

A Modified-Integrative Examination : A Comparative Study of the Current and the Proposed NIDA English Entrance Examination

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NIDA

This paper is an attempt by a group of lecturers of the NIDA Language Center to make a comparative study of NIDA's current English Entrance Examination (EEE) which is a discrete point test, and a proposed modified integrative test, which aims at assessing students' abilities in their understanding of vocabulary, structurally complicated sentences, main ideas, and major details from long pieces of writing. Students' assessments of the two types of the test were obtained from a questionnaire asking their comments on the tests right after they had finished. Findings from the study indicated that the Modified-Integrative Test seemed to be more difficult than the currently used NIDA EEE. However, the correlation between the Modified-Integrative Test and a standardized reading test (King and Campbell) is somewhat higher than the correlation between the current NIDA EEE and the standardized reading test. On the questionnaire, a high percentage of the students responded that the Modified-Integrative Test was too long and quite difficult but when compared with the current NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test was considered to be a better measure than the current one. Nonetheless, further refinement of the Modified-Integrative Test is needed.

I. Introduction

The National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) was established in 1966 with the aim of producing graduates in several areas of administrative sciences and development. NIDA now offers both master's degree programs and doctoral degree programs. To be qualified for admission, a student must hold at least a bachelor's degree and pass the NIDA Entrance Examination which comprises :

1) English; 2) Mathematics; and 3) a paper in the field of specialization. The NIDA English Entrance Examination (EEE) is written by the staff of the NIDA Language Center (NLC). The objective of the EEE is to measure students' proficiency in reading at an advanced level. Since the majority of texts assigned to NIDA students are in English, advanced reading competency is, therefore, essential to the success of students in their course-work and research.

The current NIDA EEE is a multiple-choice test and is composed of three sections: 1) Vocabulary (20 items); 2) Sentence Comprehension (20 items); 3) Reading Comprehension (25 items). The objective of Section 1 is to test students' abilities to use contextual clues and their knowledge of word formation to arrive at the meaning of the test word. Section 2 tests students' comprehension of structurally complicated sentences. Section 3 is intended to test students' abilities to identify and comprehend main ideas and major details of selected passages. For each test, between four to five passages with approximately half a page to one page in length are used. Textbooks and current journals covering various fields are the sources for the test materials used in all three sections.

The nature of the current NIDA EEE is a discrete-point test because each of the three sections is targeted at testing only one skill. Although the test as a whole satisfactorily measures students' reading skills, some sections (e.g. Sections 1 & 2) seem quite artificial because the items tested in these sections are extracted from larger contexts. They are isolated utterances that lack the communicativeness of real discourse.

The objective of developing the proposed EEE is to make the EEE more authentic because once a student is accepted into the master's degree program, he/she is expected to read, not one-page passages, but long pieces in treatises and journals. Therefore, the proposed EEE is aimed at assessing students' abilities in understanding long pieces of writing and, within that context, testing their understanding of vocabulary, structurally complicated sentences, main ideas, and major details. This type of examination might be called an integrative test following Oller (1979):

The concept of an integrative test was born in contrast with the definition of a discrete point test. If discrete items take language skill apart, integrative tests put it back together. Whereas discrete items attempt to test knowledge of language one bit at a time, integrative tests attempt to assess a learner's capacity to use many bits all at the same time (p. 37).

The purpose of the paper is to propose a new type of NIDA EEE in the form of a Modified-Integrative Test and to compare that to the NIDA EEE currently in use.

II. The Trial Procedure of the Modified-Integrative Test

I. Method

1.1 Subjects

The subjects consist of 133 NIDA students who are attending EL 400 : Reading Skills Development in English, or EL 405 : English for Business Administration, and 10 NIDA students who are exempt from taking EL 400 or EL 405. The students who are required to attend EL 400 or EL 405 are those whose performances in the English language have not reached the minimum standard set by the NLC as measured by the current NIDA EEE. All of them took the current NIDA EEE in March, 1986. Their scores ranged from 34 to 124 out of 195 points. They are students in the Schools of Public Administration, Development Economics, Social Development, or Business Administration. Table 1 presents the number of students in each school who took all three tests (the current NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test, and King and Compbell Standardized Reading Test).

Table 1

The Number of Students Taking the Three Tests

Variables	Public. Admin.	Dev. Econ.	Social Dev.	Bus. Admin.	Total
EL 400 and E1 405 Students	41	27	14	51	133
Exempted Students	2	2	-	6	10
Total	43	29	14	57	143

1.2 Instruments

1.2.1 The Modified-Integrative Test: The Modified-Integrative Test comprises two parts: I) Reading for comprehension (35 items); II) Summarization of the test passage (20 items). An eight-page passage in Part I is one article in the text "Role of Productivity in Asian Economic Growth". The content of the passage was neutral, displaying no bias for or against certain students on the basis of background knowledge. Measured with the Dale-Chall Readability formula (Dale & Chall, 1948), this passage was at the college graduate level. The objective of Part I is to test students' abilities to extract the meaning of selected vocabulary and structurally complicated sentences from the passage and to comprehend main ideas and major details of the passage. Therefore, vocabulary skills, sentence comprehension skills, and reading comprehension skills are all tested at the same time based on a single complete discourse. Part II aims at testing students' abilities to summarize, an important skill demanded of advanced level students. The summa-

rization test took the form of a modified-cloze test. The test passage was summarized into two paragraphs of 230 words. Every seventh or eight word was deleted for a total of 20 blanks, with each blank having four choices for students to choose from. Most of the choices were considered from the words that fit grammatically but did not give the right information according to the reading selection (See Appendix A).

This Modified-Integrative Test also underwent a pretest in November 1985 by 90 NIDA students. On the basis of the item analysis procedure, adjustments were made on some items in Part I and Part II.

1.2.2 The King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test: The standardized reading test was used as a standard measure of reading ability. The standardized reading test used in this paper is *The English Reading Test for Students of English as a Foreign Language* by Harold V. King and Russell N. Campbell. This test is the result of a series of experimental try-outs which made it possible to include in the final form only items of the highest validity and reliability. The test is intended as a scale for measuring reading skill over a wide range of ability. The test is composed of two parts: 1) sentence completion (18 items), and 2) reading comprehension (32 items).

1.2.3 The Questionnaire: The questionnaire was given to students after they had finished the modified-integrative EEE and the standardized reading test. The objective was to get students' assessment of the Modified-Integrative Test and their comments on the current NIDA EEE and the Modified-Integrative Test. The questionnaire and its results are presented in Appendix B.

1.3 Administration

1.3.1 The Modified-Integrative Test: The Modified-Integrative Test was given to 143 students in July 1986, the beginning of the first semester, to avoid any practice effect. The students were advised to read through the instructions before working on the test and were required to complete the test within two hours.

1.3.2 The King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test: The King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test was given to the same group of students who took the Modified-Integrative Test one week after the Modified-Integrative Test was given. The students were required to finish the test within 45 minutes.

1.4 Scoring Procedures

The Modified-Integrative Test was scored in the same way as the current NIDA EEE; that is, 3 points for each correct response, -1 for each incorrect response, and 0 for the one with no answer. As for the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test, 2 points were given to each correct response and none to the ones with either incorrect or no answer.

2. Statistical Results

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the current NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test, and the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Current NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test, and the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test

Variables	N of Cases	\bar{X}	S.D.	Reliability
Current NIDA EEE (195 points)	143	65.19	21.09	.75
Modified-Integrative Test (165 points)	143	47.89	23.13	.77
King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test (100 points)	143	57.27	14.05	.88

The mean of the Modified-Integrative Test is lower than the current NIDA EEE and the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test. This shows that the Modified-Integrative Test seems to be more difficult than the other two tests. The standard deviations of the current NIDA EEE and the Modified-Integrative Test indicate that their scores are more widely spread than the scores of the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test. The reliability coefficients of the NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test, and the King and Campbell are .75, .77, and .88 respectively.

The intercorrelations among the current NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test, the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test, and the two parts of the Modified-Integrative Test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Intercorrelations among the Current NIDA EEE, the Modified-Integrative Test, the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test, and the Two Parts of the Modified-Integrative Test

Variables	Current NIDA EEE	Standardized Reading Test	Modified Int. Test	Part I of M-I Test	Part II of M-I Test
Current NIDA EEE	1.00	.39	.49	.45	.40
Standardized Reading Test		1.00	.44	.41	.34
Modified-Integrative Test			1.00	.90	.74
Part I of M-I Test				1.00	.43
Part II of M-I Test					1.00

Table 3 shows that the correlation ($r = .44$) between the Modified-Integrative Test and the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test is higher than the correlation ($r = .39$) between the current NIDA EEE and the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test. This indicates that there is a stronger relationship between the Modified-Integrative Test and the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test than between the current NIDA EEE and the standardized reading test. However, the correlation ($r = .49$) between the current NIDA EEE and the Modified-Integrative Test is statistically significant. This indicates that there is a relationship between the two tests because both measure the students' reading abilities even though each represents a different type of test. It is interesting to note that Part I of the Modified-Integrative Test has a higher correlation with the current NIDA EEE, with the King and Campbell Standardized Reading Test, and with the Modified-Integrative Test itself than Part II of the Modified-Integrative Test. The lower correlation of Part II of the Modified-Integrative Test with the other three tests could be attributed to either the students' unfamiliarity with cloze as a testing procedure, with fewer items or with the placement of the cloze test at the end of the examination. Some students might not have had enough time left to work on this section. However, the correlation ($r = .43$) between Part I and Part II of the Modified-Integrative Test is significant.

III. Conclusion

Although most of the students taking the Modified-Integrative Test mentioned that they considered this test a good reading test for advanced level students, they did not perform as well as they did on the current NIDA EEE. Most of them found the test rather difficult and too long to be finished in the given time. However, the significant correlation ($r = .44$) between the Modified-Integrative Test and the standardized reading test seems to support the use of the Modified-Integrative Test. Moreover, on the questionnaire, although 46.90 % of the students responded that the Modified-Integrative Test was less appropriate to be used as the NIDA EEE, a high percentage of the students (75.41 %) still considered the Modified-Integrative Test a better measure than the current one. Nonetheless, further experimentation and refinement of the Modified-Integrative Test are still needed.

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Appendix A

A Modified-Integrative Test

Research and Development

Part I: Reading Comprehension

จงเลือกคำตอบที่ถูกต้องมากที่สุดเพียง 1 คำตอบ แล้วเขียนหมายเลขข้อที่เลือก
ลงในกระดาษคำตอบ

Introduction

1. During the past few decades, research has created a cycle that has led to _____
 1. fantastic increases in labour and machine productivity
 2. levels of productivity which are beyond the realms of reality
 3. lower production costs and consequently increased demand
 4. increases in productivity and consequently economic prosperity
2. According to the first paragraph, which group of people has been *least* benefited by research?
 1. The small minority of people in developing countries.
 2. The majority of people in developing countries.
 3. The small minority of people in developed countries.
 4. The majority of people in developed countries.
3. Although the impact of research on economic development has generally been recognized, why are some developing countries still reluctant to invest in it?
 1. Because expenditures for research have greatly increased.
 2. Because there are many other projects that deserve more attention.
 3. Because the impact of research on economic development is still questionable.
 4. Because their governments have lost faith in research.
4. In regard to the funding of research in developed and developing countries, which of the following is true?
 1. The governments of developed countries spend more on research than the governments of developing countries do.

2. Industrial research is financed by private agencies in developed countries and by governmental agencies in developing countries.
3. Industry in the U.K. and the U.S.A. spends about 45 per cent more on research than industry in India does.
4. The amounts of research expenditure of the two countries are different -- depending on the size of each research project.
5. The word "negligible" from paragraph 3 means_____ .
 1. wasteful
 2. useful
 3. small
 4. great

Industrial Research in Developing Countries

6. Why has there been so much pressure on industry in developed countries to invest large amounts of money on research?
 1. Because the standard of living of the people is improving.
 2. Because industrial firms are growing at a rapid rate.
 3. Because it is necessary for industry to survive in the highly competitive market.
 4. Because the purchasing power of consumers is strong in the market.
7. What is the general competitive situation of industry in developing countries?
 1. There is little competition partly because demand exceeds supply.
 2. Internal competition is weak, but external competition is strong.
 3. Competition is strong because the demand, generated by rapid population growth, is in excess of supply.
 4. There are many sellers in the market resulting in strong competition.
8. The word "insulated" from paragraph 4 means_____ .
 1. changing
 2. competitive
 3. protected
 4. developed
9. What is the important condition for applied research to successfully promote economic development?
 1. The significant amount of money must be spent on research.
 2. There must be close cooperation between developed and developing countries in applying research.
 3. The government must not interfere with private research organizations.
 4. There must be much cooperation between research and industry.
10. Research in developing countries has often failed to promote economic development because_____.
 1. research organizations interact too closely with industry
 2. research organizations are usually independent of industry
 3. special attention has been given to research organizations instead of industry
 4. research is treated as an internal function of the industry

Methods for Research Cooperation

11. What does the underlined "*such participation*" in paragraph 7 refer to?
 1. Participation by the user industry.
 2. Participation by research organization.
 3. Participation by all research users.
 4. Participation by research scientists.
12. The word "tailor" from paragraph 7 means_____.
 1. cut
 2. adapt
 3. analyze
 4. restrict
13. An effective method for increasing industrial participation in research _____ .
 1. is to define what industrial research is
 2. is to reduce the activities of the research organizations
 3. is to consider certain activities to the exclusion of research
 4. is to include a variety of activities in addition to research within the legitimate scope of research
14. The suggestion that the research organization change its role from providing the services to helping industry set them up internally will_____.
 1. not build up confidence of industry and establish a rapport between research and industry
 2. not build up confidence of industry nor establish a rapport between research and industry
 3. provide to the scientists direct experiences of industry's problems and enable them to formulate a research programme related to industry's needs
 4. not enable scientists to formulate a research programme
15. The word "rapport" from paragraph 7 means_____.
 1. gap
 2. difference
 3. co-operation
 4. success
16. The concept of cooperative research is cited as a means to help developing countries_____.
 1. solve their problem of using research and development facilities
 2. cope with great expenses of research and development facilities
 3. carry on doing research and development with facilities supported by developed countries
 4. help industrial research to cooperate with industry
17. The sentence "The situation in developed countries is exactly the opposite." implies that in developed countries_____.
 1. the research organization is not government sponsored
 2. the technological and economic conditions are not considered when selecting research projects

3. capital is not only scarce but also expensive
 4. labour is neither plentiful nor relatively cheap
18. The word "acute" from paragraph 9 means_____.
- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. moderate | 3. know |
| 2. severe | 4. increasing |
19. What does "research leading to development of automated high speed machinery" in paragraph 9 exemplify ?
1. Research of this type is not suited to developing countries.
 2. This type of research is not suited to countries with an acute scarcity of labour and a surplus of capital.
 3. Developed countries should help developing countries with this type of research.
 4. Research of this type requires the designing and manufacture of complex machines.
20. What are the industrial research factors that may vary widely between developing and developed countries ?
1. The choice of applied research programmes.
 2. Cost-benefit ratios, technical feasibility, chances of success, etc.
 3. Economic conditions and needs.
 4. The modification of existing machinery in the countries.

The Distinction between Academic and Industrial Research

21. The main idea of paragraph 10 is_____.
1. the importance of academic and industrial research for economic development
 2. the objectives of academic and industrial research in developing countries
 3. the differences between the objectives and criteria of evaluation of academic research and those of industrial research
 4. an aspect of research organization regarding academic and industrial research
22. The word "vital" from paragraph 10 means_____.
- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. essential | 3. beneficial |
| 2. successful | 4. practical |
23. Which of the following is *more* important in industrial research than in academic research ?
1. The originality of ideas.
 2. The quality of the research.
 3. The coordinated efforts of teamwork.
 4. The critical evaluation by other scientists in the same field.
24. Industrial research which is considered successful_____.
1. must be carried out by a group of leading scientists of the industrial research organizations

2. must suggest ways to solve industrial problems
 3. must be able to be applied to any industrial research activities
 4. must be able to be implemented and utilized in industry for economic benefits
25. The development phase of industrial research in industry is_____.
1. a phase of promoting a new product in the market
 2. a phase of testing out research results in an industrial pilot plant
 3. a phase of developing an industry on a large scale
 4. a phase in which only research scientists participate
26. Whose evaluation of the industrial research results is likely to be the most important in the development phase of industrial research ?
1. the evaluation of industrial scientists.
 2. the evaluation of industrial plant managers.
 3. the evaluation of industrial experts.
 4. the evaluation of industrial consumers.

The Need of Administrative Procedures

27. The underlined sentence in paragraph 12: "Lacking the experience of research management, these agencies frequently apply to research, the usual bureaucratic procedures developed primarily for maintaining law and order in the country." can be restated as_____.
1. the bureaucratic procedures are used in these agencies because these procedures are developed primarily for maintaining law and order in the country
 2. the bureaucratic procedures are developed to be used both for maintaining law and order and for research
 3. since these agencies do not have the research management experience, they frequently apply the bureaucratic procedures to research
 4. the experience of research management is needed for these agencies to apply bureaucratic procedures to research
28. "*These agencies*" in question 27 refers to_____.
1. governmental agencies
 2. legal agencies
 3. research organizations
 4. administrative organizations

29. The word “*thrive*” from paragraph 12 means_____.
1. continue
 2. begin
 3. succeed
 4. dominate
30. The research organizations in developing countries will fulfil the goals which they are set up for_____.
1. if they are financed and run by the research management
 2. if they establish and maintain an environment which encourages and nurtures initiative
 3. if they have overall control over the research administration
 4. if they have a broad frame-work of policy
31. The word “delegated” from paragraph 12 means_____.
1. related
 2. added
 3. guided
 4. given
32. A national science policy is strongly needed in a country_____.
1. where its government has the authority to choose priorities for research
 2. where its research policy is widely recognized
 3. where the resources of money and skills are available
 4. where there is a variety of research problems
33. The word “liability” from paragraph 13 means_____.
1. problem
 2. responsibility
 3. debts
 4. policy

Conclusion

34. In considering priorities for research in developing Asian countries, what areas should receive high priorities ?
1. Agricultural productivity.
 2. Extensive surveys of natural raw material resources, mineral and others.
 3. Export-oriented industries.
 4. All of the above.
35. The word “exploitation” from paragraph 14 means_____.
1. destruction
 2. exploration
 3. utilization
 4. expectation

Part II : Summary (Cloze Test)

จงเลือกคำที่เหมาะสมทั้งทางด้านความหมายและไวยากรณ์ จากตัวเลือกที่ให้ไว้
แต่ละข้อซึ่งสามารถเติมลงในช่องว่างของข้อความที่สรุปจากเนื้อเรื่องยาวที่ให้อ่าน
แล้วได้ใจความสมบูรณ์ แล้วเขียนหมายเลขข้อที่เลือกลงในกระดาษคำตอบ

Developed countries' research has produced great increase in productivity, and, although developing countries have recognized the need for research and increased their investments, there is considerable concern as to whether there are commensurate returns for the investments made. The reversed conditions in the developing countries (36) _____ it imperative that research be financed and (37) _____ by government, as industry operates in insulated and (38) _____ markets. In this case, separation of (39) _____ and industry becomes a problem, because effective research (40) _____ the cooperation of research scientists, managers, (41) _____ and technicians. Two methods of insuring this (42) _____ are : one, adapt the research to meet (43) _____ the immediate and the future needs of (44) _____ and, two, create research groups among small (45) _____ of an industry with government sharing of (46) _____. The selection of research projects must (47) _____ the current technological and economic situation into (48) _____ using cost-benefit ratios and feasibility studies to (49) _____ their applicability.

The distinction between academic research, which (50) _____ high value on individual achievement, and (51) _____ research, where teamwork is the most (52) _____, must kept in mind. Because of the (53) _____ regulation of research in most developing countries, new (54) _____ of management must be developed to maintain the (55) _____ that is necessary for research. Priorities for research in the developing countries of Asia appear to be : agricultural productivity; more efficient use of imported materials; development of native raw materials; and improvement of export-oriented industries earning valuable foreign exchange.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------|
| 36. 1. suggest | 2. make | 3. let | 4. show |
| 37. 1. controlled | 2. supervised | 3. performed | 4. invested |
| 38. 1. independent | 2. expanding | 3. protected | 4. internal |
| 39. 1. research | 2. development | 3. government | 4. public |
| 40. 1. serves | 2. creates | 3. increases | 4. requires |

- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 41. 1. engineers | 2. consumers | 3. legal advisors | 4. suppliers |
| 42. 1. productivity | 2. cooperation | 3. organization | 4. benefit |
| 43. 1. both | 2. partly | 3. either | 4. neither |
| 44. 1. researchers | 2. mechanism | 3. industry | 4. government |
| 45. 1. investments | 2. phases | 3. units | 4. selections |
| 46. 1. programmes | 2. confidence | 3. experiences | 4. expenses |
| 47. 1. extend | 2. take | 3. choose | 4. turn |
| 48. 1. effect | 2. project | 3. initiation | 4. consideration |
| 49. 1. determine | 2. compare | 3. implement | 4. improve |
| 50. 1. indicates | 2. distinguishes | 3. places | 4. leaves |
| 51. 1. political | 2. industrial | 3. scientific | 4. group |
| 52. 1. valuable | 2. critical | 3. common | 4. difficult |
| 53. 1. definite | 2. beneficial | 3. bureaucratic | 4. systematic |
| 54. 1. factors | 2. personnel | 3. methods | 4. establishment |
| 55. 1. capital | 2. environment | 3. specification | 4. creativity |

Appendix B
Questionnaire

	Percentage*
1. The students' assessment on the overall structure of the Modified-Integrative Test	
1.1 The content of the test passage	
- neutral	51.57
- bias to a certain school	44.03
1.2 The length of the test passage	
- too long	81.76
- the right length	16.98
1.3 The difficulty of the test	
- very difficult	54.09
- not too difficult	44.03
- easy	0.63
1.4 Level of interest in the passage	
- interesting	74.21
- not interesting	22.65
2. The students' assessment on Part I of the Modified-Integrative Test	
2.1 The difficulty of this part	
- very difficult	45.28
- not too difficult	50.31
- not difficult	0.63
2.2 The nature of the questions	
- good for testing reading ability	86.16
- not good for a reading test	5.03
3. The students' assessment on Part II of the Modified-Integrative Test	
3.1 The difficulty of this part	
- very difficult	35.85
- not too difficult	54.72
- not difficult	3.14

* The percentage of the number of students answering the questionnaire

	Percentage
3.2 The nature of the questions	
- good for testing reading ability	72.33
- not good for a reading test	16.35
4. The amount of time given for the test	
- too much	1.89
- enough	54.72
- not enough	40.88
5. The students' comments on the current NIDA EEE and the Modified-Integrative Test	
5.1 no differences between the two tests	17.96
5.2 The Modified-Integrative Test is better than the current NIDA EEE because	
- better measure than the current one	75.41
- better measure on advanced reading	18.03
5.3 The current one is better than the Modified-Integrative Test because	
- the Modified-Integrative Test is more difficult	10.00
- the Modified-Integrative Test is too long	52.50
- it took too much time to read the test passage	22.50
5.4 The appropriateness of using the Modified-Integrative Test as the NIDA EEE	
- equally appropriate	21.60
- more appropriate	17.28
- less appropriate	46.91
6. The students' suggestions on the length of the test passage	
- one passage : 6-7 pages long	2.52
- two passages : 3 pages long each	14.46
- three passages : 2 pages long each	29.56
- four passages : 1½ pages long each	48.43