

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has a big role in language education, not only within Europe but worldwide (Khalifa and French: 2008). The CEFR for Languages which covers learning, teaching, and assessment originally desires to provide a prevalent foundation for the development of languages syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, assessments, and textbooks across Europe (Council of Europe: 2001). The CEFR is asserted to differentiate various dimensions in which language proficiency is explained and give a series of reference points by which progression in learning can be adjusted. These reference points are elaborated in terms of behavioral scales and the framework core consists of a descriptive scheme that represents communicative competence aspects, language use and a set of common reference levels (North & Schneider : 1998) that categorize language proficiency into six common levels ranging from A1, the lowest level, through A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2, the highest of the levels. These levels acomodate the assessments of what language learners learn or expected to learn and give a chance both teachers and learners to self-monitor (Demirezen and Bakla : 2007).

Assessment is an pivotal part of language teaching and learning. It is not solely the end of the process nor just a judgment about an activity accomplished. The CEFR uses the term “assessment” to show the implementation of language competences, thereby focusing on learner performance and its analysis (Piccardo

et al : 2011). This focus contrasts with the more global term, “evaluation”. Assessment is related only to analysis about the level of learners’ proficiency evident in their performance, whereas evaluation can also refer, for instance, to the quality of a course, the effectiveness of teaching, or the appropriateness of pedagogical materials. Assessments produce certain results, such as grades, passing or failing, or the attainment of a certain CEFR level.

Assessment involves several factors related to contexts, cultures and assessment traditions. Choosing among different types of assessment requires carefully selecting procedures consistent with the assessment goals in its appropriate context. The CEFR proposes a series of 26 types of assessment organised in 13 pairs, which are at once distinct and complementary (Piccardo et al : 2011).

In this CEFR study, the writer only focuses on English listening assessment. Listening is the least researched compared to other English skills (Nation and Newton : 2009). It is often neglected in many language learning situations (Buck : 2001). Those are because English listening skill has many difficulties. There are complex factors such as rate of speech, prosody, accent, phonology, hesitations, background knowledge, and rhetorical signaling cues can influence listening comprehension (Cross : 2011) which make listening becomes “a vital role in the language acquisition process” (Brett : 1997). Therefore, assessing the listening ability is also one of the least understood, developed, and yet one of the most crucial areas of language (Anderson and Bachman, 2001). There is limited research on language assessment and concentrated on the specific

constructs or abilities underlying listening comprehension, the procedure of listening assessment construction, and the validation and evaluation of listening tests (Sun, Lin and Hung : 2015).

Assessment is strongly related with teaching and test. Informal and formal assessment can be used to differentiate tests, assessment, and teaching (Brown : 2004). Informal assessment has many forms, for example comments and responses that are unpremeditated, along with unprepared feedback for the students (Brown : 2004). While the form of formal assessments can be seen as systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed that accommodate teacher and student an appraisal of students' achievement (Brown : 2004). Not all formal assessments are included in testing, but all tests encompass formal assessments, (Brown : 2004). This is why the writer often connected assessment and test, and use both terms in this research.

This study aims to design the English listening test specifications based on CEFR for Languages for S1 of English Study Program in Indonesian Universities by using research and development design. A survey presented that CEFR is the best model or reference in the APEC economies research (Duff, 2008). The CEFR provides a useful frame of reference for locating English listening assessment within a commonly accepted system of levels which can be used to guide an institution select examinations which meet its English listening testing requirements. It enables people in charge and authorities to compare standards in their own countries and institutions with those of students around the world and is usually used by policy-makers in organizing language policy and to

set language requirements for a wide range of purposes. It is also applied widely in the curricula and syllabi and many other contexts.

In order to be able to design English listening test specifications, the writer gathered English listening syllabi from seven universities and CEFR documents from The European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS). The writer dissected the CEFR documents into eight elements based on six CEFR levels. The elements are CEFR Global scale, CEFR listening scale, descriptors or sub-competence, topics, functions or notions, lexical items, grammatical features and gambits. The writer also dissected every analysed listening skill syllabi into eight elements: global competences, specific competences, indicators, topic, functions or notions, lexical items, grammatical features and gambits. Those eight components in the CEFR as well as in the existing syllabi were reconciled subsequently in order to analyse their similarities and differences and to map the existing syllabi position in the CEFR level. Therefore, the writer would be able to determine the exact CEFR level for every universities in order to design appropriate English listening test of specifications.

Three phases were conducted in this research: need analysis, information gathering, and prototypical design. The result gathered from need analysis shows that the levels of the analysed Universities are A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1 in CEFR levels. This result is a basis for the writer to design English listening test specifications that ranges from those levels.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The statement of the research question is organised into two fold; the main and sub questions. The main question of the research is:

How are the CEFR for languages-based test specifications of English listening skill for S-1 English study program?

The sub questions of the research are:

1. How are the English listening test specifications of standard competence, coverage of materials and lexicogrammar in the existing syllabi for S-1 English study program?
2. How are the English listening test specifications of standard competence, coverage of materials and lexicogrammar in the CEFR for languages?
3. How do standard competence, coverage of materials and lexicogrammar of test specifications in existing syllabi and CEFR for languages share similarities and differences?

1.3 The Purposes of the Study

The current study is conducted to answer the research problems. Therefore, the purposes of the study are in line with the research questions formulated into main and sub purposes.

Main purpose:

To design the CEFR for languages-based test specifications of English listening skill for S-1 English study program.

Sub-purposes:

1. To identify the test specifications of standard competence, coverage of materials and lexicogrammar in the existing syllabi for S-1 English study program.
2. To identify the test specifications of standard competence, coverage of materials and lexicogrammar in the CEFR for languages.
3. To analyze the similarities and differences of competence, coverage of materials and lexicogrammar of test specifications in the existing syllabi and CEFR for languages.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide one of the references for institutions to assess students' listening skill based on Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It is unassailable that studies on the design of test specification can give significant contribution to the process of English learning assessment. Syllabuses act as the description of what to deliver and what to carry out during the process of teaching learning activities. Facilitating courses with syllabuses undoubtedly enables the teaching learning activities to be more directive and relatively efficient to enrich the goals of the learning.

The research theoretically enhances the concept of how materials should be covered within English listening test of specifications which is guided by CEFR as the standard. There are various materials carried out in the existing English listening syllabi, however, this study aims to propose the coverage of the materials carried out using CEFR for Languages as the guiding standard which is recently becoming the current trends of determining levels of English proficiency.

The research is practically projected to be one of the adapted test of specifications for test makers, teachers, course directors, designers, stakeholders or who seek for the design of English listening test specifications which are based on CEFR for Languages to assess English listening proficiency. The result of the research is also expectantly proposed to be a reference for English Study Program test of specifications employed in Indonesian universities, particularly for S-1 English Study Program. Specifically, the test of specifications designed in this research is expected to be contributory resources in the area of English study program.

1.5 The Scope of the Study

This study only focuses on designing the English Listening test Specifications based on CEFR for languages. The design is intended to be an alternative form of assessment, especially in the receptive skill of listening competence of English. The English listening test specifications are developed for S-1 English Study Program considering relevant theories, references and other principles of learning underlying them.

A number of English listening syllabi have been collected from seven universities. Those syllabi are observed and analysed to identify their competences, coverage of the learning materials and language features utilized in those existing syllabi. The observation, as the need analysis, is based on the CEFR perspective, where the writer compares the components of the existing syllabi with the CEFR components gathered from the European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS). Later on, the writer finds the gaps in form of

percentages which place the universities into particular levels of CEFR. Thus, the area of the discussion in this research is limited into the university level for S1 English Study Program as the object of the English listening test of specifications design.

1.6. The Clarification of Key Terms

In order to evade misunderstanding, the main key terms put in this current research are CEFR for Languages, English Listening Assessment, and Test of Specification. The CEFR for Languages which cover learning, teaching, and assessment is a broad foundation for the development of languages syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, assessments, and textbooks across Europe. English listening assessment are often limited in language assessment that focus on the particular constructs or abilities in listening comprehension, the listening assessment construction procedure, and the listening tests validation and evaluation. Whereas Test of specification (TOS), sometimes called a table of specification, is a table that helps teachers align objectives, instruction, and assessment.