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A Reading Progressive Test: Assessing the Reading Ability of Upper Class Intermediate Level Students of North South University

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It is imperative that students, especially at the tertiary level, achieve adequate proficiency in major academic skills like reading, and writing to be able to do well in different content area courses of their choice. Thus the need for EAP (English for Academic Purpose) courses is on the rise to help students improve their academic reading and writing skills. In this regard, effective and valid testing instruments are very important to measure the proficiency level of the students, and prepare them to become effective communicators in the future. The present paper presents a test designed for 8th semester tertiary-level students followed by a discussion on test design and presentation of the findings of students' test performance. The study, in which twenty nine students participated, tries to find a correlation between the participant's test score and academic performance. The literature review section draws on various theoretical evidences that expand upon various aspects of the definition of reading abilities. In the study, twenty nine students of an advanced composition course participated. The results indicate that most of the items had moderate level of difficulty and discrimination, and that academic exposure has very little effect on participant's test scores. It also reveals that three of the questions require a revision either because they lack difficulty or they simply fail to discriminate between the top and the bottom scorer. The scores of the test and test-takers' academic exposure had little correlation. Moreover, the participants having higher academic exposure scored a little higher than the junior students which could possibly happen due to their longer exposure to teaching materials and experiences. The methodology section contains a reading comprehension with 10 MCQ questions. It is to be noted that the findings of the test can be used as washback in that they can be referred to in the future design of reading tests.

Keywords: *Top-down approach, Bottom-up approach, Interactive theories, Schema theory, Test construct, Target language use domain.*

Introduction

Motivation of the Test

North South University (NSU) offers English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses for students of all disciplines. The courses are designed in a way that enables the students to achieve the required academic reading and writing proficiency to survive in different 4-year undergraduate content programs. Depending on the students' language proficiency, they are placed in different levels of EAP courses, among which ENG 105 is one. ENG 105 is an advanced composition course designed for the

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undergraduate students. Most of the students are in their sophomore or senior years. The students are assessed throughout the semester with not just midterms or finals, but also through discussions, assignments and quizzes. These assessment tools are, however, not standardized. It is the course instructor's responsibility to design test according to the need of the students and administer them accordingly. These assessments help the instructor indentify students' achievements and also possible changes needed to be taken into account to turn the learners into efficient readers.

The present paper presents a test designed for the students in one of the advanced composition courses at NSU. The purpose of this designed test and the paper is to assess students' reading ability. This paper, at first, deals with the theoretical studies and empirical evidences pertaining to reading ability and shows how it supports the definition of reading ability. Next, it discusses test design, followed by an analysis of the results. The paper ends with an overall conclusion of the findings.

Research Questions

This paper addresses the following questions:

1. What is the nature of reading ability in this test?
2. How reliable was the test?
3. What is the relation between participants' academic exposure (semester) and the overall performance of the test?

Literature Review

Reading: A definition

Before starting the discussion on reading abilities and how reading may be tested, it is necessary to understand the very definition of reading. Traditionally reading was viewed to be a passive skill, which was later refuted and labeled as an important receptive skill. Nunan (1999) said that reading involves "highly complex cognitive processing operations" (p. 249). According to Goodman (1967), whose view on reading is shared by Paran (1996), considers reading to be a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (p. 25) where the readers sample texts, predict possible content by making hypothesis, sample texts again to confirm or create new hypothesis according to the need. This particular view of reading believes that readers do not always need to read every sentence or word and sometimes simply rely on their ability to guess what is to come next. Therefore, reading can be considered an active receptive skill in that the meaning, the results of decoding, is not just found in the text, but "constructed from reader's background knowledge" (Grabe, 1991, p. 6).

Reading Abilities

Top-down, bottom-up and interactive

It is very unusual that two readers use the same strategy or adopt the same approach to reading. The two most important reading approaches constitute (a) top-down and (b) bottom-up approaches, the difference of which became "a cornerstone of reading methodology" (Brown, 2007, p. 358). Nunan (1999) characterizes bottom-up approach to reading as "a process of decoding written symbols into their aural equivalence in a linear fashion" (p. 252). In this approach, readers basically process letters into words, words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs. Evidences gathered from the techniques of Goodman and Burke (1972) showed that "reading is more than mechanical decoding" (cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 253) which eventually led to the development of an alternative approach, widely known as top-down approach. This approach treats reading as a "process of reconstruction" (Nunan, 1999, p. 253) and believes that readers only opt for decoding when the other means fail. On the other hand, according to top-down process, readers are engaged in testing one's hypothesis about the meaning of a text (Nunan,

1999, p. 253). Reading as top-down approach functions the same way as "whole-word approach" (Nunan, 1999, p. 252). The third approach to reading has been explained by interactive theories. Grabe (1991) believes that meaning of a text depends on a reader's background knowledge. He also believes that there needs to be an interaction between top-down and bottom-up reading process. Nevertheless, Murtagh (1989), another advocate for interactive theories, believes that neither top-down or bottom-up approach can fully account for the very process of reading; to be an efficient reader one needs to strike a balance between the two.

Schema Theory and Background Knowledge

According to the schema theory, a text does not encode meaning by itself (Anderson, 2004; Eskey, 2005; Grabe, 2004, as cited in Brown, 2007). This theory says that it is the reader who brings information, knowledge, emotion, experience and culture to the text. However, Nassaji (2002) provided an alternative view of the role of background knowledge arguing that knowledge is not "pre-stored", but rather it comes into play in the context of the task. In either of these two views, it is evident that effective reading enforces a strong interaction between the texts and the world.

Strategies for Reading Comprehension

According to Brown (2007) reading comprehension is nothing but developing appropriate, effective comprehension strategies, some of which are related to bottom-up procedures and some others to top-down processes. Out of 10 such strategies, 5 selected ones are as follows:

Identifying the purpose in reading

Every act of reading has a purpose. It comprises of looking for particular information and eliminating irrelevant information.

Skim the text for main ideas

Skimming requires a quick running of one's eyes across a text for its synopsis. This sub-skill affords the reader to make guesses about the purpose of the passage, the central idea, and also supporting details.

Scan the text for specific information

The next most import category is scanning or quickly looking for some particular pieces of information. Garton (1979) defines scanning as "pushing through a text at 'an initially uncomfortable rate', with the search focused on specific information, such as a date, a number, or a place" (p. 110). Brown (2007) describes the purpose of scanning to extract specific information without going through the entire text.

Analyze vocabulary

One way for learners to make effective guesses in a situation when they do not recognize a word is to analyze the word in terms of its morphological construction (prefixes and suffixes), grammatical context (an item of grammar that may give clue to information), or semantic context (topic).

Distinguish between literal and implied meanings

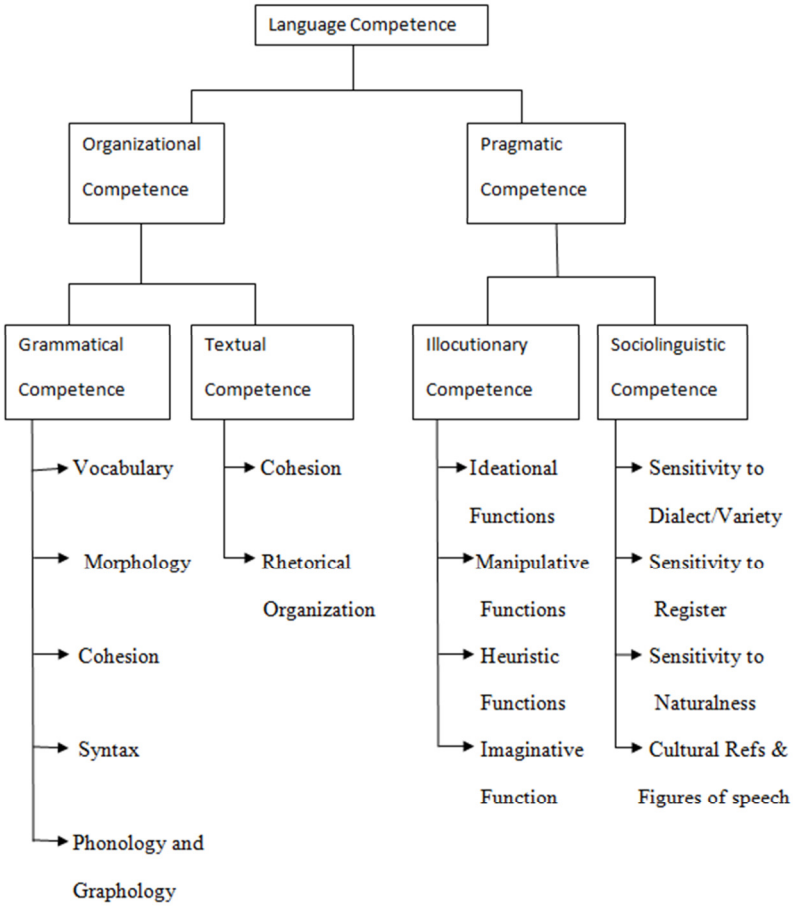
This sub-skill entails top-down processing skills. Readers need to process the implied meanings expressed trough certain expression. For example, telling somebody sitting by an open window that it is cold, is actually asking him to close the window (Brown, 2007).

Test Construct (Reading)

Construct is defined by Fulcher (2010) as the abilities underlying learners' test performance that cannot be observed directly. The oldest construct was believed to be intelligence while others include teachers looking for "attitude", "fluency" as extrapolated from the "behaviour of the individuals concered" (Fulcher, 2010, p. 96). Bachman (1990) adapted Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence into a language competence model. Different components of the model are represented through a table below:

Figure-1

Bachman's components of language competence (Bachman, 1990, as cited in Fulcher, 2010)



Test Construction

Target language Use (TLU) Domain

The context for this exam is an upper-intermediate level general education course (GED) at North South University titled Advanced Composition, the content of which focuses on the reading ability of students based on a short reading comprehension called "A happy life may not be a meaningful life".

On the day of the test, students were presented with the text and the multiple questions with possible choices. The paper includes texts on one side of it and the multiple questions on the other. The Target Language Use (TLU) domain is instructional and is related to various aspects of life.

To contextualize the test with the learner, a theme about 'life' was chosen. There were important reasons for choosing 'life' as the test theme and including multiple choice questions as test tasks. The theme about 'life' corresponds to the specified TLU domain because of its universal appeal as every learner can relate to this theme and may feel interested to know the actual meaning of life. Through this theme, learners will come to know the difference between 'happiness' and 'meaningfulness' of life. They will also come to know how social relationship makes someone's life more meaningful. Through all these, they will be able to relate to their position in today's increasingly mechanized world. Thus, the test context can be considered as closely related to real-life TLU tasks providing excellent elicitation device for the elements of the exam constructs. The TLU setting for the test is the regular classroom for the course. Both reading a passage and answering the questions are possible tasks within the TLU domain. The test also provides an opportunity to the learners to come across different levels of register in the reading text.

The skills the students need in order to perform this task are the ability to understand detail, the ability to identify the overall gist of the text, and the ability to make inferences regarding the meanings of lexical items, as well as the author's intentions and feelings. Ten multiple-choice (MC) items are included to measure students' performance.

Item Coding for Multiple Choice Section

It is to be noted, the selected response items are designed to assess test-takers with regard to three components of reading ability: general, specific and making inferences. Table 1 provides with the answer keys and the components of reading ability that each item measures.

Table-1

Coding Multiple Choice Items for Reading

Observed Variable	Item Number	Answer Key
General	1	D
	3	C
Specific	2	C
	4	B
	6	D
	9	B
	7	B
	8	B
Inference	5	A
	10	C

Administration Procedures

The test was administered among all twenty nine students of the course English 105 course. The students were asked to put away everything with the exception of a pen and pencil. The test packets were only distributed among students after they were seated in rows. Instructions were read aloud by the course instructor before the test started. Test takers were told that they may ask questions during the test if necessary. Test takers were asked to raise their hands should they have any questions. The time for answering the 10 questions was 20 minutes.

Test Pilot

Study Participants

The participants were twenty nine students of a GED course. They were all adults between 20 and 24 years of age. Thirteen of the students were males, and sixteen females. All the participants were Bangladeshi whose native language is Bangla. There were mixture of both Bengali and English medium background students with a majority from Bengali medium education. Among 29 students, 22 were from Bangla medium and the rest were from English medium background with a Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) or equivalent degree. Their duration of study at North South University ranged between five to forty four months.

Measuring Instruments

The researchers wanted to examine test takers' reading ability and understanding in the context of the test. The test consisted of only a reading section, which consisted of a reading passage followed by ten multiple-choice questions. Through this exam, reading ability was defined as the ability to make inferences. The students were required to derive both 'literal' and 'implied' meaning through guessing and synthesizing the main ideas of the paragraphs and the whole piece. They were also required to answer direct/simple questions as well as vocabulary questions. Among the 10 items of the reading test, six MCQ items measured proficiency in specific/vocabulary, two items measured inferences, and two items measured synthesis of main ideas (also known as general questions). A complete copy of the exam, including keys and coding for the MCQ items, has been presented in the Appendix sections.

Scoring Procedures

An objective scoring method was used to score the reading section. One point was awarded for each correct answer while each incorrect answer received zero point. The inclusion of ten items allowed for a maximum possible score of ten points on the reading section.

Test Analysis and Results

Results for Multiple Choice Tasks

Descriptive Statistics

As the reading test had 10 multiple choice questions, with a total possible score of 10, the mean was 5.55. Both median and mode were 6. The range was 7 with a minimum score of 2 and a maximum score of 9. The summary of all these results are presented in the table given below:

Table-2

Descriptive Statistics for Reading Task

Statistics	
Number of Participants (N)	29
Number of Items (k)	10
Maximum possible score	10.00
Mean	5.55
Median	6.00
Mode	6.00
Range	7.00
Minimum	2.00

Maximum	9.00

The table above shows that the mean was 5.55, which corresponds to a percentile of 56%. Median and mode both being 6 corresponds to a percentile of 60%, out of a total possible score of 10. Given the fact that the test being a low stake class test, the scores are not up to the mark. Therefore, the percentages are not that satisfactory since the tests takers could have performed better. With one test taker scoring 2 points and the top scorer scoring a total of 9 points, the group can be described as a heterogeneous group. The table below shows the range of distribution in a stem and leaf plot.

Table-3

Reading MC Stem and Leaf Plot (N=29)

Frequency	Stem	Leaf
20.000	1	00000000000000000000
21.000	2	000000000000000000000
16.000	3	0000000000000000
24.000	4	000000000000000000000000
14.000	5	00000000000000
17.000	6	00000000000000000
9.000	7	000000000
13.000	8	0000000000000
11.000	9	00000000000
16.000	10	00000000000000000

Item Analyses

In this section, the detailed efforts to increase the internal consistency reliability through item analysis are discussed. The quality of an individual item can be analyzed by measuring its particular mean, known as p-value. The p-value of an item is a simple measurement of the percentage of test takers who answered the item correctly out of the total number of test takers attempting the item. P values from 0.3 to 0.8 are considered to be satisfactory because lower p-value means that the test item has higher difficulty level. Similarly, higher p-value represents the test item as easy. 1 cannot be an acceptable P-value of any item as it represents that the particular item is too easy and items having p-value below 0.3 is too difficult for the test takers to be included in this test.

A second measure of item quality is the discriminating index, also known as the d-value. The d-value of an item measures the extent to which the item discriminates between the high and low achievers in the test. A positive d-value is desirable as it indicates a larger percentage of high scorers answered the question correctly than the percentage of low achievers. A negative d-value is also possible but undesirable because it indicates that a greater number of low scorers got the item correct than the high scorers. d-values can range from -1 to 1 applying the following guidelines; items with a negative d-value or a positive d-value from 0.01 to 0.3, are considered for revision or removal and items with a d-value of 0.4 can be kept unchanged. These two measurements of item quality, p-value and d-value along with the decision of each item are presented in the table below.

Table-4

Measurement of MC Item Quality

Item No.	Observed Variable	Difficulty (p-value)	Discrimination (d-value)	Decision
1	Gen1	0.689	0.667	Keep

2	Vocab1	0.724	0.334	Keep
3	Gen2	0.552	0.778	Keep
4	Spec1	0.828	0.556	Keep
5	Infer1	0.483	0.334	Revise
6	Spec2	0.586	-0.223	Delete
7	Vocab2	0.310	0.556	Revise
8	Spec3	0.448	0.778	Keep
9	Spec4	0.379	0.556	Revise
10	Infer2	0.552	0.223	Keep

Items can be viewed as 'easy' or 'difficult' by comparing their p-values to the test mean 5.55 which corresponds to 56% of the total of 10 possible points. Items 1, 2, and 4 have p- values higher than 0.65 which indicates that these items were quite easy for the participants. Items 3, 5, 6, 8 and 10 have p-values from 0.4 to 0.6 which means these items were moderate in terms of difficulty level. And item 7 with the lowest p-value of 0.310 was probably the most difficult item for the test takers.

D -Values ranged from -0.223 to 0.778, where only one item, item 6 had a negative d-value of -0.223. This means that item 6 was not discriminating at all. Such questions are often deleted by test designers. Items with d-value 1.00 are considered to be the best item as they have maximum discrimination and are likely to reflect successful learning on the part of the participants rather than indicating the poor nature of the designed items. In this test, there is no item with a d-value of 1.00, but there are values that are close to 1. Items 1, 3, and 8 have d-values 0.66, 0.77 and 0.77 which is a very good range for discrimination index and the corresponding p-values for these items are also very satisfactory (0.689, 0.552 and 0.448) so the test designer might decide to keep these items.

Items 4, 7 and 9 have d-value 0.556 which is also a satisfactory to discriminate between the high scorers and the low scorers. Therefore, these items might be kept by the test designer and considered for revision if need be. Items 2 and 5 both have d-value 0.334 and item 10 have a d-value of 0.223. Although these values are not exactly high, they can still be kept, considering a revision takes place, because the values are higher than 0.00. Items with d-values 0.00 are usually deleted by the test designers since they provide the designers with very little information about the test takers. In this test none of the items had a d-value of 0.00.

Items 1 to 4 which were a combination of 2 general and 1 vocabulary and one specific question were kept unchanged because for all these items the p and d- vales are satisfactory. Item 5 which is an inference question requires revision as both the p and d-values are moderate. (p=0.483 and d=0.334). In spite of a good p value, item 6 is still being deleted due to its negative d-value 0d -0.223. Items 7 and 9 are also advised for revision as its d-values ranges around 0.31-0.38 which is a little low although the discriminating index is 0.556 for both. And item 8 and 10 were again kept unchanged due to a satisfactory value of difficulty and discrimination.

The item with the worst overall performance was item 6, with a p-value of 0.55 and a negative d-value of -0.22. This indicates that all the participants who missed the item were likely among the high achievers. Upon review of the reading section data, it was noted that those participants who answered the question incorrectly, most of them chose the same distractors indicating that this distractor may have been a second key which in result degraded the item and warrant for deletion.

Item 3, on the other hand, was considered well designed, as it obtained a relatively satisfactory p-value of 0.55 which indicates a standard difficulty level and a moderately high d-value of 0.778 which makes the item more discriminatory between test takers.

Distractor Analyses

Items were chosen for distractor analyses based on their performances i.e. their discrimination index and difficulty level. The section presents further analysis of item 6, which had the worst performance among all the items on the test and item 3, which may be considered one of the best because of its satisfactory discrimination index and difficulty level.

The d-value of item 6 is -0.223, shows that there was no discrimination at all which as result required complete deletion of the item even after having a satisfactory p-value (p=0.586). The table below represents the frequency of the items along with the percentages.

Table-5

Distractor Analysis for Item 6

Options	Frequency	Percent
A	6	21.00
B	2	7.00
C	3	10.00
D (Answer)	18	62.00
Total	29	100.00

The correct answer for item 6 is D, and 18 out of 29 (i.e. 62%) test takers chose the right answer. 11 test takers (38%) got the item wrong. Among these 11, 6 (21%) of them selected distractor A, 2 (7%) of them chose distractor B and 3 (10%) of them opted for option C. It is to be noted that 2 of them were from the group of bottom scorers and 4 belonged to the group of top scorers. Frequency of option A is 6 which is 21% of the total number of students. Interestingly 3 out of the top 4 scorers chose option A which is basically 50% of the total frequency. This proves that option A is a very good distractor as it is able to distract half (50%) of the top nine and 21% of the total. It is also to be noted that from the 9 low achiever, 1 test taker only chose option A and 1 test taker chose option C and the rest 7 (78%) answered the question correctly. This test item basically distracted the low achievers less and the top achievers more which is undesirable. Therefore it can be said that the performance of item 6 was heavily impacted by the 6 scorers (3 of them belonging to the group of the top achievers) who were distracted by distactor A. Nevertheless it is worth examining the distractors to determine what might have possibly attracted the top 3 performers towards a wrong answer, where most low performers were able to identify the correct answer.

Item 3 was a general question having a difficulty value of 0.55 and discrimination index of 0.77, where 17 out of 29 test takers (59%) answered the item correctly and the other 12 i.e. 41% where distracted by other options. Among the three other distractors, option B and D attracted 2 test takers each with an individual percentage of 7% and a total of 14%. Distractor A, on the other hand, attracted the highest number of test takers i.e. 8 test takers (27%). Among these 8, 6 of them (75%) are low achievers. The rest 3 of the 9 low achievers chose option B and C. The table below shows the frequency analysis and the consecutive percentages of this item.

Table-6
Distractor Analysis for Item 3

Options	Frequency	Percent
A	8	27.00
B	2	7.00
C (Answer)	17	59.00
D	2	7.00
Total	29	100.00

It is to be noted that from the group of top 9 achievers, all the test takers chose option C which is the correct answer. In other words, 100% top test takers opted for the right option without any distraction. Therefore this item can be considered as a good item as it discriminated well between the high scorers and the low scorers. The test item also has satisfactory difficulty as all the high scorers answered it correctly whereas the low scorers were deviated by the other distractors.

Variables

Relationship between a Background Variable and Performance

There are three types of variable which can be related to learner's performance. The variables are learners background (English/Bengali), gender (male/female) and student's academic exposure (number of semesters). It is believed that the senior the student becomes, the knowledgeable s/he becomes. To determine whether it is true for the participants of the survey, the correlations between learners' academic exposure and their scores in the test were analyzed.

Among the 29 participants of this survey 16 were above 8th semester having atleast 2 years of exposure to this university. Rest 13 participants were juniors belonging to either 8th semester or below in this institution. The average scores of senior and junior students in the test are given below:

Table-7
Correlation between participants' number of semesters & scores in the test (out of 10)

Above 8th Semester	8th Semester & Below
5.57	5.15

The average shows that the number of semesters spent has some effect (though less significant) on the score of the test. The learners above 8th semester got 5.57 out of 10 as opposed to the learner below or at 8th semester having the average of 5.15. After looking at the average it can be said that there is very little difference in their performances which may be a sign that the seniors are slightly better than the juniors. The difference between the averages is 0.42 which does not affect the learners' performance that much. The reason behind seniors performing slightly higher than the juniors can be because of their longer exposure to the learning materials and experience. Their exposure to the institution may have helped them to enhance their understanding and comprehension level.

Discussion and Conclusion

As stated before, the researcher assessed the students on 10 multiple choice reading comprehension where there were 2 general questions, 2 inferencing questions and 6 specific questions. The result of the test shows that the range of the test being 7 makes the group a heterogeneous group. The researcher

also did items analysis to find out the difficulty and discrimination value of each item to increase the internal consistency of the test. It was seen that most of the items were of moderate difficulty level with a p-value ranging from at least 0.4-0.6. However, test -takers found item 7 and 9 the most difficult where the p- values were less than 0.4. Furthermore, the discrimination index showed that among all the 10 questions, item 6 had the lowest d- value, which is -0.22 which is an indicator to the fact that item 6 failed to discriminate between the top and the bottom scorers completely. After analyzing all the items the researcher decided to revise item no 5, 7 and 9 for having comparatively lower difficulty level. Also, as item 6 failed to make discrimination between the top and the bottom scorers completely the researchers decided to delete the item. For item 6, 21% test takers' answers were wrong (option A) making that a good distractor where 50% of the top scorers got distracted.

It is believed that with exposure comes knowledge. The researcher analyzed the scores the test-takers achieved and their academic exposure (number of semester) to find a correlation between the two. 8th semester being the bench mark, the results showed that there was very little difference between the two groups. The participants having higher academic exposure scored a little higher than the junior students. This may possibly be because of their longer exposure to teaching materials and their experience.
In a nut shell, the results show that most of the items had moderate level of difficulty and discrimination which leads the researcher to keep most of the items while revising just a few. It also shows that, though the variable (academic exposure) was present among the participants, it created very little difference among the average scores of the two groups (8th semester or above and below 8th semester).

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Appendix

Test

Below is a copy of the test administered to students, along with the answer key. MC items are coded for general, specific or inference to the right of the key.

Class Test **Time: 20 minutes**

Name: **ID:** **Section:**

Background: Bengali/ English **Gender:**

Read the following passage and tick (√) the best answer. Total Marks: 10

Psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Franklin once wrote, "Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose." For most people, feeling happy and finding life meaningful are both important and related goals. But do happiness and meaning always go together? It seems unlikely, given that many of the things that we regularly choose to do – from running marathons to raising children – are unlikely to increase our day-to-day happiness. Recent research suggests that while happiness and a sense of meaning often overlap, they also **diverge** in important and surprising ways.

Roy Baumeister and his colleagues recently published a study in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* that helps explain some of the key differences between a happy life and a meaningful one. They asked almost 400 American adults to fill out three surveys over a period of weeks. The surveys asked people to answer a series of questions their happiness levels, the degree to which they saw their lives as meaningful, and their general lifestyle and circumstances.

As one might expect, people's happiness levels were positively correlated with whether they saw their lives as meaningful. However, the two measures were not identical – suggesting that what makes us happy may not always bring more meaning, and vice versa. To probe for differences between the two, the researchers examined the survey items that asked detailed questions about people's feelings and moods, their relationships with others, and their day-to-day activities. Feeling happy was strongly correlated with seeing life as easy, pleasant, and free from difficult or troubling events. Happiness was also correlated with being in good health and generally feeling well most of the time. However, none of these things were correlated with a greater sense of meaning. Feeling good most of the time might help us feel happier, but it doesn't necessarily bring a sense of purpose to our lives.

Interestingly, their findings suggest that money, contrary to popular sayings, can indeed buy happiness. Having enough money to buy what one needs in life, as well as what one desires, were also positively correlated with greater levels of happiness. However, having enough money seemed to make little difference in life's sense of meaning. This same disconnect was recently found in a multi-national study conducted by Shigehiro Oishi and Ed Diener, who show that people from wealthy countries tend to be happier, however, they don't see their lives as more meaningful. In fact, Oishi and Diener found that people from poorer countries tend to see their lives as more meaningful. Although the reasons are not totally clear, this might be related to greater religious belief, having more children, and stronger social ties among those living in poorer countries. Perhaps instead of saying that "money doesn't buy happiness," we ought to say instead that "money doesn't buy meaning."

Not too surprisingly, our relationships with other people are related to both how happy we are as well as how meaningful we see our lives. In Baumeister's study, feeling more connected to others improved both happiness and meaning. However, the role we adopt in our relationships makes an important difference.

Participants in the study who were more likely to agree with the statement, "I am a giver," reported less happiness than people who were more likely to agree with, "I am a taker." However, the "givers" reported higher levels of meaning in their lives compared to the "takers." In addition, spending more time with friends was related to greater happiness but not more meaning. In contrast, spending more time with people one loves was correlated with greater meaning but not with more happiness. The researchers suspect that spending time with loved ones is often more difficult, but ultimately more satisfying, than spending time with friends.

When it comes to thinking about how to be happier, many of us fantasize about taking more vacations or finding ways to avoid mundane tasks. We may dream about skipping housework and instead doing something fun and pleasurable. However, tasks which don't make us happy can, over time, add up to a meaningful life. Even routine activities — talking on the phone, cooking, cleaning, housework, meditating, emailing, praying, waiting on others, and balancing finances — appeared to bring more meaning to people's lives, but not happiness in the moment.

More broadly, the findings suggest that pure happiness is about getting what we want in life—whether through people, money, or life circumstances. Meaningfulness, in contrast, seems to have more to do with giving, effort, and sacrifice. It is clear that a highly meaningful life may not always include a great deal of day-to-day happiness. And, the study suggests, our American **obsession** with happiness may be intimately related to a feeling of emptiness, or a life that lacks meaning.
By Daisy Grewal

1. Which one will be the most suitable title for the passage? (General)
    a. A meaningful life is full of happiness.
    b. Money can buy happiness
    c. Life needs meaning, not happiness
    d. A happy life may not be a meaningful life (Answer)
2. The word "**diverge**" in line 7, can be best replaced by- (Specific/Vocabulary)
    a. Consent
    b. Disagree
    c. Differ (Answer)
    d. Turn
3. How do you best summarize the third paragraph? (General)
    a. People's happiness is correlated with meaningfulness
    b. Feeling happy means being in good health
    c. Happiness and meaningfulness are not identical (Answer)
    d. Feeling good brings sense of purpose to our lives
4. Oishi and Diener found that people from poorer countries tend to have a more meaningful life. One of the reasons behind this is- (Specific)
    a. Motivation
    b. Social relationship (Answer)
    c. Poverty
    d. Disincentive
5. What does the writer imply by "American Obsession"? (Inference)
    a. Getting and spending (Answer)
    b. Spending less
    c. Giving more
    d. None of the above

6. What makes life unbearable? (Specific)
   a. Lack of meaning
   b. Lack of purpose
   c. None of the above
   d. Both a and b (Answer)

7. Which one is the antonym of "**obsession**"? (Specific/ Vocabulary)
   a. Fixation
   b. Indifference (Answer)
   c. Desire
   d. Enthusiasm

8. The give is high in _____? (Specific)
   a. Happiness
   b. Meaningfulness (Answer)
   c. None of the above
   d. Both a and b

9. Which of the following has "**NO**" correlation with happiness? (Specific)
   a. Staying healthy
   b. Sacrifice (Answer)
   c. Trouble free occasions
   d. Pleasant life

10. Who has the probability of having a happier and more meaningful life? (Inference)
   a. People with easy and pleasant life, less children and who doesn't bother about social relationship
   b. People who are powerful and wealthy who always receives gifts from others
   c. People with more children, strong religious beliefs, good health and has enough money to buy his/her needs. (Answer)

People who are taking more vacation, enjoying life and doesn't have any worries about household responsibilities.