THE ASSESSMENT TOOL OF L2 LEARNERS’ PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE:
WRITTEN DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST (WDCT)

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ABSTRACT
Research studies have shown that pragmatic competence is teachable. The importance of teaching pragmatics has also been recognized, but still foreign language teachers are reluctant to teach pragmatics in their classrooms. This might be partly due to the lack of some valid methods for assessing pragmatic competence. This essay contends that while the Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) has some pitfalls, the WDCT effectively assesses learner's pragmatic competence.

Key words: pragmatic competence, teaching pragmatics, pragmatic competence assessments, Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

INTRODUCTION
Pragmatic competence is the ability to communicate effectively that involves both grammatical and pragmatic knowledge (Thomas, 1983; Bachman, 1990). Bachman (1990) identifies pragmatic competence as consisting of two aspects: (1) illocutionary competence that enables us to use language to express a wide range of functions, and to interpret the illocutionary force of utterances or discourse, and (2) sociolinguistic competence that enables us to perform language functions in ways that are appropriate to that context. Considering the importance of appropriateness in language use in order to communicate successfully, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners require to learn and acquire pragmatic competence. Studies have showed that pragmatic competence can be taught explicitly in EFL classroom (Brock & Nagasaka, 2005; Jernigan, 2007; Vitale, 2009; Taguchi, 2011; Sadhegi & Foutooh, 2012). Still, due to the lack of valid tools

own way to have better language learning is put on the priority. Appropriate language learning strategies will result proficiency and greater self-confidence. Many researches show that language students who apply strategies in learning have better result than those who do not. Learners who use strategies know what they have to do to overcome specific language task, they become self-directed learners inside or even outside the class.

This study focus only on socio-affective strategies which cover how the students used situation around them to deal with their problems and how they organize emotions, attitude and values in learning English language while motivating themselves in the process of language learning, especially in reading English text, because the writing on IT, as well as information and technology itself, has grown and there are so many articles about IT are released everyday in English, both in printing form and when students browse on the net.

Language learning strategies are classified into two classes: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies involve the target language (i.e. memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies), while indirect strategies do not involve the target language directly but they support and manage language learning (Oxford, 1990). Indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. This study highlights the last two strategies: social and affective strategies, later called socio-affective strategies applied by students in reading English text.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Language Learning Strategy

The concept of learning strategy depends on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques (Stern 1992: 261). All language learners use language learning strategies either consciously or unconsciously when processing new information and performing tasks in the language classroom. Since language classroom is like a problem-solving environment in which language learners are likely to face new input and difficult tasks given by their instructors, learners' attempts to find the quickest or easiest way to do what is required, that is, using language learning strategies is inescapable. In the same way, Oxford (1990: 8) defines learning strategies as
STUDENT'S SOCIOAFFECTIVE STRATEGY IN READING

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Abstract
Informatics grows fast along with articles related to it and the students of STMIK AMIKOM need to have the ability to read comprehensively to deal with her study and work place. This case study is aimed to explore and find the pattern of student's socioaffective strategies in reading and how they are applied. As the socioaffective strategy found, it will be easier for the teachers to provide English reading materials that suit their strategy preferences, more enjoyable for the students, and raise students' awareness of socioaffective strategy. Hopefully, it will lead students to become autonomous in reading, foster their good adjustment in study and work place, bring a broader awareness of socioaffective strategy in reading, and invites further research related to this strategy.

A preliminary observation was taken to choose one Information System student of semester 3, who had just experienced reading class, as this project participant. Data were collected through interviews with 16 indicators of socioaffective strategy. Steps of data analysis and data coding system were also prepared to make the research and data analysis easier.

Result shows that the participant applied 13 of 16 socioaffective strategies. A good self-confidence and maturity make her be able to encourage herself to be sure of what she does. Student's taking emotional temperature strategy through taking risk wisely and cooperating with peers -as part of cooperating with others' strategy- seemed to be student's best preferences among others.

Keywords: strategy, socioaffective strategy, and reading

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning orientation has moved from traditional one - which puts attention on teachers' role and teaching method - to the learners' great involvement in the teaching learning process. How learners can maximize their in assessing learners' interlanguage pragmatic competence, teachers are uncertain to include it into their syllabus. Moreover, it is a difficult task to develop and design a communicative language testing to measure learners' pragmatic competence in EFL context. There are some tools used to assess L2 learners' pragmatic competence, such as role-plays, multiple-choice questionnaires, rating scale assessments, simulations, interview tasks, and Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT).

Apparently, the popularity of WDCT has been widely recognized because of its practical use among other assessment tools. However, there has been an endless debate among language teachers whether the WDCT can be used to assess EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Thus, this essay argues that despite its limitation, the WDCT is an effective tool to assess the learners' pragmatic competence. It will then put forward five stages to construct the WDCT in assessing the learners' pragmatic competence.

WDCT AND ITS BENEFITS

Supporters of the WDCT assert that this test is able not only to test learners' pragmatic awareness, but also to assess learners' production on certain speech acts. In this test, the learners are asked to respond appropriately in written form based on short situational descriptions given (Jianda, 2006). For example, the teacher has the learners make a request to someone who is older and not close, and write it down in a natural way as they speak to a real person. At this point, the learners are expected to write a polite request since they make a request to an older person. Thus, they also have to pay attention to some variables, such as social distance, relative power, and degree of imposition in each situation before giving their response (Martinez-Flor, 2003; Decapua & Dunham, 2007; Phisghadam & Sharafadini, 2011). In line with this, Jie (2005) investigated how Chinese university EFL learners performed appropriately in making refusal and request acts in different pragmatic tests, namely Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) and the WDCT. The results have generally shown that the WDCT demonstrated learners' actual pragmatic competence more than the MDCT did. More specifically, the learners were aware about the context, which are social distance and relative power that led them to produce appropriate speech acts. Therefore, the WDCT can be used to elicit learners' production in order to assess their pragmatic competence.
Next, regarding the test's usefulness framework proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996), reliability and validity aspects are considered essential in validation process. In relation to this, some researchers contend that the WDCT has been proved as a valid test so that the test can be used as an effective assessment of L2 learners' pragmatic competence. According to Hudson, Detmer, and Brown, (1995), the WDCT adequately had high validity after applying some statistical procedures on six different test instruments, namely a self-assessment for the role-play, a self-assessment for the DCT, a role-play, oral DCT, WDCT, and MDCT, for assessing pragmatic competence of English learners. Similarly, Yamashita (1996) quantitatively investigated the validity of six test instruments proposed by Hudson et al. (1995) to test Japanese as Second Language (JSL) learners' pragmatic competence. She indicated the same results as what Hudson et al. (1995) found. Following the research conducted by Hudson et al. (1996) and Yamashita (1996), Ahn (2005) also examined the same instruments by excluding the role-play and the oral DCT to examine pragmatic competence of Korean as Second Language (KSL) learners. The findings showed that the test instruments were also valid and applicable to KSL contexts. Hence, the WDCT, which is one of the test instruments of pragmatic competence, is reasonably valid even though it has been used to assess L2 learners' pragmatic competence of different target language teaching contexts.

Furthermore, the reliability of the WDCT has been affirmed as a measure of L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Jianda (2006) explored some methods to assess Chinese EFL learners' pragmatic competence. He evaluated three different test instruments, which are MDCT, WDCT, and Discourse Self-Assessment Test (DSAT). He quantitatively estimated the Cronbach alpha reliability of the WDCT which showed satisfactory result. Likewise, Roever (2005) also confirmed that the WDCT reasonably had high reliability in his research. Based on his analysis, this test was effective to assess L2 learners' pragmalinguistic knowledge of three speech acts, such as request, apology, and refusal. The results illustrated reasonable consistency in the test. In other words, it can be implied that the internal consistency reliability of the WDCT is highly satisfactory.

Focusing on the practicality of the test, the WDCT can be claimed as a highly effective tool to gather a large number of data quickly. For instance, if the teacher wants to assess L2 learners' pragmatic competence in big classes consisted of more than thirty students, the WDCT can be effectively administered.

This approach can encourage students to understand the material easily, get involve in classroom activity, minimize limited structure concepts and understand English competencies as a set of skills.

REFERENCES

Picture 3 is the example of combination between text and animation. The display presents the conclusion of the material about reading comprehension by using specific technique that is called Hypermedia Text. This technique allows learners to see additional information that pops up when they click the menu box in the left side of the display. The information will appear in the big box (right side of the display).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

By integrating CBI approach in instructional multimedia, English content can be presented effectively because it is designed based on students’ interest and the material is visualized by using all aspects of multimedia such as text display, images, audio, video and animation.

Particularly, the teacher does not need to take a long time to get as many responses as from the learners (Roever, 2011). In addition, according to Kasper (2000), the teacher can control situational variables in the WDCT, such as social distance, familiarity, age, degree of imposition, and relative power between the speakers. What is more, this test does not need to be transcribed, so the teacher can easily analyse the result and know the level of learners’ pragmatic competence.

PITFALLS OF WDCT

However, the WDCT also have some limitations. Firstly, the opponents of the WDCT use in language testing comment on its authenticity and compatibility with natural speech occurrences. Using a written form to elicit oral production cannot reflect the cognitive process involved in the interaction (Yamashita, 1996). More specifically, the realisation of targeted speech acts in the actual oral production is quite different from the written form. In addition, it is impossible to play conversational turns in the WDCT since it does not allow the assessment of speech act production in its real discourse context. It also lacks sequential orders in terms of the choice of strategy and the negotiation of meaning (Yamashita, 1996). It can be concluded that the WDCT does not demonstrate interactive aspect of oral performance in authentic conversation even though this test portrays the linguistic expression of speech acts.

Next, the WDCT does not seem to reflect the range of strategies use in speech acts employed by the learners. For instance, in oral performance, the learners use hesitations, repetitions, inversions, and longer supportive moves, which are missing in the WDCT. Rasekh and Alijanian (2012) claim that the WDCT is not preferable to be used to elicit learners’ oral production in the speech acts. After comparing participants’ responses collected from WDCT and role-plays regarding length and content of request acts used, they found that the learners used less alerters, supportive moves, head act strategies, internal modification used in the head acts in the WDCT compared to strategies used in the role-play. Hence, the learners cannot employ more variations in the WDCT since it has no interactive nature of real situations.

The further claim is that the nature of situations in the WDCT is considered as the simplification of the complexity of interactions in real oral communication. This is supported by Nurani (2009) who argues that the situations in the WDCT do
not represent what the learners say in the real life situations. This might be due to the fact that the modifications and situational variables have been controlled in order to elicit targeted speech acts. Consequently, the data elicited from the WDCT cannot reflect important cultural values that may be particular to certain speech community.

Lastly, the learners are not able to extend the negotiation of meaning of the speech acts in the WDCT. This indicates that there is no access to complete combination of interpersonal and contextual details in the WDCT (Varghese, & Billmyer, 1996). In other words, the WDCT may not illuminate the learners' internal negotiation when they are interacting each other in the real situations. For instance, when a speaker gives advice to someone who is not familiar with, the WDCT does not give a clear picture how the speakers negotiate the message delivered and encounter the problems if the advice is not accepted. This makes the use of WDCT limited in terms of the negotiation of meaning in the real interaction.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Having reviewed the benefits and the pitfalls of using the WDCT as an assessment tool of learner's pragmatic competence, it is obviously seen that this is not an easy task to construct a testing instrument of pragmatic competence. The teacher has to design this testing instrument as accurate as possible so that this can adequately examine learners' pragmatic competence holistically. At the end, the learners can be stimulated to use their real language when they are assigned to complete the WDCT. More specifically, the learners are able not only to show their grammatical competence, but also to use the language in appropriate contexts. Thus, the teacher should figure out some ways to design the WDCT in order to use it effectively in the assessment process.

With regard to develop and design a test of pragmatic competence, the teacher should pay attention to five stages (Jianda, 2007; Birjandi & Rezaei, 2010). Firstly, exemplar generation should be determined before the test is constructed. In the exemplar generation stage, the teacher asks the learners to identify and classify situations, which are applicable for them in certain speech acts. This is one of the ways to ascertain the authenticity of the test, which is very important aspect in order to have a communicative language testing. In the same vein, Bachman and Palmer (1996) confirm that authenticity is one of the elements which ensures the
3. Video. Choosing video for instructional multimedia is similar to choosing pictures. It should be relevant to the topic and easy to see (clear view). In addition, consider the duration of the video because video is a part of the whole lesson plan in the learning process, thus classroom activity cannot just focus on the video but also assessment and discussion.

4. Animation. Animation refers to a simulated motion picture depicting movement of drawn (or simulated) objects (Mayer & Romano, 2002: 2). Animation can promote learners' understanding when used in ways that are consistent with several aspects such as presenting animation and narration simultaneously, presenting text and animation with appropriate proportion on the screen and choosing relevant animation based on the topic (Mayer & Romano, 2002: 8).

The pictures below are several examples of reading presentation in instructional multimedia:

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while the WDCT has some limitations, this tool can be used effectively to assess learners' pragmatic competence. In other words, although the WDCT cannot facilitate to capture the complete interaction of natural speech, the WDCT is able to represent learners' pragmatic competence with regard to the communicative aspect of language testing. Moreover, the WDCT does not only reflect the learners' linguistic competence, but also show how the learners use the language in the communicative context based on sociocultural variables. Regarding the development of the WDCT as one of the pragmatic tests, there are five stages that should be considered in constructing the test, namely exemplar generation, situation likelihood investigation, metapragmatic assessment, situational pilot test, and test development stages. These stages should be conducted in constructing and developing a good quality of the assessment tool of pragmatic competence. Therefore, the teacher can use the WDCT effectively to assess learners' pragmatic competence and minimize the limitations of the test.
References


2. Integrating all English skills

English skills can be visualized by adding more multimedia elements in the reading text display. The elements are:

1. Picture. Picture visualizes abstract concepts in the material. However, choosing appropriate picture is necessary to create an effective presentation. Pictures for instructional multimedia should relevant to the topic. It is also simple and realistic (Anitah: 2010: 9). Computer-supported learning presentation needs pictures that have a large size. Pictures with a large size are easy to be customized into different size according to computer display.

2. Sound. The audio effect should enhance the presentation of the content (Lee & Owens, 2004: 174). The sound should be clear and easy to listen by using volume control. It had better to choose audio based on the topic; either it is song, conversation, speech or lecture.
experience to promote learning. Today, multimedia is used in the format of computer instructional program (Smaldino, 2005: 141). Computer is used to support the utilization of multimedia in learning process because computer provides virtually response to student input. It also provides capacity to store and manipulate information. There are two applications of computer in instruction: computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and computer-managed instruction (CMI). In CAI students interact directly with the computer as part of the instructional activity. Meanwhile, CMI helps both instructor and students in maintaining information about students and in guiding instruction (Smaldino, 2005: 110).

There are two important aspects in creating effective multimedia and integrating the characters of content-based instruction in computer learning model, such as:

1. **Displaying reading Text**

   Reading passages can be visualized by considering some multimedia guidance. Azhar Arsyad (2011: 99-100) explains several multimedia designs for reading text in computer display:
   
   a. Reading text in a computer screen should have appropriate space between sentences, for example: use double line spacing to make it easier to read.
   
   b. Use normal font and combine uppercase and lowercase based on their function, for example: use capital letter in front of Places' name, title, sub title, etc.
   
   c. Use seven to ten words per line because it will be easier to read short sentences.
   
   d. Place the text in the center of the screen.
   
   e. Consistent with style and writing format.
   
   f. Use certain characters in the title and key words, such as bold, underline or italics.
   
   g. Use table or line to separate text and images, text and graphs or other visual representation.

   Other multimedia elements that should be provided to complete the text are (Phillips, 1997: 82-86):
   
   1. **Line.** The line is an important element in the design of multimedia to determine the focus of eyes when looking at a computer screen.
   
   2. **Shape.** Elements form has its own function in the use of text and symbols. There are three basic forms of multimedia design: a square, rectangle and