.

It also occurs in such sentences as :

"Dia	ada	di	bilek."	
He	"is"	in	room	or

"Ada	tiga	ekor	kucing	di	sana."
"got"	three	(Classifier)	cat	at	there."

7. "Leontas was jealous to his friend Polixenes."

Note: In Malay it is "cemburu pada" = jealous to

8. "He already finish preparation for make travel again.

Note: These are probably interference in connection with such Malay structures as:

"Dia	telah	siap.....	untuk	membuat...."
He	already	finish.....	for (to)	make"
				untuk berdailog*."
				for (to) discuss..."

"telah" is the past time adverb and precedes the uninflected "siap".

The above are but a very small sampling of the students' actual performances. But this is just to indicate what can be done with such materials in the constructing of test items through the C.A. approach.

Test Items

Item: (Multiple choice - dialogue - tense/verb)

"What did you say?...I didn't quite catch that."
 "Oh, Ahmad _____ his work."

- A. already finish
- B. was already finished
- C. has already finished
- D. have already finished

The closest equivalent to the English perfect tense here in Malay is "telah siap" literally "already finish". Verbs are not as in English inflected to indicate tense or subject-verb agreement. Hence the rationale for distractor A.

* berdailog - from the English "dialogue" (The pre-fix "ber" indicates, in this context, a mutually participating or reciprocated activity. Other recent borrowings: ekonomi, inflasi.

Then there are other forms with "di" like:

"di sana" literally at there

"di bawah" " at under

"Buku saya ada di sana."
Book my "is" (at) there

"Ada sa ekor kucing di bawah meja."
'There is' one (N.C.)* cat (at) under table

- 4) "ada" may mean "have" or "got" = possess or the copula "be".

"Dia ada dua ekor kambing."
He has two (N.C.)* goats

But "Dia ada di rumah."
He 'is' at house=home

There may be negative transfer in the use of "ada" in D.

A linear ordering of the above sentence in Malay may also affect the choice of D.

"Di hadapan rumah ada taman besar."
In front house 'is' garden big

Item: Aminah's veil is exactly _____ Hasnah's.

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| A. same as | B. the same as |
| C. same with | D. the same with |

Interference possibilities:

- 1) Leaving out the article
- 2) Direct translation - In Malay "the same as", "sama dengan" = same with, without the article.

I do not want to give the impression that for every multiple choice item, all the distractors should be devised through the C.A. approach and involve first language interference,

* N.C. = numeral classifier e.g., "dua ekor kambing" = two 'tail' goats

but this idea of first language interference and also "cultural interference" should be used wherever feasible.

The following is a multiple choice item where two of the distractors are culturally oriented.

"Why did Ali's lorry stall?"

- A. There was a lot of room.
- B. It was a good place for a food service.
- C. He ran out of petrol.
- D. He wanted to have a rest.

The first two distractors could be chosen because of confusion over the word "stall" - Is it a verb or the noun referring to those temporary "set-ups" for selling things e.g. booths, found all over Malaysia?

Another example is:

"Why did they put off the match?"

- A. They don't need a light.
- B. The actors were not ready.
- C. The bride ran away.
- D. Several players were sick.

Here the confusion in C. in miscomprehending the word "match" probably for match-making - arranged marriages, still practised by some sectors of the community in Malaysia.

Cultural aspects are often included in the areas covered by Contrastive Analysis. Culture is shaped by many factors, chief among them being the types of civilization, traditions, and environment. It is revealed as behaviour, attitudes and beliefs.

The language sub-area where culture is most revealed is in idioms, cliches and metaphorical usage. Naturally these may differ from language to language, because of the different

cultures. To a Malay unfamiliar with the expression, "a fishy character" might be someone who is not physically clean - has an odour about him. If not familiar with the Westerner's high regard for dogs, and coming across an item requiring the filling in of a quality in the expression, "dog-like _____," he might use "ferocity" or "ingratitude", but not probably "faithfulness" or "loyalty", for dogs do not figure highly in his culture.

An example of a multiple choice question testing an idiomatic usage is the following:

"That fox, Johnny, you're right about him." or

"That Johnny, he's a foxy one."

- A. Johnny enjoys night life.
- B. Johnny is a cunning person.
- C. Johnny can run very fast.
- D. Johnny can see well at night.

A Malay unfamiliar with the English idiomatic meaning of a "fox" as being cunning or sly, may assume the Malay idiomatic meaning of "musang malam" (night fox) as a person, generally a batchelor, who enjoys pursuing certain nocturnal activities, or like a fox is able to see well at night, or again like this animal, is fleet of foot. From the score analysis of the above item we can gauge to a certain degree the extent of either first language interference or near nativeness of the examinee.

I consider multiple choice items the most difficult of all the test modes to write, for it contains all the pitfalls and problems that could be encountered in any other test mode.

Therefore it has formed the most substantial part of this section on test writing and item analysis.

The difficulty of writing a multiple choice item as against any other test mode is this: While in other test modes you have to construct only the question/problem (the subject works out the answer himself), in the multiple choice type you have both the question/problem and a set of three or four alternative answers from which the right answer is to be selected. The difficulties encountered in the latter would be increased at least twofold. Most of the difficulties and pitfalls that might be encountered in other test modes would be covered by any discussion of the multiple choice mode.

I shall, therefore, limit myself to briefly discussing and describing the most relevant and significant aspects of the other test modes.

I shall start off with modes that are mainly found in Paper 11, as these appear to be the most logical follow-up in so much as several of these, like the multiple choice mode, deal with subskills, if in a more integrative way.

The modes: Completion, Supply, Paraphrasing, Correct Form in Context, Modified Cloze, Correction of Sentences, Translation.

The Completion and Supply types may be seen as modes that are half-way between the discrete-point multiple choice type and the integrative cloze procedure. The more highly contextually limited examples, testing isolated language items, may be considered discrete-point. The completion type is excellent

for testing idiomatic expressions. For example:

Complete the following idiomatic expressions:-

1. He was so poor he could barely make _____
2. When he heard about his punctured tyres the man blew _____.

One way of using the supply type is for testing articles.

Example: In the following sentences insert articles wherever required:

1. Rahman has gone out to play _____ badminton.
2. Yesterday, Aminah left for _____ United States.
3. My brother has _____ unusual hobby.

Paraphrasing: The paraphrase type is excellent for testing the active vocabulary of the subject.

Example: Replace the underlined word or phrase with another word or phrase without changing the meaning:

Where, when and how language began is still a mystery. Many people think that language grew from human beings imitating animal sounds....

The Correct Form in Context tests the subject's ability to use and spell words according to context, in continuous discourse.

Example: Use the correct form the words in parentheses:

November came, with raging south-west winds.
(Build) _____ had to stop because it (be) _____
now too wet to mix the cement. (Final) _____
there (come) _____ a night when the gale
was so violent that the farm (build) _____
rocked on their foundations and several tiles
(blow) _____ off the roof of the barn.

This exercise, though less integrative than the pure cloze, can cover many language sub-areas — verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and all in a continuous, integrated discourse.

Modified Cloze: Some writers e.g. Anderson (1971), have noted that supply (blank-filling) and completion types are not the same as the cloze procedure. Whereas supply/completion entails subjective deletion on the part of the writer, and usually

in isolated sentences, the "pure" cloze procedure is a systematic and mechanical deletion within a passage. Be that as it may, I shall take the lead of Oller and Inal (1971), and have a "modified cloze" in which every other preposition or adverbial particle is deleted.

Example: Ahmad with his parents got _____ the taxi.
It proceeded immediately along Federal Highway
directly _____ the airport.

Correction of Errors (in sentences): Recognition of errors and correction of sentences, indicate to what extent the subject has combatted this first language interference we have been discussing.

The samples of the students' performances which we looked at provide just the kind of materials we need for this test mode.

Example: Rewrite the following sentences, correcting any errors you see, but do not change the meaning.

1. The story not so difficult to understand.
2. It was happened at one village called Mountain Top.
3. Cordelia was married with king of France.
4. Are you agree with me?

Translation: As discussed in Section 2, translation is an excellent form of contrastive technique, useful in testing integratively the subject's control of contrasting form and function.

The passage to be translated should, I think, be taken from samples of present day Malay as found in Newspapers or magazines, as this is the kind of bilingual context that the subject will be placed in, in his working life. It would not be practical to take the passage from a purely literary work.

Example: Translate the following into English.

Tidak berapa lama lagi, ramai di antara
pelajar-pelajar ITM akan menghadapi peperiksaan.

A translation: Not long from now, many students from ITM
(The Mara Institute of Technology) will be
having examinations.

The Writing Course is a wholly integrated part of the test
examining the subject's ability to function in a writing
situation.

Here the priorities are based on practical utility with
reference to the subject's student and future working career.

The following five pieces of written test items represent
this practical utility.

1. A letter of job application - two alternatives - one for
the "Business" oriented stream, the other for the "Science"
oriented stream.
2. A reply to a letter of complaint or invitation. Only
one choice. The letter to be replied to, should be within
the area of general experience of all.
3. Writing of a notice. Only one exercise - the same remark
as for No. 2.
4. A summarizing exercise of a passage for general reading.
5. A short essay: From a selection of at least five, the
candidate chooses one.

The essay is a good mode for testing the subject's ability
to handle continuous discourse. This is important in relation
to his usual assignments as a student, and to the writing of
reports, often required in his future career.

I do not agree with Harris (1969) when he says that we
should allow no alternatives in essay writing. I believe
students should be given a fairly wide choice of alternatives

because of varying aptitudes (a student may be better in one subject than another) varying interests (a student may be more inclined to one subject than another), and even varying attitudes (he may hate the subject and be turned off when asked to write about it).

I do agree with Harris though, in the following:

Although we should endeavour to select composition topics of interest and challenge to the better students, we must avoid setting tasks that require a high degree of ingenuity and creativity. The purpose of general writing ability testing is to elicit characteristic samples of every student's writing and from these to determine his proficiency at expressing himself in clear, effective, and grammatical prose - not to measure his "creative powers"

I also agree with him in that we should make our writing tasks clear. Topics like "The time I was ill" and "How to give up cigarettes" are specific and clear enough, but not a topic like "Love" or "Friendship". Just to get started on such a topic would probably entail loss of precious time.

To facilitate matters and get a range to select from, every lecturer of English could be asked to submit two items or titles for each of the sub-headings of the Writing Course. The co-ordinator would do the final selection of test items.

In the Oral-Aural test section, the aural part has been discussed in connection with the multiple choice type item.

The Oral part of the test comprises: Reading - Oral Production, Comprehension - Oral production, Oral Instructions/ descriptions, Scored Interview/conversation.

Reading - Oral Production: This is one way of testing the student's oral production proficiency at different levels.

Two passages of two levels of difficulty are given. These passages are chosen with the purpose also of distinguishing between the more proficient and the less proficient.

The subject should be given 2 to 3 minutes to read each passage to himself. (For the sake of objective reliability, the time given for silent reading should be uniform.) He then reads the passage, and is graded by two examiners for pronunciation, stress, intonation, rate and fluency.

Passage A: (An easier passage from newspapers, magazines, simplified versions of text books etc.)

A flash flood swept across the coastal plain about 100 miles southwest of here yesterday morning, killing scores of villagers in a market place.

Reports from the area said 75 bodies had been counted, and dozens of people were missing.

The flood followed heavy rains which filled the coastal plain's dry creek to overflowing. The flood...

Passage B: (More difficult - seminar papers, unsimplified texts)

The policies of these two neighbouring countries, Tanzania and Kenya, represent two rather diverse solutions to the language problems of multi-lingual states. Tanzania's choice of Swahili as the national language, however logical in historic-demographic terms, represented first a gesture of independence from colonialism and an affirmation of the role that the language had played in Tanzania's achievement of independence. In the period.....

(Wilfred H. Whiteley, "Some Factors Influencing Language Policies in Africa.")

The subject's active oral comprehension and fluency in the English Language is further indicated by the Oral Comprehension/comment test on the passages read.

Oral Comprehension-comment:

Example: (Comprehension) 1. At least how many people were killed in the flood?
2. How did the flood occur?

Example: (Comment question) In what way do you think Kenya be different from Tanzania in trying to solve its language problems?

In devising comprehension questions the test-writer has to be on guard against questions requiring mere matching of question and answer, discussed earlier in this section.

The subject is scored for comprehension and grammar in the comprehension question. It does not matter if he uses mainly the words of the passage because the problem is in comprehending the question. For comment questions the main aspects to be considered are lexical - the correct use of words in context, grammatical - the correct use of structures, and how both are combined in adequate, fluent delivery.

Oral Instructions and Descriptions are good tests of how a subject can communicate in a particular social situation, and how he can orally describe something accurately.

- Some examples:
1. You are a new student on campus trying to register. What would you do and say?
 2. Describe and comment on the picture you see.
 3. Tell us how you would make a cup of tea.

The subject would be graded on the following points:

- (i) Language - appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar
- (ii) Delivery - pronunciation and fluency

Examiners should be careful in such items not to get into the area of "cultural sensitivities". Such a question as "How would you go about giving your dog a wash?" or "How would you get rid of his fleas?" would come to the subject

as a "culture shock". It is not in his culture to keep dogs. It would be unthinkable to touch a dog. Such items might easily cause him to be ill at ease and consequently adversely affect his performance.

Some examiners might give such a question expecting the examinee to answer something like, "Excuse me, Sir, I'd rather talk about cats." But will all examiners accept an answer which to some might seem the student's way of leading towards a subject he has prepared for in advance? Anyway, we are supposed to test the student's linguistic ability and not his ability at quick thinking and giving repartee.

Scored Interview/conversation: As this is a relatively unstructured form of testing covering a variety of subjects, the scoring should be structured. The examiners (two for greater reliability) grade the examinee on:

- (a) Pronunciation (b) Grammar (c) Vocabulary
- (d) Comprehension (e) Fluency

The interview/conversation should be conducted in a relaxed atmosphere with such opening questions as "How are you today?" and "Had a good night's sleep?" to put the examinee at ease and to see how well he manages in a social situation.

The interview should reveal a subject's proficiency in dealing with what is required of him in the classroom and in his future career.

Some topics include:

1. Recent developments, discoveries, in science, technology, medicine, agriculture, etc.
2. Problems and solutions - population explosion, family planning, birth control, racism, inter-marriage, integration etc.

Have a great variety of subjects and vary the patterns to avoid coaching by previous candidates.

Language Arts: ("Language through Literature")

I shall not discuss this part of the tests because:

- (1) All the test modes used in this part have been discussed elsewhere, and
- (2) Language Arts is not language per se. In Language Arts we often test the ideas gathered, their logical organization and delivery, their interrelationships, etc., rather than the language aspects of the responses.

SECTION 5

SCORING

Scoring, as practically every text book on Language Testing tells us, is an important factor affecting the the reliability of a test. If the scorer gives different marks for the same test at different times, or if two scorers do not not give equivalent marks for the same performance, then the scores are not reliable.

For multiple choice items the scoring is near perfect in this regard. Often, we can even use a machine or some mechanical device to score multiple choice questions. It is in free responses, as with an essay question that reliability tends to be low. Here it is often the case that subjective judgement may come in, but with careful planning we can improve the reliability of these scores. For example, before scoring, all the examiners should get together to decide on a uniform plan of scoring. Scoring sheets with allocation of marks should be provided.

Below is the summary of a suggested scoring schedule for the Final Test of English as a Second Language at Mara.

- Paper 1 (i) Multiple choice - 1 mark each
- (ii) Reading - Oral Production - each passage 10 marks
- 1 to 5 for pronunciation, stress, and intonation
- 1 to 5 for rate and fluency
- (iii) Comprehension - Oral
- 2 marks - 1 mark each for language and comprehension

- (iv) Comment - oral
 - 2 marks - 1 mark each for language and delivery
- (v) Oral instruction or description - 10 marks
 - 1 to 5 for language - appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar
 - 1 to 5 for delivery - pronunciation and fluency
- (vi) Scored interview/conversation - 20 marks
 - 1 to 4 each for (a) pronunciation (b) grammar (c) vocabulary (d) fluency (d) comprehension

Paper 11

- (i) Multiple choice, supply, completion, correct form, modified cloze,
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ mark or 1 mark each answer
- (ii) Comprehension question - sentence answer
 - 2 marks - 1 each for comprehension and grammar
- (iii) Correction of errors
 - 2 marks each
- (iv) Translation - Malay into English - 15 marks
 - 5 marks each for grammar, accuracy, and style (English sounding)

Paper 111 - Essay question - 20 marks

- 1 to 4 each for (a) matter (b) organization (c) grammar (d) style (e) Spelling and punctuation

In certain cases, especially for Reading - Oral Production and Essay, there should be at least one practice session for the scorers. This will certainly help towards more uniform scoring

For the purpose of better reliability every essay paper should be scored separately by at least two examiners, with the scores averaged. If there is a discrepancy of more than three marks for each essay, that essay should be scored by a third examiner, and have the closest two averaged.

There are five pieces of essay-type exercises. To lessen the burden of examiners having to mark a great variety of exercises, and also for the purpose of more uniform scoring, a team of two examiners should concentrate on only one exercise, i.e. this team would score only one exercise of all the candidates. A similar arrangement of scoring could also be effected for the other parts of the the tests.

For the Oral test also, every candidate should be scored separately by a team of two examiners, and the scores averaged. Scoring should be effected as far as possible not in the presence of the examinee. We could make it, for instance, between change of candidates. To minimize "score-bias" examiners should, as far as possible, not examine their own students.

CONCLUSION

In this work I have discussed and attempted to illustrate the practical application of good testing principles and techniques, including the contrastive analysis approach, to a homogeneous group of language learners. I have centred my study around the Final Test of English as a Second Language at the Mara Institute of Technology.

Attached to this report will be found sample test models of Papers I, II and III of the above test. These represent the results of my attempts at applying good testing principles and techniques to an actual situation.

Several conclusions or implications should follow from my work in connection with the above-mentioned test. First of all, it should now prove a more effective and reliable testing instrument. Secondly, analyzing the scores on the multiple choice questions with contrastive analysis distractors, and the performances for other C.A. oriented test exercises, should indicate the extent of first language interference. A lot of interference or negative transfer indicates low-level proficiency, and freedom from it indicates near native proficiency.

Thirdly, analyzing the scores and performances on the various test items should provide further materials and suggestions for future tests.

Finally, analyzing the test results can also provide us with ideas towards more effective teaching in the above and similar second language learning situations.

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APPENDIX

TEST MODELS OF PAPERS 1, 11 & 111

PAPER 1 - Oral-Aural TestAural (Listening) Comprehension

PART A

DIRECTIONS: Listen carefully. You will hear either a question or a statement only once. Select the right answer from one of the four choices (A or B or C or D)

Example: You will hear: "When's Abu leaving for Ipoh?"
On your answer sheet you will have:

- A. Gopeng Street
- B. In 1974
- C. Tomorrow morning
- D. Last night

The answer is C. Darken block under C

ANSWER SHEET

A	B	C	D
☐	☐	☒	☐

Example: Ahmad is good at several instruments.

- A. He's a carpenter.
- B. He's a musician.
- C. He's a scientist
- D. He's a doctor.

The answer is B.

ANSWER SHEET

A	B	C	D
☐	☒	☐	☐

(1) Why did they go on strike ?

- A. They wanted higher wages.
- B. They struck oil.
- C. They were lucky with numbers.
- D. The thief stole their car.

(2) There was quite a queue-up, I tell you.

- A. A lot of people were crowded together.
- B. There were a lot of people scattered about.
- C. A lot of people were surrounding something.
- D. There were a lot of people standing in line.

- (3) How soon does Rashid leave for Penang?
- A. By car
 - B. A year ago
 - C. In a flat
 - D. In an hour.
- (4) Fatimah referred to a confluence. What is it?
- A. The mouth of a river
 - B. Water falling from a height
 - C. A meeting-place of rivers
 - C. A place where the river is rough
- (5) I attended a talk on gastronomy. What did the speaker talk mainly about?
- A. Different gases
 - B. Different stomach disorders
 - C. Different kinds of food
 - D. Different brands of petrol
- (6) Ahmad was given a hazardous job. What kind of a job was it?
- A. rewarding
 - B. dangerous
 - C. exciting
 - D. wonderful
- (7) Why did Ali's lorry stall?
- A. There was a lot of room.
 - B. It was a suitable place.
 - C. He ran out of petrol.
 - D. He wanted to have a rest.
- (8) Jamilah, unlike her mother, is a chatterbox.
- A. Jamilah's mother has a cat in a box.
 - B. Jamilah likes to talk a lot.
 - C. Jamilah does not like her mother's cat.
 - D. Jamilah does not like her mother.
- (9) Know something? John got off very lightly in that T.V.case.
- A. John found the T.V. and the case very light.
 - B. John easily got the answer while standing before the T.V.
 - C. John easily took off the T.V. from its case.
 - D. John was not punished very much for his part in the T.V. case.

- (10) Mrs Lee is out of sugar.
- A. Mrs Lee went out to buy sugar.
 - B. Mrs Lee has some sugar.
 - C. Mrs Lee likes sugar very much.
 - D. Mrs Lee has no more suagar.
- (11) Why did they put off the match?
- A. Several players were sick.
 - B. The bride ran away.
 - C. The actors were not ready.
 - D. They don't need a light.
- (12) Ali and Ah Chong were neck to neck in the final stretch.
- A. Being tired, they were falling on each other's necks.
 - B. They were trying to stretch their necks to see whose was longer.
 - C. They were running side by side in the last lap.
 - D. They were trying to choke each other in the last round.
- (13) That fox, Johnny, you're right about him.
- A. Johnny enjoys night life.
 - B. Johnny is a cunning person.
 - C. Johnny can run very fast.
 - D. Johnny can see well at night.
- (14) Say, I tried calling you several times last night, but couldn't get through.
- A. I tried to speak to you on the phone.
 - B. I shouted to you to stop, but you didn't here me.
 - C. I tried to see you at your place.
 - D. I tried to visit you, but couldn't get your address.
- (15) Listen, I've kept in touch with them, all this time.
- A. I keep touching these stones often.
 - B. I kept stroking their soft fur.
 - C. I keep these things usually in a box.
 - D. I've been writing to them often.

PART B (Dialogue)

DIRECTIONS: Listen carefully. First, you will hear a short conversation between two people. Then a third person will ask a question about the conversation. During the pause, choose the right answer.

Example: (1st voice) Say, you've spent quite a bit already?
 Think you can manage this month?
 (2nd voice) It's O.K. I'll get by.
 (3rd voice) What does the second speaker mean?

- A. He has a lot of money.
- B. He has enough money.
- C. He has very little money.
- D. He'll get more money.

The correct answer is B. Underline the correct answer as shown in the example.

Ready?..

1. (1 v.) Say, the Chans are leaving for Singapore by the 11.00 a.m. flight. How about getting them there on time?
 (2 v.) I'd really be happy to, but today my car is at the workshop.
 (3 v.) How are the Chans travelling to Singapore?
 - A. By plane
 - B. By bus
 - C. By car
 - D. By train
2. (1 v.) My, we really could do with some sunshine.
 (2 v.) You're telling me: and wish I could do away with these thick clothes for a while.
 (2 v.) What was the weather probably like?
 - A. Warm and wet
 - B. Cold and dry
 - C. Hot and dry
 - D. Cold and wet
3. (1 v.) Heh. Did you see the film last night?...I thought the girl who did the part of Anna was really great.
 (2 v.) Oh, she had looks all right. But did you think she was realistic in her part?
 (3 v.) What did the second speaker think of the girl who played the part of Anna?

- A. She had a lovely face and acted well.
 B. She was fairly pretty but did not act very well.
 C. She had a good figure and acted well.
 D. She had a lovely face but did not act very well.
4. (1 v.) Well, how did he behave?
 (2 v.) Oh, I think his manners left much to be desired.
 (3 v.) How was his behaviour?
- A. He behaved well.
 B. There was a lot in his manners that others liked.
 C. He did not have much manners.
 D. He showed that he wanted to learn good manners.
5. (1 v.) Hallo. Could you direct me to the library, please?
 (2 v.) Sure...Ah.. Let me see. Yes, It isn't too far away. See that grey building just over there? The one you want is to the rear of that.
 (3 v.) Which is the library?
- A. The building far away.
 B. The building behind the tall grey one.
 C. The grey building.
 D. The building in front of the tall grey one.
6. (1 v.) Heh Tom, know what happened to Lim? Have you seen him?
 (2 v.) Oh, yes; He dropped by at my place yesterday.
 (3 v.) What did Tom say about Lim?
- A. Lim visited Tom at his place.
 B. Lim drove past Tom's place.
 C. Lim fell down at Tom's place.
 D. Lim lost something at Tom's place.
7. (1 v.) Excuse me. I'd like to take a quick look at my current account.
 (2 v.) Sure. Please fill up this form.
 (3 v.) Where did this conversation probably take place?
- A. At a bank
 B. At the Utilities Payment office.
 C. At a grocer's
 D. At the Internal Revenue Office.
8. (1 v.) Yes, this is Jack speaking. Can I help you Ma'm?
 (2 v.) You most certainly can. You promised to come and fix my sink immediately.... That was an hour ago.
 (3 v.) To whom was the lady probably speaking?
- A. A mechanic B. A carpenter
 C. A plumber D. An engineer

9. (1 v.) Excuse me. Where's the Admin. Building, please?
 (2 v.) Oh, yes..... See that four-storeyed building.
 That's the one.
 (3 v.) Whom does the first speaker probably want to see?
- A. The watchman
 B. The Public Admin. lecturer
 C. The librarian
 D. The Personnel Officer
10. (1 v.) Say, how was Saturday night?
 (2 v.) Oh, it was marvellous. We really had a ball.
 (3 v.) What probably happened?
- A. They watched football.
 B. They all had to dance.
 C. They enjoyed themselves.
 D. They had a football game.
11. (1 v.) Heh Rahim, seen the headlines in today's "Star"?
 (2 v.) Sure Pat, - TOWERING INFERNO IN THE HEART OF
 SUNGAI HITAM.
 (3 v.) What did this TOWERING INFERNO probably refer to?
- A. A tower just completed
 B. A tall building on fire
 C. A tower well lit-up
 D. A skyscraper just completed
12. (1 v.) By the way, what do you think of Fatimah's
 "Quails Eggs" project?
 (2 v.) Frankly, I can't say much for it.
 (3 v.) What did the second speaker probably mean?
- A. The speaker doesn't know much about it.
 B. Fatimah had already told everyone about
 the project.
 C. The speaker didn't think it was very
 successful.
 D. Fatimah didn't really start the project.
13. (1 v.) Say, how did you make out yesterday?
 (2 v.) You're a fine fellow, Harry, making me walk three
 miles in that broiling sun.
 (3 v.) What did the second speaker mean?
- A. He enjoyed the walk.
 B. Harry did not do a nice thing to him.
 C. Harry did a nice thing to him.
 D. He thanked Harry for the exercise.

14. (1 v.) So, what did you think of Halim?
 (2 v.) Well, wish h'd had more science. He's quick in the up-take though.
 (3 v.) What does the second speaker think of Halim?
- A. Has enough science
 - B. Talks fast
 - C. Does not like science
 - D. Thinks fast
15. (1 v.) By the way what happened to the two after that blow-up?
 (2 v.) Ah.. well, they eventually made up.
 (3 v.) What actually happened?
- A. They finally succeeded in causing an explosion.
 - B. They succeeded in the end in blowing up a big ballon.
 - C. They had a big quarrel but finally came together again.
 - D. They spent all their money but made more finally.

Lecture Comprehension

(Blank paper for note-taking, and Answer sheets are provided)

DIRECTIONS: In this section you will hear a short lecture only once. As you listen to the lecture, take notes on the blank paper provided. When the lecture is over, use your notes to answer the 10 questions that follow. You will have six minutes to answer the questions.

(Reader or pre-recorded tape) Ready. The lecture is about to begin.

Early Indonesian nationalists recognized the need for unity among the ideals and actions of the various national movements to combat the strongly centralized Dutch government. Thus, the oath of the Indonesian Youth of October 28, 1928 called for one fatherland, one nation, and one language. With this oath, not only was the goal of the Indonesian nationalist movement formulated but also the Malay lingua franca was chosen as the national and official language of an independent Indonesian nation. The consecration of this ideal took place in 1945.

This formulation of the linguistic goal of the Independence movement was still a long way from what we earlier

termed a plan; namely a predetermined course of action. At this time, the goal was no more than an ideal, with strong motivating force. In 1933, a literary and linguistic magazine PUDJANGGA BARU ("The New Writer") was founded and served as a rallying place for those committed to this ideal.

Nearer to the formulation of a plan was the First Congress of the Indonesian Language in Solo in 1938, convened at the initiative of the editors of PUDJANGGA BARU. Present at the congress were journalists, politicians, linguists, and literary figures. To a degree, this congress can be considered as a planning conference whose goal was to implement the Oath of the Youth of 1928. The Congress resolved that it was necessary (1) to create a faculty of language and letters; (2) to establish a standardized grammar and orthography; (3) to write a comprehensive dictionary; and (4) to create a modern terminology. But since there was no government behind the Congress and the PUDJANGGA BARU or an organization with sufficient money and experts, such decisions were little more than the expression of a desire to see an improvement in the Indonesian language. And, indeed, nothing further happened to this desire until the Japanese occupation during World War II.

PLANNING EFFORTS DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

Although it was clear from the outset that the Japanese view on the language problem in Indonesia was quite different from that of the Indonesian national movement (i.e. the Japanese wanted to make Japanese the official language of Indonesia as they had in Formosa and in Korea), the exigencies of war forced the Japanese occupation forces to carry out the Indonesian goals for their language. Almost immediately the Dutch language was forbidden. All legal pronouncements for Indonesians took place in the Indonesian language, and Indonesian became the sole medium of instruction in the schools.

Since Indonesian high-school and university instruction during the Dutch colonial regime was given almost entirely in Dutch, naturally, there were neither enough competent teachers in Indonesian nor the necessary textbooks and reading materials. To produce high-school textbooks, a translation committee was created (within the Balai Pustaka - the government publishing house) whose task was to translate Dutch textbooks into Indonesian. It was soon clear to this committee that, before a translation could be completed, an equivalent Indonesian term must be created. Thus, these translators and other interested persons organized meetings to discuss and codify the new terms. The new terminology was published in the PANDJI PUSTAKA, a magazine of the Balai Pustaka. This lack of terminology was felt not only by the schools but also by the Japanese war administration. After some hesitation, the Japanese authorities established an Indonesian Language Committee, whose task was to standardize the language and to provide it with the necessary modern vocabulary for administrative, educational, and other purposes. The committee had

some thirty members, including, among others, Sukarno and Hatta.

This committee decided in its first meeting that the work should be divided into three sections: (1) the coining of a modern terminology for science and technology; (2) the writing of a modern grammar; and (3) the selection of daily words to be incorporated into the standard language. Of the three tasks, it turned out that the first was both the most urgent and the most comprehensive. (S. Takdir Alisjahbana, SOME PLANNING PROCESSES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALAY-INDONESIAN LANGUAGE)

Lecture Comprehension Questions:

- (1) That solemn promise of the Indonesians, the chief aims of which were one country and a single language, took place in:
 - A. 1928
 - B. 1933
 - C. 1938
 - D. 1945
- (2) PUDJANGGA BARU or "The New Writer" was:-
 - A. A publication for the advancement of Dutch
 - B. A person working for the advancement of Indonesian
 - C. A publication for the advancement of Indonesian
 - D. A person working for the advancement of Dutch
- (3) The First Congress of the Indonesian Language took place in the:
 - A. Late 20's
 - B. Early 30's
 - C. Late 30's
 - D. Middle 40's
- (4) Identify the wrong answer in the following. The First Congress of the Indonesian Language decided the need of:-
 - A. building a new Indonesian university.
 - B. having a standardized Indonesian grammar.
 - C. forming a comprehensive Indonesian dictionary.
 - D. forming modern terms in Indonesian.
- (5) One of the following is wrong. Identify it. The reasons why the resolutions or aims of the First Congress were unsuccessful at first were:-
 - A. There was no government backing.
 - B. There were insufficient funds.
 - C. The Japanese were against them.
 - D. There were not enough experts.

- (6) The Japanese in the beginning of their occupation had really intended to make _____ the official language of Indonesia.
- A. Indonesian
 - B. Dutch
 - C. Japanese
 - D. Korean
- (7) During the Japanese occupation teaching in schools was carried out in:-
- A. Indonesian
 - B. Dutch
 - C. Japanese
 - D. A & C
- (8) During the Dutch colonial rule teaching in higher institutions of learning was:-
- A. Mainly in Indonesian.
 - B. Almost wholly in Dutch.
 - C. Mainly in Dutch.
 - D. Almost wholly in Indonesian.
- (9) A translation committee was formed to produce:-
- A. Japanese translation from Indonesian.
 - B. Dutch translations from Indonesian.
 - C. Indonesian translations from Dutch.
 - D. Indonesian translations from Japanese.
- (10) Identify the wrong answer. The Indonesian language committee:-
- A. was set up by the Japanese administration.
 - B. was to standardize the Indonesian language.
 - C. was to promote the Japanese language.
 - D. was to provide a modern Indonesian vocabulary.

Reading (Oral Production)

PASSAGE A: (An easier passage)

A flash flood swept across the coastal plain about 100 miles southwest of here, yesterday morning, killing scores of villagers in a market place.

Reports from the area said 75 bodies had been counted, and dozens of people were missing.

The flood followed heavy rains which filled the coastal plain's dry creek beds to overflowing. The flood crest, several feet high, hit the village of Kemis Naga at mid-morning yesterday as farmers from the surrounding areas joined townsfolk in an open market place.

The roaring waters swept the village's flimsy dwelling places, the market sheds, shoppers, cattle and farm implements for miles across the unobstructed plain.

The flood was over almost as soon as it started, the report said. As the crest swept out to sea, rescue workers quickly moved into the area from the nearest town, about thirty miles further south.

Comprehension - Questions/comments (Oral Production)

- (1) At least how many people were killed in the flood?
- (2) How did the flood occur?
- (3) What do you think the people were doing when the flood struck?
- (4) What do you understand by the word "flash" as used here?
- (5) Describe briefly what you would do when there is a flood warning?

PASSAGE B: (A more difficult passage)

The majority of Irish people seem to have dropped Irish in favour of English somewhere between 1750 and 1850, though the process of change went on for a period far longer than a hundred years. The seventeenth century saw the crushing of a culture that was in certain of its elements well over a thousand years old. English rule then on was solidly established, and, though Irish continued in some landed families, it gradually became the language of an impoverished and disinherited peasantry. English had for long been strong in the towns. With the passage of time, the peasantry adopted the language of the towns and of the upper classes, and the language switch seems to have been for the most part complete by 1851, when the first census to take account of language was held. In that year, only about 5 per cent of the population described themselves as monolingual Irish speakers, and a further 23 per cent described themselves as bilingual. Although these figures are probably underestimates, it is clear that by 1851 the proportion of monolingual speakers was very small indeed. (John MacNamara, SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN THE MOVEMENT FOR THE RESTORATION OF IRISH)

Comprehension - Questions/comments (Oral Production)

- (1) In what centuries was English getting the upperhand over Irish?
- (2) What according to the author was destroyed in 1600's?
- (3) Comment on the language situation in the early 17th century.
- (4) Why do you think Irish gave way to English in the country?

Oral Instructions or Descriptions

- Examples:
- (a) You are a new student on campus trying to register. What would you do and say?
 - (b) Tell us how you would make a cup of tea.
 - (c) Describe a situation where you have to take a telephone message?
 - (d) Describe and comment on the picture you see.

Scored Interview /conversation

TOPICS SUGGESTED:

- Personal:
- 1. Leisure time
 - 2. Likes/dislikes
 - 3. Plans
 - 4. Successes/failures
 - 5. Ideal lecturer
 - 6. Choice of Field or Subject

Current Topics/issues:

- 7. Inflation/stagflation/recession
- 8. Energy crisis
- 9. Emerging/developing nations
- 10. Recent developments or discoveries in science, technology, medicine, agriculture etc.

Problems and solutions:

- 11. Population explosion
- 12. Family planning
- 13. Birth control
- 14. Racism
- 15. Intermarriages
- 16. Integration, etc.

Miscellaneous:

- 17. A noted personality - past/contemporary
- 18. Customs and traditions
- 19. Superstitions
- 20. Women's lib and Male chauvinism

PAPER 11 - General English (Written Test - Reading Comprehension, grammar/structure, vocabulary)

SECTION 1 - READING COMPREHENSION

PASSAGE A: Passenger Information

The following details are taken from a BOAC time-table:-

Your fare includes:

Meals. On BOAC service your fare includes all meals and gratuities in flight and on the ground from the departure of the aircraft until arrival at the airport of destination shown on the flight coupon of your ticket. Kosher, Muslim, salt-free and vegetarian diets are available, provided they are requested in advance. Alcoholic drinks, provided free in flight for First Class passengers, are available on board for sale to Tourist, Economy, and Economy (Skycoach) passengers. Cigarettes may be purchased in all classes.

Stopovers. In most cases, you may break your journey at one or more places en route, and retain the benefit of the through fare, provided notice is given at the time of reservation. Hotel expenses at each stopover will be your responsibility.

Children and Infants. An infant under two years of age, accompanied by an adult, and not occupying a separate seat, is charged 10% of the normal First, Tourist, Economy or Economy (Skycoach) adult fare. Additional infants under two accompanying the same adult and children of two years of age and over, who have not reached their twelfth birthday, are charged 50% of the normal First, Tourist, Economy or Economy (Skycoach) adult fare.

Passports, Permits and Visas. Any BOAC or Travel Agent's office will gladly assist you to obtain the travel documents required for your journey.

Health Regulations. Valid certificates of inoculation and/or vaccination, are required by most countries.

Free Allowance Baggage. On First Class service the free baggage allowance is 30 kilos (66lb.). On Tourist, Economy and Economy (Skycoach) Class service it is 20 kilos (44 lb.). Children at half fare get the adult allowance. Infants travelling at 10% fare have no free allowance.

QUESTIONS:

1. You are a Muslim intending to fly from Kuala Lumpur to London, United Kingdom. What must you do if you want your kind of food on the journey?
2. What according to the passage are the advantages of travelling first class?
3. You wish to fly from Singapore to London, stopping for a day or two at Karachi and Rome. What arrangements must you make at the time you confirm your booking?
4. Who will pay for the hotel charges at the above two places?
5. What according to the passage are the travel documents you will require if you are an international traveller?

PASSAGE B:

Animal Farm

By the autumn the animals were tired but happy. They had a hard year, and after the sale of part of the hay and corn, the stores of food for the winter were none too plentiful, but the windmill compensated for everything. It was almost half built now. After the harvest time there was a stretch of clear dry weather, and the animals toiled harder than ever, thinking it well worth while to plod to and fro all day with blocks of stone if by doing so they could raise the walls another foot. Boxer would even come out at nights and work for an hour or two on his own by the light of the harvest moon. In their spare moments the animals would walk round and round the half-finished mill, admiring the strength and perpendicularity of its walls and marvelled that they should ever have been able to build anything so imposing. Only old Benjamin refused to grow enthusiastic about the windmill, though as usual, he would utter nothing beyond the cryptic remarks that donkeys live a long time.

November came, with raging south-west winds. Building had to stop because it was now too wet to mix the cement. Finally there came a night when the gale was so violent that the farm buildings rocked on their foundations and several tiles were blown off the roof of the barn. The hens woke up squawking with terror because they had all dreamed simultaneously of hearing a gun go off in the distance. In the morning the animals came out of their stalls to find that the flagstaff had been blown down and an elm tree at the foot of the orchard had been plucked up like a radish. They had just noticed this, when a cry of despair broke from every animal's throat. A terrible sight had met their eyes. The windmill was in ruins.

QUESTIONS:

- (1) Passage B describes a time between
- a) Spring and autumn.
 - b) Summer and autumn.
 - c) Winter and spring.
 - d) Autumn and winter.
- (2) Why were the animals able to work harder than before?
- a) The food made them stronger.
 - b) The weather helped them.
 - c) They had to raise the walls.
 - d) The building was easy to erect.
- (3) The animals walked round and round the half-finished mill because
- a) they needed the exercise.
 - b) the building required constant inspection.
 - c) they wished to admire their work.
 - d) They disliked the half-finished building.
- (4) Work stopped in November because
- a) the winds were too powerful.
 - b) there were insufficient materials.
 - c) there was too much rainfall.
 - d) the windmill was high enough.
- (5) The hens woke up at the same time because
- a) the sound of the wind was loud.
 - b) a gun had been fired not too far away.
 - c) a gun had been fired near them.
 - d) they dreamt they had heard a gun shot.
- (6) In the morning after the gale the animals found that
- a) an elm tree at the nearer end of the orchard was uprooted.
 - b) an elm tree at the further end of the orchard was uprooted.
 - c) part of the flagstaff had been broken off and lay on the ground.
 - d) only one portion of the windmill had been damaged.
- (7) For the winter, the animals had
- a) plenty of food.
 - b) some food.
 - c) sold all the harvest.
 - d) none of the above.

- (8) What happened to the windmill was the result of
 a) heavy rain.
 b) being struck by lightning.
 c) a strong wind.
 d) none of the above.
- (9) The animals had been building the windmill to
 a) to protect them from the cold.
 b) keep away insects.
 c) help them with their farming.
 d) none of the above.
- (10) How did Boxer and Benjamin feel about the mill?
 a) They were both very interested in it.
 b) Boxer was interested in it but not Benjamin.
 c) Benjamin was interested in it but not Boxer.
 d) None of the above.

SECTION 2 - GRAMMAR-STRUCTURE AND VOCABULARY

1. Use the correct form of the words in parentheses.

It is 1. (paradox) _____ that in the
 2. (develope) _____ countries of Asia the
 farmer who 3. (feed) _____ the nation is
 among the 4. (bad) _____ fed members of
 society. Nutrition surveys show that his diet is
 5. (genral) _____ deficient in vitamins
 and proteins, 6. (special) _____ animal
 protein. Although his 7. (diet) _____
 deficiency may be 8. (part) _____ due to
 9. (culture) _____ causes, the major reasons
 are 10. (econ-) _____.

2. Fill in each blank with a single preposition or adverbial particle.

He looked around for his gun, but (1) _____ place
 of the clean well-oiled rifle, he found an old rusty one.
 He now suspected that the mysterious little old men
 had played a trick (2) _____ him. Wolf had disappeared,
 but might have strayed after a squirrel. He whistled
 (3) _____ him and shouted his name, but in vain.
 As he rose to walk, he found that he was stiff
 (4) _____ the joints and lacking in his usual acti-
 vity. (5) _____ some difficulty he got down (6) _____

the glen; he found the gully which he and the little man had ascended the preceeding evening, but to his astonishment, a mountain stream was now flowing (7) _____ it, leaping from rock (8) _____ rock. Rip shook his head, and with a heart full (9) _____ trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew. Their dress was different (10) _____ what he was accustomed to...

(Washington Irving, RIP VAN WINKLE)

3. In the following sentences insert articles when required.

- 1) Rahman has gone out to play _____ badminton.
- 2) Yesterday, Aminah left for _____ United States.
- 3) My brother has _____ unusual hobby.
- 4) We had _____ very busy vacation period last year.
- 5) _____ moon is really bright tonight.
- 6) I always have _____ dinner at 7.00.
- 7) We need _____ honest man for the job.
- 8) He has _____ good news about the exam.
- 9) _____ National Monument was all lit-up last night.
- 10) She doesn't even have _____ sense to stop it.

4. Complete the idiomatic expressions as used in the following. One word for each blank.

- 1) He was so poor he could barely make _____.
- 2) When he heard about his punctured tyres the man blew _____.
- 3) Disappointments are part _____ of life.
- 4) It is as pretty as _____.
- 5) I suppose they're going to roll out the _____ for the champ's return.
- 6) The Head bent over _____ to help him out.
- 7) Man's worst _____ is himself.
- 8) In spite of all our explanations he wouldn't budge _____.
- 9) You've got to make up _____ quickly in this matter.
- 10) Do you have a tea or coffee _____ during the course of such a long morning?

5. Replace the underlined word or phrase with another word or phrase without changing the meaning.

Where, when and how languages began is still a mystery. Many people think that language grew from human beings imitating animal sounds and that they learned to use these

indistinguishable sounds to communicate with each other.

Languages change with the times although we are seldom aware of it. To meet changing situations we find it necessary to invent new words. For example, the word 'radar', 'television', 'astronaut' and many medical terms did not exist fifty years ago.

- 1) began - _____.
- 2) mystery - _____.
- 3) imitating - _____.
- 4) indistinguishable - _____.
- 5) communicate - _____.
- 6) change with the times - _____.
- 7) are seldom aware of - _____.
- 8) necessary to invent - _____.
- 9) To meet changing situations - _____.
- 10) did not exist - _____.

6. Underline the correct answer as shown in the example.

Example: "Say, what'll happen next?"

"Well, he' _____ for the girl."

- A. go looking
- B. going to look
- C. go for looks
- D. go to look

1) "Anything wrong, John?"

"Yes, I've _____ myself into some trouble."

- A. got
- B. getting
- C. gets
- D. get

2) "Isn't Ali coming with us?"

"No, he isn't interested _____ for a walk."

- A. going
- B. to going
- C. in going
- D. for going

- 3) "Look, Awang couldn't come on time this morning."
"Yes, I know, but he wouldn't have been late, if _____ at 6.00."
- A. he'd got up
 - B. he gets up
 - C. he's getting up
 - D. he'll get up
- 4) "What did you say?...I didn't quite catch that."
"Oh, Ahmad _____ his work."
- A. already finish
 - B. was already finished
 - C. has already finished
 - D. have already finished
- 5) Aminah's veil is exactly _____ as Hasnah's.
- A. same as
 - B. the same as
 - C. same with
 - D. the same with
- 6) When she said she liked John's repartee, she was referring to his _____.
- A. conversation
 - B. visit
 - C. dancing
 - D. manners
- 7) The crops failed because of the _____.
- A. decomposition
 - B. drought
 - C. deformation
 - D. draught
- 8) It doesn't seem right. I think your reasoning is _____.
- A. outrageous
 - B. insidious
 - C. obsequious
 - D. fallacious
- 9) He is extremely _____, believing everything they told him.
- A. gullible
 - B. flexible
 - C. credible
 - D. tractable
- 10) Mahmud was _____, and the accident happened.
- A. notorious
 - B. negligent
 - C. nefarious
 - D. negligible

7. Rewrite the following sentences, correcting any errors you see, but do not change the meaning.

- a) The story not so difficult to understand.
- b) Are you agree with me?
- c) It was happened at one village called Mountain Top.
- d) Cordelia was married with king of France.
- e) Better we go to school if we wish to learn something.
- f) You are well, isn't it?

8. Translate the following into English.

BERUSAHA KE ARAH KECEMERLANGAN

Tidak berapa lama lagi, ramai di antara pelajar-pelajar ITM akan menghadapi peperiksaan. Ada yang menghadapi peperiksaan yang terakhir sekali; ada pula yang mempunyai masa yang banyak untuk merencanakan jadual pembelajaran, serta kaedah-kaedah atau cara belajar yang efektif sebelum menghadapi peperiksaan yang terakhir ini.

Walau apa saja pegangan kita tentang peperiksaan sebagai alat-ukur kepintaran dan kebolehan intellectual sesaorang itu, kita tidak dapat lari daripada hakikat bahawa pencapaian keputusan yang baik didalam peperiksaan ada lah fakta yang terutama tiap-tiap kali kita membuat permohonan pekerjaan atau pun memasuki institusi pengajian tinggi untuk meneruskan pelajaran.

Oleh demikian, pelajar-pelajar dinasihat untuk menumpukan masa yang secukup-cukupnya untuk menguasai pelajaran supaya mereka tidak gagal di belakang hari. Selain dari itu, mereka dinasihatkan untuk membina sikap yang sihat tentang kebolehan diri sendiri.....(WARTA ITM - April 1976)

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PAPER 111 - The Writing Course (written Production)QUESTION 1

The following advertisements appeared in a local paper recently. Write a letter applying for ONE of the posts advertised.

(A)

A leading shipping company plying between S.E.Asia and Australia has the following immediate vacancy:

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANTS

Applicants should possess M.C.E. or H.S.C. with some knowledge of book-keeping and basic accounting procedures and functions.

Successful applicants to the above vacancy will be required to sign a 2 year contract initially. Training will also be provided.

Generous fringe benefits and excellent working conditions are offered to the right candidates.

Written applications, giving full particulars of age, qualifications, experience, salary expected, should be sent to Box 505, Kuala Lumpur.

(B)

A leading Chemical Company in K.L. requires:

PAINTS SALES REPRESENTATIVE

The Job: To promote the sales of the Company's paints and allied products and to provide after sales service.

Qualifications: Malaysian Citizen, aged between 18 and 25 years, shall possess at least MCE from the Science Stream.

Preference will be given to HSC holders.

Experience: Previous commercial experience in paints or allied products will be an advantage but not essential.

Salary: An attractive salary shall commensurate with experience and qualification.

Hand written applications, stating full details of qualifications, age and salary expected, should reach the Factory Manager, Box 66, Kuala Lumpur, not later than 30th November.

QUESTION 2

Write a short composition of about 200 to 250 words on ONE of the following:

- a) My first day away from home.
- b) The time I was ill.
- c) The man/woman I would like to marry.
- d) A frightful experience.
- e) A present day problem.

QUESTION 3

You are the Manager of Berjaya Sendirian Berhad. You have just received a letter of complaint from the Mara Students' Co-operative Store, regarding some defective goods. Write a suitable letter in reply to the above complaint.

QUESTION 4

You have lost an article which is of personal (sentimental) value to you. Write a notice to be put up on the notice-board giving information about the lost article and asking the finder to return the article to you.

QUESTION 5

As far as possible in your own words, summarize the following passage in not more than 100 words.

Even in the most primitive societies, the great majority of people satisfy a large part of their material needs by exchanging goods and services. Very few people indeed can make for themselves everything they need - all their food, their clothes, their housing, their tools. Ever since men started living in communities, they have been satisfying their needs by means of specialization and exchange; increasingly each individual has concentrated on what he or she can do best, and has produced more of the special goods or services in which he has concentrated than he can consume himself. The surplus he has exchanged with other members of the community, and in exchange he has acquired the things he needs which others have produced.

The more advanced the community, the more complicated does dual process of specialization and exchange become. In primitive

communities there will only be a few special trades, and only a few goods or services are produced; they will be exchanged by barter. In more sophisticated societies, the range becomes very much greater, and it becomes necessary to have a special mechanism to regulate the exchange of goods and services. This special mechanism we call 'money'. And again, as society becomes more complex, the types of money and the ways in which buyers and sellers are brought together become more and more intricate, and so we have evolved the vast network of world trade that exists today. But however complicated the system, the principle behind it is exactly the same as it is in the primitive village community where some of the men hunt and others fish, while the women weave cloth - and where these simple goods are exchanged so that everybody has something to eat and something to wear.

ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE TESTING
AS APPLIED TO MALAY LEARNERS

by

PATRICK H. C. KOAY

B.A. Hons., University of Malaya
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1970

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Manhattan, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to discuss and illustrate in practical terms, the specific application of good testing principles and techniques, especially contrastive analysis to a homogeneous group of second language learners. These are Malay-educated, post-secondary students completing a one year intensive course in English as a Second Language at the Mara Institute of Technology, Malaysia. The main objective of this course is an English proficiency level equivalent to English-educated, post-secondary students, to enable these students to enter professional or semi-professional courses which are conducted through the medium of English.

The justification of this study stems from the following facts. First, most of the teachers of English have had little or no training in Language Testing. This included the writer himself prior to his coming to the United States. But testing has always been considered an essential part of this and similar language courses, involving the teachers who, like the writer, have to be variously coordinators, examiners, and test-writers. Secondly, the teachers being bilingual in both the students' native language - Malay, and the target language - English, provides an ideal situation for the use of contrastive analysis as one of the language testing techniques. It is hoped that this study will provide some useful suggestions towards improving language testing in the above and

similar language testing situations.

The approach to this study includes the discussion of principles and techniques of language testing, the description of test-modes, the writing and analysis of test items, and a discussion of scoring procedures, all in connection with the Final Test of English as a Second Language, at Mara.

Some expected conclusions or implications are that the application of testing principles and techniques discussed, should contribute towards better testing, and the analysis of test scores, particularly of those items related to contrastive analysis, should provide further materials and suggestions not only for language testing but also its correlate, language teaching.