Talk The Walk

Improving the way we think and talk about our testing work

By Eric Jacobson
My Agile2016 submission stumbles...
You’ll learn test technique names like “Follow-On testing” or “Blink Zoom testing”, that will help you expand your investigations.

The names won’t help with that.
You’ll learn test techniques...

You don’t know what your lessons are going to be. (You may have some *intentions*, but you have no way of knowing in advance what people are going to learn.)
This talk will use group discussion, videos, exercises, and lecture to increase your command of testing language.

Talks don’t use things. YOU do
I’ll show you a technique I use to remove ambiguities from my own verbiage as well as others’.

How can you remove ambiguities from others’ language? ...no more than I remove bugs from other people’s code.
A handful of practitioners have worked to expand our testing language but it seems to me, most testers still struggle to speak precisely about what they do.

You don’t need “it seems to me” here. It’s a fact.
Craftspeople refine their language to improve the speed at which they practice their craft.

The speed? Only the speed?
This session targets testers, whether their focus is exploratory testing or writing automated checks.

We’re deprecating the term “exploratory testing” because it’s like saying “carbon-based humans” or “vegetarian cauliflower”.
Live experiment
Quality
(noun)
value to some person
- Jerry Weinberg
Safety Language

(noun)

a precise way of speaking that differentiates between observation and inference

- Jon Bach
Instead of:
“It passes”

Try:
“It appears to pass under these circumstances”
Instead of:
“There are no problems”

Try:
“I’m not aware of any problems”

Or even better:
“I’m not aware of any problems so far”
Instead of:

“It meets the requirements”

Try:

“It meets the requirements to some degree”
Instead of:
“Our customers are not complaining”

Try:
“Our customers are not complaining...yet”
Instead of:
“It never works”

Try:
“Each time I’ve perform these steps, it hasn’t worked”
Instead of:

“It works”

Try:

“I’ve seen it work”

Or:

“It can work”
Instead of:
“You’re wrong”

Try:
“I disagree”

Wrap up your argument with:
“I might be wrong”
Instead of:
“This is what is happening...”

Begin an observation with:
“It seems to me...”
Instead of:
“You should do this”

Try:
“You may want to do this”
Instead of:

“12”

Try:

“I don’t know how to count test cases”
Change “The” to “A” Heuristic.

- Michael Bolton
Instead of:
“The problem with this new API is this.”

Try:
“A problem with this new API is this.”
Instead of:
“The deadline is...”

Try:
“A deadline is...”
Try these on your own:

• “All the testing is done.”
• “The way to reproduce this bug is...”
• “The Story is QA Certified”
• “The Acceptance Criteria passes”
• “This can’t be reproduced”
Ambiguities
Integration Testing
Sans Personal Pronouns
Ambiguous things testers say
I found a bunch of bugs that need to be fixed.
Go write a bug for that.
I finished the bug.
We need more automation.
...our Backlog
Things we can say better
I break software!
I break people’s illusions about software!
Derrick’s code is buggy.
That API is buggy.
Change “testing” to “all of development” Heuristic

- Michael Bolton
Why is testing taking so long?
Why is all of development taking so long?
To prevent bugs from getting to customers we should improve testing.
To prevent bugs from getting to customers we should improve all of development.
Why is testing so expensive?
Why is all of development so expensive?
Bad Agile boards can lead to bad language, which can lead to dysfunctional teams.
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Nothing to test.
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I’m done.
We just need to test and then we’re done!
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Is it in QA or Dev?
One thing is done.
It’s all development!
Developer
(noun)
a person on a development team (e.g., tester, product owner, scrum master, programmer)
Programmer
(noun)
a developer specialized in writing code
Tester

(noun)

a developer specialized in testing code
Product Programmer

(noun)
a programmer focused on writing code to support the product-under-test

- Me
Test Programmer
(noun)
a programmer focused on writing code to support testing

- Me
Video of tantrum
50 words for snow
Words help you think.
Language Spectrum

Poor  Rich
Language Spectrum

Poor  Testers  Rich
Language Spectrum

Poor

Testers

Programmers

Rich
Language Spectrum

Poor       testers       Rich
ET With Subtitles #1
Testing-related language I like
Follow-on Bug

(noun)

a bug caused by another bug

- Michael Hunter
Follow-on Journey

(noun)

tests you perform to investigate downstream behavior of the thing you just tested

- Duncan Nisbet
Blink Zoom Test

(noun)
a test approach using grand scale pattern recognition

- James Bach
Secondary Verification

*(noun)*

a way to verify something that is decoupled from the thing being tested

- Ian Stewart
Sympathetic
(adjective)
a test that honors explicit assumptions or requirements

- Cem Kaner
Negative

(adjective)
a test that intentionally violates at least one explicit assumption or requirement
Stale
(adjective)

1. describes a test case that is no longer relevant.
2. data temporarily persisted in one area of an application that has changed in another.

- Me
Nondeterministic

(data)

data returned by the test is not consistent enough to result in pass/fail with a decision rule

- Doug Hoffman
Fire Drill Test

(noun)
a test you perform to investigate the product robustness when unforeseen situations occur

- Dave Snyder
Bug

*(noun)*

something that threatens the value of the product

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Issue

(noun)

something that threatens the value of the project

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Escape

(noun)

a bug found in production

- Alex Kell
Test Idea

(noun)
the minimum description necessary to capture the essence of a test

- Robert Sabourin
Natural Documentation

(noun)
documentation that fulfills a mission without requiring extra effort

- Griffin Jones
Test Session

(noun)
a documented, time-boxed period, of mission-focused test activities, resulting in a test report, and followed by a debrief

- James and Jon Bach
Baseline Test

(noun)
a test you perform using unrealistic production loads to measure future impacts on those same loads
Send it left

(phrase)
to move a User Story left on a Kanban board because it isn’t “Done done”

- Me
Soak Test

(noun)
to observe the product-under-test while it undergoes some degree of normal operation, without changing its code
Golden Master

(noun)
a trusted thing used to compare against an untrusted thing

- Doug Hoffman
Shallow Testing

(noun)

testing to achieve wide product coverage, in a short amount of time, honoring assumptions

- James Bach
Deep Testing

(noun)

testing done for in-depth investigation on a targeted product feature

- James Bach
Tacit Knowledge

(noun)

knowledge that is difficult to write down or transfer to other people. Knowledge that is temporal.

- James Bach and Michael Bolton
Requirements Document

(noun)

requirements that have been written down, requirements we are aware of

- Michael Bolton
Requirements
(noun)
all requirements pertaining to a thing, including those not written down, and those we may not yet be aware of

- Michael Bolton
Test Notes

(noun)

an artifact that contains most testing related information for a chunk of testing.

- Me
Charter: Find problems with the Zip Code search service.

Test Idea: Not enough test data in QA environment.

Try it with Puerto Rico zip codes.
Testing-related language I try NOT to use anymore
Manual

(adjective)

testing performed by a human
Sapient

(adj.)
of or relating to the human species, as in *Homo sapiens*

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Exploratory Testing (noun)

Simultaneously designing and executing tests to learn about the system, using your insights from the last experiment to inform the next.

- Elisabeth Hendrickson
Instead, I try to say...
Testing
(noun)
The process of evaluating a product by learning about it through exploration and experimentation, which includes to some degree: questioning, study, modeling, observation, inference, etc.

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Automated Test

(noun)
a test performed by a machine
Instead, I try to say...
Automated Check
(noun)
a check performed by a machine

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Check

(noun)
an instance of checking

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Checking
(noun)
the process of making evaluations by applying algorithmic decision rules to specific observations of a product

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Human Checking

(noun)

checking performed by a human

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Machine Checking
(noun)
checking performed by a machine
- James Bach / Michael Bolton
[TestMethod]

(noun)

an instance of an automated check

- James Bach / Michael Bolton
Testing

Learning by experimenting, including study, questioning, modeling, observation, inference, etc.

Human Checking

Human/Machine Checking

Machine Checking
Credits

Jon Bach  Michael Bolton  James Bach
Your turn...
www.testthisblog.com