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ABSTRACT

In all classifications of cognitive abilities a Verbal Comprehension factor is prominent. The nature of this factor is complex, and attempts to analyse it (Thurstone, 1938; Carroll, 1941; Guilford, 1972) have made distinctions between receptive ability (comprehension) and productive ability (fluency), and between isolated words (vocabulary) and words in context (discourse). The validity of these distinctions is discussed. The second part of the article examines what type of tests are the best markers for the Verbal Comprehension factor. The Educational Testing Service's kits of factor referenced cognitive tests (1 954, 1963, 1976) give only single-word voca bulary tests, despite suggestions by Cattell (1971) and Carroll (1974) that other types of tests should also be used, and despite increasing doubts, especially in some ESL/EFL circles, about the validity of discretepoint language testing. The final part of the article describes an experiment with Hong Kong Chinese students. The results support the use of single-word Vocabulary tests as reliable markers of the Verbal Comprehension factor, but also support the contention that future Kits' of The Educational Testing Service should include verbal tests of a more varied nature.

KEYWORDS : cognitive abilities, Verbal Comprehension,

INTRODUCTION

Some of the available tests for the assessment of attainment of Cognitive abilities in Social Science subject at VIII Standard were not found to be that satisfactory in terms of comprehensiveness

and relevance.

A battery of comprehensive test on Cognition abilities with Figural, Symbolic, Semantic and Behavioural abilities was developed using the scientific procedure. The details of the content dimensions are given below.

Cognitive Abilities

About the grammatical structure of the incoming signal, and checks this against the actual input. Miller (1964: 30) describes the process: The first stage is a guess about the stream of incoming sound; a response to this is then generated; the first guess may well be wrong, so another guess is made which will probably be closer; the listener keeps trying till a satisfactory match is obtained.

Though the active, constructive nature of the analysisby-synthesis (A-by-S) mode seems to fit our internal awareness of the comprehension process, it was challenged by Katz and Postal (1964: 167). Their objection was that in order to provide the syntactic analysis of even fairly short sentences, the number of independent operations required would be so enormously high that a human brain could not be expected to perform the analysis even in a lifetime. The trial-and-error process would have too many errors and could not keep up with the incoming signals.

Neisser (1966) attempted to confront this objection with two suggestions. His first suggestion was that the incoming flow of speech passes through a "filter" system which segments the flow, extracts a few distinctive features, and tentatively recognises some of the constituent elements or units. What comes through this filter system is the raw material for the listener's construction or synthesis of an internal message to match the actual input. Neisser's second suggestion was that the constructive process is not aimlessly trial-anderror, but bases its construction on contextual clues. The context thus ensures that the most probable "fit" will be tried first, and since this will often be the correct one, the trial-and-error process will be characterised more by success than by error.

Cognition : The Figural Dimension

i.Figural Units
ii.Figural Classes
iii.Figural Relations
iv.Figural Systems
v.Figural Transformations
vi.Figural Implications

Cognition : The Symbolic Dimension

vii.Symbolic Units viii.Symbolic Classes ix.Symbolic Relations x.Symbolic Systems xi.Symbolic Transformations xii.Symbolic Implications

Cognition : The Semantic Dimension

xiii. Semantic Units xiv. Semantic Classes xv. Semantic Relations xvi.Semantic Systems xvii.Semantic Transformations xviii.Semantic Implications

Cognition : The Behavioural Dimension

xix. Behavioural Units xx.Behavioural Classes xxi.Behavioural Relations xxii.Behavioural Systems xxiii.Behavioural Transformations xxiv.Behavioural Implications

In all 24 Cognition abilities were listed under 4 Content areas such as Figural, Symbolic, Semantic and Behavioral. These Cognition abilities are to be attained by students of secondary schools through Social Science subject.

However, the scope of the present study is restricted to only 4 Contents and 6 Products. Details of the factors selected for the construction of test are : CFU, CFC, CFR, CFS, CFT, CFI, CSU, CSC, CSR, CSS, CST, CSI, CMU, CMC, CMR, CMS, CMT, CMI, CBU, CBC, CBR, CBS, CBT and CBI.

Constructing and Pooling of Test Items

Test items representing 24 factors were developed by the investigator after consulting the following sources :

1. Guilford's J.P. Structure of Intellect. In Psychological Bulletin, 52, 1996.

2. Guilford, J.P. Nature of Intelligence. New York : McGraw Hill, 1967.

3. Meeker, M. N. The Structure of Intellect : Its Interpretation and Uses. Columbus, Ohio : Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969.

4. Guilford, J. P. and Hoepfner, R. The Analysis of Intelligence. New York : McGraw Hill, 1971.

5. Katageri, B. S. Construction and Analysis of Guilford Type Test. Unpublished Dissertation, Karnatak University, 1981.

6. Ari, P. G. Development and Detailed Item Analysis of Guilford Type Tests of Some Semantic Abilities. Unpublished Dissertation, Karnatak University, 1984.

7. Harapanahalli, J. G. A Comparative Study of Guilford's Cognitive Abilities among Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students. Unpublished Dissertation, Karnatak University, 1994.

8. Pednekar, R. G. A Comparative Study of Guilford's Convergent Abilities among Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students. Unpublished Dissertation, Karnatak University, 1995.

9. Gudi, J. B. Comparative Study of Guilford's Divergent Production Abilities among Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students. Unpublished Dissertation, Karnatak University, 1995.

10. Morkar, U. S. A Comparative Study of Guilford's Divergent abilities among Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students. Unpublished Dissertation, Karnatak University, 1999.

11. Investigator's experience.

A total pool of test items on Cognitive abilities with Figural, Symbolic, Semantic and Behavioural areas consists of 201 test items.

CONCLUSION

Within the wider framework of attempts to classify human cognitive abilities, the Verbal Comprehension factor has been discussed. Attempts to analyse this factor have been described, and some distinctions commonly made have been seen to be inadequate.

Given the complexity of the factor, it is hardly surprising that there is disagreement on what kind of tests are the most appropriate marker tests for Verbal Comprehension. The practice among some psychologists of using only single-word Vocabulary tests would be challenged by many language teachers, who themselves, however, should not be too cavalier in dismissing this type of test from their test batteries.

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10.Royce, J. R. 1973. The conceptual framework for a multi-factor theory of understanding. In J. R. Royce (Ed.), Multil'ariate analysis and psychological theory. London: Academic Press, 305-407.

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