

AN EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT 1 AND 2 OF THE BETA MODULE

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<p>Lau Bee Yian is the senior English language teacher in SMK Santubong and is also the state ETeMS trainer. She holds a Bachelor of TESL (Hons).</p> <p>She has published an article, <i>Techniques in utilising the Form One class reader time - when no prescribed text is available</i> in <i>Bicara Pendidik, Persatuan Pengetua Sekolah Menengah Sarawak</i> in 1997.</p>	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>In training, materials are inevitably utilized to achieve the aims of the training programme. This was also true of the Second Phase of the English for the Teaching of Mathematics and Science (ETeMS) programme. One of the modules used in this phase was the Beta module. This study reports on an evaluation of the Assessment One and Assessment Two components of the Beta module. Recommendations and suggestions are also given as to how these two components can be improved.</i></p>
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Introduction

In 2002, English for the Teaching of Mathematics and Science (ETeMS) programme was initiated to help Math and Science teachers (MST) enhance their English Language skills to ensure that they can teach effectively. Those who were affected were teachers who failed to meet the criteria set by the Ministry of Education. MST had to obtain credit at SPM level in their English Language in order to obtain an exemption; failing which, they had to undergo two phases of ETeMS.

Background to the Study

MST who attended the ETeMS programme essentially were helped to 'develop their English Language proficiency in order to access the wealth of information on the subject area currently available in English texts (Portal Pendidikan Utusan, 2003:2). Moreover, MST were also encouraged to develop their English Language competence to 'deliver their subject matter in the language' (ibid). In Phase Two of the ETeMS programme, three modules were used namely Alpha, Beta and Gamma Modules. However, for the purpose of this study, only Assessment 1 and 2 found in the Beta Module would be referred to.

Assessment 1 and 2 are considered as instructional materials used in Phase Two of the ETeMS programme. Instructional materials serve as a valuable source of language input carefully chosen to match the demands of the students, their skills, abilities, goals, backgrounds and interests. Essentially, instructional materials are needed for any teaching situation. This point is well stated by Nunan (1991:208) who says that 'while the syllabus defines the goals and objectives, the linguistic and experiential content, instructional material can put flesh on the bones of these specifications.'

Evaluation of instructional materials has to be carried out to help us develop insights into different views of language and language learning and into the principles of material design. Teachers should develop the ability to evaluate teaching materials effectively as all teachers need to use instructional materials at some stage or other in their teaching career. According to McDonough and Shaw (1993:64-65), the evaluation of materials 'merits serious consideration as an inappropriate choice may waste funds and time' as well as having a 'demotivating effect on students.' However, no textbook or set of materials is likely to be perfect. Even then, we need some form of criteria to evaluate though 'it is clear that coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid or system ever provide a definite yardstick' (Sheldon, 1988:245).

Statement of the Problem

Instructional materials are inevitably used to help facilitate language proficiency and competency of MST. These instructional materials have to be carefully selected so that MST would be able to derive maximum benefits from them. This is because the MST who came for the ETeMS programme only have a basic understanding of English. One to two appeared not to even understand English at all.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to:

1. evaluate whether the viewpoints of the two trainers and two course participants identified concur with the researcher on Assessment 1 and 2
2. give suggestions for Assessment 1 and 2

Methodology

This study is based on a mixed methodology design (Creswell,1994), which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study.

The Sample Population

Only two trainers and two course participants from an ETeMS training centre at Rajah Court Kuching were chosen. The trainers had to have taught Assessment 1 and 2 of the Beta Module. This was also true of the course participants who had to have gone through the component.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected from a questionnaire and interview. Piloting of the questionnaire was carried out by asking a respondent who was from the researcher's own training centre to answer. A questionnaire is used because it is a 'good way of collecting certain types of information quickly and relatively cheaply' (Handout 5B, 2003:1). The questionnaire was distributed to two trainers and course participants of a training centre at Rajah Court, Kuching, on 15th October 2003.

There are two sections to the questionnaire - Section 1: Personal Data and Section 2 : Assessment 1 and 2 of the Beta Module. Respondents have to fill in their particulars for Section 1. In the first part of Section 2, they only have to tick the answer that is most true for them. In the second part, they have to answer five open-ended questions. The information gleaned from the questionnaire was further reinforced by the survey interview, which has been described by Moser and Kalton(1971:271) as 'a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent.'

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse what respondents wrote in the open-ended questionnaire and also what they say in the interview. According to Wilson (1993), content analysis is a firmly established technique for textual data analysis. Manual counting was carried out to determine the number of ticks given by the respondents for each activity.

Findings and Discussion

Profile of Trainers and Course Participants

Table 1: Profile of Trainers

Trainer	Gender	Race	Professional Teaching Qualification	Teaching Experience	Name of School	Main Subject Taught
1	F	Iban	BA Ed (Hons)	6 years	SMK Agama Matang	English
2	F	Chinese	M. Ed.	20 years	SMK Kuching High	English

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that Trainer 1 and 2 are different in terms of professional teaching qualification, teaching experience and the school where they taught. Trainer 1 is an Iban with only six years of teaching experience. She is teaching in the outskirts of Kuching and holds a basic degree in education. On the other hand, Trainer 2 is a Chinese with 20 years of teaching experience. She is a 'guru cemerlang' with a Masters degree and is teaching in the heart of Kuching.

Table 1a: Profile of Course Participants

Course Participant	Gender	Race	Professional Teaching Qualification	Teaching Experience	Name of School	Main Subject Taught
1	F	Malay	Teaching Certificate	21 years	SMK Santubong	Math
2	M	Chinese	Diploma Perguruan	14 years	SMK DPHA Gapor	Science

Both the course participants are experienced teachers. Course Participant 1 had been educated in English before while Course Participant 2 is from the Malay medium. Course Participant 1 holds a teaching certificate and is teaching Math in the

outskirts of Kuching while Course Participant 2 has a Teaching Diploma and is teaching Science in a town school in Kuching.

The Findings of the Questionnaire

Table 2: Assessment 1 and 2 of the Beta Module

ASSESSMENT 1																
ACTIVITY 1																
	EASY				ADEQUATE				DIFFICULT				APPROPRIATE			
	T1	T2	CP1	CP2	T1	T2	CP1	CP2	T1	T2	CP1	CP2	T1	T2	CP1	CP2
RUBRICS	4	4	4										4			
INPUT/ CONTENTS		4			4								4		4	
QUESTIONS IN TEXT	4								4					4	4	
EXERCISES GIVEN	4								4					4	4	
LANGUAGE	4	4											4		4	
ACTIVITY 2																
RUBRICS	4	4											4		4	
INPUT/ CONTENTS		4			4										4	
QUESTIONS IN TEXT					4				4	4					4	
EXERCISES GIVEN		4			4				4						4	
LANGUAGE	4									4			4		4	
ACTIVITY 3																
RUBRICS	4				4								4		4	
INPUT/ CONTENTS					4								4	4	4	
QUESTIONS IN TEXT	4				4									4	4	
EXERCISES GIVEN	4				4				4						4	
LANGUAGE					4					4			4		4	
ACTIVITY 4																
RUBRICS					4								4	4	4	
INPUT/ CONTENTS					4								4	4	4	
QUESTIONS IN TEXT													4	4	4	4
EXERCISES GIVEN													4	4	4	4
LANGUAGE													4	4	4	4
ACTIVITY 5																
RUBRICS					4	4							4		4	
INPUT/ CONTENTS					4				4				4		4	
QUESTIONS IN TEXT					4								4	4	4	
EXERCISES GIVEN	4												4	4	4	
LANGUAGE													4	4	4	4

ASSESSMENT 2																
ACTIVITY 1																
	EASY				ADEQUATE				DIFFICULT				APPROPRIATE			
	T1	T2	CP1	CP2	T1	T2	CP1	CP2	T1	T2	CP1	CP2	T1	T2	CP1	CP2
RUBRICS					4	4	4									4
INPUT/ CONTENTS					4								4		4	4
QUESTIONS IN TEXT					4								4		4	4
EXERCISES GIVEN					4								4			4
LANGUAGE					4								4	4		4
ACTIVITY 2																
RUBRICS					4	4							4			4
INPUT/ CONTENTS					4				4				4			4
QUESTIONS IN TEXT					4								4	4		4
EXERCISES GIVEN					4								4	4		4
LANGUAGE					4								4	4		4
ACTIVITY 3																
RUBRICS					4	4							4			4
INPUT/ CONTENTS									4				4		4	4
QUESTIONS IN TEXT													4	4	4	4
EXERCISES GIVEN					4								4	4	4	4
LANGUAGE													4	4		4
ACTIVITY 4																
RUBRICS					4	4							4			4
INPUT/ CONTENTS									4				4		4	4
QUESTIONS IN TEXT													4	4	4	4
EXERCISES GIVEN					4								4	4		4
LANGUAGE					4								4	4		4
ACTIVITY 5																
RUBRICS					4								4		4	4
INPUT/ CONTENTS									4				4		4	4
QUESTIONS IN TEXT					4								4	4		4
EXERCISES GIVEN					4								4	4		4
LANGUAGE					4								4	4		4
ACTIVITY 6																
RUBRICS									4				4		4	4
INPUT/ CONTENTS									4				4		4	4
QUESTIONS IN TEXT									4				4		4	4

EXERCISES GIVEN			4	4	4	4
LANGUAGE			4	4	4	4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF ASSESSMENT 1

Table 2 above gives an indication of how the two trainers and two course participants find the activities of Assessment 1 and 2. For Activity 1, Assessment 1, Trainer 1 considers the rubrics, questions in text, exercise given and language easy. She could be seeing these from her own perspective as Trainer 2 has a different viewpoint from hers. To Trainer 2, the questions in text and exercises given are difficult whereas the rubrics, input and language are appropriate. It is interesting to note that trainers and course participants differ in opinions regarding Activity 1. Course Participant 1 finds the rubrics, layout and language adequate whereas the questions in text and exercises given are appropriate. For Course Participant 2, the rubrics given are adequate whereas other items listed are all appropriate.

The course participants' viewpoint are more in concord with the researcher's as the researcher feels that Activity 1 provides a good introduction to what assessment is. The exercises given reinforce what is being learnt as course participants have to use their thinking skills to determine which assessment type is referred to in the situation given. In other words, this activity meets the usability factor stated by McDonough and Shaw.

For Activity 2, Trainer 1 finds the rubrics and language easy whereas the input, questions in text and exercises given are adequate. Trainer 2 is of the opinion that the questions in text and exercises given are difficult whereas the rubrics, input and language all appropriate. To Course Participant 1, the rubrics, input and exercises given are adequate whereas the questions in text and language used are appropriate. Course Participant 2 finds all the items appropriate.

Trainer 2 had found the questions in text and exercises given difficult. Her opinion concurs with the researcher's as the researcher wants further input to be supplied by the trainers before course participants were able to answer the question posed. The researcher suggested that a graph depicting suitability of jobs versus academic qualifications achieved or a newspaper report on the qualifications needed for the various job markets be given as further input. These would then help the course participants to answer better.

On the whole, the two trainers feel that Activity 3 is appropriate. However, Course Participant 1 does not agree as to her, the exercises given and language used are difficult. The researcher had considered this a useful activity to enable course participants to categorize their items into either Selection-Type Items or Supply-Type Items.

The overall scenario provided by the answers of the trainers and course participants is that Activity 4 is a most appropriate activity in Assessment 1. However, the researcher begs to differ as to her, the explanation on Objective and Subjective Tests is clear but the follow-up activity should be samples of Objective and Subjective Tests. Then only would Activity 4b and 4c be clearer. This is because the answers to Activity 4b are mostly on multiple choice. However, the answers to numbers 11, 12 and 13 do not really indicate that they are subjective tests. Logical and sequential activities would better meet the needs of the course participants whose proficiency and competency sometimes hamper their understanding of the text read.

Trainer 1 finds the exercises of Activity 5 easy, the input adequate and the others appropriate. To Trainer 2, the input is difficult while the other items are appropriate. Course Participant 1 feels that the rubrics, input and questions in text are adequate whereas the other two items are appropriate. Course Participant 2 feels that everything is appropriate.

To the researcher, Activity 5 provides a rationale for new approaches to assessment. Moreover, the activity enables participants' knowledge in Alternative Assessment to be widened. However, the researcher feels that Figure 5.8 is included as an afterthought as there is no apparent relationship of what course participants have just read to Figure 5.8, which is an Observation Checklist for Projects. Figure 5.8 would have made more sense if a discussion on observation has been included earlier. As it stands, Figure 5.8 appears to be included because it is available. Activity 5b is a viable activity as it brings the participants back to their core business as teachers. As teachers, they should be able to consider the validity of each assessment procedures in their own classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF ASSESSMENT 2

The two trainers and course participants agree that Activity 1 of Assessment 2 range from easy, adequate to appropriate except for the exercises which Course Participant 1 feels as inappropriate. This is an accurate observation as the exercises consist of three questions, which do not seem to elicit much meaningful responses at this stage.

The researcher's criticism of Activity 1 is centred on its layout as she feels that the rubrics and explanation for the assessment triangle should not have been framed together with the cartoon. It would have been more effective if the last paragraph beginning 'An Assessment Procedure ... in the classroom' could have been put directly after the heading, 'The Assessment Triangle' followed by the rubrics and then the cartoon.

Trainer 1 considers all items in Activity 2 as appropriate whereas Trainer 2 finds the questions in the text difficult, the rubrics adequate and all other items appropriate. The researcher agrees with Trainer 2 that the input is difficult because the lead-in to Bloom's Taxonomy is obscure. Only the term, 'taxonomy' is used. It should have been more specific. The section on Bloom's Taxonomy should be included in the participants' copy as they need it more than the trainers. From the lead-in to the exercises, another segment could be included. This could possibly be on samples of questions on the various categories of Bloom's Taxonomy. Obviously, the more experienced trainers could handle this section better.

The two course participants feel that Activity 2 is adequate and appropriate. The researcher agrees with them as the exercises given are a practical application of knowledge learnt. However, it can be taken one step further as four out of the five answers are on knowledge. The last answer is on comprehension. Thus, participants can be asked to move 'knowledge' to a higher category by making some changes to the question. This practical application would enable participants to have real practice on how they could modify existing questions found in sample text and guide books. They would then be made aware that objective test items do not only test skills at the knowledge level.

Activity 2b can be left out as there is not enough time to use another extract on computer. Alternatively, course participants could be asked to do the activity at home

as it is a good practice exercise and follow-up to Activity 2. However, the only drawback is not every course participants has the Science CD.

To Trainer 1, the items in Activity 3 are all appropriate. However, Trainer 2 finds the rubrics adequate, the input difficult and the others appropriate. Again, the researcher's opinion is in accord with hers as the course participants find the input difficult. They are able to do the five statements without even having to read the text. Activity 3 should have been included in Activity 4 of Assessment 1. The two respondents, however considers all items adequate and appropriate.

The two trainers and course participants answers are the same for Activity 4 and 5 as in the preceding three activities, namely they are adequate and appropriate. Trainer 2 still considers the input difficult for both Activities 4 and 5.

These two activities could actually be meshed as one as when these are taught, overlapping occurs. In activity 4, it is enough to just start with 'the notes below are the names... task that follows...' Then what is now Activity 5 could be now Activity 4b. The present Activity 5b is a good follow up to Activity 5. The items used in Activity 5b actually came from Activity 3 of Assessment 1, however, in Activity 5, the items are further explored to allow course participants to apply the rules for writing effective multiple-choice items.

Trainer 2 finds Activity 6 very difficult. In most groups, there was not enough time to cover this as there are already too many activities. When given as homework, course participants were unable to do the exercise satisfactorily.

Suggestions and Recommendations

In view of the amount of time available, the team of ETeMS writers are to be congratulated for coming up with the modules on schedules. However, within the team of writers, there should be a mix of Maths, Science and English Language personnel. These personnel should all work closely together. At times, in using the module as a trainer, it was felt that the activities are not logically sequenced in terms of easy to the most difficult. Maybe, a few experienced teachers could be part of the team in order to assess whether teaching steps are logical or not.

It is suggested that whatever is taught is applied by the participants at some point in the ETeMS programme. For example, after spending so much time on Bloom's



Taxonomy, the rubrics for the Test Kit could then be modified as in the Test Kit, participants only have to come up with two item types, one of which has to be a multiple choice item type. The Test Kit should incorporate at least two to three levels of questioning in Bloom's Taxonomy. If not, it is a waste of time to teach Bloom's Taxonomy to participants and remind them to include the taxonomy categories in their test questions in school without making it compulsory for them to include these in the Test kit.

Conclusion

On the all, both trainers and course participants agree that after going through all the activities in Assessment 1 and 2, student learning could be brought about effectively. They would also be able to determine the extent to which students have achieved the intended outcomes of instruction after going through all the activities in Assessment 1 and 2. Trainer 2 disagrees with this observation as she feels that 'It depends on the type of assessment being utilised and what the teacher sets out to achieve.' In other words, all the activities in Assessment 1 and 2 are insufficient for MST when they go back to teach.

All four respondents agree that Assessment 1 and 2 is trying to teach language proficiency and at the same time, raising the awareness of MST to the different types of assessment being used currently.



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