

An Analysis of EBS Preparation Materials for the CSAT, English Section

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Following the announcement by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development that the university entrance test in Korea would, from 2004, be based on language modeled in books published by the state-run Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), educators, high school students and parents looked forward to the establishment of a common denominator in terms of preparing for the high-stakes, life-determining, College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). No longer would the ability to pay for expensive tutoring be an important factor distinguishing between successful and unsuccessful students, since the EBS books would be available to everyone and would therefore help to eliminate advantages gained by studying at expensive institutes or employing private tutors. However, as this analysis shows, the university entrance test-preparation books that were meant to be the instruments of positive change contain a significant number of grammatical errors, poorly constructed passages, poorly designed questions, illogicalities and inappropriate topics. Consequently, students studying from these books are being presented with incorrect or misleading information. This paper recommends, therefore, that the current EBS books be withdrawn, to be re-released only when they have been thoroughly revised, screened and piloted by a permanent team of international test experts.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a report of an analysis of Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) English-language books published as test-preparation materials for the national College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) 2005, to be taken by high school students in November 2004. This report, based on EBS books available in bookstores in April 2004, is not exhaustive, since there is insufficient space here to describe all the problems identified in detail. Instead, the

analysis takes the form of a diagnostic report, classifying and exemplifying types of errors and inadequacies, and recommending actions to prevent recurrence of these.

Whatever the justification for continuing to use a high-stakes testing system of examinations in Korea, despite the wealth of research detailing the ethically questionable and pedagogically dubious nature of such testing (cf. Fetler, 1991; Jones, 2004; Madaus, 1988; Neill, 1998; Sacks, 1999), it goes without saying that the test-preparation materials and the tests themselves must be above criticism; they must conform to international testing standards and practices; they must be authored by the best and most highly qualified testing experts available; and they must be extensively piloted, so that the validity and reliability of testing items can be analyzed and improved. National-level “objective” tests, by definition, can contain no errors, and preparation materials for such tests must also be of the highest quality. However, as this analysis shows, the CSAT test-preparation books which were available at the time the report was written contain a significant number of grammatical errors, poorly constructed passages, poorly designed questions, illogicalities and inappropriate topics. Instead of being instruments of positive educational change, the books are presenting incorrect or misleading information to students nationwide. The kind and quantity of errors identified in this report are inexcusable, especially when one considers that the books represent a monopoly in the field. Not only has EBS been given sole responsibility for producing model test-preparation materials, but students have been assured that a number of CSAT items each year will be based to items appearing in EBS books. The result is that the EBS series, though in theory not official school textbooks, are being studied nationwide by prospective college applicants,

As Alderson (2002) has pointed out, the field of language testing contains many examples of unethical behavior, and it is the responsibility of educators to uncover such behavior and demand that it be eradicated. This paper, by reporting on the educational validity of preparation materials being bought by students and studied in schools throughout Korea, attempts to satisfy Alderson’s call for transparency by identifying an unacceptable practice (the dissemination of incorrect and misleading test-preparation materials) and making constructive recommendations.

II. SITUATION

In February 2004, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development announced “a comprehensive set of policies ... to cut down the phenomenal amount of public spending on private education” (Soh, 2004a). These measures included basing CSAT questions on the content of classes available on the state-run education broadcasting network, EBS. Such classes, appearing on the Internet and public television, would model the language to be tested and

would act as benchmarks against which students could measure their abilities (Soh, 2004a). This decision was taken in view of the extremely high level of financial and emotional investment in the test by families, students, teachers and school principals (Soh, 2004b). Since the CSAT is seen as the gateway to successful careers, and since it determines which students get selected for the main “career” universities, enormous effort is put into getting a good score, and tremendous pressure is put on students to achieve high marks. As a result, 3rd year high school English classes are completely test-driven.

In this situation, those who have the means normally spend great amounts of money on test preparation (the average monthly spending in April 2004 was approximately USD 300 for high school students, Soh, 2004b), sending their children to special institutes and hiring expensive tutors to help students digest the mountain of lexis and linguistic rules that are required to pass the final test. Such a state of affairs obviously benefits those with the money to spend on extra tuition, and duplicates the situation in America (cf. Gardner, 1993), where it has been known for some time that relative wealth is the best predictor of academic achievement (Sacks, 1999, pp. 261-262). The policy decision of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development was designed to address this issue by “leveling the playing field.” If a series of public broadcasts and their accompanying textbooks could be used as models of test content, then all students would have an equal opportunity to learn the required language items from them and to pass or fail the test according to merit.

In reality, however, it has transpired that the very books that should provide models of “correct” language use are positively misleading to students (unless they have access to competent and proficient tutors, who can point out and correct the inconsistencies). This paper categorizes and describes the problems and finally suggests palatable short term and long term remedies that will prevent the situation from recurring.

III. METHOD AND ANALYSIS

This diagnostic analysis was conducted by the author in May 2004, using eight EBS books publicly available at that time. The titles of these books have been translated from Korean, for the purposes of this paper:

1. High school English listening: EBS – FM radio programs 2004/2/2 – 7/4
2. Analysis of possible CSAT questions; foreign language section: 2004/2/2 – 4/25
3. CSAT English grammar special class: Internet advanced level
4. English reading method: Internet beginner level

5. First grade CSAT vocabulary special class: Internet advanced level
6. English reading practice (1): Internet advanced level
7. English reading practice (2): Internet advanced level
8. EBS CSAT special class; foreign language section: 2004/2/2/ – 7/4

Errors and inconsistencies identified during examination of these books fell into eight categories. These will be examined separately in the following subsections:

1. grammatical inaccuracies (159 instances identified)
2. incorrect answers to multiple-choice questions and reading passages (7 instances identified)
3. more than one appropriate response to multiple-choice questions (14 instances identified)
4. poorly-constructed passages (not conforming to the rules of paragraph construction) (24 instances identified)
5. illogical passages (poor expositions of unfounded, opinion-based arguments) (54 instances identified)
6. inappropriate use of the target language (especially in listening scripts) (36 instances identified)
7. inappropriate content (racist, sexist, discriminatory) (44 instances identified)
8. repetition of passages in different books (16 instances identified)

1. Grammatical Inaccuracies

This category presented the greatest quantity of errors. In all, some 159 errors were identified, though it is highly likely that a more detailed linguistic analysis (for which there is no space here) would find more. As mentioned earlier, this report is a diagnostic one, and errors identified are ones which are fairly unambiguous, uncontroversial and symptomatic.

If we consider some examples, we can see that the types of error range from the very simple to the more complex:

Each person needs to find the right combination of diet and exercrise.¹ (English reading practice (2), page 47, item 2, line 7)

¹ Incorrect or questionable words in the examples are underlined for ease of identification.

Exercise is no more than a spelling mistake that can easily be identified and corrected by teachers and students.

In Korea, 71% of all children who die are killed when they are struck by cars while walk. (English reading practice (2), page 55, item 2, line 6)

The correct verb form in the sentence above is *walking*. Once more, this is a simple mistake. Note also the questionable content of this passage. If 12,000 children die on the roads every year in Korea, it is certain that a number of students studying this passage will have friends or relatives who are among the deceased. The topic is therefore highly emotional and inappropriate for test-preparation materials.

As a result, they tend to develop some rather unrealistic conception about themselves, which are called 'personal fables.' (English reading practice (1) page 58, item 1, line 3)

The problem in the above example is that *conception* and *are* do not agree. The prevalence of such simple errors in the books raises the question of whether (and by whom) they were proofread. What was the editorial process that led to such mistakes?

... have a chance to meet and talk with the movie director and staffs. (High school English listening, page 58, item 1, line 8)

He got a help from his son. (English reading practice (1), page 112, item 5, line 7)

The two examples above indicate a confusion regarding non-count nouns. This is a common error in Konglish², but is not one that should be reproduced in national textbooks. The use of the term "Konglish" at this point is not intended to be judgmental in any way. As a combination of the target language and cultural influences (including the Korean language), this regional variation of World English has become appropriate in many situations. However, the question being asked here is whether the CSAT English section (and the test-preparation materials) should contain Konglish concepts. In other words, what are the linguistic criteria for the language which is being modeled in the books?

The next example illustrates a more universal problem in studying English: the use of articles.

² A Korean-English interlanguage. This term also applies to English words which have been imported into Korean, where they have acquired a different meaning from that of the original words.

However, he missed the Dorset so much that he returned there and began writing novels. (Analysis of possible CSAT questions, page 58, item 1, lines 2-3)

In this case (as explained in the remainder of the passage), the writer Thomas Hardy was working in London as an architect, but missed his home county (Dorset) so much that he returned to it. *Dorset* is a proper noun and requires no article. In view of the prevalence of this type of error in EFL learning, it should be the role of the EBS books to clarify, rather than to confuse the issue.

The following sentence appears viable at first, if we consider constructions such as “I am hoping to visit you in London tomorrow”:

I am thinking to clean my apartment. (High school English listening, page 86, item 1, line 3)

The appearance of this sentence in a book of listening scripts, however, reveals an incomplete knowledge of spoken English. The phrase “I am thinking to ...” is not used in the vernacular, and should be replaced by “I am thinking of cleaning my apartment.”

You might as well as throw your money into the river as lend it to him. (First grade CSAT vocabulary special class, page 15)

The construction “as well as” has been misused here, with three appearances of the word “as,” the second of which should not be included in the sentence.

Now have your arms folded. Don’t close your eyes. (High school English listening, page 34, item 3, line 5)

This use of the imperative form occurs in a listening passage in which one person (a photographer?) is telling another person to make certain poses. To make the utterance “Have your arms folded” is not grammatically incorrect (it is possible to construct this sentence), but its meaning is ambiguous. The use of the passive suggests that there is a third person present, whom the poser can ask to fold his/her (the poser’s) arms. The intended meaning in the passage, however, would seem to be “Stand with your arms folded” or simply “Fold your arms.” The inaccuracy is thus one of meaning and of verb-form usage. In spoken English (which is the basis of listening passages), it is normal to use the expression which conveys meaning in the simplest and clearest way.

M: The sales conference is near at hand, so I'm supposed to talk over the conference.
(High school English listening, page 51, item 5, line 8)

The final example shows a confusion of preposition usage. The man in the dialogue wants to talk about the conference. Prepositions represent another thorny issue for EFL learners, and the EBS books have a responsibility to clarify the problem through use of exemplary modeling of authentic spoken language. In passing, it is interesting that the sentence can be construed as "correct" in a different context. If we imagine a situation in which the speaker is a news reporter who is going to stand in front of the conference (or in front of a TV showing the conference) and talk over it as he gives his report to watchers, then this sentence could be used. However, this is not the situation that is inferred from the dialogue. The use of the causal "so I'm supposed to" makes this hypothesis highly unlikely and makes the use of "about" (instead of "over") highly likely. In either case, the dialogue could have been constructed with greater care, so as to make the intended meaning obvious.

All of the examples in this section reveal presentation of misleading information to test-takers, and place a burden of accountability on teachers. If high school teachers have to inform students that there are a number of grammatical errors in the test-preparation materials, and that they should therefore be careful to verify any examples when studying them, then the result will be general dissatisfaction with the books and distrust of the materials within them. Teachers will also be placed in the unfortunate position of criticizing government-sponsored, nationally available materials, and will be open to questioning in terms of their own ability and qualifications.

2. Incorrect Answers to Multiple-Choice Questions

Though with only 7 instances identified in this examination, this category must be viewed as serious, since explicitly incorrect information is being given to students. Given the high proportion of multiple-choice questions in the CSAT, it is essential that modeled questions have the correct answers in the preparation materials, and that proofreading be of the highest quality.

The first example in this section highlights the sort of confusion that can occur. Students are asked to identify the dictionary definition which is closest to the meaning of the underlined word *over*:

The manager <u>over</u> a staff of 10 workers is on vacation. She will be back tomorrow.
--

over 1. above in place or position: *the roof over one's head* 2. above and to the other side of: *to leap over a wall* 3. above in authority, rank, power, etc., so as to govern, control or conquer: *She is over the department now. He will be over the occupied zone.* 4. so as to rest on or cover, on or upon: *Throw a sheet over the bed.* 5. on or upon, so as to cause an apparent change in one's mood, attitude, etc.: *I can't imagine what has come over her.*

Ⓐ 1 Ⓑ 2 Ⓒ 3 Ⓓ 4 Ⓔ 5

(First grade CSAT vocabulary special class, page 20, III)

The third option (Ⓒ) is the most appropriate definition for the given sentence. However, when we look at the two examples given in definition 3, we find that the second of these (“He will be over the occupied zone.”) is very ambiguous. Although such a phrase could mean “He will be in charge of (in control of) the occupied zone,” its immediate (decontextualized) implication is that “He” is a pilot who will soon be flying over the zone in question. The use of “occupied” suggests a context of war and of occupation by an enemy. For someone to be “over” that zone in the future, implies that someone from the “friendly” side is going to fly above the enemy-occupied territory, probably in order to take pictures. Whatever the actualities of this derivation, the sentence is inappropriate and confusing as an example of “over” in the context of authority. The point here is that test-questions must be very carefully constructed and must go through an exhaustive process of validation. When misunderstandings such as the one in the previous example are identified, they must be rigorously edited and ambiguities erased.

Let us now consider a more obvious example of incorrect responses. In this question, students are asked to choose the best combination of (A) and (B) answers to fill the gaps in a given passage. Because of the seriousness of the error in this instance, and in the interests of clarity, the whole test item is included below:

11. Find the most appropriate (A) and (B) options to fill in the empty spaces³.

Pollution from industry can put unwanted chemicals into the air, damaging the environment. When people or animals breathe the poor quality air, it can make them sick. Pollution can also be garbage that people throw on the ground or into the ocean, lakes or rivers. Chemicals and other materials _____ (A) _____ for the environment must be properly disposed of to prevent pollution. _____ (B) _____ can help reduce pollution and make the environment more beautiful and safer for people and animals.

³ This instruction is translated from Korean for the purposes of this paper.

(A)	.....	(B)
① aren't good	.....	Not littering and recycling
② which aren't good	.....	Littering not and recycling
③ aren't good	.....	Not littering and recycling
④ nothing good	.....	To litter not and to recycle
⑤ what aren't good	.....	Not littering and recycling

(CSAT English grammar special class, page 91, item 11)

The correct answer according to the book, is response ③. When we examine this, however, we find that it is exactly the same as response ①. Students studying this passage by themselves can be justifiably confused at this point. It is left to teachers to have the confidence to indicate that the use of "which" is necessary, and that answer (A)② is correct, along with (B)① or ③.

To consider one more example in this category, students are required in the following test item to find the closest approximation to the word underlined in the given sentence:

The lifestyle of people who live in each culture area is influenced by the geography of that area.

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|
| ① selected | ② reflected | ③ neglected |
| ④ elected | ⑤ collected | |

(First grade CSAT vocabulary special class, page 106, Word Check 54)

Option ② is given as the correct answer to this item, though closer inspection reveals that it in fact reverses the meaning of the sentence. If *lifestyle* is influenced by *geography*, then *geography* is the primary factor. If *geography* reflects *lifestyle*, however, then *lifestyle* is the primary factor. In this 'chicken-and-egg' problem, "influenced by" and "reflected by" are opposites. Potential for confusion is further increased by the term "culture area" (is this term the intended one?) and the lack of an article before "people." As the sentence stands, it could be referring to people (in general) who live in each (all of the specified) area(s) of culture. In this case, people who live in each one of the areas under consideration find their lifestyles influenced by the different geography of each area. While this doesn't alter the correct response (since there isn't one!), it implies that the people who don't live in each (every) area are not influenced by the geography. In this complex and ambiguous situation, the need to find the answer which is closest in meaning to "influenced" becomes very difficult indeed.

3. More Than One Appropriate Response

In similar fashion to the previous category, only 14 instances of multiple correct answers were

revealed in this diagnostic survey. However, it remains true for both categories that these instances are misleading and confusing, and serve to undermine the EBS books' credibility. If students have to rely on private tutors and language institute teachers to clarify the problems and to vet the books, then the initial goal of making a "level playing field" for all students, irrespective of parents' wealth, will not be achieved.

In the interests of saving space, this section and the ones following it will be confined to a small number of representative examples. The first example in this category requires students to find the most appropriate word to fill the blank in the given sentence:

Men who drink a lot of alcohol may have a higher chance of having children with _____ or mental problems.

- ① social ② natural ③ ethical
④ physical ⑤ physiological

(First grade CSAT vocabulary special class, page 94, Word Check 4)

At first glance, the appearance of *mental* in the given sentence suggests a contrasting answer (*physical*), and this is the response given in the book. When we consider the meaning of the sentence, however, remembering that we have no context to guide us (this is a discrete test item, and has no surrounding text to provide us with the appropriate meaning of ambiguous terms), then it becomes apparent that *social* (response ①) might be just as appropriate. After all, if a man drinks so much that his children "may have a higher chance of having physical problems" (i.e. his children might suffer deformities at birth), then it is entirely probable that they will also suffer *social* consequences arising from having a father who is an alcoholic. We might wonder equally whether these children might have *ethical* problems (response ③), due to the poor role modeling provided by the father. Finally, there is a possibility of *physiological* problems (response ⑤), since the children's "healthy or normal functioning" would be impaired by their home environment (poor nutrition, parental guidance, etc.).

It is interesting that this dubious topic (parental dependence on alcohol) appears in another Word Check item, and that this also has more than one "best" answer:

Large quantities of alcohol may affect the quality of the father's _____ .

- ① pregnancy ② character ③ oxygen
④ genes ⑤ genetics

(First grade CSAT vocabulary special class, page 105, Word Check 47)

Response ④ is identified as the best response, but it is evident that large quantities of alcohol

may just as well affect the father’s “character.”

Finally in this section, we consider an item in which all the possible responses can be construed as being plausible. This passage once more asks students to choose a set of (A) & (B) responses:

During the Middle Ages, Europeans consumed food with their fingers. People rarely used forks or spoons. The only eating utensil at a medieval table was the knife. When guests were invited to dinner at someone’s house, they were expected to bring their own knives. They didn’t care whether the knives were clean or not. Knives were used to spear hunks of meat and to cut it, and also to cut the plates made of heavy bread. Guests had to share drinking cups and bowls of food.

It can be inferred that ___ (A) ___ during the Middle Ages were ___ (B) ___.

- | (A) | | (B) |
|-------------------|-------|---------------|
| ① dinner parties | ..... | unpleasant |
| ② eating utensils | ..... | inconvenient |
| ③ tables manners | ..... | unrefined |
| ④ eating utensils | ..... | impractical |
| ⑤ table manners | ..... | uncomfortable |

(Analysis of possible CSAT questions, page 112, item 1)

Response ③ is given as the set of answers presenting the most appropriate words, yet *tables manners* (response ③ (A)) is incorrect (this term does not exist) and therefore appears to be a distractor – an answer deigned to confuse the testee. In this situation, students could not be blamed for choosing any of the other 4 alternatives. Having read the passage, they might well infer that “dinner parties were unpleasant” (response ①), that “eating utensils were inconvenient” (response ②), that “eating utensils were impractical” (response ④), or that “table manners were uncomfortable” (response ⑤). In fact the one response that cannot be chosen is the “correct” one, since “tables manners” is grammatically incorrect. This example of shoddy test-item design is symptomatic of many similar passages in which problems are less glaring but nevertheless exist, to unnecessarily confuse the hapless test-taker.

4. Poorly-Constructed Passages

One of the problems in writing reading passages that are suitable for multiple-choice questions with one “correct” answer is that the “best” word or phrase can be too easily identified if students are aware of principles of paragraph construction. Because of this, there can be a

tendency to “bend” such rules, and to make paragraphs that hide the topic sentence by putting it in an inappropriate place. Such lack of authenticity allows the CSAT to define its own version of style and causes teachers and students to focus on test-taking skills rather than fluency in the target language. Instances of such test-paragraphs can be seen in the EBS books, in which (for example) “I can’t imagine” appears 10 times in an extraordinarily inauthentic passage (CSAT English grammar special class, page 128, item 1). In another example, “He or she,” or “his/her” or “himself/herself” appear 11 times in the reading passage and 12 times in the responses (EBS CSAT special class, page 94, item 4). In order to put the problem into context, this section focuses on one particular example of poor paragraph construction and the resulting confusion in terms of selecting an answer. In this item, students are asked to choose the option that best describes what the underlined “this” in the passage refers to:

Like any industry, the rose business must adapt to changing conditions in the marketplace in order to succeed. In the past, a florist shop was most likely a local, independently owned business that bought roses from a wholesaler who purchased them from a grower. For Valentine’s Day, the cost of a dozen roses rose twofold or more as a result of high demand. Cost for a dozen delivered roses could be \$150. Today, suppliers of roses include large supermarket chains, wholesalers who sell directly at many locations, and direct telephone marketers who don’t even have to have a storefront. Add to this the price competition of imported roses grown in countries with low labor costs on the equator, and the romance of roses is replaced by economic realities. (English reading practice (1), page 92, item 5)

Before considering the meaning of *this* in the passage, it is helpful to analyze the passage itself. In line 2, we are told about suppliers of roses “In the past.” This is obviously done to contrast with conditions “Today” (line 5). However, two sentences (from “For” to “\$150”) are placed out of context, in front of the “Today” sentence. These out-of-place sentences tell us about the price of roses on Valentine’s Day (not about suppliers of roses) and should rightly be positioned in front of “Add to this ...” (line 8), since they are complemented by the final sentences, which continue the theme of the (article missing in the passage, line 5, “Cost”) cost of roses. Were this to be done, however, *this* would refer to the cost of roses on Valentine’s Day. As it is, *this* refers to “Ⓞ the current situation in which roses are supplied easily and cheaply,”⁴ and “this” ease of purchase (according to the author of the passage) reduces the romantic value of the roses. However, if we read the paragraph in this light (i.e. with the “Valentine’s Day”

⁴ This is a translation of a response written in Korean.

sentences in their current position), we are expected to believe that “In the past ... [The] cost for a dozen delivered roses could be \$150.” Not only are these two sentences irrelevant to the flow of the passage (we are not told how much the same roses would be “today,” and the contrastive value of the sentences is thus lost), but we are put in the position of reconciling on the one hand an undefined time before supermarket chains, before wholesalers selling directly and before telephone marketers, and on the other hand the high cost of \$150 dollars for 12 delivered roses. Inferring that “price competition” has recently made roses much cheaper, we remain in confusion over the final statement that “the romance of roses is replaced by economic realities.” This conclusion seems to contradict the meaning of the passage and clouds reader-comprehension even more. The author is telling us that cheap and easily available roses are not romantic, since they are subject to “economic realities.” The reality, however, is that lovers on Valentine’s Day can easily obtain beautiful roses to express their affection. The “economic realities” apply to the suppliers, who have been forced to lower their prices. The romance-value of flowers traditionally associated with love is surely not determined by cost, though the author would have us believe this. On the contrary, the necessity of having to pay \$150 for a dozen roses is an example of economic reality.

The 24 instances of poor item construction which were identified in the EBS books are further instances of confusing test-design practices. Whatever the source of the passages used, it is essential that every item be extensively scrutinized for clarity of meaning and correctness of structure. For this reason, all examples of the foreign language used in national tests and in national test-preparation materials should be designed, edited and proofread by expert test designers, and should bear analysis at every level.

5. Illogical Passages

This theme of confusion continues in the next category, in which we consider examples of unfounded, opinion-based and even illogical arguments (54 instances identified). To claim that a test passage doesn’t have to conform to common laws regarding appropriateness of written style and logical exposition of arguments is to disregard the principles upon which the target language is founded, and to replace them with meaningless language-as-code, in which students simply identify the “correct” answer regardless of the questionability of the content. A particular example might suffice to illustrate the point here. In this item, students have to find the most appropriate place to insert the given sentence:

Students today belong to the TV generation and find it hard to read a book.

Advanced technology takes time away from reading and thinking. Before television,

people used to read, think and converse. (①) They had the time to look at their lives and values. (②) Today, people prefer to watch exciting things on video and television. (③) Few people find time to read books, journals and newspapers. (④) This affects their ability to study for school. (⑤). Also, because students do not read or think, they cannot look at their own lives and values. (English reading practice (1), page 118, item 1)

If we look deeply at this passage, we find that (whatever its origin) it is profoundly insulting to the very people who are using it to study for the test. The passage calmly informs us (without supporting evidence) that people used to “read, think and converse” before television, and that (by implication) they do not do these things now. The generalizations continue as we are told that “few people find time to read books” and that “students do not read or think.” Because of this, “they cannot look at their own lives and values.” If this passage were really true, then it would be a damning indictment of advanced technology and the very students who were reading the passage would find it extremely difficult to do so, since they “do not read or think.” Closer inspection reveals that this passage has been written specially for this type of test question and, as a result, the sentences are all very short (so that the given sentence can be inserted easily). It might be argued that the use of such blatant generalization makes the item easier to comprehend, but the extent of these unsubstantiated claims is inexcusable. The statement that “Students today belong to the TV generation and find it hard to read a book” is also questionable from a semantic perspective: i) Does this sentence mean that (all) students today experience physical difficulty in reading “a” (any) book? ii) Does it mean that there is a particular book (“a book”) that all students today find it hard to read? iii) Does this sentence contain two propositions (“students today come from the TV generation” and “Students today find it hard to read a book”) or is the second a consequence of the first? One could continue asking similar questions of the other statements in the passage.

The use of questionable logic, prejudice, sexism and discrimination continues in many other passages, of which a few examples are given below:

In any country, women are the poorest of the poor. (English reading practice (1), page 12, item 5, line 1)

Is this statement true of Korea? Do we want to make this statement in the CSAT? How will female test-takers feel about being included in this generalization?

We cannot use the same reasoning on ourselves. (English reading practice (1), page 60,

item 3, line 6)

This passage tells us that we can learn to understand the weaknesses in other people, but we should not apply the same reasoning to ourselves. Apparently the logic that we apply to our acquaintances is specific to them and cannot be transferred. Presumably it also cannot be applied by them to themselves.

Sometimes she was also asked to keep an eye on Mrs. Walker's elderly mother who lived in a house next to the door. (English reading practice (1), page 148, item 1, line 8)

The subject of this sentence ("she") is an Indonesian woman employed to look after the son of a professional couple (Dr. and Mrs. Walker) in London. It is hard to believe, however, that Mrs. Walker's mother lives in a house that is best described as being "next to the door." This must be an extremely small house if "the door" (which door?) is used as a referent. One imagines a small doghouse outside the kitchen door. However, the employers are obviously quite wealthy, and it is assumed that Mrs. Walker's mother lives in a house *next door*. Such inference is not too difficult for a native speaker, but one wonders how high school students are expected to critically evaluate (and repair) such a mistake, especially in view of time constraints.

Solar power and wind power and the like are pie-in-the-sky. (First grade CSAT vocabulary special class, page 76, IV, line 2)

This is one of a number of passages which advocate nuclear energy to the exclusion of "alternative" energy sources such as wind, waves, sun and geothermal energy. This passage also tells us unequivocally that "the greens" (advocates of "safe energy") must be ready to accept fewer jobs and a lower standard of living if their ideas are to be considered effective. The fact is, however, that in addition to the significant arguments against nuclear power, modern research and technology have made great strides in the field of alternative energy; wave power, solar power, wind power and geothermal power are now being used increasingly around the world. To make such a statement as this passage does (that solar power is "pie-in-the-sky") is therefore dogmatic and unsound. The designer(s) of this item cannot be excused by saying that the passage was adapted from an authentic source. If the passage contains opinionated, unfounded arguments and generalizations, then it simply cannot be used in a national test or in preparation materials for that test.

In the end, Nancy decides to use her computer to write e-mails to Mark. She has never

used e-mail before, so she is learning how to send an email from Mark. (High school English listening, page 207, item 17, line 5)

The juxtaposition in this passage of “e-mails to Mark” and “email from Mark” is confusing, and suggests that Nancy is learning how to send (to someone else) an e-mail that she has received from Mark. This is further compounded by the fact that she “decides” (rather than “has decided”) to write e-mails to Mark, and (apparently) at the same time “she is learning how to send an e-mail from Mark.” The passage confuses the listener, because the present tense is used to describe a series of events, as if commenting on an unseen video or TV program.

Unfortunately the defensiveness does not deserve you. (Analysis of possible CSAT questions, page 107, item 3, line 3)

This illustrates another semantic confusion. If it were possible for defensiveness to deserve someone (an interesting concept), then the sentence might be overlooked. However, the context of the passage shows us that the intended meaning is in fact “The defensiveness does not do you credit.”

According to the police, the driver's behavior should be different depending on whether he encounters a drunk driver or a distracted driver. (Analysis of possible CSAT questions, page 137, (A), line 1)

This sentence (and the rest of the passage) gives no answer to the reader’s questions “Who is ‘the driver’?” and “Why should he/she behave differently according to the drivers he/she encounters?”

Santa Claus has little to do with Christianity. Saint Nicolas was a fourth century bishop in Turkey. (English reading method, page 88, item 2, line 1)

These two sentences are contradictory. Sainthood is a Christian institution, and the position of “bishop” is a step in the Christian hierarchy. How is it, then, that Saint Nicolas “has little to do with Christianity”?

Speak directly to them rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter. (EBS CSAT special class, page 178, item 4, line 2)

This is one of a series of suggestions given to people “meeting the disabled.” One wonders, however, how it is possible to speak to people “directly” if they need sign language. One also wonders how disabled test-takers would view this rather condescending item.

6. Inappropriate Use of the Target Language

As mentioned at the beginning of Section III, the book of high school English listening passages is particularly prone to the use of inappropriate language, incorrect register, and non-sequiturs. Thus, of the 36 identified examples, 34 come from the listening book, indicating a lack of familiarity with authentic spoken English and communication strategies on the part of the dialogue writers. As can be seen from the following two sample dialogues, the regularity of inauthentic language and incorrect register and the resulting awkwardness of style do not bode well for students hoping to hear authentic language.

Sample Dialogue 1:

M: Hey, Diana, please pass me Brandy’s photo that is on my desk. I should fix my eyes on this project.

W: OK, but I don’t know who Brandy is. Please describe her in detail.

M: Yes, she has bangs and shoulder length, almost straight, blond hair.

W: I see, but two people are so similar. Are there any other features?

M: She has a nice smile and great teeth.

W: Is her neck long or short?

M: She has a long neck and looks very brisk.

W: Oh, yes, here it is. (High school English listening, page 94, item 01)

It is appropriate at this stage to take all the problems in this dialogue in sequence (while focusing on the “inappropriate language” ones), since it presents an opportunity to examine how misleading such a poorly-written passage can be to listeners, and consequently how difficult it can be for students to identify the correct answer (which in this case involves looking at 5 “head shot” pictures of girls and identifying which one is the photo of Brandy).

- Line 1: Firstly, we have a problem of register. The man (M:) sets a familiar (informal) tone by saying “Hey, Diana” and then changes immediately to a formal register as he asks her to “please pass me Brandy’s photo that is on my desk.” Spoken, informal language is known for its use of incomplete and ungrammatical utterances, yet this well-formed sentence could

have come straight from a stylebook of formal written English. More authentic (and comprehensible) would be something along the lines of “can you pass me the photo of Brandy? It’s on the desk.”

- Lines 1 and 2: The man then says “I should fix my eyes on this project.” The aural discomfort caused by this particular phrase is due simply to the fact that it is incorrect. It is possible to fix one’s gaze on something, but not one’s eyes. Presumably the man is saying that he can’t get the photo himself because he “can’t take his eyes off” his work (i.e. he has to concentrate on it to the exclusion of all else). Unfortunately the phrase used in the dialogue impedes comprehension further by using “should,” implying that the man “ought to” pay full attention to a project that does not allow him to go to his desk and pick up a photograph. Finally, the term “project” implies a long-term, ongoing task or set of tasks, and it is difficult to imagine how such a long-term undertaking prevents the man from walking over to the desk and picking up the photo, particularly since it takes him so long to describe it to Diana.
- Line 3: The woman continues the informal tone with “OK,” but then contradicts this with “I don’t know who Brandy is. Please describe her in detail.” These two phrases come out of the writing-style book once more in addition to being misleading in meaning. The woman doesn’t need to know “who Brandy is,” but “what she looks like.” A simple response of “OK, what does she look like?” would have sufficed.
- Line 4: The man answers the woman’s request by saying “Yes, she has bangs ... hair.” Presumably “Yes,” is supposed to convey the meaning that he will be happy to describe Brandy in detail. However, it does not follow on from the meaning of the previous turn, since Diana did not ask a “yes/no” question.
- Line 5: The woman returns to her formal register, and tells the man “but two people are so similar. Are there any other features?” The intended meaning is presumably that the man’s description matches two of the photos on his desk. However, the phrase used by the woman tells us that “two people” (any two, unspecified people) are similar. This is an awkward turn that needs clarification and simplification in order to promote ease of comprehension: “W: I see, but there are two people who fit that description. Can you tell me anything else?”
- Line 6: The man then tells the woman about Brandy’s smile and teeth. Given that “two people are so similar” (line 5), this information now makes photo ① the only possibility, though the earlier information about “shoulder length, almost straight, blond hair” is confusing, since the style of the drawings in the book make it impossible to distinguish the hair color of the girls. Students might well be confused at this point, since the girl who seems to have blond hair has short, wavy hair, is smiling, and has teeth that are as “great” as the other two smiling girls. The hair in the drawing of the other girls (including Brandy)

is drawn using a large number of parallel lines, which give the effect of brown hair.

- Line 8: “M: She has a long neck and looks very brisk” Again, this description can apply to any of the three girls who are smiling. If the information about the length of the hair has been missed, and if the hair color remains impossible to distinguish, then this turn will not help the students to identify the correct photo. Finally we are told that Brandy is “very brisk.” Even if this referred to her liveliness, and vigor, or to her sharpness in speech or manner, its use would be inappropriate in this setting.

Sample Dialogue 2:

W: For the life of me, I can't fix this computer for myself.

M: What's the problem?

W: I can't figure out the problem.

M: Let me see. It is no big deal. I guess I can handle this problem.

W: Really? You always seem too confident. But almost always you end up asking my help.

M: As a matter of fact, it is a snap for me. I have only to replace the fuse.

W: I hope that you will fix it with ease.

M: Look! It works beautifully.

W: I have to take back my words. Thanks a million!

M: My pleasure. (High school English listening, page 174, item 3)

- Line 1: “For the life of me, I can't fix this computer for myself.” In addition to the rather extreme first utterance (the woman seems to be “at the end of her tether”), there is the problem of the preposition “for.” Is the woman fixing the problem *for* herself, or is she frustrated because she can't fix it *by* herself? It would be more natural to say “I can't fix this computer.”
- Line 3: The woman can't discover what is wrong with her computer, but her second turn suggests more of a mathematical problem which needs to be solved by her. “I can't figure out what's wrong” would be better.
- Line 4: The man now condescendingly tells the woman that the insoluble problem she has been wrestling with, the problem she can't fix “for the life of me,” “is no big deal.” He declines, however to say “It's no big deal,” as would be normal in spoken English. (There are only two contractions in this dialogue.) “I guess I can handle this problem” continues his sexist tone. It must also be mentioned that “problem” appears in lines 2, 3 and 4, whereas in written and spoken English, it is normal not to repeat key words that have been used before; instead, synonyms or pronouns are used. This indicates interference by the L1

(Korean), in which language key words are often repeated in a passage, especially if they derive from Chinese characters.

- Line 5: The phrase “You always seem too confident” is inappropriate here, since “too” is a criticism of the man’s approach to life and suggests that he is arrogant. This criticism continues when the woman states “But almost always you end up asking my help.” The dialogue now has turned from one in which the man is offering to fix the woman’s computer, to one in which she is making personal comments on their relationship, accusing him of not being as competent as he would like to seem. It might also be noted that the language of this second sentence is very uncomfortable due to incorrect sequencing of words. It would be simpler (and more authentic) for the woman to say: “You always think you know what you’re doing, but you usually end up coming to me for help.”
- Line 7: “M: As a matter of fact, it is a snap for me.” The man ignores the woman’s negative comments on his character and informs her (in unaccustomed informal language, but still without contractions) that the problem is very simple for him (though he knows that it was exasperating for her).
- Line 8: “W: I hope that you will fix it with ease.” The man has already said that the problem can be fixed easily, so this turn is unnecessary, particularly in view of the fact that the woman’s language is highly inappropriate, resembling something that a character from a Jane Austen novel might have uttered.

These two dialogues are symptomatic of a general level of confusion with regard to appropriateness of register in the EBS listening passages. In addition, the use of incorrectly quoted idioms, Konglish, reference to color in black and white drawings, and L1 interference make such passages extremely difficult to understand on first hearing. It might be said in their defense that students in fact comprehend them more easily than they do authentic dialogues, since high school students also use Konglish, quote idioms incorrectly and (rather than thinking in English) translate from Korean when using the target language. Such a defense is, however, extremely dangerous, since it advocates the construction of listening passages according to the students’ interlanguage, and not according to the actual language as it is used around the world. If there is to be a national CSAT of English, then it goes without saying that the language of the listening passages in that test must be internationally acknowledged as correct and authentic, whatever its level.

7. Inappropriate Content

This diagnostic analysis comes now to the question of content in the reading passages. It

might be argued that the main purpose of the English section of the CSAT is to test comprehension through “objective” testing methods, and that the content of the passages used is irrelevant. This argument, as with the one in the previous paragraph, is highly dubious and basically untenable. It implies that language and communication of ideas are separate, that language is to be studied per se, irrespective of the message it conveys, that meaning has no

TABLE 1
Sample Inappropriate Topics in EBS Books

Books	Topics and comments
English reading practice (1) Page 12, Item 5.	<i>Addictions and dependencies (shopping, eating, sports):</i> Many students will have such dependencies, or will know people who have them.
English reading practice (1) Page 13, Item 6.	<i>Land development resulting in lower house values:</i> Many students will know of people who have lost their houses due to land development.
English reading practice (1) Page 28, Item 1.	<i>Suicide and anti-social behavior:</i> This is a highly sensitive topic for high school students.
English reading practice (1) Page 33, Item 6.	<i>Nuclear winter:</i> Another sensitive topic, particularly in view of North Korea’s nuclear capability.
English reading practice (1) Page 50, Item 3.	<i>Adoption:</i> This topic is becoming more acceptable, but is still a closed book for many families in Korea.
English reading practice (1) Page 103, Item 6.	<i>Pregnancy and work:</i> This passage, which depicts a woman giving in to sexual discrimination, is sexist.
English reading practice (1) Page 118, Item 1.	<i>Students today:</i> This passage tells us that students today “cannot look at their own lives and values.”
English reading practice (1) Page 152, Item 5.	<i>The “Singapore Girl”:</i> This passage tells us that only “beautiful and young women” apply to become a “Singapore Girl.” This is sexist and insulting to “non-beautiful” young women.
First grade CSAT vocabulary special class. Page 52, IV.	<i>Pop culture:</i> This passage tells us that “pop culture is an annoyance and a hazard to most of us” and that its “universal acceptance is ... shocking,” since it contains “particularly noxious pollutants.” Many students would find this passage insulting, and would not count themselves with “most of us.”
High school English listening, Page 97, Item 12.	<i>Observance of laws:</i> This passage is discriminatory, highly opinionated and anti-religious.
High school English listening, Page 106, Item 2.	<i>Betty’s savings:</i> Betty’s brother spends Betty’s money irresponsibly. This might have happened to a number of test-takers.
High school Eng. listening. Page 167, Item 6, line 12.	<i>The screen test:</i> This dialog is insulting to the acting profession and to students who want to get artistic jobs.
English reading practice (2) Page 55, Item 2.	<i>UNICEF report on child mortalities, especially in Korea:</i> Many students will be members of families which have lost a child in a car accident.
English reading method Page 39, Items 3-4.	<i>Rodin’s sculpture and the nature of women:</i> This passage is extremely sexist and condescending.
CSAT English grammar Page 124, Item 5.	<i>Divorce:</i> Many students will have divorced parents. This is a very sensitive topic.
CSAT English grammar Page 144, Item 10.	<i>Human bodies for science:</i> This is a passage about cutting up dead bodies and selling the parts!

connection with motivation to learn, and that the reader does not invest any emotional interest in the passage being studied. When we look at a representative list of inappropriate passage topics (Table 1), however, we can see that these claims are incorrect and that (for example) the topic of suicide is not one that should be included in CSAT reading passages, particularly in view of the regular toll of student suicides following the national test in November of each year (Soh, 2003a).

It could be said that these topics (selected from the 44 inappropriate topics identified in the EBS books) represent life and that students should get used to reading authentic articles, however unsettling they might be. In life, however, we read newspapers, magazines and books through choice. If we don't like what we are reading, or if it upsets us, we stop reading. This option is not available to students studying for the national CSAT. If such passages are in the EBS test-preparation books, then it is possible that similar ones will be in the final exam in November. While not advocating the censoring of topics or the cleansing of certain vocabulary from the EBS books, this report recommends that sensitive topics be treated with care, and that the appropriateness of passages about cutting up dead bodies (for example) be questioned at the editing stage. It must be remembered that affect is a powerful controller of learning (Stern, 1983, p. 386) and that negative affect caused by inappropriate test-item content can have a harmful effect on the test-taker's ability or desire to answer the questions.

8. Repetition of Passages

This final category makes the observation that at least 16 passages are used more than once in the EBS books. It is not clear whether this is for ease of learning or simply to fill space. It could be that, since different books cover different aspects of language, the authors hoped to make grammatical or structural points more comprehensible by referring to a passage that has already been studied. It could also be that the repetition of items that have appeared in previous versions of the test (and in different EBS books) is intended to promote familiarity with the test format and language level. In either case, it would make sense to cross-reference the various appearances of such texts, or to include a greater range of past questions.

IV. CONCLUSION

A national test such as the CSAT, along with its officially sponsored test-preparation materials, must conform to international standards of test-design. Just as it is unacceptable for a test-question to fall short of testing standards (cf. Soh, 2003b), so it is imperative that the

materials on which the test is based should be of the highest quality, and should be written by the most able professionals available. This diagnostic examination shows, however, that the current EBS English test-preparation books contain a sufficient amount of dubious, erroneous and unsuitable material as to be misleading to teachers and students, and that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development's original idea has been devalued by poor English test-preparation materials. As a result, high school students and teachers are reportedly using the EBS books and the EBS programs less and less, as their inadequacies become apparent to all (O, 2004). In view of this, and in view of the responsibility of test-item designers to provide test-preparation materials that are exemplary in every respect, it must be asked, even on the basis of this inexhaustive analysis, why these important texts were not written by a permanent team of experienced educators and international language-test experts. Why was such a vital project not given the highest priority in terms of standards of authoring? Why were the books not piloted, edited and proofread thoroughly? The fact that the EBS books have been designated as examples of correct language use by the Ministry, and the further fact that millions of students preparing for the national CSAT are using these materials, requires the highest levels of professionalism to be observed. Not only should the test-preparation materials be above question in terms of grammatical accuracy, linguistic authenticity and social appropriateness, but they should also have been thoroughly screened and piloted before arriving on the shelves of public bookshops.

A testing system in which students' futures are determined by summative, high stakes, multiple-choice, discrete-item, standardized tests of language-as-code, is extremely unsatisfactory (cf. Lee, 1991). To compound this situation by producing inaccurate, misleading and inappropriate test-materials is unacceptable. It would not be an adequate solution, however, simply to correct a list of errors, since many of the passages and listening exercises need complete rewriting in order to eradicate Konglish, incorrect register, illogicalities and unsuitable topics. In consequence, it would be well worth the short term inconvenience of withdrawing the books, in order to produce a new set of excellent study materials to be used in the long term. In the interests of quality and consistency, these books (and the CSAT test itself) would be written by a semi-permanent team of government-approved test-item designers and would conform to international testing criteria. This would be beneficial for students, teachers and everyone concerned, since it would restore confidence in the CSAT and in the validity of the preparation materials. Teachers would know that they are transmitting accurate information, and students would know that the passages have been internationally accredited and can therefore be trusted. It is to be hoped that this opportunity to restructure will be seized and acted on at the highest level.

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