ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT TEST FOR ESL LEARNERS IN NORTHERN PHILIPPINES

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Abstract: *The analysed the quality of the achievement test administered to the students in the university. The test was analysed in terms of validity and reliability. Test difficulty and discrimination were also analysed by making an item analysis which was used as basis in improving some items found discriminating. The descriptive method was used in the study. The study was conducted among the randomly sampled 1,395 sophomore students enrolled in the eight satellite schools of Cagayan State University and all the purposively sampled faculty teaching the five basic English subjects offered based on the curriculum. A centralized English Achievement Test made in a multiple choice type and a questionnaire composed of seven statements to serve as the criteria in determining the validity of the test were the instruments used. In determining concurrent validity of the test, the results of the Achievement Tests in English and Filipino were correlated using Pearson r. Reliability was also obtained in terms of internal consistency and reliability. Internal consistency was obtained by correlating the odd and even numbered scores of the respondents using Pearson r, then obtained coefficient was corrected by Spearman Brown formula. The ESL learners obtained the highest mastery level in reading comprehension, but the lowest in logical organization of ideas. The test is valid and reliable; however, it is difficult and does not discriminate well. The performance of the sophomore ESL learners is low because the English Achievement Test was difficult. Finally, most of the test items were revised to improve them based on the item analysis made.*

Keywords: *English achievement test, quality, validity, reliability, item analysis, item difficulty and discrimination*

INTRODUCTION

Study Background

Assessment has become a very common process of documenting student learning. The use of test in measuring the achievements of learners is very common in the Philippine School

System. Numerous kinds of tests were constructed and administered in all schools and all levels. At present the Division and the Professional Regulation Commission prepare and administer standardized tests and the results of which become their bases for the conduct of researches to improve the system.

Various tests administered by the Department of Education like the National Achievement Test, and The Philippine Vocabulary Test and many others in the different elementary, secondary and college subjects adapted to Philippine needs and conditions.

If the effectiveness of testing is desired, there is a need to look into the quality of the test given. It is the responsibility of the teacher the ability of the students to express themselves freely, expand vocabulary, strengthen study habits and build higher level skills in critical-creative thinking (Gabuyo, Yonardo, et al, 2013).

To achieve this goal, the teacher should always consider her objectives of teaching and the kind of tests given. The evaluation items must be congruent to the objectives of the lesson. The Cagayan State University at Lal-lo designed a meaningful evaluation among its students, to administer an achievement test to all the basic subjects offered to first and second year students of the university at the end of the school year. Prior to this, a common syllabus was prepared and used by all teachers handling the basic subjects to ensure uniformity of lessons taught.

Administering the test has been done in the past whose results were not analysed in terms of validity and reliability since different tests were given yearly.   It is very important that tests be valid and reliable (Navarro, R., et al, 2013); hence, this study was conducted.

Objectives of the Study

The study analysed the English Achievement Test administered among the sophomore students of Cagayan State University. Specifically, it determined the ESL learners' extent of mastery on the following skills; vocabulary development, effective speech, correct usage, identifying errors, reading comprehension, logical organization, use of figures of speech and literature; assessed the concurrent and content validity and the internal consistency and reliability of the test given, the overall difficulty and discrimination of the English test and identify the test items to be improved based on indices of facility and discrimination.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The Descriptive survey design was used to describe the extent of mastery of the desired competencies of the ESL students and the quality and effectiveness of the achievement test given them.

Respondents

The study was conducted at the eight satellite campuses of the Cagayan State University. The respondents were the 1,395 sophomore students chosen purposively since it was mandatory for all second year students to be tested. The English teachers were also used as respondents.   They were requested to scrutinize the Achievement Test prepared to determine its content validity.

Instruments

The English Achievement Test designed by the University English professors was used to gather data needed. The test is a multiple-choice type composed of seven topics. Test 1 tested students' knowledge and understanding about vocabulary; Test 2, about effective speech; Test 3, about grammar (correct usage); Test 4, about grammar (identifying errors), Test 5, about reading comprehension; Test 6, about logical organization of ideas; and Test 7, about literature (figures of speech).

A questionnaire which composed of seven statements describing the content of the English Achievement Test and which served as the criteria for judging the content validity of the said test was also used.

Collection of Data

The Data were collected following a step-by-step procedure. Permission to conduct the study from the University President and the different Campus Executive Officers was sought prior to the conduct of the study.   Then, the distribution of questionnaire and administration of the test were done with the help of the class advisers of the respondents. Strict administration of the test was observed to ensure that students gave their own answers based on their stock knowledge. Retrieval of the questionnaire and exam result was done immediately.

Analysis of Data

After the test papers were checked, item analysis was done to determine the index of discrimination and index of difficulty of the test. Pearson r was used to determine correlations like concurrent validity and internal consistency of the test, and ideal mean and standard deviations were used to determine the learners' achievement in the said test. The overall difficulty of the test was obtained by computing and comparing the ideal mean and actual mean and its overall discrimination was computed through the coefficient of variation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Performance of the Students in the English Achievement Test

Results showed that among the skills tested, the ESL learners performed satisfactorily in Reading Comprehension with a mean percentage of mastery of 57.68, followed by literature with 54.1 and they performed fairly (unsatisfactorily) in correct usage and logical organization with mean percentages of mastery of 38.53 and 29.99, respectively.

The ESL learners acquired skills in reading comprehension specifically in noting details, giving titles of texts, identifying topic sentence and methods of paragraph development. However, they did not acquire enough skills for their mastery level is satisfactory. It means that these basic skills, give them difficulty in understanding inferential skills.

On the contrary, the ESL learners' mastery level in logical arrangement was fair. Hence, they did not develop adequate skills in arranging sentences to form a text. This seriation skill is not yet fully mastered. The students are unable to recall the event that occurred in a series as presented in the text.

The critical thinking skills of the learners were not yet fully developed. The learners did not develop yet the skill of connecting facts and details to ascertain the relationship among them. Moreover, the students could not logically see the interconnections of the facts contained in the text.

Validity and Reliability of the Test

The achievement test had both content and concurrent validity. The test measured the skills being tested and the students who were good in Filipino were also good in English. Moreover, the test was reliable in terms of internal consistency and reliability. The test contains items that could satisfy the purpose of the test. The reliability of the test was

higher (0.898) as corrected by the Spearman formula. Findings imply that the English Achievement Test prepared and administered among the CSU sophomore students is valid and reliable.

Overall Difficulty and Discrimination of the Test

For the overall difficulty and discrimination of the test, the mean score of the 99-item test was 40.16. The test was considered difficult compared to the ideal mean of 61.87. The test had a discrimination index of 0.37 as shown in the coefficient of variation. The test does not discriminate well. Most of the test items were revised to improve them based on the item analysis made.

CONCLUSION

Reading comprehension skills of the students are not adequate, and their logical organization skill is deficient. The English Achievement Test is valid and reliable; however, it is quite difficult and possesses low discrimination power. Moreover, the achievement of the students is low since they have not mastered all the skills tested.

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