

Teacher –Made Language Test Planning, Construction, Administration And Scoring In Secondary Schools In Ekiti State.

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Abstract

The much emphasis laid on Continuous Assessment (C.A) in the current system of education in Nigeria has made C.A. to be important in the evaluation of students' performance and even certification. Teachers give one form of test or the other for the continuous assessment exercise. It is therefore important that teacher-made tests are not just means of gathering grades but evidence capturing device that should be carefully designed to ensure high level of validity and reliability. This study therefore investigated how language teachers in secondary schools in Ekiti State plan, construct administer and score their tests. The research design for the study was the descriptive design of the survey type.

The population for the study comprised all language teachers that teach English language, Yoruba language, French language and Arabic language in all the secondary schools in Ekiti State. Eighty respondents out of the population were purposively selected as sample for the study. A self-designed questionnaire was the instrument used for the study. The instrument was validated to ensure its face and content validity; it was also subjected to test-re-test reliability which yielded a coefficient value of 0.76 at 0.05 level of significant.

Data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics. The result showed that language teachers plan, construct, administer and score their tests well. It was recommended that language teachers should be encouraged to continue to plan, construct and administer their tests well.

Introduction

Language tests of various types are usually given to students in order to determine their attainment in the language for which they are given. In the current system of education in Nigeria, much emphasis is laid on continuous assessment (C.A) for the evaluation of students' performance and even certification. The main instrument used for C.A. by teachers is one form of test or the other. It could therefore be said that in this era of accountability and high stake decision making, teachers tests can no longer be viewed as simply a means to gather grades for the end term of session report cards. Rather, it should be thought of as evidence capturing device or tool to show or prove students' knowledge and ability. The classroom teacher therefore must consider several things in selecting the tools to be used for tests given to students. Teacher made tests are tests constructed, administered and marked by the teachers (Kolawole, 2000).

Teacher-made tests are to be properly and carefully planned to meet the criteria of validity and reliability so that the results obtained can be genuine. Bandele (2006) has rightly observed that the bane of our examination system in the developing work is heavy reliance on teacher-made tests that are constructed under questionable conditions. This underscores the need to pay attention to teacher made tests so that all is not based on the teacher's Whims. Kolawole (1998) also identified the need for language teachers to be helped in order to understand the important roles which properly constructed, administered and scored tests play in preparing students for external examinations. He found out in his study that language teacher-made tests did not meet the criteria of validity and reliability.

The nature of language as subjects gives them certain unique characteristics that call for caution in the way they should be tested in order to take care of their peculiarities. Those peculiarities are embedded in the various language skills that are to be taught and tested. According to Wier, in Suzanna (2005), the following test formats according to each language skill is found in literature:

Table I: Test Formats Used In Testing Each Language Skill

Language Skill	Test Formats
Listening	Multiple choice question (MCQ), Short Answer Question (SAQ) Dictation; Information transfer; Listening Recall
Speaking	(Controlled); Role Play
Reading	MCQ; SAQ; close group (The close C-tests, Close Elide, Rational close; Information Transfer.
Writing	Essay Tests; Editing tasks; Summary

Each of the above test formats requires some level of competence on the part of the teacher to be able to design and administer. Testing in these formats also requires some level of planning especially to determine the objective(s) which is very important in order to have a proper understanding of what should be the content and the format for the tests. According to Fakeye (2006), test writing is preceded by considerations of some fundamental issues which are:

- a) The purpose of the test
- b) The content area to be covered by the test
- c) The test type or test format to be used

Other things that could be considered at the planning level are those things that Gbenedio (1996) called process variables. These refers to given considerations to the learners' age, sex, socio-economic background and his/her aptitude for language learning. According to her, all these can influence or affect the level of learners' performance.

From the foregoing, the need to pay attention to the issue of teacher-made language tests is paramount as the teaching and learning process is not complete without a good assessment procedure. A look at what happens in schools these days seems to reveal some lapses. Some teachers seem not to give themselves to the nitty-gritty involved in a test process. Some teachers are seen few days to examinations or even at the point of examination going to search through past questions in order to pick questions for their students. Most of the time that teachers do these, they do it at the detriment of the students because the questions they pick from past questions are sometimes those meant for students who have completed the syllabus for that level of education and such questions are given to those who are yet to complete that syllabus.

The teacher as a test maker therefore has a great deal of work to do if he/she is to produce a good test. A good test is that which meets the criteria of objectivity, validity and reliability. In addition to the issue of making a test good, it is also good to administer a test in a highly conducive environment. This put into consideration issues like sitting arrangements, the time of the day the test is being administered, proper ventilation and proper invigilation (if it is a written test).

Finally, a test that is well planned, constructed and administered, if not well scored could still yield a misleading result. There are procedures to follow in scoring tests and there are conditions to be considered if scoring a test will not be prejudicial. The need to pay attention to all these processes of test planning, construction, administration and scoring cannot be overemphasized if teacher-made tests are to be reliable and have high prediction guarantee. This study was therefore carried out to assess the way language teachers plan, construct, administer and score their tests in Ekiti State Secondary Schools.

Statement of the Problem

The objective of a test is to compare the performance of an individual student with a designated standard of performance and one of the principles of good testing is that the test must be constructed and administered in a skillful manner. When test processes are not followed to achieve this objective as accurate as possible, it becomes a problem. It seems that language teachers do not plan, construct, administer and score their tests well. Some teachers are seen to just pick on anything in the name of question at the point of examination. The conditions under which some tests are administered seem not to be conducive the manner of scoring sometimes look prejudicial.

Research Questions

- 1) How do language teachers plan their tests?
- 2) How do language teachers construct their test?
- 3) Do language teachers administer their scores following accepted procedures?
- 4) Do language teachers score their tests following accepted procedures?

Methodology

The research design for this study was the descriptive research design of the survey type. Samples of 80 respondents were purposively selected among language teachers across secondary schools in Ekiti State. The instrument was a self-designed questionnaire titled: Questionnaire on Teacher-made Language Test Planning, Construction, Administration and Scoring. The questionnaire contained two sections. Section "A" was on the

bio-data of the respondents while section “B” contained question items based on the research questions. The respondents were expected to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to show what they do as against what they do not do. The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured by experts in language education and tests and measurement. The test-re-test method of reliability was also carried out on 10 respondents outside the sample and the Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyse their scores and a correlation co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. The data generated from the instrument was subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. The results are as presented.

Results

The results from the data generated were analysed based on the research questions.

Research Question 1

How do language teachers plan their tests?

Table I: How Language Teachers Plan Their Tests

S/N	Items	Yes	%	No	%	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
1	I determine the objective(s) of my test before constructing the test	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
2	I determine the content area to be covered before constructing the tests	72	94.7%	4	5.3%	76	100
3	I determine the test type of format I want to give before constructing my tests.	76	100%	-	-	76	100
4	I prepare my test long before its administration so that it is not done in a hurry.	66	86.6%	10	13.2%	76	100
5	I pick relevant questions from past questions and administer anytime I want to carry out a test	42	55.3%	34	44.7%	76	100
6	I have little knowledge of test planning.	31	40.8%	45	59.2%	76	100

From the table I above, it is seen that most language teachers seem to plan their tests well as it is seen that 75 out of 76 (98.7%) of the respondents claim to determine the objective(s) of their tests prior to construction, while 72 (94.7%) admit that they determine the content area to be covered beforehand and 76 (100%) of them claim that they determine the test format/type before constructing their tests. Also, 66(86.6%) admit that they prepare their tests long before its administration so that it is not done in a hurry. One major problem revealed here is that more than half of the respondents 42(55.3%) admit that they only pick past questions and don’t make out time to write or develop their own questions. This is a serious problem because most times, the questions they pick from are meant for higher classes (e.g WAEC questions). The reason for the above problem seem to show in the next question, that is, item 6, where almost half 31(40.8%) admit that they have little knowledge of test planning.

Research Question 2

How do language teachers construct their tests?

Table II: How Language Teachers Construct their Tests.

S/N	Items	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Total frequency	Total percentage
7	I prepare a table of specification for the construction of my test.	50	65.8%	26	34.2%	76	100
8	I prepare a test draft before constructing my test.	57	75%	19	25%	76	100
9	I trial-test the draft before finally using it	62	81.6%	14	18.4%	76	100
10	I ensure the reliability of my test	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
11	I ensure the validity of my test	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
12	I give my test to other colleagues to help me vet and make comments.	68	89.5%	8	10.5%	76	100
13	I consider the comments and criticism offered by other colleagues in order to improve the quality of my test.	69	90.8%	7	9.2%	76	100
14	I ensure the readability of my tests by making use of correct and clear language.	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
15	I have little knowledge of test construction.	65	85.5%	11	14.5%	76	100

Table II above revealed that a very good percentage of the teachers claim that they construct their tests well. 50(65.8%) admit that they prepare table of specification while 57(75%) claim that they prepare test draft and 62(81.6%) say that they trial-test the draft while 75(98.7%) claim that they ensure the validity and reliability of their tests respectively. 68(89.5%) admit that they consider the comments of other colleagues and 75(98.5%) ensure the readability of their tests and 65(85.5%) admit that they have little knowledge of test construction.

Research Question 3

Do language teachers administer their tests using accepted procedures?

Table III: Language Teachers' Test Administration Procedures.

S/N	Items	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Total frequency	Total percentage
16	I administer my test under a conducive environment	72	94.7%	4	5.3%	76	100
17	I ensure proper supervision while administering my test	76	100%	-	-	76	100
18	I ensure proper sitting arrangement while administering test.	76	100%	-	-	76	100
19	I notify students well ahead of time (when necessary) before administering my test.	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
20	I administer my test at the proper time of the day putting into consideration the weather condition and other factors.	69	90.8%	7	9.2	76	100
21	I ensure proper distribution of questions and submission of answer scripts to avoid rowdiness.	75	98.7%	1	1.35	76	100
22	I handle any case of exam malpractice in the regulated way.	72	94.7%	3	3.9%	76	100

Table III above reveals that most of the respondents follow good test administration procedures. 72(94.7%) claims to administer their tests under a conducive environment. 76(100%), all of them claim to ensure proper supervision and sitting arrangements while administering their tests. While 75(98.7%) notify students well ahead of time when necessary, 69(90.8%) claim to administer their test at the appropriate time of the day bearing in mind the weather condition and other factors and 75(98.7%) admit that they ensure proper distribution and submission of question papers. 72(94.7%) accept that they handle any case of exam malpractice in the regulated way.

Research Question 4

Do language teachers score their tests using accepted procedures?

Table IV: Language Teachers' Scoring Procedures

S/N	Items	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Total Frequency	Total Percentage
23	I prepare the making guide for scoring my tests before marking or scoring my tests. .	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
24	I mark any tests myself (all the time) without giving it out to another person to mark for me.	72	94.7%	3	3.9%	75	98.7%
25	I try to avoid hallow effect in scoring my tests	75	98.7%	1	1.3%	76	100
26	I do my marking in a convenient place and at the convenient time to avoid making mistakes.	75	98.7%	-	-	75	98.7%
27	I mark my tests within the stipulated time	73	96.1%	2	2.6%	75	98.7%

Table IV reveals the scoring procedure of the teachers to include preparation of making guide which is claimed by 75(98.7%) of the respondents. 72(94.7%) agree that they mark their test themselves all the time without giving it out to other people to mark for them while 75(98.7%) claim not to allow any hallow effect when marking and do their marking at a convenient place and time. 73(96.1%) admit to mark their tests within the shortest possible time.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of his study reveal that language teaches admit to plan, construct administer and score their tests well following accepted procedures. These findings are in contrast to the findings of Kolawole (1998) who found that teacher- made language tests did not meet the criteria validity and reliability. The reason for this contrast might be due to the fact that there are more qualified teachers in this study area than that of Kolawole (1998).

The study further reveals that many of the teachers have little knowledge about test planning and test construction. This might be due to the kind of training these teachers received in the course of the teacher education programme that they attended. It was possible that training in language test planning and construction was inadequate.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that language teaches plan, construct, administer and score their tests well following accepted procedure. Also, language teachers in the study area have little knowledge of test planning and test construction.

Recommendations

From the finding of the study therefore, it is recommended that language teachers be encouraged to continue to plan, construct, administer and score their tests well. School management should also organize seminars and workshop for language teachers on test planning and construction so as to improve their knowledge. Also, teacher training institutions should intensify effort at training pre-service language teachers in test planning procedure.

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