

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE  
PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS AT UNIVERSITY WITH  
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH.



by

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1988

I, SUSAN ANNE COURT, declare that

"LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS:

an investigation into the relationship between language proficiency and academic success at university with particular reference to first-year students of English"

is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Susan Anne Court', written in dark ink.

Durban

December 1988

## ABSTRACT

The relationship between language proficiency and academic success in university studies is of major concern in educational institutions throughout the Western world. The particular focus of this study is the situation in the Republic of South Africa.

This problem is of critical importance at this stage in the history of South Africa when universities have publicly stated their commitment to admit any students with merit or potential to succeed at university. In order for students to succeed at university they need to be communicatively competent in the language which is the medium of instruction. It has been assumed that this ability can be assessed by means of a formal test and it is this issue on which this dissertation focuses in order to establish how reliable such tests are as predictors of academic performance.

The empirical research covers a six-year period from 1982 to 1987 and investigates two tests. One is a particular language test which was designed specifically for the selection of students for courses of academic study of English at university. The other is the senior certificate

examination which provides the statutory admission requirement for university entrance in South Africa.

An extensive review of relevant studies both within South Africa and overseas has been undertaken. In addition an unstructured questionnaire was sent to English departments throughout South Africa in order to establish the current practice with regard to the selection of students for first-year courses.

The conclusion seems to be that in the context of a homogeneous population language proficiency as measured on a formal test is predictive of academic success in first-year courses in English. In heterogeneous student populations, like that of South Africa where the majority of prospective students may be described as being "disadvantaged", however, this is not the case. Academic success cannot be predicted with any degree of confidence on the basis of language proficiency.

Extreme caution is necessary in the implementation of any language test for the selection of students for academic study at university in the present changing nature of university student populations in South Africa.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

#### 1. The First-Year Failure Rate

South African universities are facing the ever-increasing problem of students who are failing in their first-year courses at university. The first-year failure rate has been a vexed question for some time. Stoker et al ( 1985:6), quoting Le Roux ( 1976:1), point out that as early as July 1938, Dr E.G. Malherbe, in an address entitled "Whither Matric?", disclosed that about 40% of the 8,000 students enrolled at South African universities between 1930 and 1935 had failed their first year. During the next five decades the situation continued to cause concern. Some of the pertinent research studies during this period are reviewed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. A study undertaken in 1982 on a sample of students from all the white residential universities revealed that, on average, 44% of students in the faculties of arts, science and commerce either took longer than five years to graduate or never graduated. This study also showed that in 1979, at these same universities, 19.5% of all first-year students did not pass a single course. (Cloete and Pillay 1987:28) Eventually, in December 1982, the Committee of University Principals requested that the Joint Matriculation

Board (JMB) give consideration to raising the minimum aggregate mark needed for matriculation exemption. The JMB agreed in principle to the raising of the minimum requirements for university entrance, but expressed doubt as to whether this would necessarily ensure a better selection for university entrance. (Stoker et al, 1985 : 2)

Recently, however, the problem has been aggravated by the increase in the number of Black students at many universities which had been traditionally "White", particularly the English-speaking universities like the University of Cape Town, the University of Natal, Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand. Of the "ethnic" universities the University of Durban-Westville has, since it achieved its autonomy in 1983, had a spectacular increase in the enrolment of Black students,<sup>1</sup> particularly since 1986.

## 2. The University Admissions Policy

This issue of the first-year failure rate should be seen within the wider context of the whole question of the university admissions policies. In January 1987 the Committee of University Principals (CUP) commissioned a study of macro-aspects of the university in the context of tertiary education in the Republic of South Africa. The report of the Main Committee which carried out this investigation was tabled at the meeting of the Committee of University Principals held in Pretoria on 20 January 1988. The report

isolates five proposed guidelines dealing with the functions of the university which were accepted by the CUP. The fourth of these reads as follows:

The benefits of a university education should be accessible to anyone who commands the required capacity, talent and interest, with due consideration, however, for the financial constraints to which universities are subject, and for the nature and extent of the manpower requirements that universities should attempt to meet, and on condition that the ideal of academic excellence is neither surrendered nor lowered in the pursuit of equal opportunities and the widest possible access.

( CUP 1987:12)

In the preamble to this fourth guideline the report discusses the "contentious relationship" between the elitist stance which requires "quality" institutions and the egalitarian position which perceives the university as "an institution geared to mass needs."(CUP 1987:10)

The primary concern of the elitist position is one of quality, incorporating the pursuit of academic excellence. This goal emerges pre-eminently in the criterion for the selection and

admission of students, which is one of intellectual talent and ability, as measured by school achievements or other assessment tools....An important aspect of this approach is its emphasis on a uniform system of admission requirements, qualification programmes and evaluation procedures.

In contrast to this position, the egalitarian approach concentrates on the promotion of equal opportunities for all people, and more specifically on the widest possible access to the benefits of a university education.

In its extreme form the egalitarian approach pleads the scrapping of all admission requirements, and hence unrestricted access to the university. The university should, in this view, be open to anyone having the need or the desire to study, irrespective of prior qualifications.

(CUP 1987:10)

The report acknowledges the difficulty of reconciling the ideals of academic excellence and unlimited access within the same institution. It accepts that access to university education in South Africa cannot be totally egalitarian but that there are certain limitations which implies admission requirements. The report emphasises that in South Africa admission requirements should be based not only on scholastic

and academic performance " but also on the candidate's potential and abilities , as well as on the economic and other realities of the community."(CUP 1987:77)

In its response to this report the Committee of University Principals asserted its commitment

to ensure that the university system in South Africa develops in such a way that any person with the ability to gain admission to a university and the wish to do so should as soon as possible be able to compete on equal terms to gain admission on grounds of merit and/or potential.

( 1988:1)

This document identifies five different areas which require further investigation, one of these being "strategies for and methods of selecting students and identifying potential for success." (1988:2)

### 3. The Policy and Practice of Admissions in South African Universities 1980 -1988

It has been the practice for some time to screen students for entry to university on the basis of the senior certificate examination. In addition to the basic statutory requirement of a matriculation exemption qualification, universities have

implemented a points system which varies in different faculties and departments. Under this system, symbols obtained in the senior certificate examination are converted into numerical ratings. In 1981 at the University of the Witwatersrand , for example, selection of students for admission to the Faculty of Science was based on a conversion table. ( See Table 1 ) According to this system, students with an admission rating of 42 or above were accepted for the three-year curriculum, while those with a rating of 38 to 41 were required to spread their curriculum over four years. Candidates with a rating of 32 or lower were rejected, while those with a rating between 33 and 37 were considered individually. The school principals' reports were taken into account and these students were restricted to certain subject choices. (Behr 1985:108).

Table 1

CONVERSION OF SENIOR CERTIFICATE SYMBOLS INTO NUMERICAL RATINGS, FACULTY OF SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

SYMBOL	HIGHER GRADE	STANDARD GRADE
A	8	6
B	7	5
C	6	4
D	5	3
E	4	2
F	3	1

The Universities Amendment Act, 1983 (Act 83 of 1983) introduced the quota system which allowed universities to admit students who were members of "population groups...other than that of which the student body of a relevant university mainly consists...". In 1984 the University of Natal introduced a rating system, similar to that of the University of the Witwatersrand, for the admission of first-year students based on the symbols achieved in the senior certificate examination. The formula was amended in 1985 because it was considered that the original point system did not differentiate sufficiently between higher and standard grade passes. It was decided that an A pass at Higher Grade would carry 8 points while an A pass at Standard Grade would carry only 5 points. Each symbol below A = 8 in the Higher Grade was reduced by one point and each symbol below A = 5 in the Standard Grade was reduced by one point. Matriculants who obtained 32 points or more were admitted unconditionally. Thereafter, selection would be made in descending order of points until the intake was full.

In addition certain departments and faculties imposed their own requirements. In English departments for example it is the practice among several universities to select only those students who have gained a D on senior certificate English first language or a C on English second language.

In dramatic contrast to these policies, the University of the Western Cape, espousing an egalitarian approach, implemented an Open Admissions Policy in 1987. In other words, any student who has the requisite qualification of a matriculation exemption, which is the statutory requirement for university entrance in the Republic of South Africa, is accepted into the university.

#### 4. Language Ability and Academic Success

While the whole issue of admission to universities in South Africa is being debated by the Committee of University Principals and other concerned bodies, this dissertation attempts to focus on a particular area which is of critical importance within the wider context, that of the relationship between language ability and academic success. This is clearly a crucial factor both at school and university. It is hoped that the findings discussed here may throw some light on the problem which is of general concern throughout the country.

It has been assumed that Black students are not succeeding because of their "disadvantaged backgrounds" - an umbrella term which would seem to encompass a number of factors both educational and socio-economic. The CUP Report isolates several broad categories of bridging problems experienced by first-year students at university. These are problems of an

academic nature, problems that concern career and curriculum choice and, finally, psychological, social and medical problems.

Academic problems can be of a very general nature and be related to inadequate preparation, inadequate ability and faulty perceptions regarding university studies - as well as poor cognitive skills. The academic disposition and motivation of the student can also be deficient. In addition, one finds more specific academic inadequacies, such as poor language or numerate skills, or inadequate mastery of the natural sciences or mathematics. In many cases the school performance itself is too poor.

(CUP 1987:82)

The response to these problems on the part of the universities concerned has been various. Some, like the University of Cape Town, the University of Durban-Westville, the University of Natal, Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand have instituted academic support programmes. These vary from induction and orientation weeks to courses in study and reading skills, language courses and bridging courses before the beginning of the university year. In some instances, specialised projects have been introduced, often financed by the private sector. Sached's Khanya College in Johannesburg and in Athlone is an example where tuition is offered to students from "deprived environments". Khanya

College has entered into agreements with the Universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand, by means of which recognition will be given to subjects passed by the students while preparing for further studies at university. Special emphasis is placed on English skills, study methods and the principles underlying the subjects taken by students. The English Language Development Scheme at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus) and the BELS (Basic English Language Skills) Project at the University of the Western Cape are further examples of projects funded by the private sector.

While these latter two examples are concerned exclusively with English language skills, the development of language ability has been a major concern in all the academic support programmes. There is clearly the assumption that there is a relationship between linguistic ability and academic success at university. The concern with language ability in prospective students at university appears to have two different and distinct emphases: one is that because linguistic ability is recognised as a key factor in academic success, that students need to be assessed in order to ascertain that proficiency. In other words, only those students who can demonstrate a certain standard of competence should be permitted to follow a course of study at university. This particular approach is a minefield of sensitive political issues in the context of South Africa where educational opportunities have been differentially

applied to different population groups. The other, more "humanitarian" rationale for assessing students is diagnostic, to detect those students who are "at risk" of failure because of their language skills and who therefore need to be channelled into some sort of intervention programme, such as the academic support programmes mentioned above, or bridging programmes, in order to give them every opportunity to succeed.

This dissertation examines the relationship between language proficiency and academic success in a particular context, that of first-year students of English at university. The research directs a critical focus on assessment and screening procedures for prospective English I students in the Republic of South Africa. This includes a critical analysis of the senior certificate examination results as well as a particular language test which has been used for the purposes of the selection of students to English I courses.

Academic success at university has been confined to the discipline of English for several reasons:

- a. It has been necessary to confine the research within reasonable, controllable parameters.
- b. University authorities have often looked to English Departments to provide a solution to the problem of language skills, and, as a result English Departments are very close to the problems and issues involved.

c. Competence in English language is generally agreed to be a pre-requisite for the study of English at university. Thus the relationship between language ability and academic success can be closely analysed in this context.

d. English Departments , because of the concerns just mentioned, have frequently implemented research and language programmes to deal with the problem. This has meant that there has been interest and co-operation from English Departments who have offered their own experience and have expressed interest in the findings of this research for their own purposes.

## 5. Outline of Chapters

The succeeding chapters deal with the following issues:

Chapter Two is concerned with the definition of pertinent terminology and concepts which are referred to throughout this dissertation. It also reviews relevant literature on the subject both within and without South Africa in an attempt to discover the findings of other researchers and to place the present study in context.

Chapter Three focusses on the problem at a particular university, the University of Durban-Westville, where a language testing programme was conducted among first-year students of English during the period 1982 to 1987.

Chapter Four discusses the findings of the research into the particular test (which was used in the Durban-Westville programme) which was administered at two other universities, the University of Fort Hare and the University of Natal (Durban campus).

Chapter Four also reviews the situation with regard to language proficiency and student selection in English Departments at universities throughout the Republic of South Africa.

Chapter Five is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of all the relevant statistical data to hand for the period 1982 to 1987.

Chapter Six attempts, in a consideration of all the findings from both the empirical research and the survey of literature, to make some conclusive and comprehensive statement with regard to the relationship between language proficiency and academic success at university. Suggestions will be made for the future direction in this matter, particularly in the Republic of South Africa.

#### NOTES

1. Throughout this dissertation reference is made to the different population groups in the Republic of South Africa

as Black, Coloured, Indian and White.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGY

#### 1. Definition of Terminology

This dissertation aims to investigate the relationship between language proficiency and academic success at university. Before proceeding any further it is necessary to define the parameters and clarify the terminology. The term "language proficiency" has been chosen particularly rather than " language competence " or " language performance" or "communicative competence" for the following reasons.

1.1. "Competence" and "performance" as defined by Chomsky are key terms : "competence" being confined to what a speaker knows about his language, referred to as deep structure, which is not outwardly observable. "Performance", on the other hand, refers to language which is produced, the outwardly manifested behaviour - the surface structure. (Lyons 1970:38 -39)

1.2. Chomsky's "competence" and "performance" are contrasted with "communicative competence" which has problems of connotation for philosophers conversant with the work of Habermas. "Communicative competence" has a particular meaning for linguists, applied linguists and language

teachers and a research study of this nature must take this into account and explain clearly what is meant by the term in the particular field of language.

The term "communicative competence" was first fully defined, as far as Linguistics is concerned, by the American linguist Dell Hymes in 1971. Communicative competence, according to Hymes includes among other things, the notions of grammaticality and appropriacy. Hymes defines four "sectors" or types of rules of communicative competence (Hymes 1971):

1.2.1. What is formally possible - this corresponds with grammaticality i.e. what is grammatically possible within the linguistic system.

1.2.2. What is feasible - a sentence may be grammatically possible but not feasible. For example, the following sentence from Hymes (1971) quoted by Brumfit and Johnson (1979:14) may be regarded as being grammatically possible but it is not feasible.

"The mouse the cat the dog the man the woman married beat chased ate had a white tail."

1.2.3. What is appropriate - i.e. what is appropriate within a given context. Thus, a sentence may be grammatical and feasible but not appropriate in the context. George Bernard Shaw gives us the famous and well-loved example of Eliza Doolittle in Pygmalion who has learned the grammar and pronunciation of English as it is spoken in the aristocratic circles but she has not learnt what is socially appropriate.

So when Mrs Higgins embarks on what is essentially phatic communication with the question: "Will it rain do you think?" Eliza responds with the following rejoinder which is quite inappropriate but very amusing in the social context:

"The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation." (Shaw 1916:78)

1.2.4. What is performed - whether or not something is in fact done. A sentence may be grammatical, feasible and appropriate but it does not occur i.e. it has no probability.

1.3. "Language proficiency" in the context of this particular research project refers to language ability as measured on a test. This is contrasted with both "competence" and "performance" and "communicative competence" as defined above. In a sense, it may be regarded as a test of certain aspects of a speaker's communicative competence.

## 2. The Question of Assessment

2.1. In order to investigate the relationship between language ability and academic success at university, it is necessary to implement some assessment procedure. Assessment has been defined as "the process of determining the level of a person in a particular skill." Rowntree gives a broad view of assessment when he says:

... assessment in education can be thought of as

occurring whenever one person, in some kind of interaction, direct or indirect, with another, is conscious of obtaining and interpreting information about the knowledge and understanding, or abilities and attitudes of that other person. To some extent or other it is an attempt to know that person. In this light, assessment can be seen as human encounter. In education we are mainly conscious of this "encounter" in the shape of teachers finding out about their students.

(Rowntree 1987:4)

## 2.2. The Purposes of Assessment

Rowntree (1987:16 - 33) isolates six major purposes of assessment

- a. Selection by assessment.
- b. Maintaining standards .
- c. Motivation of students.
- d. Feedback to students.
- e. Feedback to the teacher.
- f. Preparation for life.

2.2.1. This dissertation is concerned with the first of these purposes i.e. selection by assessment. It is concerned with the issue of the selection of candidates for educational opportunity at university on the basis of

- a) their performance in the senior certificate examination

and

b) their performance in a particular language test which was designed for the screening of students for admission into first-year English courses at university.

Both of these forms of assessment can be described as prognostic tests. A prognostic test is a predictive test. In this instance it sets out to predict a student's performance in his academic career on the basis of a formal English examination, (the senior certificate examination) or a particular language test.

2.2.2. The fifth of these purposes outlined by Rowntree is also relevant here i.e. "Feedback to the teacher". In this instance the purpose of the assessment is diagnostic, in other words to diagnose problems experienced by students in the process of their learning. In the South African context, diagnostic tests are frequently administered to detect students "at risk" who may then be directed towards academic support programmes.

2.2.3. The test which is discussed in this dissertation was designed primarily as a prognostic test. The intention was to select students who would be likely to benefit from an academic course of study at university and would have a chance of passing the first-year English I examinations. The intention was to screen out students who were manifestly unsuitable and would appear to have little chance of academic

success in first-year English.

However, it should be mentioned at this stage that the test has been used with some considerable success in the English Department at the University of Natal (Durban) for diagnostic purposes. The results of this experiment are discussed in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

### 2.3. Testing for Communicative Competence

In the particular case which is the subject of this research, students entering into a course of study at university need to be proficient in all of the "sectors" of communicative competence. They need to be conversant with all of the rules of grammaticality, feasibility, appropriacy and possess an intuitive knowledge of probabilities of occurrence.

Ideally, a test of communicative competence should include all of these areas. However, to date, any test which has begun to satisfy all of these requirements is a time-consuming and unwieldy instrument as Brendan Carroll illustrates in Testing Communicative Performance (Pergamon 1980). For practical purposes a test which is to be used in the selection of a group of students from a large sample, either for a course of academic study or for an academic support programme, needs to be easy to administer and quick to mark

because of constraints of time in an already short academic year.

The most that can be done is to test English for academic purposes or, in other words, to test that students would be communicatively competent in an academic environment. Even this, however, involves a range of abilities and skills which could hardly be assessed by only one test.

### 2.3. The Type of Assessment

In the consideration of the question of what type of test to select for the broad purpose of the selection of students, there are basically two different types of tests from which to choose - discrete point tests and integrative tests. Oller defines them in the following way:

...a discrete point test is one that attempts to focus attention on one point of grammar at a time. Each test item is aimed at one and only one element of a particular component of a grammar...such as phonology, syntax or vocabulary. Moreover, a discrete point test purports to assess only one skill at a time (e.g. listening, or speaking, or reading, or writing) and only one aspect of a skill ( e.g. productive versus receptive or oral versus visual). Within each skill, aspect and component, discrete items supposedly focus on precisely one

and only one phoneme, morpheme, lexical item, grammatical rule, or whatever the appropriate element may be.

... Whereas discrete items attempt to test knowledge of a language one bit at a time, integrative tests attempt to assess a learner's capacity to use many bits all at the same time, and possibly while exercising several presumed components of a grammatical system, and perhaps more than one of the traditionally recognised skills or aspects of skills.

(Oller 1979:37)

Lewis (1981:49) gives examples of discrete point tests which operate on:

2.3.1. the phonological level - e.g. a focus of the distinction between "sit" and "set".

and

2.3.2. the semantic or lexical level - e.g. the collocation of "rent" and "hire".

and

2.3.3. the grammatical level - e.g. word order differences like the differences between the following sentences:

"I painted the wall green."

and

"I painted the green wall."

Examples of integrative tests on the other hand are :

- dictation tests
- cloze tests
- free-writing

2.4. Lewis compares discrete point versus integrative tests and points to the advantage of discrete point tests, that is that they are comparatively easy to refine.

A successful discrete point test is taken to be one in which a complete item analysis has been carried out, producing an instrument which can in the end be standardised.

(Lewis 1981:50)

Because integrative tests deal with several elements of language they are far more difficult to standardise. Here one comes up against one of the fundamental paradoxes of testing. Tests require standardisation i.e. comparisons and correlations over large samples of subjects in order to arrive at a dependable instrument. But communicative competence by its very nature is subjective and idiosyncratic and does not lend itself to standardisation.

2.5. To return to the issue of testing communicative competence, clearly, then, discrete point tests are not tests of communicative competence. From the preceding discussion it might be implied that integrative tests are tests of

communicative competence. Lewis is at pains to indicate that this is not the case. In order for a test to fit the requirements of communicative competence it needs to be "pragmatically valid" i.e. it needs to approximate to a real life situation; it should be authentic; it should present the testee with a test that could be a natural act of communication.

2.6. Interactional sociolinguistics has contributed another dimension to the notion of communicative competence. Researchers of this persuasion are concerned with accounting for interaction as a process rather than a product: with how participants in an interaction negotiate meaning.

...interactional sociolinguists argue that an adequate description of communicative competence is to be accomplished by establishing not what goes on in heads, which is in any case not directly available for analysis, but between heads. With this focus, the analytic task becomes one of examining the details of interaction to discover how participants set up environments or contexts for the display of knowledge and ability, in terms of which they are perceived of as having a particular level of competence (including level of communicative competence.)

(Chick 1983:1)

Chick argues for a balance between the interactional and the cognitive views of communicative competence and quotes Mehan (1979:129) that "neither cognition nor behaviour can exist without the other; they are in a constant dialectal relationship." He points to the implications of the interactional view of communicative competence for testing, noting that:

any test of communicative competence must inevitably be partial. It follows that if a test is to have any diagnostic or predictive value it has to be closely related to the knowledge and abilities which the testee will find essential in contexts or situations he is likely to find himself in the immediate future.

(Chick 1983:4)

### 3. The Particular Test Used in the Empirical Research

3.1. What has in effect been done in the testing programme which constitutes the basis of the empirical research in this study is to focus on particular areas of communicative competence which are requisite in an academic environment. Thus the following competencies have been assumed to be important:

3.1.1. The ability to read and comprehend written text of a

fair degree of complexity. This includes the ability to see the connection between ideas and their logical development.

3.1.2. The ability to understand the denotative and connotative meanings of vocabulary. This includes the ability to derive the meanings of words from their context.

3.1.3. The ability to understand different levels and types of questions.

3.2. With regard to this last point Bensoussan distinguishes between the level of difficulty of a text and the level of difficulty of a test i.e. the questions. She argues that two separate skills are involved:

understanding the text involves following a logical thought sequence, whereas answering multiple-choice questions involves, in addition, the discernment of similarities and differences among alternative responses. This skill is closely linked to general intelligence as well as to reading proficiency.

(Bensoussan 1982:286)

In a testing programme conducted at Haifa University in 1978 the subjects were first-year students who had completed seven to eight years of English studies at high school. The 310

candidates were divided into two groups each of which wrote a separate multiple choice comprehension test. The topics of the passages were similar but the level of difficulty of one text was much greater than the other. However, the level of questioning in both tests was of the same degree of difficulty. It was found that from a general statistical overview that the tests appeared to be equivalent. The average of the test scores on the easier text was 65%, while the average of test scores on the more difficult text was 66%. Her conclusion was that "it is the set of questions and not the text that appears to be the decisive factor in determining the difficulty of the test as a whole."(Bensoussan 1982:289)

3.3. The empirical research for this dissertation is based on a multiple-choice objective comprehension test of 50 items. The test was administered to groups of first-year students during the period 1982 to 1987. In order to preserve test security, the same test was not written every year. There was a battery of 13 test passages, so that in any one year the content of the passages was different. For example, in 1983 the test comprised passages 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 whereas in 1986 it comprised passages 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 13. For each test, however, the questions were designed on the same format, with a similar spread between questions on content and vocabulary, and as far as possible at the same level of difficulty. In other words, every attempt was made to maintain consistency in the testing programme so that the

same student who wrote the test in 1983 or 1987 might score a mark in the same percentage range. The validity and reliability of the test as well as the item analysis for the 1986 test are discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. (See Appendices D, E, F, G and H for copies of the test papers used.)

#### 4. The Senior Certificate Examination Result and Academic Success at University

4.1. A major concern of this dissertation is the relationship between the senior certificate examination, which is the final school-leaving certificate in the Republic of South Africa, and academic success in first-year university studies. The senior certificate examination provides the matriculation qualification in South Africa and is frequently referred to as "matriculation" or "matric" throughout this dissertation. The empirical research is discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, but it is pertinent to discuss here the findings of other researchers.

4.2. Throughout the world, all universities except those run on egalitarian lines have required and still do require some admission requirement. As the CUP report (1987) shows, a totally egalitarian approach is seldom successful. It quotes the USSR where, after the Revolution, universities were, in 1918, open to all persons above the age of 16, regardless of

citizenship or sex, and without proof of successful secondary-school education. In the thirties, as a result of increasing industrialisation, stricter admission requirements were implemented. More recently manpower needs have influenced admission requirements in that country. Spalding, quoting Halls (1971) and Hearnden(1973) notes that the U.S.S.R. currently requires prospective university students to have secondary-school passes in Russian, a modern language, mathematics, astronomy and a further science subject along with one or more options drawn from languages, the sciences and/or the social sciences.

4.3. Spalding surveying admission requirements to university from a general international perspective makes the following comment:

The subject groups stipulated in basic entrance requirements tend to reflect the educational theory underpinning a particular educational system. Generally, independent university study is seen to require three essential qualities, namely, literacy, numeracy and the possession of a substantial body of relevant sociocultural knowledge.

Spalding ( 1985:7)

He quotes Halls (1971) that the most common subject grouping seen to fulfil these requirements are : - mother tongue, mathematics, a second language, one or more of the sciences

(physics, chemistry and biology) and one or more of the social sciences (history, geography, economics, etc.) "Minor differences tend to reflect national idiosyncrac~~ies~~ies as to what constitutes 'valid' sociocultural knowledge." (Spalding 1985:7) The following are some examples of basic national requirements for university entrance:

4.3.1. In the United Kingdom a combination of five subjects is required in the General Certificate of Education, with two or three at Advanced level (A level) and the remainder at Ordinary level (O level). English, a modern language, mathematics, and one of the sciences together with an additional subject chosen from one of these groups or the social sciences, forms the basic requirement.

4.3.2. Australia and New Zealand have followed the Scottish rather than the English model. Up to the end of the secondary school six subjects are studied with English, a modern language and mathematics being compulsory.

4.3.3. In Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe have followed the English model, even going so far as to write the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate and Cambridge Advanced Level Examinations and the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level and Advanced Level Examinations. It should be mentioned that these examination papers are written in English and that they are set and marked in the

United Kingdom. Of these four states, only Zimbabwe insists on two A levels for entrance to university.

4.3.6. In South Africa the senior certificate examination has traditionally provided the function of admission requirements to universities (c.f. the point made under 4.1 above). South Africa has, like Australia and New Zealand, followed the Scottish model with variety rather than specialisation being the basic approach i.e. six subjects are studied up to the end of secondary school. The Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) was set up in 1916 in an attempt to provide a single national examining body. Although this was never achieved the JMB does exercise power in the setting of performance standards and subject groupings and the drawing up of syllabi. The policy of separate educational provision for different population groups has resulted in the proliferation of educational responsibility so that there are currently nine examining education departments and eighteen education authorities in the country.

A summary of the present minimum requirements for matriculation exemption based on the senior certificate examination are as follows:

- a. an aggregate of 45% based on six subjects of which at least five must be passed.
- b. from group A (the official languages) both English and Afrikaans must be passed, one at First Language Higher Grade and the other at First or Second Language Higher grade. A

Black student may replace one official language with an African mother tongue language, but must still in this instance, attempt both official languages, though only one need be passed.

c. two further Higher Grade passes are required from at least two different groups, while a subject from each of at least four groups must be passed. These subject groups comprise: Group B - mathematics; Group C - the sciences; Group D - third languages; Group E - social sciences and Group F - the applied subjects such as accountancy, home economics, art etc..

#### 4.4. Second Language Admissions

The impetus for this study has come from the growing number of students at universities in South Africa who are second-language speakers of English. South Africa is not alone in this problem and it is pertinent to note that in most countries special regulations apply to those students who wish to study via the medium of a second language. In the United States of America it is common practice for non-native speakers of English to write a language test prior to admission to university. Such tests as the "Test of English as a Foreign Language"(TOEFL) are offered by private examining bodies, for example the Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton. Spalding, quoting Halls (1971) reports that in 1965 18,000 testees sat the examination. Of this

number, 16% failed and were not admitted to university; 71% passed "reasonably", but still needed some language help while studying; while the remaining 13% passed well and needed no further language remediation in order to pursue their academic studies. The escalation in the number of second-language students at universities in the U.S.A. is indicated by the fact that in 1982 225,000 candidates sat the TOEFL examination. Hale (1984) reports that TOEFL is currently required by more than 2,500 colleges in the United States and Canada to determine the English proficiency of applicants whose native language is not English.

In the United Kingdom, universities generally require a pass in the General Certificate of Education "O" level language from prospective students.

From all of the above quoted examples it is clear that language competence in the medium of instruction is generally regarded as being a pre-requisite for academic success at university. All of the countries mentioned require that the school-leaving certificate, which provides the criteria for admission to university, includes a credit in the official language which is the medium of instruction at tertiary level. Students who have acquired their secondary school qualifications in languages other than that which is the official language of the country are required to prove their proficiency in the language which is the medium of instruction.

In the Republic of South Africa, as has been shown, White students are required to pass both official languages at the senior certificate level while Black students may replace one of the official languages with an African mother tongue. Problems arose when the senior certificate examination proved to be an unreliable predictor of academic success at university. Its role as a criterion of student selection thus needs to be carefully scrutinised.

The following section presents a survey of some relevant research into the relationship between the senior certificate examination and academic success in first-year university studies.

5. A Survey of Research into the Relationship between the Senior Certificate Examination Results and Academic Success in First-Year University Studies

Chapter Three of this dissertation compares performance on the senior certificate examination and first year results in the Department of English at the University of Durban-Westville. Other researches have been conducted elsewhere on the senior certificate result as a predictor of university success. It is necessary to consider some of these.

As the CUP report points out, since the 1960's there have been several attempts by researchers and organisations to investigate "the problem of progression from school to university, and possible admission requirements" (1987 : 80). Their work has however been chiefly confined to the white sector of the population as this was the only group on which data was readily available. Most of these investigations were concerned with the statistical analysis of available data and focussed on the senior certificate examination as a predictor of university success. Some of the more recent of these research investigations will be reviewed here.

5.1. Gouws (1961) found that a high percentage of students who enrolled for first-year courses dropped out before the final examination. Approximately 25% of first year B.A.

students failed whereas about 50% of first-year B.Sc. students failed. He found that certain combinations of subjects in the senior certificate examination were better predictors of success at university than the matriculation aggregate. These are Afrikaans, English, Mathematics, Biology and History for a B.A. degree, and some or all of Afrikaans, Mathematics and Science for a B.Sc. degree.

5.2. Steyn (1963) analysed the class of matriculation passes and found that the probability that a second class matriculant will obtain a bachelor's degree in commerce or science is about half the probability that a first-class matriculant will obtain a bachelor's degree in the same faculties. Among first-class matriculants the probability of obtaining a B.Sc. degree is 62% and a B.A degree 82%. Among second-class matriculants there is a 29% probability of obtaining a B.Sc. and 55% probability of gaining a B.A. degree.

He also found that success or failure in a specific subject at university can be based on the matriculation symbol obtained in that subject.

5.3. Garbers and Faure (1972) found a highly significant positive relationship between the average matriculation mark and the number of first year subjects passed at university.

5.4. Gous (1966) also found that there was a strong correlation between a students's matriculation results and his academic performance in his first year at university.

5.5. Erens (1975) found that a matriculation aggregate of less than 50% is a good negative indicator of academic success at university . He points out that the matriculation aggregate cannot be used as a positive indicator of success, as raising the university entrance requirement to a 60% aggregate, for example, would exclude only about 60% of the failures while excluding approximately 28% of the successful students. A similar result was found by this researcher when analysing the relationship between the senior certificate result in English and academic success in first-year English at the university of Durban-Westville. This is discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

5.6. Gous and Botes (1976) found that first-year failures were mainly students with weak matriculation symbols. Thus, very few candidates with an E symbol for a matriculation subject passed the corresponding university subject in first year. They suggested that a minimum pre-requisite of a D symbol in a corresponding matriculation course would offer students a better chance of success.

Their research further proved that there was a strong correlation between success in certain " key " subjects in

the matriculation examination and success at university. These "key" subjects are Afrikaans (Higher Grade) or English (Higher Grade), German or Latin, Mathematics, Physical Science, History and Bookkeeping. Thus, the matriculation symbol in a certain subject could validly be used as a predictor of academic success in that subject at university. They recommended that for admission to university at least a D symbol should be obtained in a minimum of four of the subjects Afrikaans Higher Grade, English Higher Grade, German or Latin, Mathematics, Physical Science and Bookkeeping. For admission to the Sciences they recommended at least a C symbol to be the minimum requirement.

5.7. Glenn of the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Cape Town compared performance in English in matric. and at university. The study scrutinised the results of students over a ten-year period in the English Department at the University of Cape Town. It was found that "the matric mark is a highly significant indicator of success in the first year."(Glenn 1986:1) However it should be emphasised that this analysis did not include Black students who had written the matriculation examination of the Department of Education and Training and Glenn admits that "these results are not predictive in the same way that other matriculation exams are." (Glenn 1986:1)

5.7. In a research conducted on student admissions during

the period 1980 - 1985 at the University of the Witwatersrand, Mitchell and Fridjhon compared performance of medical students in the senior certificate examination and subsequent performance in first-year examinations. They challenged the assumption that all of the senior certificate examinations in the country are of the same standard and found that "using the criterion of the first-year university mark, the Joint Matriculation Board and Indian Senior Certificate examinations produce students better equipped for university study than do the Transvaal Senior Certificate and, in some circumstances, the Natal Senior Certificate examinations." (Mitchell and Fridjohn 1987:555) The analysis was based on the marks achieved by 15,294 students admitted to the university during the period 1980 - 1985 who registered as first-year students and then went on to write first-year examinations. Of these 15 294 students, 950 wrote the senior certificate examination of the Department of Education and Training or that of the Department of Coloured Affairs and were excluded from the study because "these two examinations are unrevealing of university potential (unpublished data)." (Mitchell and Fridjhon 1987)

They conclude that the disparity between average senior certificate performances and average first-year university performance implies that some senior certificate examinations are assessing skills which equip students better for university study than for passing the senior certificate

examination. They found that Joint Matriculation Board matriculants who have significantly lower average senior certificate marks than the Cape Senior Certificate, the Natal Senior Certificate or the Transvaal Senior Certificate have an average first-year university mark that is significantly greater than the marks achieved by the Transvaal Senior Certificate students and indistinguishable from the marks of the Cape Senior Certificate and Natal Senior Certificate students.

These findings lend support to the findings of this researcher that the senior certificate examinations are unreliable or unsatisfactory as a criterion for the selection of students. Not only is there disparity between the senior certificate examinations of the different white provincial examining bodies, but the senior certificate examination written by the majority of the Black students, that of the Department of Education and Training, or the examination of the Department of Coloured Affairs, were totally discounted because previous research and experience had shown these examinations to be unsatisfactory predictors of university success.

5.8. Potter and Jamotte (1985) conducted a study to investigate the senior certificate results of the Department of Education and Training (DET) schools. Two separate studies were conducted in 1980 and 1981, under the auspices of the Undergraduate Cadet Scheme of the University of the Witwatersrand, in which the school performance prior to the

senior certificate examination and the subsequent senior certificate examination (which is externally marked) were correlated. The findings of both research projects highlighted a lack of consistency between the "pre-matric marks" and the marks achieved by the candidates in the senior certificate examination.

In the 1980 study the "pre-matric results" and the senior certificate results of 63 Black students were analysed. These students constituted the short-list of applicants who had been screened out from an original pool of 1,000 students in a scholarship selection programme. To reach this final short-list the students had to have demonstrated a consistently high level of school performance prior to the senior certificate examination.

In the 1981 study the same selection process was applied to a group of 1,000 students, resulting in a select group of 159 students. The samples of 63 and 159 students "represent a carefully selected stratum of academically gifted African youngsters, who displayed the academic potential necessary to reach the final stages of a rigorous selection programme." (Potter and Jamotte 1985:11)

For both the 1980 and 1981 samples, the following indices of school performance were inter-correlated:

a. English junior certificate, Standard 9 , pre-matric and

matric symbols

b. Science junior certificate, standard 9, pre-matric and matric symbols

c. Mathematics junior certificate, standard 9, pre-matric and matric symbols.

For the 1981 sample, in addition, aggregate symbols obtained on junior certificate, standard 9, pre-matric and matric were also included.

The researchers found it significant that most school performance variables for either sample failed to predict performance on the senior certificate examination with any degree of accuracy. Overall they found

a surprising feature of both the 1980 and 1981 studies was the poor relationship between pre-matric and matric results. An analysis of these results indicates that the students tested suffered an average drop of approximately 15 percent (e.g. from a high C symbol to a low D symbol) between pre-matric and matric. In many individual cases the drop was far greater.

(Potter and Jamotte 1985:13)

The researchers noted "particularly disturbing features" which emerged from the analysis:

a) The low level of correlation between the pre-matric performance and the symbol obtained on the senior certificate

examination "a mere six months later".

b) A high level of fluctuation in the relationship between pre-matric performance and the symbol obtained in the senior certificate examination in the same subject from year to year. In the 1980 sample for example there was a firm relationship between the science pre-matric and the matriculation symbol ( $r = .54$ ). In the 1981 sample, however, there was virtually no relationship between the science pre-matric and the matriculation symbol ( $r = .17$ ).

c) The third feature is of particular relevance to this dissertation i.e. that of the performance in English. It was found that there was a "consistently low predictive value of school results and pre-matric symbols obtained in English vis-a-vis the final matric performance." The 1980 sample showed no predictive relationship between the English pre-matric and the matriculation symbol while the 1981 sample showed a weak predictive relationship between the English pre-matric and matriculation symbol.

5.9. These findings are corroborated by Classen and Orkin who conducted a survey of B.A. students at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1982. They compared pre-matric and matric performance and subsequent performance in the first year B.A. examinations among Black students and White students.

They found Black students' pre-matriculation performance to be much better than their matriculation performance. This

was not the case with White students as they found that "three-quarters of Blacks, in contrast to a quarter of Whites come down in their matric." ( 1983 : 7 ). In their scrutiny of the first year B.A. examination results they found that there was not a significant difference between the White students pass rate (76%) and the Black students' pass rate (73%), yet it would have been expected that the Black students' pass rate would have been much lower than that of the White students because their matriculation marks are concentrated at the bottom end of the rating scale.

Thus it is evident that Blacks perform better according to University standards than their low matric aggregates might have let one expect. This finding contradicts the contention that Black matric results are inflated, i.e. that admitting Blacks with a given aggregate the University is favouring them over Whites with the same aggregate.

They concluded that:

there is a downward bias in Blacks' reported aggregate matric symbols; so that to decide to exclude them on the strength of these symbols, in the same manner as for Whites, would be racially discriminatory.

(Classen and Orkin, 1983:11)

## 6. The Assessment of Potential

The studies outlined above have been concerned with the correlation between the senior certificate examination results and academic success at university, particularly in the first year. However thorough these analyses may be and there is no doubt that the data and procedures provide a convincing argument, they do not provide a comprehensive picture. For they do not take into account such factors as motivation, socio-economic differences, cultural backgrounds and disadvantaged educational backgrounds. It has been increasingly realised that these factors, which apply particularly to the Black population group in South Africa, cannot be ignored. As the CUP report states:

One of the basic challenges is considered to be the identification of potential in students in the light of inequalities in exposure to education and the low predictability of some school-leaving results.

(CUP 1987:81)

It is this element of potential which is currently providing a good deal of interest in the assessment of prospective students. The research projects which reflect this thinking are based on the ideas of Reuven Feuerstein (1979) who

believes that intelligence is a process and not a product. He postulates that intelligence has to be measured in terms of "learning potential". He argues that intelligence tests measure the manifest level of functioning, and has developed a testing device called the Learning Potential Assessment Device. This involves providing mediated learning experiences to the testees and assessing the modifiability of individuals, and thus their intelligence or "learning potential". In Feuerstein's view cognitive potential can only be assessed if we can measure how much learning can take place in the testing situation. The testing situation thus includes mediating and teaching in order to assess the extent to which students are able to learn the cognitive tasks as the test progresses. In this process they would demonstrate their cognitive potential. (Feuerstein 1979)

6.1 This concept lies behind the research project of Shochet at the University of the Witwatersrand (1984) who was concerned to identify those disadvantaged students who, in spite of poor manifest performance, nevertheless have the potential to succeed at university. He claims that while research has proved that the matric rating is a reasonable predictor of university success for white matriculants the same matriculation rating criteria cannot be applied to students from black schools administered by the Department of Education and Training.

Clearly students who emerge from the grossly

disadvantaged D.E.T. background have a manifest performance that is not a reflection of their potential, as this potential has not been facilitated. Their white counterparts have, in the main, had their potential facilitated. For them, therefore, matric will be measuring both the manifest performance and potential performance.

( Shochet 1984:2)

Shochet quotes findings at the University of the Witwatersrand which "pointed to totally disastrous correlations between matric rating of D.E.T. students and university performance."(Shochet 1984:2) For these disadvantaged students the single best predictor of university success was attendance at academic support programmes. (Shochet, undated paper p.14)

6.2. Griesel and Damerell of the Student Support Services of the University of Natal (Durban) espouse the same approach of dynamic assessment. They argue that the challenge to white universities

is to confront the consequences of differential access to educational opportunities, and to ensure that both student selection and procedures and educational development programmes rectify the current imbalance in terms of African black

students who are admitted to university, and those who succeed in meeting degree requirements.

(Griesel and Damerell 1988:1)

They refer to the fact that many studies have been undertaken in South Africa and other parts of the world in an attempt to find some suitable predictors of academic success at university and concede that "school results remain the most feasible predictor of university success if results fall within the higher range scores." They point out that this is not the case with Black students in South Africa where there is a very small pool of students who fall within the higher range scores, and that the schooling which Blacks receive is "vastly inferior" to the schooling which Whites receive.

They continue that:

these reasons for the present state of affairs compel the University to establish a fairer and more rational basis upon which to select or identify black students "with potential" for adapting to, benefiting from, and of course, also contributing to, the changing form of universities. Yet the dilemma and challenge the University faces are complex. The first (and not the only) of these complexities may be disaggregated as follows:

a. to identify disadvantaged students who have the potential to succeed at university, and more importantly,

b. to provide adequate and appropriate educational opportunities to develop such students' potential, once they are at university, so that they will succeed.

Measurements such as school results and psychometric tests provide little more than a record of past learning/knowledge and are inadequate and misleading indicators of especially black students' potential to learn and adapt to university studies.

(Griesel and Damerell 1988:2)

They posit that the "only viable alternative appears to be the development of a dynamic assessment which needs to be based on individuals' potential to learn when given the opportunities to do so." They are developing a "teach-test" procedure which aims to secure not a static measurement of potential "but rather to implement a dynamic assessment procedure which is ongoing and in essence part of educational development and redevelopment." They emphasise that their proposal for the implementation of a teach-test programme

should be seen as the beginning of a process of examining what the demands of university studies are , and what is meant by "potential". Their purpose is also to produce and prove to all concerned ( i.e. students, academics, departments, the university and the community in general) data which are crucial for what they see as "the necessary adaptation of the university to the community we serve, and vice versa." In other words, they aim to make the rules of learning and teaching at university explicit to all those who participate in it, both students and staff.

Their exploratory research programme proposes to undertake an in-depth investigation and description of the tasks and demands associated with university studies. At the same time the learning experiences, skills and competencies and expectations of Black students need to be investigated and described in order to determine what students need to develop in order to succeed. To this end their "teach-test model" will include three phases of teaching, learning and assessment:

a. The exposure of students to typical university learning tasks ( e.g. lectures, assignments, reading, examinations etc..)

The materials for students' exposure to typical university tasks will be developed and taught by discipline-specific academics in the first phase. These materials will need to be analysed before-hand by an educational development team in co-operation with discipline-specific academics in order to

"establish the typical demands placed on students in the learning-teaching dialectic."

b. The development of students' insights into the "contentless processes" of teaching and learning, which they refer to as "meta-cognitive skills and strategies".

In this phase students need to be taught the necessary skills to monitor their own engagement in typical learning tasks.

c. The development of students' insights into how knowledge is constructed (i.e. epistemic cognitive skills and strategies)

They explain that this third phase "focuses on the development of students' understanding of the form of arguments, the reasoning styles suitable to justifying claims of knowledge, and what may count as evidence in an argument or claim of knowledge."

Assessment of student engagement in the set tasks during the "teach-test" programme will take place at the end of each of the phases described above. All of the students will be formally assessed on three occasions and a graph of their potential to adapt to the demands of these perceived university tasks will be plotted.

The researchers do not claim that the development that takes place during these three phases will necessarily be permanent; neither do they suggest that such a programme will rectify past learning histories. However, they do argue

that the programme will reveal those students who have the potential to learn both typical university content and contentless cognitive processes and that the "results of students' engagement in university tasks must stand, therefore, as evidence for further educational development during their university careers."( Griesel and Damerell 1988:4)

At the time of writing it is envisaged that 200 students will be involved in the pilot scheme of the "teach-test" programme in December 1988/January 1989. These will be students who would not normally gain admission to the university and will be recruited by the Educational Projects Unit which, as a joint university-community structure, has contacts with the community outside of the university. The University of Natal has agreed to admit 100 of these students who are selected through this project into the faculties of Arts and Social Sciences in 1989.

6.3. In a report on the Alternative Admissions Research Project at the University of Cape Town in 1987, Badsha, Williams and Yeld, in reviewing other research, state that "it has become widely accepted that the matric results are not accurate predictors of university success for black, particularly African students who are schooled through the D.E.T. system."(1987:3) They point out that, on average, 95% of the D.E.T.students who manage to obtain a matriculation exemption, attain a D or an E aggregate and are thus excluded from automatic entry to "open universities". This has

resulted in the development of special policies for the admission of disadvantaged students to universities which at the University of Cape Town has been the responsibility of the Deans and Faculty Selection Committees. The researchers emphasise the dangers of faculty autonomy over admissions by quoting research carried out at the University of the Witwatersrand where, in 1987, in the Arts Faculty, a battery of tests was administered to a group of students who had not qualified for automatic entry and were on the waiting list for admission to the university. This group consisted of 400 White students and 270 Black students. On the basis of the test results 51% of the White students were accepted and only 20,3% of the D.E.T. students gained entry to the university. They quote the Witwatersrand researchers:

The selection procedure had thus provided white students with poor matrices (in some cases with ratings as low as 9) an opportunity to gain entry, while it is known that these students have little chance of being successful. Thus although the intention had been to admit more black students, the outcome privileged the advantaged.

( Cloete and Pillay 1987:13)

The Alternative Admission Research Project, in the face of this evidence of the unreliability of the matriculation examination and testing procedures carried out at university

level, is committed to the development of alternative selection criteria and methods which will help to identify students who have the potential to succeed, given the academic support which is available at the University of Cape Town. Their pilot study for 1988 aimed to test "the feasibility of pre-matric selection", on the understanding that such selection can be only provisional until the candidate obtains matriculation exemption which is the statutory entrance requirement for university. They employed five methods of assessment :

- The English Language Proficiency Test developed by the Academic Support Programme at the University of Cape Town
- a biographical questionnaire
- a mathematic test
- the school record
- interviews

The application forms and the results of the assessments were submitted to the Deans concerned who would make the final selection.

The researchers see their primary role as the development of selection criteria but emphasise that this cannot be divorced from their support for the development of programmes which aim to improve both the academic skills of students and the quality of teaching offered to students.

## 7. Review of Some Research Projects Conducted Overseas

7.1. Shochet in his doctoral thesis (1986) on Manifest and Potential Performance in Advantaged and Disadvantaged Students makes the following statement:

The ironic conclusion that can be drawn from a review of school performance is that it remains the single best predictor of university success yet not sufficient to satisfactorily predict university success, particularly at the lower range.

(Shochet 1986:122)

Shochet quotes research carried out in other countries which supports the same conclusion. Darling (1983) reviewing Canadian research on the subject found that secondary school results were the best single predictor of success. In Australia, McDonnell's review (1975) of Australian research indicated that the matriculation score is the best basis for the selection of students for university. Breland (1979) in the United States of America, in reviewing the High School Record and university performance, found much the same results as the Canadian and Australian studies. The U.S.A. with its heterogeneous population has slightly poorer correlations than homogeneous countries such as Canada.

7.2. Chai and Woehlke (1979) reported on eighteen studies on

the validity of tests of English as a Foreign Language (E.F.L.) for college admission and placement decisions in the United States of America. All of the studies investigated the predictive validity of test scores relative to some external standard, usually the grade point average on college courses, but occasionally grades in coursework for E.F.L. courses. It was found that no predictor explained more than half of the variance in the grades and most explained less than one-quarter. It was suggested that the lack of validity may have been caused by variability in grading standards, exclusion of test candidates who were not admitted to college, or low content validity of the E.F.L. tests themselves. It was recommended that two predictors which might be usefully examined are native language achievement and mathematical ability.

7.3. Spinks and Ho (1984) in reviewing research conducted at the English language University of Hong Kong, which is described as "Western-orientated", concluded that English language and mathematical ability are good predictors of academic performance of Chinese students, but that cultural background should be taken into account when considering admissions.

7.4. Rea (1984) explored the concurrent and predictive validity of the English Language proficiency screening test used by the University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and the relationship of this measure to academic performance. She

concluded :

a. that the test could be used efficiently for detecting those students who need language remediation in order to succeed in their academic studies

and

b. that the introduction of the admission requirement of a passing score on the British National School Leaving Certificate Form IV English Test would not adequately assure a proficiency level needed for first-year success.

It is stated that the complexity of the linguistic environment in Tanzania and the complexity of the predictor and criterion variables in academic success argue for further, systematic analysis of potential sources of variance in that country over a period of several years.

7.5. Omari and Zughoul (1986) in a research study directed towards formulating an educational admissions policy for English major students at Arab universities, investigated the effect of a set of predictors of success in both the undergraduate English programme and all other subjects. The academic data for the graduates of an Arab university's English department during a three-year period were analysed. Four predictor variables were examined:

- total scores on the secondary school certificate examination
- scores on the English test in the same examination

- grades in the four university-level introductory courses in English

- averages in the four university-level introductory Arab courses

University academic success was measured by the students' cumulative averages in English at the university and their general cumulative averages. The results indicated that neither the students' total score nor the English language score on the secondary certificate examination had significant power to predict general or English language success at the university, but that college level English and Arab grades did have significant predictive power. The findings argue for a revision of the current admissions policy to place more emphasis on performance in university-level introductory English and Arabic and less on secondary school performance alone.

7.6. Spurling (1987) conducted a research programme involving 198 "limited English-speaking students" in the United States of America. The students' results on an English language admissions test which involved reading, writing and listening test scores were correlated with their university performance as measured in the main on the Grade Point Average. The findings indicated that the English language test scores are not always related to the students' academic achievement.

7.7. Hargett and Olswang (1984) reported on an

administrative policy adopted at the University of Washington, providing an alternative to relying entirely on English language proficiency tests for determining foreign students' ability to succeed in academic courses at university. In order to gain admission into a full-time English-medium curriculum, students, whether undergraduate or graduate, are required to score 580 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language or 500 as a minimum requirement, contingent on further assessment. Students with the lower score are given provisional admission status pending additional work in English as a Second Language (E.S.L.). The incorporation of E.S.L. classes into the academic programme is considered to be essential to the success of the programme. The approach is designed to allow institutions to admit students based on their proven academic abilities, so that subsequent decisions can be based soundly on prior academic performance.

## 8. Verbal Deprivation Theory

8.1. A study such as this which focuses on language ability and academic success, needs to take cognizance of the "verbal deprivation" debate. The proponents of verbal deprivation theory hold that educational failure results from a child's language and experience which does not accord with the language and experience required by schools. It is proposed that children from certain socio-economic classes do not

succeed academically because they are deprived of something necessary in their intellectual development. The claim is that children who fail at school are either exposed to an inferior variety of language, or not enough language, or are exposed to an impoverished social or family background. In its extreme form children are regarded as having no language at all. ( Labov 1972: 204) Based on the ideas of Sapir and Whorf, these notions gained educational currency in the 1960's and 1970's with the work of Bernstein in the United Kingdom who postulated a public language and a formal language. (Bernstein 1958). He hypothesised that the language spoken by a child predetermines the development of perception and that this is linked inextricably to class. Thus, the working class child speaks a public language and the middle class child has access to both a public language and a formal language.

In this view a public language links perception to the content of objects which means that the child cannot perceive the relationship between objects in the environment which are seen as discrete. This has significant implications for education because the child will be unable to detect or understand underlying principles of subjects like Mathematics, Science and languages. Formal language , on the other hand, orientates the child towards a sensitivity to the structure of objects which means that the child can perceive the relationship between objects in the environment. Thus,

the child who speaks a formal language is more likely to be able to perceive underlying principles of subjects like Mathematics and Science and is likely to achieve educational success.

By 1965, Bernstein had replaced the notion of public and formal language with restricted and elaborated codes. While the characteristics of these as defined by Bernstein are more complex than the public and formal language identified earlier, nevertheless the implications for children and education are that children socialised within the middle class

can be expected to possess an elaborated and restricted code whilst children socialised within some sectors of the working-class strata, particularly the lower working class, can be expected to be limited to a restricted code.

Bernstein 1965:136

8.2. Bernstein's work had wide influence on both sides of the Atlantic which resulted in compensatory education programmes. The aim of these programmes was to

promote a planned development which will balance out the deficiencies in stimulation and experience that are caused by the environment.

Deutsch 1970:20 (cited in Dittmar 1976:80)

A compensatory education programme like that of Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), (cited in Dittmar 1976 :79 - 82) assumes that the poor intellectual ability of Black lower class children is reflected in their inadequate speech and therefore aims to replace these speech norms with the elaborated code of the middle class which will effect the desired change in cognition. Compensatory education programmes have been a major issue in the U.S.A since the 1960's as illustrated by the fact that between 1965 and 1970 \$10 billion were spent on the education of poor and minority groups. However, these programmes like "Head Start", which was a federally funded programme for pre-school children from poor families, were disappointing.

The general effect appeared to be an initial spurt in measured intelligence, followed by a plateau or decline, and therefore no long-term improvement, although there is also some evidence that although large-scale programmes have failed, small scale experiments have had some success.

(Stubbs 1980:144)

8.3. The logic of deprivation theory and compensatory programmes was challenged by Labov who demonstrated that lower class children speak a different kind of English - a non-standard English - which deviates systematically and

regularly from the middle class standard. From his research data Labov proved that lower-class children live in a verbally rich sub-culture where the child is "bathed in verbal stimulation from morning till night". (Labov 1972: 212). He showed that there was no linguistic proof for claiming that the language of the working class child inhibits the development of his cognitive abilities. On the contrary he found that non-standard English had its own logical system. He warned that

...the myth of verbal deprivation is particularly dangerous, because it diverts attention from real defects of our educational system to imaginary defects of the child.

(Labov 1972:202)

8.4. Stubbs (1980) gives a balanced perspective on the deprivation theory debate. He points out that there is considerable confusion over the theory and that there appear to be several versions of it. He postulates four stages in the debate:

- a. development of the deprivation hypothesis: that the concept of deprivation or deficit can explain why some children, usually from working class or minority ethnic backgrounds, fail at school.
- b. the concept of deprivation is accepted unquestionably and is taught on courses like teacher training programmes.
- c. the notion of deprivation is criticised and is given the

status of myth.

d. the myth comes to be accepted as fact by some people and is taught on courses like teacher training programmes.

Stubbs points to an important distinction between "deprivation" and "disadvantage".

The term deprivation implies that there is a lack in the child or in his family, whereas the term disadvantage could more easily be taken to imply that there is nothing wrong with the child, but that his social experience puts him at a disadvantage because it is different from what is expected in schools and may be stigmatized in schools.

(Stubbs 1980:148)

Stubbs acknowledges that many departments of education teach Bernsteinian views while others accept Labov's criticisms of Bernstein. It is Stubbs' contention that neither is correct. While there are undoubtedly differences between the language of working class and middle class children, interpretation of these differences is problematic. Stubbs also challenges the notion that Labov's work refutes Bernstein's. He claims that Bernstein and Labov are not directly comparable:

whereas Labov's work is naturalistic and involves detailed linguistic analysis, Bernstein's is mainly experimental and involves high-level

theory about social-class structure.

(Stubbs 1980:156)

Finally he disclaims the fact that Bernstein and Labov are protagonists, stating that they have never discussed each other's work in any detail.

8.5. It is tempting to draw conclusions from this body of research and apply them to the South African situation. In some quarters the Bernsteinian views may well appeal: i.e. that students who do not command standard English have limited powers of perception and that this would explain their lack of educational success. To adopt the position of Labov however, would lead to the assumption that non-standard speakers have their own logic in both language and perception and that the problem is lack of synchrony between different cultural and social values.

Caution must be exercised in drawing any hasty conclusions because

a. in South Africa the majority of the population are second-language speakers of English. In the researches of Bernstein and Labov the subjects were mother-tongue speakers of English and therefore it is unsound to extrapolate directly from these findings.

b. the compensatory education programmes in the U.S.A. may well have failed due to their specific content. While there may be convincing arguments in Labov's contention that

what needs to change is the social system itself, experience in the South African context has shown that academic support programmes have a positive effect on student performance. (c.f. the work at the universities of the Witwatersrand, Natal and Cape Town discussed under 6.1., 6.2 and 6.3. above and also the work in the English Department at the University of Natal, Durban, discussed under 3.2. of section B of Chapter Four of this dissertation)

## 9. Summary of Findings

In conclusion, it may be stated that in the case of a homogeneous population, the final school leaving certificate remains the best single predictor of academic success at university. However, with a heterogenous population, such as South Africa, the situation is dramatically different. In the homogeneous groupings within the country e.g. the white population, the senior certificate examination appears to be a reliable predictor of university success. However, studies throughout the country have concurred that the senior certificate examination of the Department of Education and Training does not have the same predictive powers. The pre-matriculation assessment is, in several cases, found to be a better indicator of potential. The issue of assessment of potential has become the focal point of research programmes at the universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand.

These findings are supported by research studies overseas where it appears that the school-leaving certificate is a reliable predictor of academic success in countries with homogeneous populations. However, wherever there are large numbers of second-language or foreign-language speakers of English, final school grades, or language proficiency tests at the point of admission to university, are not always reliable predictors. The alternative admissions policy at the University of Washington in the United States of America provides a useful comparison with the search for an alternative admissions policy in the Republic of South Africa. At this point a great deal of hope and money is being invested in intervention programmes in South Africa. These inevitably bring to mind the compensatory education programmes introduced in the U.S.A. in the 1960's which were, in the main, not successful. These programmes were based on deprivation theory which is the subject of ongoing debate. While we may learn from the experience of other countries, we cannot extrapolate directly to the South African situation which is unique in many respects.

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### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE PROBLEM FOCALISED : THE SITUATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

##### 1. The Genesis of the Research Project

###### 1.1. The University of Durban-Westville

This particular research project arose as a result of the situation in the English Department at the University of Durban-Westville during the early 1980's. It is necessary to contextualise the University of Durban-Westville which is unique in South Africa, in the sense that it is the only university which was founded primarily for the Indian population of the country.

The University College, Durban, was established in November 1960 in terms of the extension of Universities Education Act of 1959. This Act provided for the establishment of separate universities for the non-white people of the Republic of South Africa. Among these were the University College of the North at Turfloop, near Pietersburg in the Transvaal, for the Sotho-Tsonga and Venda-speaking people, and the University College of Zululand at Ngoya in Natal for the Zulus. This

Act also formed the basis for the establishment of the University College of the Western Cape for Coloureds and the University College, Durban, for Indians. The University College, Durban, was initially housed in the old naval barracks on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay. At first the college was placed academically under the "aegis and tutelage of Unisa, following its syllabuses, writing its examinations and being awarded its degrees". (Fiat Lux 1971:6)<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the University College implied a momentous decision: the scrapping of, in the words of Professor Olivier, "the century-old policy of repatriation, which had hung like a sword of Damocles over the heads of the Indian people since their first arrival in Natal in 1860". In 1961, the Prime Minister, Dr H.F. Verwoerd, officially declared acceptance of the Indian community as an integral part of South Africa's population structure.<sup>2</sup>

(Fiat Lux 1968:pp. 38 - 40)

In terms of Act 49 of 1969 the University College for Indians received university status. In 1970 it became academically autonomous and was renamed the University of Durban-Westville. Westville is a borough on the outskirts of the city of Durban where the University was relocated. The University of Durban-Westville Amendment Act which became effective on 1 January 1978 empowered the University to admit

students irrespective of origin or colour. In practice, these students were mainly post-graduate students who had to be granted permission to study at the university.

By the University of Durban-Westville Act no. 81 of 1983, the university became fully autonomous. It was brought into line with the other older universities and operated under the same financial formula. The Universities Amendment Act, ( Act 83 of 1983) allowed universities in the Republic of South Africa to admit students who were members of population groups other than that of the main student body. All of the universities which fell under this act, including the University of Durban-Westville, now became "open", although a quota system controlled the intake of students from different racial groups. According to the census taken at the University of Durban-Westville on 5 June 1984, there were 6,584 students at the university. Of these 6,220 were Indians, 198 were White, 98 were Coloured and 68 were Black. Since then there has been a rapid increase in the number of Black students enrolled at the university. In 1986 87% of the students were Indian, 7% were Black and the remainder were White and Coloured. By 1987 the percentage of Black students had increased to 18% of the student body and the Indian students had decreased to 75% while the remaining 7% included both the White and Coloured students.

## 1.2. The First-Year Failure Rate in the English Department

The English Department of the University of Durban-Westville offered two first-year English courses, English I and Practical English. Practical English was a one year course, which included a practical language component which was geared particularly towards students who were second-language speakers of English or students who were not proficient in English language. The course did not lead to English II. English I, on the other hand, was intended to be a more academically orientated course leading to English II.

Until 1983 there was no selection procedure for students entering into the English I course . In 1982, 942 students registered for English I while there were approximately 350 students in the Practical English Course. English I was being used as a service course by many faculties like Commerce and Education which required that their students have a credit in one of the official languages. At that time the majority of students opted for English I rather than Practical English for three major reasons:

- a. English I had more status than Practical English.
- b. In terms of course content there was little to choose then, between Practical English and English I as far as the student was concerned. Each included approximately the same number of texts, the notable exception being that English I included a Chaucer text while Practical English did not.

Practical English, on the other hand, included a language component which English I did not.

c. Thirdly, in the students' eyes, English I required them to write only one examination while Practical English required them to write two. English I was therefore regarded as the "soft option".

At this time, particularly the period 1979-1982, the high failure and drop-out rate in English I was a matter for grave concern. It was obvious that there were many students opting for English I who did not have the basic communicative competence to be there.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.3. The Consideration of Selection Criteria

It became increasingly clear that some means of selection should be applied to this unwieldy group. The question was what criteria should be chosen as a basis for selection. The obvious place to look was the senior certificate examination. However, the Indian Senior Certificate examination results in English appeared to offer very little basis for discrimination. A glance at the two tables summarising the Indian Senior Certificate results in English in 1980 and 1981 indicates this clearly. (See Table 2 overleaf).

Table 2

SENIOR CERTIFICATE ENGLISH RESULTS 1980 AND 1981		
EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE		
SYMBOL	1980	1981
A	-	-
B	0.09	0.19
C	3.45	4.87
D	26.39	31.27
E	68.21	61.49
F	-	-
Below F	1.87	2.18

In 1980, 68.21% of the Indian matriculants achieved E (40 - 49%); 26.39% scored D (50 - 59%); only 3.45% achieved a C pass and .09% (less than 1%) achieved B. Surprisingly, no-one scored an F, and 1.87% scored below F.

The 1981 results reveal a similar picture: 61.49% achieved E; 31.27% scored a D; 4.87% achieved C and .19% (again less than 1%) attained B. Again no-one scored an F and 2.18% achieved less than F. These results would seem to be a little perplexing: no A's and no F's in either case. Only 2% of the total number of students failed. (Total no. of students

writing the Indian Senior Certificate English 1st Language Higher Grade: 3,479 in 1980 and 4,269 in 1981.)

There is thus , as has been suggested, little basis for discrimination. The question is where the cut-off line should be drawn. C (60 - 69%) would seem to be a good category for prospective English students but then most of the candidates would be eliminated. Approximately one-tenth of the students who wrote the screening test in 1982 achieved a C for English in the senior certificate examination. This would have resulted in a very small class. On the basis of the available figures for the period 1982 to 1984 , for example, the average size of the English I class would have been 107 students. However advantageous this might be from the teaching point of view it would seem to be unfairly discriminatory in that students who actually passed English I would have been deprived of the opportunity of following the course. A consideration of the next grade of pass - D (50 - 59%) - illustrates this point clearly. During the period 1982 - 1984 the total sample of students for whom all the statistics are available is 891. Of these, 483 students achieved a D for senior certificate English and 285 of these scored over 50% for English I. But then, of the 282 who achieved E for senior certificate English, 88 scored over 50% for English I. So, by eliminating all students with E's, approximately one-third of the students who happened to gain an E for English in the senior certificate examination would

have been denied the opportunity of gaining a credit in English I.

It was clear that the Indian Senior Certificate examination would not be useful in the selection of students for English I and some other means of screening prospective students would have to be found.

#### 1.4. The Black Comprehension Test

In 1980 Behr of the Centre for Tertiary Education of the University of Durban-Westville administered an English comprehension test, known as the Black Test, to first year students.<sup>4</sup> These were not only English students, but came from across the faculties on campus. The test has been used for screening students for entrance to tertiary institutions in the U.K., "especially colleges of education, polytechnics, colleges specialising in art, home economics, physical education and technical subjects. It is used to a lesser extent for screening university students." (Behr 1980:15) The test, which is designed to determine general ability to understand reading on a wide variety of topics, is a multiple choice objective test. It consists of 60 questions based on seven extracts of prose including two newspaper articles in The Manchester Guardian and The Observer; two from the works of Winston Churchill; one from Buchan's biography of Sir Walter Scott; one from English Journey by J.B. Priestley and an extract from Milton's Areopagitica.

The results of the test showed that the students at Durban-Westville did not perform as well as students in the U.K. on the same test. (Behr 1980:15 - 20) Fifty percent of the Durban-Westville students scored at, or below, the 9th percentile (UK norms), with a further 33% scoring between the 10th and 29th percentile, 14% between the 30th and 69th percentile, and 3% above the 69th percentile.

## 2. The Design of the Screening Test

Behr, speculating that the passages for comprehension were largely outside the frame of reference of Durban-Westville students, asked the English Department to construct a test on the format of the Black Test but using passages which would be more relevant to these students. The test which was initially devised was, like the Black Test, a multiple choice comprehension test based on six passages of prose with which a first year student might reasonably be expected to cope and which should fall well within his interest range. The passages were taken from Aldous Huxley's Brave New World Revisited; Kamala Markandaya's Two Virgins; Gavin Maxwell's Ring of Bright Water; Rachel Carson's Silent Spring; Doris Lessing's Going Home and Alvin Toffler's Future Shock.

The passages varied in length from 7 to 19 lines and each was followed by questions. The questions concentrated on the

comprehension of the passage, particularly the connection between ideas and their logical development, with approximately 50% of the items being focused on the meaning of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in context. In most of the questions, five alternative answers were given from which the testee had to choose the best. Some questions required the testee to complete or provide a word. The test was designed to determine the students' ability to read and comprehend on a wide variety of topics, not necessarily "literary".

### 3. The 1981 Test Trial

Of the 525 students who wrote what was to become known as the Court Comprehension Test in 1981, 58 scored less than 38%, 5 scored between 70 and 78% and the mean was 43% achieved by 74 students. (Incidentally, this was not the whole of the first-year intake as the test was not compulsory . Students volunteered to write the test).

Behr found that there was "a moderate and significant relationship "(1981:25) between the scores obtained on the AH4 Mental Abilities Test and the Court Comprehension Test. After comparing the achievement of students in different faculties - Arts, Commerce, Education, Engineering, Health Science, Law and Science, - he concluded that all the students were "more or less on a par in English Comprehension".(1981:25) He noted that 15% of the students

completed the test in 30 minutes and 80% finished in 40 minutes. In order to improve the discriminatory power of the test, he suggested that a time limit be imposed on any future administration of the test.

#### 4.1. The 1982 Test Trial

Behr administered the same test in 1982 to 781 students, which was almost 60% of the first-year full-time enrolment. This time he restricted the testing time to 30 minutes and the results showed that the mean was 44%, with 82.84% of the students scoring between 30% and 59%.

It was again found that there was "a moderate and significant relationship" (1982:44) between the Court Comprehension Test and the Senior Certificate English examination result on the one hand and the score obtained on the AH4 Mental Abilities Test on the other. He concluded that the test was "an adequate instrument for testing what it intended to test" (1982:45) i.e. reading and comprehension, and recommended that a follow-up study be conducted at the end of the year with English I and Practical English results to determine the adequacy of the test as a predictor of success in English I and Practical English.

4.2. Analysis of the Court Test and the English I Examination Results 1982.

The statistical analysis is based on a corpus of 291 students. Although 327 English I students wrote the screening test in 1982, there was no subsequent record for 36 students. Table 3 represents an analysis of the results using the Kappa statistic. Kappa is an index of agreement which produces values ranging from +1 (perfect agreement) through 0 (chance agreement), to -1 (perfect disagreement). For most purposes, Kappa values greater than .75 may be taken to represent excellent agreement beyond chance, values below .40 may be taken to represent poor agreement beyond chance, and values between .40 and .75 may be taken to represent fair to good agreement beyond chance.

Table 3

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COMPARISON OF PASSES AND FAILURES ON THE ENGLISH I EXAMINATION AND THE COURT TEST 1982

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		COURT TEST	
		PASS	FAIL
ENGLISH I EXAMINATION RESULTS	PASS	108	28
	FAIL	87	68

---

The Kappa value for Table 3 is .22, which represents poor agreement above chance.

Taking 40% as a pass mark ( or cut-off point), being 3 or 4% below the mean for 1981 and 1982 on the test, the following results emerged: 195 students passed the test and 96 failed. Of the 195 who passed, 108 passed English I. This figure represents 55% of those who passed the test. 87 students passed the test and failed English I. This represents 45% of those who passed the test. Many of these had borderline marks of 48% or 49%. Of the 96 who failed, 68 failed English I. This represents 71% of those who failed the test. The remaining 28 passed English I. This represents 29% of those who failed the test and 9% of the total number for whom all the statistics are available.

The main area of concern was the 9% who wrote the test and failed, and subsequently passed English I. Many variables could account for this : lack of concentration while writing the test ; improvement during the year ; lucky examination "spotting". Also many of the passes were borderline in the 50 - 52% bracket. The 45% who passed the test and failed English I is not surprising. The test does not claim to predict success in English I with any degree of precision. That would be an exaggerated and unrealistic claim. What was being sought was a very elementary level of selection, not a master key to literary genius. It was necessary to

diagnose the "illiterates" in a particular academic context and to discover those students with the communicative competence which would enable them to benefit from a course of study in English I. What is more , it was necessary to have a test which could be administered and marked quickly. There was little time between registration and the commencement of the lecture programme. In effect , this meant that the test needed to be administered, marked, and the results analysed and published in three or four days.

#### 5. Implementation of the Screening Test 1983

Because of the reservations indicated above, the test was very tentatively implemented as a means of selection for the first time in 1983. The test was given the title of "The English I Screening Test" and any student who wished to enter English I was required to write the test. In fact, a student's registration for English I was provisional until such time that he had satisfactorily fulfilled the entrance requirements for the course i.e. until he had passed the screening test.

A second question was added to test the fluency of the students' writing. They were required to write a short composition of 10 - 15 lines in order to give some impression of their writing ability.

## 6. The Administration of the Screening Test

The test was administered by the English Department for the first time. In the previous two years the trial runs had been administered by the Centre for Tertiary Education. In 1983 approximately 900 full time and part-time students wrote the test in various venues on the campus. The test was invigilated and marked by members of the English Department and the results were posted on pertinent noticeboards by registration number only, in order to preserve the anonymity of the testees.

It was decided to take 20% as a cut-off point. In other words , only those students who gained less than 20% were rejected and even a few of these who seemed to be able to write competently, were accepted into the course. As a result, just over 20% of the English I enrolment was screened out, which was a considerable number, and resulted in an English I class of 709 students in 1983.

## 7. The 1984 Screening Test

Although no in-depth analysis was conducted at this stage, it appeared that the test did have some discriminatory power. No students who scored under 30% on the Screening Test in 1983 averaged higher than 50% on the year's course work and 72% of those who gained over 59% in the Screening Test passed English I. This resulted in increased confidence in the test

and consequently in 1984 the students were screened a little more stringently . 30% was taken as a cut-off point and all those students in the 30 - 40% bracket were considered very carefully.

Using this cut-off point of 30%, in 1984 just under 30% of the first-year intake was screened out and the English I class comprised 632 students.

#### 8. The 1985 Statistical Analysis

In early 1985, the statistics for 1982,1983 and 1984 were analysed to try to determine whether or not the test had any predictive value.

It was decided to work on five variables : matriculation English mark; matriculation aggregate ; Screening Test mark; English I course mark and English I final mark. All of these variables were correlated to see if any pattern emerged. Any student, therefore, for whom all the data was not available was discounted and , as a result, the total sample was 891, spread over three years ( 1982 : 245; 1983 : 313; 1984 : 333). The actual total enrolment for English I during this period was 2283 ( 1982 : 942; 1983 :707; 1984 :632).

The initial feedback indicated that there was very little

correlation between any of the variables. The highest correlation , as might be expected, was between course mark and final examination mark. There was no neat equation , no pretty predictability. It was impossible to state with any degree of certainty that a student who gained 40% was going to pass or fail. In fact, of those who achieved between 44% and 49% on the test over the whole sample almost exactly 50% passed and 50% failed. ( Of 240 , 123 passed and 117 failed).

It seemed to be unsatisfactory to draw any conclusions on the basis of the whole sample because this was a select group. Approximately 20% of the students in 1983 and 30% in 1984 had been rejected. It was decided to focus on the 1982 figures, for this was the only control group who had written the screening test and had gone on to write English I without being screened out.

It was realised that a degree of artificiality was being imposed in comparing the screening test result with the final examination mark because the group which was permitted to write the examination was a select group i.e. those students who had achieved a course mark of 40% and had satisfied the attendance requirement at tutorials. Although these factors are very important in the awarding of a credit for English I, they are not relevant to this particular study i.e. the evaluation of the screening test. It seemed then altogether more satisfactory to compare performance on the

screening test with performance during the year ( i.e. the course mark ) particularly in view of the fact that all assignments during the year had been written under test conditions. This meant that one could be reasonably sure that the marks were a reflection of the students' own work. The results were analysed of all the students who wrote the Screening Test in 1982 and subsequently gained a course mark, whether or not they went on to write the final English I examination. Here it was found that less than 4% of the students who gained 30% or less on the screening test achieved a pass mark of 50% over the year. This represents less than 0.3% of the 1982 sample.

At the time then it seemed that , on the basis of the 1982 figures , a cut-off point of 30% on the English I Screening Test could be statistically justified. Thereafter, it seemed, the test had very little power of fine discrimination. The best that could be offered was probability. Of those students who scored higher than 30% on the Screening Test 66.7% gained 50% or more on the course mark and 33.3% gained less than 50%. There was a gradual rising scale as the table overleaf indicates.

Table 4

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SCREENING TEST PERCENTAGE RANGES AND PASS RATE ON THE  
ENGLISH I COURSE MARK 1982

---

SCREENING TEST MARK	% PASS RATE
30 -39%	10%
40 -44%	29.1%
45 -49%	27.5%
50 -54%	55%
55 -59%	57%
Over 59%	75%

---

On the basis of this analysis it appeared that the Screening Test was a valid instrument for measuring comprehension ability in the first year English I intake, but it did not have a fine power of discrimination for the purposes of the English Department. One would not have expected it to be otherwise. The Screening Test and the English I course tests ultimately measure different things and success on the Screening Test should not neatly predict success in English I.

9. The 1986 Statistical Analysis

9.1. 1986 saw two major changes taking place in the English Department at the University of Durban-Westville. First of all there was a sudden influx of Black students into the first year English courses. Secondly the English Department

finalised plans for two new first year English courses which were to be introduced in 1987. The new English I course was to have a completely different conceptual base from the previous course and the Practical English course was to be replaced by a new course entitled English IT. This was no longer a watered down version of the English I course but was based on a different conceptual framework. There was to be the inclusion of a substantial language theory component as well as the retention of the practical language skills module.

9.2. Given these changes it was therefore necessary to review the Screening Test once again. The question to be addressed was whether the Screening Test was to be retained or not. If it was not to be retained then it was pertinent to discuss what sort of selection procedures should be introduced, or indeed, whether there should be any selection of students at all.

9.3. Once again the five variables were cross-tabulated: Matric. English mark; Matric. aggregate; English screening test mark; English I Course mark and English I final mark. The English Senior Certificate results were analysed to see whether there had been any change since the 1982 analysis and the selection of English I students might now be made, with some confidence, on the basis of the final school examination.

9.4. For the year 1985 there was a corpus of 371 students for whom all the data were available. For the reasons outlined elsewhere in this chapter the course mark was considered as having greater reliability than the final examination mark. The results are summarised in table 5.

Table 5

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COMPARISON OF PASSES AND FAILURES ON THE ENGLISH I COURSE  
MARK AND ENGLISH MATRIC RESULT 1985

---

		ENGLISH I COURSE MARK	
		PASS	FAIL
ENGLISH MATRIC	PASS	201	91
RESULTS	FAIL	50	29

---

The Kappa value for Table 5 is .01 which represents chance agreement. Comparing the Kappa indices on Tables 4 and 5, it would appear that the Court Test and the English I examination results have a greater agreement above chance with an index of .22, than the English matric results and the English I course marks with an index of .01.

Further analysis of the results reveals that of the 120 students who failed:

24% gained less than a D in matric English (i.e. less than 50%)

76% gained a D or higher in matric English (i.e. 50% or more)

Of the 251 students who passed:

80% gained a D or higher on Matric English

but

20% scored less than a D (i.e. less than 50%)

So it would seem that on the basis of the 1985 statistical results a D symbol in the Indian Senior Certificate English examination is not a satisfactory entry qualification to English I because 20% of the English I credits gained less than a D for English in the senior certificate examination. In fact, nearly 12% scored over 60% for English at senior certificate level and failed English I, while 5% of the passes scored over 60% for English I and gained less than 40% for senior certificate English.

9.5. The same kind of pattern emerged with the 1986 analysis. For the 1986 analysis there were only 130 cases for the correlation between Matric English mark and course mark. Table 6 summarises the results.

Table 6

---

COMPARISON OF PASSES AND FAILURES ON THE ENGLISH I COURSE  
MARK AND THE ENGLISH MATRIC RESULT 1986

---

		ENGLISH I COURSE MARK	
		PASS	FAIL
ENGLISH	PASS	57	47
MATRIC			
RESULTS	FAIL	19	7

---

The Kappa value for table 6 is -0.14 which is less than chance. Thus, comparing the Kappa indices on tables 5 and 6, it would appear that the 1985 matric English results and the English I course mark show a greater agreement with an index of .01, than the 1986 English matric results and the English I course mark with an index of -0.14. In the former case there is chance agreement and in the latter case the agreement is less than chance. In both cases the matriculation English result is a poor predictor of success in the English I course, and neither matriculation result is as good as the Court Test/Screening Test in predicting success in English I.

Further examination of the results revealed the following:

Of those who failed

13% gained less than a D in Matric English

87% gained a D or higher in Matric English

Of those who passed

75% achieved a D or higher in Matric English

25% gained less than a D in Matric English

So these results corroborate the 1985 results: that a D symbol is not a satisfactory entry qualification for English I because a significant number of students who gained credits for English I scored less than a D for Matric English.

9.6. In the correlation between the Screening Test mark and the course mark for 1985 there were 439 cases. Scores below 30% were not included as a number of students would have been screened out already.

In the range 30 - 39%, 48% of the students passed English I

In the range 40 - 49%, 59% of the students passed English I

In the range 50 - 59%, 74% of the students passed English I

In the range 60%+, 88% of the students passed English I

So there was a definite rising scale. The higher a student scored on the screening test, the more likely he was to pass English I. So the test appeared to have gained some power of predictability.

#### 10.1. Comparison of performance of English I and Practical English Students on the Screening Test

In 1986, for the first time all the first-year English students at the University of Durban-Westville wrote the Screening Test. The English I students wrote the test in February and , on the basis of these results were selected

for the course of study. The Practical English students wrote the test as their first language test of the year. The results are summarised in table 7.

Table 7

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COMPARISON OF PERFORMANCE OF PRACTICAL ENGLISH STUDENTS AND  
ENGLISH I STUDENTS ON THE SCREENING TEST 1986

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Mark Range	Total Prac. Eng.	P.E.(W/O Blacks)	English I
< 30%	24.5	16	11.7
30 - 39%	25.7	24.7	29.8
40 - 49%	29.2	34.8	27.5
50 - 59%	15.6	18.8	21.0
60%+	4.9	5.6	9.9

---

As can be seen there are two sets of figures for Practical English, one with black students and one without. The reason for this is that the black students scored so badly on the Screening Test that it was thought that their results would distort the test result overall. It also seemed that it might be enlightening to analyse the results of this group separately.

From this frequency analysis it is clear that:

1. English I students achieved the highest scores on the Screening Test i.e. a greater proportion fall into the 60%+

and the 50 -59% range.

2. The Practical English failure rate is the greatest, especially with the Black students i.e. 24% scored <30%.

3. But otherwise the achievement does not seem to vary significantly : English I is just marginally higher than Practical English on the 50 - 59% range. In the 40 - 49% range the English I score is lower than Practical English; but in the 30 - 34% range the English I score is higher than Practical English.

#### 10.2. Analysis of the Black Students' Results

The analysis of the Black Practical English students deserves special attention.

Table 8

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#### ANALYSIS OF THE BLACK STUDENTS' RESULTS IN PRACTICAL ENGLISH

1986

MARK	RANGE	% OF	CORPUS	% PASS
<	30		64%	26%
30 -	39		27%	31%
40 -	49		7%	57%
50 -	59		2%	100%

---

What is particularly interesting is that the Black students scored so badly on the Screening Test - 64% gaining less than 30% - many of them had marks of 6% , 8%, 14% - under 20%, and yet a significant number managed to gain 50% or more on the course mark. In the 50 - 59% range there was 100% pass rate.

This was a matter of considerable concern. The majority of these Black students would never have satisfied the entrance requirements for English 1. The results would seem to show that these students find the screening test very difficult - reading 6 or 7 pieces of prose and answering fairly searching questions objectively under pressure. Yet their year mark is significantly higher than might have been expected. Of the 64% who achieved less than 30% on the Screening Test 26% achieved a mark of over 50% ( i.e. a pass ) in the year mark. Admittedly the course was Practical English and not English I, but , as has been stated elsewhere in this research, the courses were not significantly different. Since 1983 the content of the English I course had been weighted far more than Practical English ( in other words English 1 included more texts than Practical English) but the courses were teaching, and the examinations were testing, much the same thing i.e.skills of critical analysis of literature.

The matter was raised at a staff meeting in the English Department in November 1986. As has already indicated, this was a critical point because at the beginning of 1987 the two

new courses - English I and English IT were due to be implemented. The crucial questions for discussion were as follows:

a. Did the department wish to continue the principle of screening English I students, particularly in view of the coincidental drop in the English I intake? (Far more students had opted for Practical English than English I in 1986).

b. Did the department wish the English IT students to write some form of entrance test?

c. Should the Screening Test be retained in its present form?

As a result of the discussion among the staff, following the presentation of a research paper by the writer, it was decided not to screen the English I intake in 1987. However, all students in English I and English IT would write the Screening Test in its current form early in 1987. The intention was that the results would be analysed and a decision would then be taken as to whether or not the test should be reintroduced for screening purposes in 1988.

#### 11. The 1987 Statistical Analysis

In 1987 all of the first-year English students wrote the screening test, both the English I and the English IT students. Once again the same five variables were correlated i.e. the screening test mark, the matriculation English

mark, the matriculation aggregate, the English I course mark and the English I examination mark. These correlations are discussed in detail in Chapter Six of this dissertation.

However, what is of particular interest at this point is the results achieved by the Black students. The cross-tabulation of the variables reveals that none of the Black students in English IT scored higher than 30% on the screening test yet 33.6% of these students passed the English IT final examination and a further 12% gained borderline marks of between 47 and 49%.

A similar result is found in the cross-tabulation of the screening test mark and the English IT course mark: 34.9% passed i.e. they gained a mark higher than 50% and 16.4% gained marks between 47 and 49%.

According to the statistics, 10.7% of the Black students passed English I and 93.8% of these had gained less than 40% on the Screening Test.

## 12. The Implications of These Findings

The important point which needs to be emphasised here, was that it was these results which provided the catalyst for the particular direction of this study. When this research was first contemplated, the original intention was to produce a refined instrument for testing. But what happened, as a

result of this empirical investigation in the English Department at the University of Durban-Westville, was that the whole question of the selection of students on the basis of testing was thrown into question.

The issue which is focused on here has huge implications for the educational system in South Africa where there has been a strong emphasis on educational measurement as a basis for the selection of students for educational opportunity. In order to gain entrance to courses whether at university or any other institution it has been necessary for students to prove their ability for entering a course of study by acquiring a certain grade in examinations. The examination has thus been invested with a respectability, and has been regarded as a yardstick or predictor of academic success.

As this chapter has indicated, the situation is not so simple or straight-forward. Experience at the University of Durban-Westville has revealed that examination results, whether the senior certificate examination or the Screening Test, have proved to be unreliable as a basis for making decisions about the selection of students for academic English courses at university. Throughout the period 1982 to 1986 the senior certificate English examination mark has been shown to be of little help. The Screening Test, which had proved to have satisfactory predictive value, if at a very generalised low level, would seem to be of questionable value in the new

dispensation with growing numbers of Black students from disadvantaged backgrounds enrolling for university. Black students, who, according to the screening test, appeared to have little aptitude for English, performed beyond all reasonable expectations. At the very least a serious evaluation of the test needed to be undertaken. It was decided then that this research should look very carefully at the question of language proficiency and academic success at university. To what extent can a language test be used as a predictor of academic success at university? It is necessary to look at the results of this particular empirical research against the findings and practices of other universities in the country, and in the light of other relevant research and literature. Chapter Two has reviewed the relevant research findings in South Africa and other countries. Chapter Four reviews the language policies and practices in English Departments at universities in the Republic of South Africa.

#### NOTES

1. Fiat Lux, vol. 6, no.2, March 1971, p.6. Quoted in Challenge to a South African University : the University of Durban-Westville Oosthuizen G.C., Clifford-Vaughan A.A., Behr A.L., and Rauche G.A. (eds.) Oxford University Press, Cape Town 1981, p. 32.

2. Ibid. Quote from S.P.Olivier, the first Rector of the University College in an article entitled "The Role of the University College, Durban," in Fiat Lux, Vol.3, No. 2, March 1968, pp. 38 - 40.

3. For an explanation and definition of the term

"communicative competence" see Chapter Two of this dissertation.

4. It is a test compiled by E.L. Black and published by the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales.

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Behr A.L.(1980), Bulletin for Academic Staff, vol.1, no.2 pp.15 - 20.

Behr A.L. (1981), "Comprehension Test in English for First-Year Students", Bulletin for Academic Staff,vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 9 - 25.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### LANGUAGE POLICY IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS AT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

This chapter deals with the issue of language policy in English Departments at South African universities. It is divided into two sections. Section A is concerned with the language admissions policy in English Departments at South African universities. Section B is concerned with the intervention programme which has been introduced in the English Department at Natal University, Durban campus. This programme is of particular relevance to this dissertation because the students "at risk" of failure owing to linguistic problems have been diagnosed by means of the Screening Test. In other words, the test has been used for diagnostic purposes, with some degree of success, as this chapter will attempt to show. It should be emphasised, however, that the test was designed for prognostic rather than diagnostic purposes.

SECTION A

THE LANGUAGE ADMISSIONS POLICY IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS IN  
SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

1. Responses of Heads of English Departments to the  
questionnaire sent out in November 1987

It was deemed necessary to establish the de facto language admissions policy practised by English Departments at South African universities. To this end, in November 1987 an open-ended questionnaire was sent out to heads of English Departments at all universities in South Africa in order to find out the answers to two questions:

- a. Were English departments throughout the country finding it necessary to screen students for entry to English I courses? If they were, what means of selection was being employed?
- b. Was it the general practice of English Departments to diagnose students "at risk" who might then be directed towards an academic support service? If this was the case, how were those students selected?

If it was the practice of departments to use a test for either of the above purposes, information about the test and

its efficacy was requested.

The following is a summary of the responses received. It should be pointed out that not all departments replied. November is a very busy time in all academic departments.

### 1.1. The National University of Lesotho

1.1.1. The response from the Department of English indicated that all first-year students take a year-long course entitled Communications Skills in English. This course is part of a Common First Year Programme for "freshmen" students. This means that students begin reading for their majors only in their second year of study. Students intending to major in the English Department are required to have passed the Communication Skills course. This requirement functions as a screening device and also means that the bachelor's degree programme takes four years to complete.

1.1.2. It was reported that many of the students who reach the required pass mark of 50% in the Communication Skills Course are not really communicatively competent in respect of the academic demands which are made on them at university.

What we are most likely to have, on the part of our students is a clear demonstration of potential rather than actual achievement in relation to the

level of performance expected of them in the first year of university.<sup>1</sup>

1.1.3. Although they do not have an academic support service they are discussing the implementation of compulsory advanced writing courses in second and third years. As the problems are common to the majority of their students, all students would follow the course and therefore, implicitly there would be no need for any means of selection, like a test.

## 1.2. University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg)

1.2.1. It was reported that this department did not screen students. Any student who can gain admission into the Faculty of Arts may attempt the English I Course.

1.2.2. They were very concerned about disadvantaged or under-prepared students. Students "at risk" are directed towards the Academic Support Service. They gauge a student's standard "by a careful scrutiny of initial tutorial and essay marks."<sup>2</sup>

## 1.3. The University of the Orange Free State

The English Department advised that it was not their practice to run screening or diagnostic tests. They have, however, in the last four years been engaged in setting up a testing project "with the aim of developing a battery of

language proficiency tests for (their) English Language and Medium students".<sup>3</sup> These are students of education who are required to have some language certification before embarking on their teaching careers.

#### 1.4. University of Port Elizabeth

It was reported that the English Department had no entry condition other than that laid down by the Joint Matriculation Board. They have no academic support programme and "weak students are directed into the English Special course, which has built into it a bridge to university English."<sup>4</sup>

In addition, "weak" students in English I, II and III are required to complete a self-help course (presumably in English language). This course is described as being "quite effective".

#### 1.5. Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education

The English Department sent a comprehensive report, the salient points of which are:

1.5.1. For the past six years the department has been engaged in an extensive programme of testing and screening students in the first year. The test involved all students enrolling for

English I and English IB (Practical English). "The purpose was dual: to screen students for entry into the course and to predict possible failures."<sup>5</sup> The programme is presently suffering owing to staff problems, but the intention is to continue with it as the results have been promising.

1.5.2. The test comprised:

1.5.2.1. A grammar test (multiple choice, marked by computer)

1.5.2.2. A comprehension test (multiple choice)

1.5.2.3. Literature appreciation test (multiple choice)

The tests were refined with the aid of computer analyses, "until they attained a fair degree of validity, etc."<sup>6</sup>

1.5.3. As the test results showed "a fair correlation with the matric (English) symbol"<sup>7</sup> they introduced at the formal level of university regulation, the following screening procedure: students who wish to take English I with the intention of majoring in English are required to have obtained a C symbol, second language, higher grade, or a D symbol, first language, higher grade.

1.5.4. The effect of the implementation of the screening procedure has been a dramatic reduction in the failure rate in English I.

1.5.5. Students who do not meet the entry requirement for English I are allowed into English IB. A credit in English IB allows them to enter English I. An additional provision

is made for students who gain a distinction for English IB in the first semester, who may then transfer to English I in the second semester. This measure was introduced for those students who felt that they were capable of the standard required for English I but did not have the requisite symbol in the matriculation examination. In practice very few students follow this route.

1.5.6. The "placement test" is used to diagnose "at risk" students. Students who fail the placement test (even if they have a C symbol for matric. English) are advised to transfer to English IB. Students who obtain a distinction in the placement test are advised to transfer to English I "because IB is a practical course and is boring to students with a high level of proficiency."<sup>8</sup>

1.5.7. The report concludes:

This year, interestingly enough, all students who had been advised to transfer to IB and who chose to ignore the advice either failed or got supplementaries, thus it would seem that the tests work to a large extent. We also correlated the results of the placement test with later results (English II and III) and once again there seems to be quite a fair correlation. Of course one always finds mavericks - students with 50% in the placement tests and C symbols who pass

English III very creditably, and also vice versa - good marks in the placement tests, and A symbols, and very mediocre performances in the senior years in English. We have now begun to look at the schools they come from, as certain schools have very good "matric trainers", but fail to instil a true appreciation, etc, in the pupils. We have got to the point where, very unofficially, of course, we can assess a student's potential on the basis of school + symbol + placement result.<sup>9</sup>

1.5.8. The university does not have an academic support system per se, but within the English Department there is a tutorial system and a language laboratory which can provide a measure of support to struggling students.

#### 1.6. University of Pretoria

1.6.1. The English Department advised that students have to achieve a D symbol in matric. English (Higher Grade) in order to enter English I. It is envisaged that it may become necessary to implement further screening in the future.

1.6.2. They do not diagnose students "at risk" and have no academic support programme at the moment. Any remediation that is offered is offered informally within the department.

## 1.7. Rand Afrikaans University

1.7.1. The English Department has been wrestling with the problem of screening processes for years without finding a satisfactory solution but they "realise increasingly that some kind of screening is necessary".<sup>10</sup>

1.7.2. They tried a diagnostic test for all students who gained less than a C symbol in matric English, but found the test "very complicated, and difficult to mark, and proved nothing at all. So we abandoned that."<sup>11</sup>

1.7.3. They will probably implement the same entry requirement as Potchefstroom ( i.e. a D for English first language in matric and a C in English second language) laid down in their regulations for 1989.

1.7.4. While they do not appear to have an academic support service, it has been their practice to give additional language tutorials to students who gain between 40 and 50% in the first semester. In 1988, they plan to introduce the language tutorials after the first essay has been marked and returned to students. So, in essence they plan to use the essay as a test of language ability.

## 1.8. Rhodes University

1.8.1. The English Department was very much concerned with the issues raised in the questionnaire.

1.8.2. At that time (November 1987) they implemented no screening procedures and did " not even have a minimum entry qualification for English, bar a matriculation pass" but they were "rapidly becoming convinced that (they ) should." 12

1.8.3. As an interim measure they were planning to ask the Dean of Arts and his staff at general registration in 1988 to advise any student with less than a D symbol in English First Language Higher Grade, or less than a C in English Second Language Higher Grade, not to take English I. This move then would be in line with that introduced at Potchefstroom University and contemplated by the Rand Afrikaans University. He pointed out that at that stage they could not prevent a student who did not meet these requirements from entering the course, they could only advise.

1.8.4. It was emphasised that they were reluctant to introduce rigorous screening procedures because they could offer no alternative course for students who did not make the grade - no "Special English" or "English for Academic Purposes" courses and that they felt "morally obliged to lay on such a course before taking a tougher line on entry into

English I".<sup>13</sup>

To this end they had just set up a committee to investigate the possibility of introducing an "Introductory English" course which would be specifically designed to prepare "below-par students" for English I.

1.8.5. With regard to academic support they have a facility called the Academic Skills Programme which "at Rhodes runs on an individual and clinical (and therefore very expensive) basis."<sup>14</sup> "At risk" students are identified by essay results and general performance and are referred to the tutors of the Academic Skills Programme. In addition, students entering university with poor matriculation results are often accepted by the deans on condition that they attend the Academic Skills Programme in their first year.

#### 1.9. University of South Africa

1.9.1. In the English Department of this university screening procedures are applied differentially. While there is no screening of English first language matriculants at first-year level, as from 1988 students with English as a second language will be required to have achieved a C symbol in order to register for English I. Any student who achieves a grade below this will be required to register for Practical English first. This system of using Practical English as a

qualifying requirement for English I was in operation at the University of Durban-Wesville until 1987.

1.9.2. Although there is not at this stage an academic support programme in operation at the University of South Africa, students who have failed their first-year courses and are seen to be in need of basic tuition are required to register for the Practical English B course.

#### 1.10. University of Stellenbosch

1.10.1. In the English Department of the University of Stellenbosch there are initially no formal procedures for selection into English I . If students' written work is not up to standard, their own poor grades with or without an informal recommendation from a member of staff will direct them to the English Special Course. "This procedure is based on the tacit assumption that English Special is slightly better geared to dealing with Language problems and hence to remediation." <sup>15</sup>

1.10.2. The English Special Course requires no selection procedures other than the university entrance requirement of a matriculation exemption. The staff have been diagnosing students "at risk" in a rule of thumb manner and have been detecting individual language problems by means of a simple writing assignment at the beginning of the year. However, this has not worked very well and they are interested in

implementing "proper diagnostic tests"<sup>16</sup> in order to detect problems or weaknesses in writing skills and comprehension ability. It was pointed out that one of the difficulties was that at that stage they had little clarity on precisely what skills they were looking for. It was stated unequivocally: "All we know for sure is that Matric symbols are totally useless as an indicator."<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.11. University of the Witwatersrand

The following information was sent:

1.11.1. In order to gain entry to English I the Department of English at the University of the Witwatersrand requires a minimum of a D symbol for Matriculation English (First Language) Higher Grade or a minimum of a C symbol for English (Second Language) Higher Grade. This policy would seem to be in line with that practised at Potchefstroom and due to be introduced at Rand Afrikaans University and followed as a general advisory principle at Rhodes.

1.11.2. English second language students are counselled at registration and encouraged to attend Academic Support tutorials that are run by the department. There is no formal selection and no diagnostic test is written.

1.11.3. The Faculty Admissions Committee runs a set of screening tests for students waitlisted for the Faculty of Arts. (This testing programme is referred to in Chapter Two of this dissertation.)

#### 1.12. University of Zululand

1.12.1. It was reported that they do not screen students for admission to any of their English courses except for Honours where students are required to have attained 60% at English III. Screening as a principle seems to be rejected by the Faculty of Arts.

1.12.2. While they have no academic support service at the moment they would very much like to institute a system of identifying students "at risk" during the first year of their English studies. There is a probability that they may be introducing the Plato system during 1988.

#### 2. The Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal (Durban)

While they were not included in the questionnaire because of the researcher's personal involvement, the English departments of Durban-Westville and Natal (Durban) need to be considered here as well. These universities provided most of the data for the empirical research for this dissertation.

## 2.1. The University of Durban-Westville

As has been stated elsewhere in this dissertation, the practice at the University of Durban-Westville up to and including 1986 was a system of screening students for entry into English I on the basis of a multiple choice comprehension test and a fluency test. Students who did not satisfy the admission requirements for English I were encouraged to register for Practical English which had a language skills component. A credit in Practical English would then allow a student to proceed into English I.

At the beginning of 1987 two new first-year English courses were introduced, entitled English I and English IT. At this stage all selection procedures were dropped for two reasons:

a. English I and English IT were seen as substantially different courses with different emphases. While English I was based on literary theory, English IT focussed on communication theory and language function. It was considered that a screening test could perform no useful role in the selection of students for either course.

b. As has already been stated in this research, 1986 saw a significant increase in the number of Black students reading for first-year English courses. The statistical analysis of the results of the Screening Test across the

first-year student intake threw some doubt on the efficacy of the test in the new dispensation.

## 2.2. The University of Natal (Durban)

At the University of Natal (Durban) the practice has not been to screen students for entry into English I . Anyone with the requisite matriculation qualification who has obtained entry to the university through its own admission requirements may register for English I. There is no other English course like Practical English or Special English. The test which was used at the University of Durban-Westville was implemented to diagnose students "at risk" who were then provided with academic support within the English Department as well as being encouraged to use the facilities of the Student Support Service. This is reported on in more detail in Section B of this chapter.

## 3. SUMMARY

Of the information which is available at this stage the following would seem to be important:

3.1. English Departments with a significant number of students who are second language speakers of English appear to be experiencing problems with these students who do not have

the communicative competence to cope with the study of English as an academic discipline at university.

3.2. There are varying reactions to the senior certificate/matriculation examinations. Four of the university English Departments refer to the Senior Certificate results to assist them in making decisions about the acceptance of students for entrance to English I courses. All of these four departments agree in accepting a D symbol at English First Language (Higher Grade) and a C symbol at English Second Language (Higher Grade) as an entry requirement for English I. Another department is considering introducing this procedure, while yet another uses these grades in a general advisory capacity when recommending courses for first-year students in the Faculty of Arts.

3.3. There appears to be a fairly widespread demand for a test, particularly for diagnostic purposes, to detect those students "at risk", who might benefit from academic support programmes.

3.4. There is a clear reluctance in many quarters to implement screening tests for entry to English I courses. Such tests are regarded as being unfair and unacceptable. The difficulty of devising even an adequate test of this nature is clearly recognised.

3.5. The relevance of this particular research project is

acknowledged and there has been general interest , offers of  
co-operation and requests for the findings of the research.

## SECTION B

### THE NATAL UNIVERSITY EXPERIMENT 1986 AND 1987

#### 1. The Introduction of the Language Test

In 1986 and 1987 the Screening test was written by English I students at the University of Natal (Durban campus). The test was not used for the selection of students into the English I course. The intention was to use the test to diagnose those students "at risk" who might then be channelled into Student Support Services or given additional help by members of staff in the English Department to enable them to cope with their academic studies. In this context the test is referred to as "the language test" or "the comprehension test".

As was the case at Durban-Westville, the students wrote two questions: the comprehension test in a time limit of 30 minutes and the fluency test in 10 minutes. The system of scoring the comprehension test was the same as that used at Durban-Westville, (i.e. a mark out of 50 or 100. At Durban-Westville the results were always converted to a percentage, but in some instances the Natal University results are referred to as a mark out of 50). However the system of grading the fluency test was a little different. Students

were given grades corresponding roughly to the university academic grading grid i.e.as follows:

1 = first class  
2.1 = second class (upper division)  
2.2 = second class (lower division)  
3 = third class  
F = failure

The following table summarises the results of a corpus of 390 English I students who wrote the test at Natal University (Durban) in 1986.

Table 9

---

MARK DISTRIBUTION ON THE ENGLISH COMPREHENSION TEST AT NATAL UNIVERSITY (DURBAN) 1986

---

Mark Range	No. of Students
a) 70 - 90%	151
b) 50 - 68%	163
c) 30 - 48%	69
d) 0 - 28	7

---

It was found that most of the Black students fell into categories c) and d). In fact the latter category was made up exclusively of Black students. Performance on the language test was compared with performance in the final English I examinations and the following results were found.

a. A student who scored below 40% on the comprehension test

and a 3 or an F on the fluency test was likely to fail the English I examination.

b. A student who scored below 40% on the comprehension test but obtained a good grade on the fluency test i.e. 2 or above, could be regarded to be "at risk".

c. A student who scored between 40 and 50% on the comprehension test, but obtained a grade of 3 or failure on the fluency test could be regarded to be "at risk".

The conclusion was that there was a correlation between the language test results and final examination results : "the higher the test result, the higher the exam result, with very few exceptions." ( Palazzo 1987a:5). Comparisons were also drawn between language test results and examination results in the lower range of language test scores. Students who obtained more than a third class pass in the fluency test were excluded from the analysis. This isolated a group of 44 students who had achieved 50% or less on the language test. Of these students, 18 were clear failures who achieved less than 50% in the final English I examination, 24 could be regarded as being "at risk", gaining between 50 and 55% in the English I examination and 2 students gained over 55%. It was concluded that "the language test taken at the beginning of that year (1986) may be seen to have predicted a large number of (failures), as well as identifying those students

who would be borderline cases (at risk)." (Palazzo 1987a :6)

The recommendation was that a 'cut-off' point of 25 out of 50 in the Language Test (with the exclusion of those who score higher than a third class pass in the fluency test) could thus be used in the future to identify those students who will have the most difficulty with English I." (Palazzo 1987a:6) In the context of the English Department these students would be regarded as being "disadvantaged".

## 2. Comparison between the 1986 and 1987 Results

The test was written by the first-year English students in 1987 and the following comparison was made between the 1986 and 1987 intakes.

Table 10

<u>RESULT OF DIAGNOSTIC TEST</u>		<u>% OF TOTAL INTAKE</u>	
		<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>
	70 - 90%	38.7	38
	50 - 68%	41.8	43
FAIL	30 - 48%	17.7	14.3
	0 - 28%	1.8	4.7

It is interesting to note that the frequency distribution in the mark ranges is similar i.e. in the range 70 - 90%, there is only .7% difference between 1986 and 1987; and in the 50 - 68% range there is a difference of 1.2% between 1986 and 1987. In the remaining two categories the difference is between 3 and 4 %, but the combined ranges which constitute a failure i.e. less than 50%, reveal a difference of only .5%.

From the above table it can be seen that 19.5% of the 1986 intake were regarded as being disadvantaged students. This represented 71 students. In 1987 19% of the English I intake were regarded as being disadvantaged. This figure represented 88 students.

A comparison was drawn between performance on the language test and performance in the June semester examinations for 1986 and 1987 and it was found that "Although the Language Test results for 1987 were lower in the disadvantaged category, there were far fewer failures - only 16 as opposed to 34 failures in 1986." (Palazzo 1987b:4) It was noted, however, that the June 1986 results were "abnormally low"..."due to the unrest situation."

### 3. The Workshop Programme

In 1987 the English Department introduced a series of voluntary workshops to be attended by those students who had been diagnosed as being disadvantaged on the basis of the

language test. Initially four workshops were offered on an experimental basis in the first semester. The student response was so positive that the department decided to extend the programme into the second semester. The objectives of the workshops were "to provide students with contextual information that would enhance the meaning of their literary texts...(and to function)...as training sessions to help students acquire the skills essential for university studies." (Spiller 1987:1)

3.2. The English Department was particularly interested in gauging the effectiveness of the workshop programme and therefore a comparison was drawn between the results of those disadvantaged students who had attended the workshops and those that did not. This time, data was used from the diagnostic test and the November 1987 English I examination.

Of the students who did not attend the workshop, three only passed. These three, strictly speaking, were not disadvantaged students, having scored 50% or more in the language test, but all Black students were invited to the workshops irrespective of their test results. The students with less than 50% in the language test who did not attend the workshops all failed.

Palazzo (1987b:5)

Of those who attended the workshops the failure rate was 44%, which represented an improvement on the overall failure rate for Black students of approximately 72%. Palazzo comments further:

Interesting to note is the fact that even those students who failed very badly in the language test, as low as 16%, had an equal chance of recovery if they attended the workshops. Such a result may indicate that failure in the Diagnostic Language Test does not necessarily mean low potential. It simply indicates unpreparedness.

(1987b:5)

#### NOTES

1. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of the National University of Lesotho.
2. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
3. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of the University of the Orange Free State.
4. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of the University of Port Elizabeth.
5. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.
6. Ibid..
7. Ibid..
8. Ibid..
9. Ibid..

10. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of Rand Afrikaans University.
11. Ibid..
12. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of Rhodes University.
13. Ibid..
14. Ibid..
15. Response to questionnaire from the English Department of the University of Stellenbosch.
16. Ibid..
17. Ibid..

#### REFERENCES

Palazzo L. (1987a), Experiments in Language for the year 1986 (English I), unpublished paper, Department of English, University of Natal (Durban).

Palazzo L. (1987b), The Workshop Approach for English I Students, paper presented at the Academic Support Programme Conference at Rhodes University.

Spiller D. (1987), The Workshop Project in the Department of English, UND, 1987, paper presented at the Academic Support Programme Conference at Rhodes University.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PSYCHOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THE COMPREHENSION TEST

#### 1. Rationale for the Psychometric Analysis

The psychometric analysis was undertaken for several purposes:

a. to evaluate the test as a measuring instrument, to investigate its strengths and its weaknesses. To this end, appropriate analyses were directed towards establishing the validity and reliability of the test as a whole and the discriminatory power of individual test items.

b. to establish the predictive value of the test with regard to performance in the English first-year courses and examinations.

c. to investigate the relationship between success in the senior certificate examination, particularly in English, and success in the first-year university course work and examinations in English.

## 2. Subjects and Procedure

2.1. The following groups of students provided the data on which the statistical procedures were calculated:

- a. University of Durban-Westville English I 1982.
- b. University of Durban-Westville English I 1983.
- c. University of Durban-Westville English I 1984.
- d. University of Durban-Westville English I 1985.
- e. University of Durban-Westville English I 1986.
- f. University of Durban-Westville Practical English 1986.
- g. University of Durban-Westville English I 1987.
- h. University of Durban-Westville English IT 1987.
- i. University of Natal (Durban) English I 1986.
- j. University of Natal (Durban) English I 1987.
- k. University of Fort Hare English I 1986.

2.2. The following procedures have been carried out:

2.2.1. Item Analysis which includes the calculation of the D-Index and the F-Index in order to establish the discriminatory power and level of difficulty of individual test items.

2.2.2. Test Reliability which focuses on internal consistency in order to check the reliability of individual items in relation to the test as a whole and that all the items of the test are in fact measuring the same features.

2.2.3. Test Validity which is concerned with establishing how accurately the test measures what it claims to measure. This

includes both construct validity and criterion-related validity.

### 3. Item Analysis

The appropriate use of item analysis is to eliminate items that are inconsistent with the test as a whole, or items that are not calibrated appropriately to the level of proficiency of the population to be tested (Oller 1979). The two item statistics on which the fate of most test items is usually decided are the discrimination index and the facility index or index of difficulty.

#### 3.1. Discrimination Index and Index of Difficulty

A discrimination index (D) is a measure of how well an item in a test of achievement or ability differentiates between high and low performers. The discrimination index of an item provides an indication of how the item correlates with the test as a whole.

The index of difficulty or facility index (F) of an item is defined as the percentage of all candidates who get an item correct.

The tables in Appendix A and Appendix B summarise the discrimination index and index of difficulty on Durban-Westville English I 1986 and Durban-Westville Practical

English 1986.

The discrimination index and the index of difficulty were calculated on the 50 items of the test in the 1986 version. The 1986 test was chosen because the test was administered to the whole of the English first-year intake i.e. English I and Practical English.

The following table taken from Macintosh and Morrison (1969:67) was used to evaluate the suitability of a test item in respect of its discriminatory power.

---

DISCRIMINATION INDEX (D)	FACILITY INDEX (F)		
	Below 40%	40% - 60%	Above 60%
Above 0,40	Difficult	Acceptable	Easy
From 0,30 - 0,39	Difficult	Improvable	Easy
From 0,20 - 0,29	Difficult	Marginal	Easy
Below 0,20	Unsuitable	Unsuitable	Unsuitable

---

### 3.2. Results

The following results were found in the English I students:

16 items were acceptable

26 items were too difficult

7 were unsuitable

1 had a nil result

Attention has to be drawn to items 39 and 40 and 46 and 47 which give identical results. It is surmised that the programme operator duplicated these items in error in the input.

The following results were found in the Practical English students:

none of the items was acceptable

27 items were too difficult

1 item was marginal i.e. not difficult or easy or acceptable

22 items were found to be unsuitable

### 3.3. Comment

The results of this statistical procedure are borne out by practical experience in the implementation of the Screening Test. It was found that the test was too difficult for the students at the University of Durban-Westville and therefore a cut-off point of 30% was chosen in making decisions about the selection of students for the English I course.

### 3.4. The University of Fort Hare Experiment

A similar result was found at the University of Fort Hare. In this instance only the D Factor was calculated and therefore a full item analysis could not be carried out. However out of the total sample of 183 English I full-time

students only 6 students achieved a mark of 50% or over, which was taken as a pass mark in this experimental investigation. The test was clearly too difficult for these students as well.

#### 4. Test Reliability

4.1. Reliability is concerned with the problem of consistency of measurement. There are several different types of reliability estimates. Two measures that are particularly relevant in an educational context are that of test-retest reliability and internal consistency. Test-retest reliability is concerned with stability of performance over time, i.e. the reliability of a test to produce the same results if it is administered on another occasion to a similar group of people.

The reliability of a test indicates the degree to which it gives the same relative difference in the scores when administered to the same individuals on a second occasion, as shown by a higher positive correlation coefficient. (The correlation coefficient for maximum reliability is +1,00. a figure which is virtually unobtainable. Most tests of good reliability have a correlation coefficient of between +,90 and +,96). Of course, the actual scores of the testees may not remain the same. What is important for reliability is that the

positions of the testees relative to one another stay the same on the two occasions of testing.

Behr 1977 : 116

Internal consistency focuses on the consistency of performance over items comprising a test. In essence the aim here is to try to determine whether all items on the test measure the same characteristic or trait. The reliability of individual items in relation to the test as a whole is measured. It is this measure of reliability which has been implemented here.

4.2. The test reliability score, calculated according to the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20) for the screening test for English I students in 1986, is 0,91. This indicates that the test has good internal consistency (i.e. the items tend to measure the same thing).

4.3. The test reliability score, calculated according to the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20) for the screening test for Practical English students in 1986 is 0.56. This would seem to contradict the findings discussed under 3.2 above. In this instance the test does not appear to have good internal consistency. This may be explained by the fact that the item analysis revealed that the test was too difficult for this population of students. Too many items had a low discriminatory power. The D-Index and the F-Index on the

test items varies dramatically for these two groups.

The discrepancy between these results on the test for English I and Practical English would seem to indicate that these are two significantly different populations of students.

4.4. These results corroborate the findings discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation i.e. that the Practical English students in 1986 fared very badly on the test - 24.5% scored less than 30% and over 50% of the students scored less than 39% on the test. The Practical English group as a whole, comprised a large number of Black students for the first time in the history of the University of Durban-Westville. As a group the Black students performed particularly poorly - 64% of them scoring less than 30%, and 91% scoring lower than 39% on the test.

This group of candidates would appear not to be comparable with the English I group or any other previous group of candidates which had written the test during the period 1982 - 1985. One of the most obvious differences is that a significant number of the group were not mother tongue speakers of English and had written the English Second Language paper on the senior certificate examination. These students come from the educationally disadvantaged sector of the population of South Africa. The particular problems

associated with this group with regard to assessment, selection for educational opportunity and academic success are referred to throughout this dissertation.

## 5. Test Validity

5.1. The analysis of test validity is concerned with establishing whether the test measures what it is intended to measure. It focusses on two questions: what the test measures and how well the test measures what it does measure. (Brown 1976:62) The purpose of the first statistical analysis carried out in 1982 was to evaluate whether the test did, in fact, test ability to understand and comprehend written English of a certain standard i.e. first-year university level. To this end correlations were drawn with other proven tests that measure, to some extent, the same ingredient, namely comprehension.

There are three major types of validity : content validity, construct validity and criterion-related validity. In this instance the concern is with the latter two i.e. construct validity and criterion-related validity. Construct validity focuses on the trait which the test actually measures. In the present study the trait is assumed to be English comprehension. Criterion-related validity is concerned with how well test scores predict performance on some independent measure. (Brown 1976:65) In the present study the independent measures are English I course marks and English I

final marks. The examination of validity is dependent on correlations.

## 5.2. Correlations

A correlation coefficient is a measure of the association or interrelationship between two or more variables. Statistically, the correlation coefficient between two sets of scores is calculated to determine:

- a. whether there is a relationship
- b. what the magnitude of the relationship is

In this particular instance the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated, being the most robust for this type of analysis.

The value of  $r$  can range from +1.00 to -1.00. The absolute value of the coefficient tells the strength of the relationship; the greater the absolute value, the greater the correspondence between the two sets of scores. Thus when  $r_{xy} = 1.00$ , scores on  $Y$  are completely predictable knowing scores on  $X$ . If  $r_{xy} = 0.00$ , the relationship between pairs of scores is random and no better than chance. The sign of the coefficient tells the direction of the relationship; thus coefficients of +.68 and -.68 represent equal degrees of predictability.

(Brown 1976:43)

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated for the purpose of this analysis on the following groups of students:

- University of Durban-Westville English I 1983, 1984 1985  
and 1986
- Natal University English I 1986
- University of Durban-Westville Practical English 1986.
- University of Durban-Westville English I 1987
- University of Durban-Westville English IT 1987
- University of Natal English I 1987

The following five variables were correlated:

- matric English
- matric aggregate
- screening test
- course mark
- final mark

The table summarising the Pearson's Product Moment Correlations of all the data available from 1983 to 1987 may be found in Appendix C.

### 5.3. Construct Validity

5.3.1. As mentioned above, construct validity is concerned with the trait which the test measures. As has already been indicated in Chapter Three of this dissertation, in the trial

run of the test conducted by Behr in respect of the 1982 cohort of students from the University of Durban-Westville (these were students from across the faculties on campus), the following results were obtained:

A moderate correlation was found between the Court Test and the AH4 Mental Abilities Test ( $r = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Similarly, a moderate correlation was found between the Court Test and matriculation English ( $r = 0.47$  with  $p < 0.01$ ).

From this it was concluded that the test had a moderate relationship with intelligence as well as with the matric English performance, and that the relationship was significant at  $p < 0.01$  or at the level of 1% probability. There is, in other words, a 99% probability that the test has some commonality with intelligence and matric performance of the population under investigation. Statistically, then, it was shown that the test had merit as a test of English comprehension. The findings provide some evidence in support of the test's construct validity.

5.3.2. Correlations were drawn between the senior certificate aggregate and the Screening Test result over the whole test sample at the University of Durban-Westville during the period 1983 to 1987.

There is generally a negative correlation between these two

sets of scores. There is no relationship between performance in the senior certificate examination as a whole and performance on the Screening Test. It would seem that these tests are measuring different things.

5.3.3. Correlations were also drawn between the senior certificate English result and the Screening Test over the whole test sample at the University of Durban-Westville between 1983 and 1987 and English I students at the University of Natal in 1986.

In nine out of eleven cases there is a negative correlation between the Screening Test mark and the senior certificate English mark and in the majority of cases  $p$  is much higher than ,05. Attention should be drawn particularly to the University of Natal result where there is a highly significant negative relationship. ( $r = -.4363$ ,  $p=.000$ )

#### 5.4. Criterion-related Validity

There are three tests under consideration here i.e. the English senior certificate mark, the English senior certificate aggregate and the Screening Test. There are also two criteria i.e. the English I course mark and the English I final mark. The predictive power of each test will be considered in relation to each of the criteria.

#### 5.4.1. Predicting English I Course Mark

##### 5.4.1.1. The Senior Certificate English Mark and the English I Course Mark

Between the senior certificate English Mark and the English I course mark there is a negative relationship in five out of the ten samples i.e. 1985, 1986, English I 1987, English I Blacks 1987 and English I non-Blacks 1987. In three instances the relationship is described as negligible where the value of  $r$  is less than 0.20 in English I 1983, Practical English 1986 and English IT 1987. In the remaining two years English I 1984 and English IT (non-Blacks) 1987 there is no significant correlation because  $p > .05$ .

These results corroborate the findings discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation i.e. there is little correlation between the senior certificate English mark and academic success in first-year English as measured on the Course Mark.

##### 5.4.1.2. The Senior Certificate Aggregate and the English I Course Mark

Between the senior certificate aggregate and the English I course mark there is a negative relationship for English I 1985 and English I 1986. For English I 1983, Practical English 1986 and English IT 1987 there is a negligible relationship and for the remaining cases there is no

significance. (  $p > .05$  )

#### 5.4.1.3. The Screening Test and the English I Course Mark

Between the screening test and the English I course mark there is a relationship ranging from slight to moderate in five cases: English I 1985; English I 1986; Practical English 1986; English I 1987 and English IT 1987. Among English IT Non-Blacks the relationship is negligible. There is no significant relationship for English I 1983, English I 1984, English I Blacks 1987 and English I non-Blacks 1987 for in all of these cases  $p > .05$ . There is an apparent contradiction here between the significant relationship found for English I as a whole and that of the breakdown of the groups into Blacks and non-Blacks. It has been suggested that this is because of the size of the sample i.e. English I Blacks = 65; English I Non-Blacks = 69.

Thus it can be seen that there is generally a significant relationship between the screening test and the English I course mark. It should be noted that the 1987 figures for English I and English IT show a slight or negligible or non-existent relationship. This corroborates the findings discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation that in the new dispensation of students from different cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, the screening test

is no longer a reliable predictor of academic success in first-year English.

#### 5.4.2. Predicting the English I Final Mark

##### 5.4.2.1. The Senior Certificate English Mark and the English I Final Mark

Between the senior certificate English Mark and the English I final mark there is a negative relationship in five cases: English I 1985, English I 1986, Natal English I 1986, English I 1987, and English I( Blacks) 1987. There is a negligible relationship for English I 1983, Practical English 1986 and English IT 1987. For the remaining two years there is no significant relationship i.e. English I 1984 and English I (Non-Blacks) 1987. This corroborates the findings above, that there is no significant correlation between success in senior certificate English and academic success in first-year university English.

Attention should be drawn particularly to the result for Natal University English I 1986, where there is a highly significant negative relationship with an r value of  $-.5780$  and a p value of  $.000$ .

#### 5.4.2.2. The Senior Certificate Aggregate and the English I Final Mark

Between the senior certificate aggregate and the English I final mark there is a negative relationship in two cases, English I 1985 and English I 1986, a negligible relationship in the case of English IT 1987 and a slight relationship for English I 1983. Otherwise there is no significant relationship between the Senior Certificate aggregate and the final year mark.

These correlations and those discussed under 5.1.4.1. and 5.1.4.2. above would seem to indicate that there is no significant relationship between success in either the senior certificate English examination or the senior certificate examination as a whole and success in first-year university English. As has already been discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation, it was the unreliability of the senior certificate English examination result in predicting success in English I which precipitated the introduction of the comprehension test as an instrument of screening.

#### 5.4.2.3. The Screening Test and the English I Final Mark

In the correlations between the Screening Test and the English I final mark there are twelve samples of varying sizes from the University of Durban-Westville and the

University of Natal over the period 1983 to 1987. In only one case is there a negative relationship i.e. 1983, but this is not statistically significant as  $p > .05$ . 1984 shows an indifferent relationship. Otherwise in six cases the relationship ranges from slight to moderate with negligible relationships for two cases - University of Durban-Westville Practical English 1986 and English IT non-Blacks 1987 and no relationship for English I Blacks and non-Blacks 1987 as was found on the Screening Test/Course Work correlations. As was mentioned above, the small sample in this particular case may account for this.

While there is generally a significant relationship between the Screening Test and the English I Final Mark, the University of Durban-Westville 1987 figures show a slight or negligible correlation.

These findings corroborate those discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation i.e. that while success on the Screening Test had been shown to have some correlation with success in first year English, either course work or final mark, from 1986 it was apparent that the test no longer had the same predictive validity because of the change in the composition of the student population.

These results should be compared with those of Natal University English I students for 1986 and 1987 , where the

relationship is described as moderate (  $r = .5378$  and  $r = .4321$  respectively ) and highly significant in both cases with  $p = .000$ . At this point in history the Natal University student population is a far more homogeneous group than that of the University of Durban-Westville with regard to educational, cultural and socio-economic factors.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The statistical analysis would seem to show that the Screening Test is a valid test of English comprehension. It has been shown to be reliable in statistical terms. Although it was shown to be generally too difficult for the students who wrote the test, it proved to have predictive value with regard to academic success in first-year English studies among homogeneous groups. However, with heterogeneous groups the test no longer had predictive value.

All of the statistical procedures which were carried out in connection with the senior certificate examination showed that this test has no predictive value with regard to academic success in first-year English studies. Neither the senior certificate aggregate nor the senior certificate English mark shows any correlation with the first-year English results.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### 1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This dissertation attempts to investigate the problem of the relationship between language proficiency and academic success in university studies. As the survey of literature reveals, this issue is of major concern in educational institutions throughout the Western world. The particular focus of this study is the situation in the Republic of South Africa.

This problem is of critical importance at this stage in the history of South Africa when universities are reassessing their role in the community at large. The Committee of University Principals has unequivocally stated its commitment

to ensure that the university system in South Africa develops in such a way that any person with the ability to gain admission to a university and the wish to do so should as soon as possible be able to compete on equal terms to gain admission on grounds of merit and/or potential. (1988:1)

In the quest for indentifying those students with merit or potential the question of language ability assumes major

importance. In order for students to succeed at university they need to be communicatively competent in the language which is the medium of instruction. The question is how this is to be assessed. It has been assumed that this ability can be assessed by means of a formal test and it is this issue on which this dissertation focuses, in order to establish how reliable such tests are as predictors of academic performance.

"Language proficiency", as explained in Chapter Two, has been taken to mean, in this context, language ability as measured on a test. Two major testing programmes have been investigated. One of these is the final school-leaving certificate examination in South Africa, the senior certificate examination, on the basis of which students may obtain the matriculation exemption qualification which is the statutory admission requirement to universities in the Republic. The other testing programme is a particular language test which was designed specifically for the selection of students for courses of academic study of English, at university. The statistical analysis for both of these covers a six-year period, from 1982 to 1987.

"Academic success" has been confined to first-year university results. The empirical research looks particularly at the relationship between the senior certificate examination results and results on the language test on one hand, and

academic success in first-year English studies at university on the other. The review of literature examines the findings of other researchers on the relationship between the senior certificate examination results and general success in academic subjects at first-year university level.

The concept of communicative competence and the problems associated with the design of an appropriate and practicable instrument of measurement are discussed in Chapter Two. It is emphasised that the particular selection test which is the basis for the empirical research for this dissertation is not a comprehensive test of communicative competence, but focuses on particular areas of communicative competence which are requisite in an academic environment.

Chapter Two also reviews relevant research studies in South Africa and abroad. In general it was found that in countries with a homogeneous population, the final school leaving certificate remains the best single predictor of academic success at university. However, in countries with a heterogenous population the school leaving certificate is not a reliable predictor of academic success. Thus, in South Africa, in the homogeneous groupings within the country e.g. the white population, the senior certificate examination appears to be a reliable predictor of academic success. Language tests, like one used for this particular research study, can also have predictive validity when administered to a homogeneous group. As soon as the homogeneity is

disturbed, however, the senior certificate examination or standardised language tests can no longer be regarded as reliable predictors of academic performance.

The same appears to be true of language tests written at the point of admission to university in other countries. In North America the Test of English as a Foreign Language is required by more than 2,500 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada to determine the English proficiency of prospective students whose native language is not English. The move of the University of Washington towards finding an alternative to relying entirely on the English language proficiency test indicates that there is some scepticism in connection with reliance on test results alone. Interestingly the University of Washington's alternative policy depends heavily on courses in English as a Second Language. A parallel development is currently taking place in universities in South Africa where the spotlight falls on the development of intervention programmes to provide the requisite academic support in language as well as other areas.

In South African universities, particularly the universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand the search is on for a viable alternative admissions policy. The current direction is towards the assessment of potential based on the ideas of Reuven Feuerstein (1979). This approach finds its

expression in the "teach-test model", a pilot study which is due to be implemented at the University of Natal (Durban campus) in December 1988/January 1989. Finally, Chapter Two considers the possible relevance of the verbal deprivation debate to the present study.

Chapter Three focuses on the problem of language proficiency and academic success at the University of Durban-Westville where the researcher was involved in a testing programme for the selection of students for first-year courses in the English Department during the period 1982 to 1987. The test which was designed was a multiple choice objective comprehension test and was known as the English I Screening Test during this period. It is referred to above and elsewhere in this dissertation as "the language test". During the period 1982 to 1985 the test was found to have satisfactory predictive powers. The exclusion of students who scored below the cut-off point could be validated. In general, the higher a student's score on the Screening Test, the greater his chance of academic success in first-year English courses. However, in 1986, for the first time there was a significant increase in the enrolment of Black students for first-year English courses. These students scored very badly on the Screening Test but achieved grades beyond all expectation in the first-year English courses. In 1987 the same findings emerged. Of the statistical corpus not one student in the large English IT course scored above the cut-off point which had been used for the selection of students

to English I in previous years. It was clear that in the new dispensation the Screening Test could not be used with any degree of confidence.

The same was true of the senior certificate examination at the University of Durban-Westville. At no time during the years 1982 to 1987 was the senior certificate examination shown to have any predictive power of academic success as far as English I was concerned.

Language policies and practices in English Departments at universities in South Africa are surveyed in Chapter Four. It is revealed that departments with a significant number of students who are second language speakers of English appear to be experiencing problems with those students who do not have the communicative competence to cope with the study of the academic discipline of English at university. Four of the departments refer to the senior certificate examination results to assist them in making decisions about the acceptance of students for first-year English courses. These four departments concur in accepting a D symbol for English First Language (Higher Grade) and a C for English Second Language (Higher Grade) as an admission requirement for English I. While there is a clear reluctance to implement a test as a screening device because of political implications, there is a demand for a test for diagnostic purposes to detect those students "at risk" of failure in their academic

courses who might benefit from some type of intervention programme.

Academic support has been the thrust of the programme in the English department at the University of Natal (Durban campus). As is described in Chapter Four, the language test has been used with some success in this instance for diagnosing students "at risk" of failure who might then be directed towards an appropriate intervention programme. The workshop programme which was introduced in 1987 was shown to be remarkably successful. "The students with less than 50% in the language test who did not attend the workshops all failed." (Palazzo 1987b:5)

Chapter Five constitutes the psychometric analysis of the data on the test results and the Senior Certificate examination. Most of the data concerns the students at the University of Durban-Westville during the period 1983 to 1987. However there is some data on the Natal University English I students for 1986 and 1987 and the University of Fort Hare English students for 1986. Three statistical procedures are discussed:

- a. an item analysis based on the discrimination index and the facility index
- b. test reliability calculated according to the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20)
- c. test validity, including construct validity and criterion-related validity.

a. The item analysis was conducted on the 1986 test because this test had been written by the whole of the first-year English intake at the University of Durban-Westville, both Practical English and English I. It was found that the test was generally too difficult for the English I students. Only 16 items were acceptable, 26 items were too difficult, 7 were unsuitable and 1 had a nil result. This statistical result would explain the reason for the fact that in practice when the test was used as an instrument of screening a low cut-off point of 30% had to be chosen. The test was far too difficult for the Practical English group. None of the items was acceptable, 22 items were found to be unsuitable and 1 item was marginal.

b. The test reliability is, in this instance, concerned with the measurement of internal consistency. The score, calculated according to the Kuder-Richardson formula (KR-20), for English I students on the Screening Test in 1986 is 0.91 which indicates that the test has good internal consistency i.e. the items tend to measure the same thing. However the test reliability score for the same test for the Practical English students for the same year (1986) is 0.56. The discrepancy between these results on the test for English I and Practical English would seem to indicate that these are significantly different populations of students. It should be remembered that in 1986 for the first time the Practical

English class had a large component of Black students who were second-language speakers of English.

c. Two types of test validity were considered : construct validity and criterion-related validity.

Construct validity focuses on the trait which the test actually measures. In the pilot study carried out in 1982 across the faculties on campus at the University of Durban-Westville, it was found that there was some evidence of the test's construct validity. It had some merit as a test of English comprehension. Later correlations drawn between performance on the test on one hand and senior certificate English and the senior certificate aggregate on the other, were generally negative and indicate that these tests are measuring different things.

Criterion-related validity is concerned with how well test scores predict performance on some independent measure. In this instance there are three tests under consideration: the Screening Test, senior certificate English and the senior certificate aggregate. The two criteria are the English I course mark and the English I final mark.

In predicting the English I course mark for the students at the University of Durban-Westville it was found that

i. there is little correlation between the senior certificate English mark and the English I course mark.

ii. there is generally no significant relationship between the senior certificate aggregate and the English I course mark.

iii. there is generally a significant relationship between the Screening Test and the English I course mark although in 1987 the correlations are not as significant as in previous years. This may be explained by the change in the composition of the student population which has been discussed elsewhere in this dissertation.

In predicting the English I final mark among the students at the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal it was found that

i. among the students at the University of Durban-Westville there is no significant relationship between the senior certificate English mark and the English I final mark. In the Natal University English I 1986 sample there is a highly significant negative relationship with an  $r$  value of  $-.5780$  and a  $p$  value of  $.000$ .

ii. the correlations between the senior certificate aggregate and the English I final mark are slightly better than those between senior certificate English and the English I final mark, but generally the relationship is not significant.

iii. the relationship between the Screening Test and the English I final mark is generally significant among the students at the University of Durban-Westville during the

period 1983 - 1986. The 1987 figures show a slight or negligible relationship which is consistent with the findings discussed elsewhere. These results should be compared with those of Natal University English I students for 1986 and 1987, where the relationship is described as moderate ( $r = .5378$  and  $r = .4321$  respectively) and highly significant in both cases with  $p = .000$ . It should be noted that at this point in history the Natal University student population is a more homogeneous group than that of the University of Durban-Westville.

## 2. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion that can be drawn from all of these findings is that in homogeneous student populations language proficiency is predictive of academic success in first-year university courses of English. In some cases it has been found that language proficiency is predictive of general academic success, and in others that academic success in the senior years is also related to grades achieved on language tests either in school-leaving examinations or university entrance tests. In heterogeneous student populations, however, this is not the case. Academic success cannot be predicted with any degree of confidence on the basis of language proficiency. This is borne out by the empirical research conducted at the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal. It is also substantiated by the studies of other researchers both within and without the

Republic of South Africa.

### 3.RECOMMENDATIONS

What all this would seem to indicate is that extreme caution is necessary in the introduction and implementation of any language test for the selection of students for academic study at university. It is a highly sensitive, political issue , particularly in South Africa where apartheid structures have meant that educational opportunities have been differentially applied. Black students emerge from an educational background where they are not generally exposed to good models of English even though English is the medium of instruction. They sit in large classes of anything up to a hundred students, their teachers are poorly trained and their cultural background is different from that of the Euro-centred university. These students can be said, with some justification, to be disadvantaged and may not perform well on either the senior certificate examination or an initial language test at university.

In the face of the inadequacy of the traditional instruments of selection the question is what criteria should be adopted. As Shochet at the University of the Witwatersrand asks in a paper written in 1984 : "How Can We be Both Fair and Accurate?" How does one find those who "command the required capacity, talent and interest"?<sup>1</sup> As has already been stated,

the current direction of research at the Universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand is towards dynamic assessment - testing for potential. As discussed in Chapter Two, this concept is based on the ideas of Reuven Feuerstein (1979) who believes that intelligence is a process and not a product and should be measured in terms of "learning potential". This is clearly illustrated in the "teach-test" pilot programme, which is to be implemented at the University of Natal (Durban campus) at the end of 1988. The aim is to implement a dynamic assessment procedure which is ongoing, the beginning of a process and the basis of intervention programmes.

As Cloete and Pillay point out:

Both selection and support are necessary, because potential alone cannot compensate for the deficiencies of Bantu education in preparing students for a "first world" university.

(Cloete and Pillay 1987:30)

The consensus seems to be that the development of intervention programmes is desirable in an attempt to give "an advantage in the present to those who have been disadvantaged in the past". (Pearce 1983)<sup>2</sup> The language test has been used effectively in order to detect disadvantaged students in the Department of English at Natal University (Durban). Its advantages are that it can be quickly and

easily administered and marked so that students with problems can be isolated at an early stage and be given the appropriate support from the beginning of their university careers.

Any proposals in the future with regard to the selection of students for educational opportunity in South Africa need to be very carefully scrutinised. A test which does not select potential but merely rejects students from disadvantaged backgrounds cannot be justified. It would seem to be clear that the senior certificate examination and language tests such as the Screening Test do little more than provide a record of past learning and knowledge, and where the educational environment has been impoverished, they are inaccurate and misleading predictors of academic potential.

#### NOTES

1. These words have been placed in inverted commas because they are taken from the Report commissioned by the CUP which is detailed under the reference listing. The words are, in addition, crucial to this dissertation which has been concerned with the examination of language tests which claim to identify "capacity, talent and interest" for academic study.
2. This quotation is taken from the University of Natal's brochure entitled The Disadvantaged Student which outlines the University's efforts towards the needs of disadvantaged students.

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ITEM ANALYSIS FOR ENGLISH I AT UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLESCREENING TEST - 1986TEST RELIABILITY = 0.91

	<u>DISCRIMINATION</u> <u>INDEX</u>	<u>INDEX OF</u> <u>DIFFICULTY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
QUESTION 1	0.366	30.488%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 2	0.415	21.951%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 3	0.610	48.780%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 4	0.098	13.415%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 5	0.232	15.244%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 6	0.220	15.854%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 7	0.280	15.244%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 8	0.390	30.488%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 9	0.585	46.341%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 10	0.537	36.585%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 11	0.671	39.634%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 12	0.378	29.878%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 13	0.671	53.049%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 14	0.463	31.707%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 15	0.488	37.805%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 16	0.695	51.829%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 17	0.073	14.634%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 18	0.537	30.488%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 19	0.488	36.585%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 20	0.159	17.683%	REJECT
QUESTION 21	0.561	34.146%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 22	0.390	26.829%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 23	0.280	21.341%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 24	0.598	33.537%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 25	0.366	25.610%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 26	0.707	54.878%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 27	0.561	35.366%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 28	0.537	29.268%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 29	0.732	53.659%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 30	0.793	45.732%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 31	0.524	31.098%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 32	0.110	9.146%	REJECT
QUESTION 33	0.659	35.366%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 34	0.402	20.122%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 35	0.500	25.000%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 36	0.524	28.659%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 37	0.720	37.195%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 38	0.512	26.829%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 39	0.695	34.756%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 40	0.695	34.756%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 41	0.415	20.732%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 42	0.378	18.902%	REJECT
QUESTION 43	0.537	26.829%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 44	0.598	31.098%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 45	0.659	35.366%	ACCEPTABLE
QUESTION 46	0.110	5.488%	REJECT
QUESTION 47	0.110	5.488%	REJECT
QUESTION 48	0.329	17.683%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 49	0.146	9.756%	REJECT
QUESTION 50	0.000	0.000%	?

ITEM ANALYSIS FOR PRACTICAL ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITY DURBAN-WESTVILLESCREENING TEST - 1986TEST RELIABILITY = .056

	<u>DISCRIMINATION</u> <u>INDEX</u>	<u>INDEX OF</u> <u>DIFFICULTY</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
QUESTION 1	0.134	22.183%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 2	0.113	11.972%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 3	0.211	27.465%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 4	0.070	13.380%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 5	0.070	9.859%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 6	0.099	16.197%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 7	0.127	14.789%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 8	0.162	20.070%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 9	0.282	28.873%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 10	0.225	24.648%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 11	0.218	28.521%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 12	0.063	21.479%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 13	0.296	38.028%	DIFFICULT/MARGINAL
QUESTION 14	0.218	21.479%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 15	0.211	28.169%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 16	0.176	29.930%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 17	0.021	14.437%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 18	0.169	18.310%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 19	0.239	26.761%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 20	0.063	13.732%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 21	0.254	25.352%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 22	0.169	19.014%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 23	0.085	9.859%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 24	0.239	16.197%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 25	0.092	15.141%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 26	0.268	37.324%	DIFFICULT/MARGINAL
QUESTION 27	0.225	29.577%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 28	0.141	14.085%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 29	0.261	41.197%	MARGINAL
QUESTION 30	0.310	35.211%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 31	0.134	20.070%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 32	0.092	5.986%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 33	0.310	24.648%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 34	0.232	13.028%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 35	0.218	14.437%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 36	0.324	22.535%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 37	0.352	26.056%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 38	0.275	15.845%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 39	0.352	28.169%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 40	0.380	28.169%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 41	0.317	18.662%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 42	0.317	16.549%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 43	0.225	12.676%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 44	0.380	20.423%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 45	0.394	21.831%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 46	0.120	6.690%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 47	0.042	2.817%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 48	0.232	11.620%	DIFFICULT
QUESTION 49	0.106	5.282%	UNSUITABLE
QUESTION 50	0.028	1.408%	UNSUITABLE

TABLE SUMMARISING PEARSON'S PRODUCT  
MOMENT CORRELATIONS 1983 TO 1987

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- \* PC = COURSE MARK
- \* PF = FINAL MARK
- \* PM = MATRIC ENGLISH MARK
- \* PA = MATRIC AGGREGATE
- \* PE = SCREENING TEST MARK

\* \* \* \* \*

		(1)	(2)	(3)
GROUP	N	PC & PF	PC & PM	PC & Pi
UDW ENG.1 1983 N = 552 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.7594 (p = .000) HIGH	.0965 (p = .015) NEGLIGIBLE	.1017 (p = .0) NEGLIGIBLE
UDW ENG.1 1984 N = 601 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.6368 (p = .000) MODERATE	.0196 (p = .316) -	.0492 (p = .1) -
UDW ENG.1 1985 N = 462 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.7597 (p = .000) HIGH	-.2611 (p = .000) -	-.0183 (p = .3) -
UDW ENG.1 1986 N = 171 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.6730 (p = .000) MODERATE	-.1394 (p = .038) -	-.2295 (p = .0) -
UDW P.E. 1986 N = 552 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.6145 (p = .000) MODERATE	.0870 (p = .020) NEGLIGIBLE	.1701 (p = .0) NEGLIGIBLE
NATAL EI 1986 N = 409 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP			
UDWEI 1987 N = 133 ST	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.8213 (p = .000) HIGH	-.0495 (p = .571) -	.0088 (p = .9) -
UDW EI (BLACKS) 1987 N= 65	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.8097 (p = .000) HIGH	-.1341 (p = .287) -	.0562 (p = .0) -
UDW EI (NON BLACK) 1987 N = 68	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.7447 (p = .000) HIGH	.0204 (p = .869) -	.0657 (p = .9) -
UDW EIT 1987 N = 552	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.7736 (p = .000) HIGH	.1460 (p = .001) NEGLIGIBLE	.1720 (p = .9) NEGLIGIBLE
UDW EIT NON BLACKS 1987 N = 365	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP	.7551 (p = .000) HIGH	.0628 (p = .231) -	.1488 (p = .9) NEGLIGIBLE
NATAL EI 1987 N = 460	r VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANCE OF R/SHIP DESC. OF RELATIONSHIP			

	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	PC & PE	PF & PM	PF & PA	PF & PE	PM & PA	PM & PE	PA & PE
	-.0510 (p = .125) -	.1439 (p = .001) NEGLIGIBLE	.1642 (p = .000) SLIGHT	-.0690 (p = .060) -	.4800 (p = .000) MODERATE	-.0995 (p = .415) -	-.1044 (p = .009) -
	.0071 (p = .431) -	.0162 (p = .346) -	.0195 (p = .317) -	.0202 (p = .311) INDIFF.	.6439 (p = .000) MODERATE	-.0053 (p = .448) -	-.1667 (p = .001) -
	.3595 (p = .000) SLIGHT	-.1939 (p = .000) -	-.0461 (p = .162) -	.2737 (p = .000) SLIGHT	-.5756 (p = .000) -	-.1294 (p = .010) -	-.1179 (p = .017) -
	.3622 (p = .000) MODERATE	-.1748 (p = .011) -	-.1895 (p = .007) -	.4005 (p = .000) MODERATE	-.4811 (p = .000) -	-.1081 (p = .093) -	-.1482 (p = .035) -
	.3919 (p = .000) MODERATE	.1914 (p = .000) NEGLIGIBLE	.1591 (p = .000) NEGLIGIBLE	.1966 (p = .000) NEGLIGIBLE	.6279 (p = .000) MODERATE	.1175 (p = .003) NEGLIGIBLE	.1340 (p = .001) NEGLIGIBLE
		-.5780 (p = .000) -		.5378 (p = .000) MODERATE		-.4363 (p = .000) -	
	.2591 (p = .003) SLIGHT	-.0074 (p = .933) -	.0054 (p = .951) -	.3026 (p = .000) SLIGHT	.7546 (p = .000) HIGH	-.0944 (p = .280) -	-.0916 (p = .294) -
	.0690 (p = .585) -	-.0865 (p = .493) -	.1069 (p = .397) -	.1067 (p = .398) -	.8370 (p = .000) HIGH	-.0786 (p = .534) -	-.0797 (p = .528) -
	.0089 (p = .943) -	.0111 (p = .928) -	.0331 (p = .789) -	.0339 (p = .784) -	.6750 (p = .000) HIGH	-.1917 (p = .117) -	-.0441 (p = .721) -
	.2472 (p = .000) SLIGHT	.1723 (p = .000) NEGLIGIBLE	.1941 (p = .000) NEGLIGIBLE	.2157 (p = .000) SLIGHT	.7826 (p = .000) HIGH	.0104 (p = .807) -	.0305 (p = .475) -
	.1339 (p = .010) NEGLIGIBLE	.0680 (p = .195) -	.1408 (p = .007) NEGLIGIBLE	.1088 (p = .038) NEGLIGIBLE	.8061 (p = .000) HIGH	-.0947 (p = .071) -	-.0098 (p = .852) -
				.4321 (p = .000) MODERATE			

## UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

ENGLISH TEST FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

You will be given time to read the instructions before the test begins.

Complete the following section:

SURNAME: .....

FIRST NAMES: .....

DATE OF BIRTH: .....

PROPOSED FACULTY: .....

MATRIC. EXAM. NUMBER: .....

TODAY'S DATE: .....

Now Read These Instructions:

1. This test consists of a series of extracts, each extract being followed by questions. You may re-read each extract as often as you wish.
2. You may or may not agree with the ideas included in a passage: the question aim solely at testing whether you have understood the passage.
3. If you cannot answer a question, do not spend too long on it; go on to the next one.
4. In most of the questions you are given five answers, from which you must choose the best one. Several of the suggested answers may be correct—choose THE ONE ANSWER THAT SEEMS BEST. Use a figure (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) to indicate the answer.
5. In a few questions you are asked to invent or to complete a word, e.g. a question might be: "Liberal means G.....S"—where the correct answer is GENEROUS. You may be given letters at the beginning or end of the word as a guide to the answer but the length of the dotted line is NOT an indication of the length of the word required.
6. Whenever you are asked the meaning of a word, give the meaning that it has in its present context. For instance, the context would decide whether ART means paintings or deceit.
7. Be ready to find some humour in some of the passages.
8. You will be told how long you have in which to answer the test.
9. Write in pencil.

DO NOT TURN OVER THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

PASSAGE 1

Our epoch has been given many nicknames - the Age of Anxiety, the Atomic Age, the Space Age. It might, with equally good reason, be called the Age of Television Addiction, the Age of Soap Opera, the Age of the Disk Jockey. In such an age the announcement that Poetzl's pure science had been applied in the form of a technique of subliminal projection could not fail to arouse the most intense interest among the world's mass entertainees. For the new technique was aimed directly at them, and its purpose was to manipulate their minds without their being aware of what was being done to them. By means of specially designed tachistoscopes words or images were to be flashed for a millisecond or less upon the screens of television sets and motion picture theatres during (not before or after) the programme. "Drink Coca-Cola" or "Light up a Camel" would be superimposed upon the lovers' embrace, the tears of the broken-hearted mother, and the optic nerves of the viewers would record these secret messages, their subconscious minds would respond to them and in due course they would consciously feel a craving for soda pop and tobacco. Meanwhile other secret messages would be whispered too softly, or squeaked too shrilly, for conscious hearing. Consciously the listener might be paying attention to some such phrase as 'Darling, I love you'; but subliminally, beneath the threshold of awareness, his incredibly sensitive ears and his subconscious mind would be taking in the latest good news about deodorants and laxatives.

*from Brave New World Revisited by Aldous Huxley*

1. "Epoch" (line 1) means  
1—century; 2—generation; 3—nation; 4—era; 5—world. (
2. "Awareness" (line 18) means  
1—wakefulness; 2—alertness; 3—consciousness; 4—intelligence;  
5—knowledge. (
3. A "threshold" (lines 17-18) is  
1—a threshing floor; 2—a storage place for grain; 3—an entrance  
4—a barrier; 5—a limit. (
4. "Our epoch" has been called the Space Age because:- (line 1)  
1—we do not have sufficient space to live in; 2—we are aware of the  
need for space; 3—of the problem of over-population; 4—of the  
exploration of space; 5—of the United States' space programme. (
5. *Subliminal* (line 5) means  
1—under the moon; 2—sub-conscious; 3—sublimely happy; 4—hypnotic;  
5—psychological. (
6. An "entertainee" (line 6) means  
1—one who is entertained; 2—a comedian; 3—an impresario;  
4—an advertiser; 5—an audience (
7. The purpose of subliminal projection was (line 5)  
1—to add variety to television and film programmes;  
2—to persuade viewers to follow a course of action without their  
conscious knowledge; 3—to increase the sales of "Camel" and "Coca-Cola";  
4—psycho-analysis of film spectators; 5—to provide information which is  
not relevant to the particular film. (
8. "Incredibly" (line 18) means  
1—unbelievably; 2—unusually; 3—credulously; 4—amazingly;  
5—extremely. (

## PASSAGE 2

How the days fly, Amma took to saying. She usually said it at Deepavali, and when new years and birthdays came round, but now that the date for Miss Mendoza's visit was fixed she said it almost every day. It drove Aunt Alamelu frantic. She said she knew she was getting older minute by minute, but was there any need to be constantly reminded? She was quite caustic, the truth of the matter was she disapproved of Miss Mendoza's ways, which were modern. Cosmopolitan, said Lalitha, who knew a lot of words like that, used them when she was in the mood to disparage village life, which was often. Westernized, Appa backed her up, he liked Indians to be Westernized, which advanced them into the big world instead of remaining static in a backwater. Amma was ambivalent; she admired Miss Mendoza for the way she ran her school, and all the lovely things she taught Lalitha, but she would not have wanted her daughters to be unmarried teachers like her. Saroja wouldn't have wanted that either. She wanted lots of lovely cuddly babies, and, as Appa said, the way society was organized you had to be married for that. A peasant's ambition, Lalitha called it, but Saroja did not feel herself demeaned by that, there were lots of qualities to peasants that she greatly admired.

*from Two Virgins by Kamala Markandaya*

9. "Caustic" means (line 5)  
1—bitter; 2—sarcastic; 3—unkind; 4—burning; 5—outspoken ( )
10. Which of the following would be an apt description of Aunt Alamelu?  
1—she was highly strung; 2—she was neurotic; 3—she was impatient and bad-tempered; 4—she was obsessed with the thought of growing old; 5—she was conservative and old-fashioned. ( )
11. "Cosmopolitan" means (line 6)  
1—ultra-modern; 2—avant-garde; 3—belonging to many parts of the world; 4—urban; 5—of the cosmos or universe. ( )
12. This extract suggests that the book may be concerned with  
1—customs associated with Deepavali; 2—the autobiography of a school teacher; 3—the tensions between traditional customs and beliefs associated with village life and the values of modern Western civilisation; 4—the role of women in the modern world; 5—life in a village in India. ( )
13. "Ambivalent" (line 10) means  
1—ambitious; 2—undecided; 3—having opposite feelings; 4—in a dilemma; 5—able to use her right and left hands with equal dexterity. ( )
14. Which of the following best describes Saroja?  
1—she was very maternal; 2—she was a confused young girl; 3—she was humanitarian; 4—she was loving and sympathetic towards people; 5—she was proud of being a peasant. ( )
15. "Demeaned" means (line 15)  
1—undignified; 2—insulted; 3—impoverished; 4—upset; 5—humiliated ( )
16. Appa felt that life in the village was  
1—not progressive; 2—quiet and peaceful; 3—scenically beautiful; 4—slow; 5—passive. ( )
17. "Disparage" means (line 7)  
1—to speak slightingly of; 2—insult; 3—criticize; 4—disgust; 5—describe. ( )
18. From the passage you can deduce that  
1—Amma is the mother of Lalitha and Saroja; 2—Appa is the son of Amma; 3—Lalitha is older than Saroja; 4—Aunt Alameu is Appa's aunt; ( )

PASSAGE 3

A Robinson Crusoe or Swiss Family Robinson instinct is latent in most of us, perhaps from our childhood games of housebuilding, and since I came to Camusfeàrna ten years ago I find myself scanning every weird piece of flotsam or jetsam and considering what useful purpose it might be made to serve. As a beachcomber of long standing now I have been amazed to find that one of the commonest of all things among jetsam is the rubber hot-water bottle. They compete successfully—in the long straggling line of brown sea-wrack dizzy with jumping sandhoppers - with odd shoes and empty boot-polish and talcum-powder tins, with the round corks that buoy lobster-pots and nets, even with the ubiquitous skulls of sheep and deer. A surprising number of the hot-water bottles are undamaged, and Camusfeàrna is by now overstocked with them, but from the damaged ones one may cut useful and highly functional table mats

*from Ring of Bright Water by Gavin Maxwell.*

19. "A Robinson Crusoe or Swiss Family Robinson instinct" (line 1) is  
 1—the ability to tell adventure stories; 2—the tendency to be marooned on desert islands; 3—the innate ability to make household articles from wreckage or discarded objects; 4—a longing for the life style of the nineteenth century; 5—the ability to adjust to life on a desert island. (
20. "Latent" means (line 1)  
 1—unpunctual; 2—dormant; 3—inherited; 4—present; 5—existing. (
21. "Scanning" (line 3) means  
 1—examining; 2—considering; 3—collecting; 4—selecting;  
 5—contemplating. (
22. "Flotsam" and "jetsam" (line 3) is  
 1—rock and seaweed; 2—wreckage floating in the sea and washed ashore;  
 3—object; 4—wood; 5—fish and coral. (
23. From the evidence provided in the passage we can deduce that the writer was living in  
 1—Jamaica; 2—Scotland; 3—Hawaii; 4—Egypt; 5—The North Pole. (
24. "Ubiquitous" (line 9) means  
 1—fossilized; 2—numerous; 3—encrusted with coral; 4—common  
 5—found everywhere. (
25. A "beachcomber" (line 4) is  
 1—a surfer; 2—a sunworshipper; 3—a vagrant who lives on beaches;  
 4—a scavenger; 5—a person who lives near the sea. (
26. The opposite of "useful" (line 4) is F .....
27. A synonym for "useful" (line 11) is S .....

PASSAGE 4

The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world - the very nature of its life.

*from Silent Spring by Rachel Carson*

28. "Lethal" (line 2) means  
1—poisonous; 2—causing death; 3—chemical; 4—plastic; 5—harmful. ( )
29. The phrase "assaults upon" (line 1) could best be replaced with  
1—pollution of; 2—developments of; 3—interference with; 4—attacks upon; 5—growth on. ( )
30. The subject of the passage is:-  
1—the changing nature of the world; 2—the evil that exists in the world; 3—man's pollution of the earth with chemicals and radiation; 4—radiation fallout; 5—the world of nature. ( )
31. A synonym (word of similar meaning) to "pollution" is C..... ( )
32. A synonym for "environment" (line 1) is S..... ( )
33. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably expect this book to be  
1—a novel; 2—a collection of short stories; 3—a collection of eighteenth-century essays; 4—a factual account of a modern problem; 5—an autobiography. ( )
34. "The chain of evil" (line 3) refers to  
1—an amulet; 2—the curse of Satan; 3—a series of related ill effects; 4—evil consequences; 5—unwelcome occurrences. ( )
35. "Universal" (line 5) suggests the problem  
1—originates in outer space; 2—affects every being on earth; 3—is widespread; 4—is of enormous proportions; 5—includes other planets in the solar system. ( )
36. A synonym for "alarming" line 1 is D.....G. ( )

PASSAGE 5

(a) Over the Plains of Ethiopia the sun rose as I had not seen it in seven years. (b) A big, cool, empty sky flushed a little above a rim of dark mountains. (c) The landscape 20 000 feet below gathered itself from the dark and showed a pale gleam of grass, a sheen of water. (d) The red deepened and pulsed, radiating streaks of fire. (e) There hung the sun, like a luminous spider's egg, or a white pearl, just below the rim of the mountains. (f) Suddenly it swelled, turned red, roared over the horizon and drove up the sky like a train engine. (g) I knew how far below in the swelling heat the birds were an orchestra in the trees about the villages of mud huts; how the long grass was straightening while dangling flocks of dewdrops dwindled and dried; how the people were moving out into the fields about the business of herding and hoeing.

(h) Here is where the sun regulates living in a twelve-hour cycle. (i) Here the sun is a creature of the same stuff as oneself; powerful and angry, but at least responsive, and no mere dispenser of pale candlepower.

*from Going Home by Doris Lessing*

37. By describing the sky as "empty" (sentence (b) line 2) the author emphasizes  
1—the fact that there were no other aircraft around; 2—the vastness  
of the African sky; 3—the absence of bird life; 4—the desolation of  
the scene; 5—the fact that the sky was usually crowded. ( )
38. The writer describes the birds as "an orchestra" (line 8) because  
1—they were arranged in ranks; 2—they were beginning to sing; 3—their  
various voices combined to create a harmonious, musical sound; 4—they  
were reminiscent of Greek classical dancers and musicians; 5—everyone  
in the villages was listening to the birds. ( )
39. The people whom the writer mentions (sentence (g) line 10) are  
1—Africans; 2—peasant farmers; 3—shepherds; 4—agronomists;  
5—Ethiopians. ( )
40. Sentence (h) (line 12) implies that  
1—the people live "by the clock"; 2—life is very ordered; 3—people  
live close to nature; 4—day and night are of equal length; 5—the  
sun rules people's lives. ( )
41. "The landscape ..... gathered itself from the dark" (sentence (c)  
line 3) means that  
1—the landscape became visible; 2—the land had a wrinkled appearance  
as if it had been gathered; 3—the land was separated from the darkness;  
4—the land was created from the darkness; 5—the sun was rising. ( )
42. In sentence (i) the writer is  
1—describing the power of the sun; 2—comparing the African sun and  
the Northern European sun; 3—showing her feelings towards the sun;  
4—personifying the sun; 5—attempting to describe sun-worship. ( )
43. A "dispenser of pale candlepower" (sentence (i) line 14)  
1—someone who sells or distributes candles; 2—a means of measuring  
light; 3—a metaphor to describe weak sunshine; 4—a candelabra for  
white wax candles; 5—the winter sun. ( )

## PASSAGE 6

1. The recent introduction of paper and quasi-paper clothing carried the trend towards disposability a step further. 2. Fashionable boutiques and working-class clothing stores have sprouted whole departments devoted to gaily coloured and imaginatively designed paper apparel. 3. Fashion magazines display breath-takingly sumptuous gowns, coats, pyjamas, even wedding dresses made of paper. 4. The bride pictured in one of these wears a long white train of lace-like paper that, the caption writer notes, will make 'great kitchen curtains' after the ceremony.

5. Paper clothes are particularly suitable for children. 6. Writes one fashion expert: 'Little girls will soon be able to spill ice-cream, draw pictures and make cutouts on their clothes while their mothers smile benignly at their creativity'. 7. And for adults who want to express their own creativity, there is even a 'paint-yourself-dress' complete with brushes. Price: \$2.00.

from *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler

4. "Quasi" (sentence 1) means H ..... ( )
5. "The trend towards disposability" (sentence 1) suggests that  
 1—people are buying goods with a limited life span with the intention of discarding them rather than repairing them; 2—it is a modern tendency for fashions to change very quickly; 3—modern clothing is easily disposed of; 4—people are always looking for new excitements; 5—in the modern world nothing is permanent; everything is transient. ( )
6. In which of the numbered sentences of the first paragraph do you detect a note of humour? ( )
7. A "boutique" (sentence 2) is  
 1—a florist's shop; 2—a spray of flowers worn in a buttonhole;  
 3—a dress shop; 4—a small shop which specializes in fashionable clothing and/or accessories; 5—a Greek form of mandoline. ( )
8. "Benignly" (sentence 6) means  
 1—kindly; 2—calmly; 3—vacantly; 4—good-humouredly; 5—graciously. ( )
9. The use of the word "creativity" (sentence 6) is ironic because  
 1—modern life is never truly creative; 2—mothers would normally regard the children's activity of drawing on and cutting up clothes as destructive; 3—mothers know the real meaning of creativity; 4—mothers spend their free time "creating" their own clothes out of paint and paper; 5—the dividing line between destructive and creative activity is very fine. ( )
10. The following numbered sentences, which are given in the wrong order, comprise the next paragraph of the book *Future Shock*. Which of the sentences do you think would logically introduce this next paragraph.  
 1—Soon it will be; 2—At \$1.29 each, it is almost cheaper for the consumer to buy and discard a new one than to send an ordinary dress to the cleaners; 3—But more than economics is involved, for the extension of the throw-away culture has important psychological consequences; 4—Price, of course, is a critical factor behind the paper explosion; 5—Thus a department store features simple A-line dresses made of what it calls 'devil-may-care cellulose fibre and nylon'. ( )

## SCREENING TEST FOR ENGLISH I STUDENTS

You will be given time to read the instructions before the test begins.

Complete the following sections:

SURNAME: .....

FIRST NAMES: .....

DATE OF BIRTH: .....

PROPOSED FACULTY : .....

REGISTRATION NUMBER: .....

TODAY'S DATE: .....

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7. Be ready to find some humour in some of the passages.
8. You will be told how long you have in which to answer the test.

DO NOT TURN OVER THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

PASSAGE 1

Geographically, Zululand rises steeply from the Indian Ocean in a series of terraces, first of coastal bush-covered plains, then of swelling parklands, then of broken hill country girdled with many dense forests and, finally, of high and open prairies, all intersected by river torrents in bushy valleys. In Shaka's time a land free everywhere to all, to roam and hunt and cultivate at pleasure; with neither roads nor bridges, nor towns, nor any mode of artificial conveyance or inter-communication, but dotting the landscape on every hillside were human habitations, each consisting of a circle of beehive huts enclosed within a fence, and themselves surrounding a central cattle-fold - each such circle the homestead of a single polygamous paterfamilias, each hut the one-roomed residence of one wife and her children.

from Shaka Zulu by E.A. RITTER

1. A word which could be used in the passage instead of "GIRDLED" (Line 3) is
  1. encircled    2. dotted    3. interspersed    4. surrounded    5. separated    (
2. A synonym for "DENSE" (line 3) is T..... (
3. A "PRAIRIE" (line 4) is
  1. a desert    2. cultivated lands    3. the domain of wild beasts
  4. dense bush    5. level grassland without trees    (
4. "TORRENTS" (line 4) suggests that the rivers were
  1. quiet and meandering    2. broad and sluggish    3. violent and rushing
  4. very full of water    5. within steep chasms    (
5. The scene could be described primarily as
  1. agricultural    2. industrial    3. urban    4. rural    5. savage    (
6. The huts are described as "BEEHIVE" (Line 9) because
  1. of their colour    2. of their shape    3. there are many of them like
  4. there are many people living in    the cells of a beehive
  5. they are in the open country where wild bees are found    (
7. "POLYGAMOUS" (line 11) means
  1. a joint family    2. having more than one husband    3. an extended family
  4. having more than one wife    5. worshipping more than one god    (
8. Why, do you think, was the cattlefold at the centre of the homestead or kraal?
  1. It was easier to build it that way    2. In order to protect the cattle at night
  3. So that the cattle were easier to find    4. Cattle were objects of worship
  5. The people liked to hear the cattle when they went to sleep    (

PASSAGE 2

How the days fly, Amma took to saying. She usually said it at Deepavali, and when new years and birthdays came round, but now that the date for Miss Mendoza's visit was fixed she said it almost every day. It drove Aunt Alamelu frantic. She said she knew she was getting older minute by minute, but was there any need to be constantly reminded? She was quite caustic, the truth of the matter was she disapproved of Miss Mendoza's ways, which were modern. Cosmopolitan, said Lalitha, who knew a lot of words like that, used them when she was in the mood to disparage village life, which was often. Westernized, Appa backed her up, he liked Indians to be Westernized, which advanced them into the big world instead of remaining static in a backwater. Amma was ambivalent; she admired Miss Mendoza for the way she ran her school, and all the lovely things she taught Lalitha, but she would not have wanted her daughters to be unmarried teachers like her. Saroja wouldn't have wanted that either. She wanted lots of lovely cuddly babies, and, as Appa said, the way society was organized you had to be married for that. A peasant's ambition, Lalitha called it, but Saroja did not feel herself demeaned by that, there were lots of qualities to peasants that she greatly admired.

9. "CAUSTIC" means (line 5)
1. bitter    2. sarcastic    3. unkind    4. burning    5. outspoken    ( )
10. Which of the following would be an apt description of Aunt Alamelu?
1. she was highly strung    2. she was neurotic    3. she was impatient and bad-tempered    4. she was obsessed with the thought of growing old    5. she was conservative and old-fashioned    ( )
11. "COSMOPOLITAN" means (line 6)
1. ultra modern    2. avant-garde    3. belonging to many parts of the world    4. urban    5. of the cosmos or universe    ( )
12. This extract suggests that the book may be concerned with
1. customs associated with Deepavali    2. the autobiography of a school teacher    3. the tensions between traditional customs and beliefs associated with village life and the values of modern Western civilisation    4. the role of women in the modern world    5. life in a village in India    ( )
13. "AMBIVALENT" (line 10) means
1. ambitious    2. undecided    3. having opposite feelings    4. in a dilemma    5. able to use her right and left hands with equal dexterity    ( )
14. Which of the following best describes Saroja?
1. she was very maternal    2. she was a confused young girl    3. she was humanitarian    4. she was loving and sympathetic towards people    5. she was proud of being a peasant    ( )
15. "DEMEANED" means (line 15)
1. undignified    2. insulted    3. impoverished    4. upset    5. humiliated    ( )
16. Appa felt that life in the village was
1. not progressive    2. quiet and peaceful    3. scenically beautiful    4. slow    5. passive    ( )
17. "DISPARAGE" means (line 7)
1. to speak slightly of    2. insult    3. criticize    4. disgust    5. describe    ( )
18. From the passage you can deduce that
1. Amma is the mother of Lalitha and Saroja    2. Appa is the son of Amma    3. Lalitha is older than Saroja    4. Aunt Alameu is Appa's aunt    5. Lalitha is the younger sister of Appa    ( )

PASSAGE 3

1. By being so long in the lowest form I gained an immense advantage over the cleverer boys. 2. They all went on to learn Latin and Greek and splendid things like that. 3. But I was taught English. 4. We were considered such dunces that we could learn only English. 5. Mr Somervell - a most delightful man, to whom my debt is great - was charged with the duty of teaching the stupidest boys the most disregarded thing - namely, to write mere English. 6. He knew how to do it. 7. He taught it as no one else has ever taught it. 8. Not only did we learn English parsing thoroughly, but we also practised continually English analysis. 9. Mr Somervell had a system of his own. 10. It was a kind of drill. 11. We did it almost daily. 12. As I remained in the Third Fourth three times as long as anyone else, I had three times as much of it. 13. I learned it thoroughly. 14. Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence-which is a noble thing. 15. And when in after years my schoolfellows who had won prizes and distinction for writing such beautiful Latin poetry and pithy Greek epigrams had to come down again to common English, to earn their living or make their way, I did not feel myself at any disadvantage. 16. Naturally I am biased in favour of boys learning English. 17. I would make them all learn English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honour, and Greek as a treat. 18. But the only thing I would whip them for is not knowing English. 19. I would whip them hard for that.

from My Early Life by Winston S. Churchill

19. The advantage which Churchill gained over the cleverer boys was that  
 1. he didn't have to learn Latin and Greek 2. he was taught English well  
 3. he stayed in the lowest form longer than they did 4. he did not have to work so hard 5. he had a very understanding teacher (
20. The opposite of "IMMENSE" (line 1) is M..... (
21. A "DUNCE" (line 3) is  
 1. a clown 2. a stupid person 3. a member of the lowest class in the school  
 4. a late developer 5. a misfit (
22. Which of the numbered sentences in the passage would you regard as being ironical?  
 1. sentence 1 2. sentence 3 3. sentence 5 4. sentence 8 5. sentence 14 (
23. The author's debt to Mr Somervell was that  
 1. he made learning interesting 2. he was a very good teacher 3. he was kind to him  
 4. he did not force him to learn Latin and Greek 5. he taught him English syntax (
24. An "EPIGRAM" (line 13) is  
 1. a witty essay 2. an inscription on a tombstone 3. a letter 4. a short poem  
 or saying expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way 5. a poetic account of  
 the deeds of a hero or heroes (
25. A synonym for "ESSENTIAL" (line 11) in this context is F ..... (
26. Which word best describes the English language from the author's point of view.  
 1. useful 2. common 3. simple 4. noble 5. disregarded (
27. This extract suggests that the whole book is  
 1. a novel 2. a biography 3. an autobiography 4. a history of Harrow school  
 5. a treatise on education (

PASSAGE 4

As the eighteenth century passed into the nineteenth the people of England had reason to congratulate themselves. Gazing across the Channel they observed country after country groaning under military despotism. They observed the fate of France, bled white for Napoleon's wars, passing from revolution to revolution; Spain starving under military oppression; Austria, ruled by an army, where even to speak of liberty was a crime. They alone were free. Thanks to their military system, the country which had the finest troops in Europe, which had broken Napoleon's power in the Peninsular and crushed him at Waterloo, had not, and had never shown any signs of having, a revolutionary army.

from The Reason Why by Cecil Woodham Smith

28. The English people could congratulate themselves (line 2) because  
1. they had defeated Napoleon 2. they had not suffered a revolution  
3. they were not starving like the Spanish 4. they had freedom of speech,  
unlike the Austrians 5. They were free of military despotism ( )
29. The author is writing of a period of history  
1. a century ago 2. in the Middle Ages 3. in the first millennium  
4. nearly two hundred years ago 5. before Jesus Christ ( )
30. "DESPOTISM" (line 3) is  
1. a military government 2. a tyranny 3. an oligarchy 4. a democracy  
5. a monarchy ( )
31. A word which could replace "OBSERVED" (line 2) in this context is S ..... ( )
32. What figure of speech is "GROANING" (line 3)  
1. simile 2. metaphor 3. personification 4. alliteration 5. oxymoron ( )
33. A synonym for "FATE" (line 4) is D..... ( )
34. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably expect this book to be  
1. a novel 2. a collection of eighteenth century essays 3. an autobiography  
4. a history 5. a collection of short stories ( )
35. "CRUSHED" (line 8) means  
1. killed 2. defeated 3. annihilated 4. destroyed 5. crippled ( )
36. According to the writer, the people of England had not suffered a military  
revolution because  
1. they had the finest troops in Europe 2. they had a tradition of liberty  
3. of their military system 4. they had freedom of speech 5. they were  
not oppressed ( )

- (a) Over the Plains of Ethiopia the sun rose as I had not seen it in seven years. (b) A big, cool, empty sky flushed a little above a rim of dark mountains. (c) The landscape 20 000 feet below gathered itself from the dark and showed a pale gleam of grass, a sheen of water. (d) The red deepened and pulsed, radiating streaks of fire. (e) There hung the sun, like a luminous spider's egg, or a white pearl, just below the rim of the mountains. (f) Suddenly it swelled, turned red, roared over the horizon and drove up the sky like a train engine. (g) I knew how far below in the swelling heat the birds were an orchestra in the trees about the villages of mud huts; how the long grass was straightening while dangling flocks of dewdrops dwindled and dried; how the people were moving out into the fields about the business of herding and hoeing.
- (h) Here is where the sun regulates living in a twelve-hour cycle.  
 (i) Here the sun is a creature of the same stuff as oneself; powerful and angry, but at least responsive, and no mere dispenser of pale candle-power.

from *Going Home* by Doris Lessing

37. By describing the sky as "EMPTY" (sentence (b) line 2) the author emphasizes  
 1. the fact that there were no other aircraft around 2. the vastness of the African sky 3. the absence of bird life 4. the desolation of the scene 5. the fact that the sky was usually crowded (
38. The writer describes the birds as "AN ORCHESTRA" (line 9) because  
 1. they were arranged in ranks 2. they were beginning to sing 3. their various voices combined to create a harmonious, musical sound; 4. they were reminiscent of Greek classical dancers and musicians 5. everyone in the villages was listening to the birds. (
39. The people whom the writer mentions (sentence (g) line 11) are  
 1. Africans 2. peasant farmers 3. shepherds 4. agronomists 5. Ethiopians (
40. Sentence (h) (line 13) implies that  
 1. the people live "BY THE CLOCK" 2. life is very ordered 3. people live close to nature 4. day and night are of equal length 5. the sun rules people's lives. (
41. "THE LANDSCAPE ..... GATHERED ITSELF FROM THE DARK" (sentence (c) line 3) means that  
 1. the landscape became visible 2. the land had a wrinkled appearance as if it had been gathered 3. the land was separated from the darkness 4. the land was created from the darkness 5. the sun was rising (
42. In sentence (i) the writer is  
 1. describing the power of the sun 2. comparing the African sun and the Northern European sun 3. showing her feelings towards the sun 4. personifying the sun 5. attempting to describe sun-worship (
43. A "DISPENSER OF PALE CANDLEPOWER" (sentence (i) line 15)  
 1. someone who sells or distributes candles 2. a means of measuring light 3. a metaphor to describe weak sunshine 4. a candelabra for white wax candles 5. the winter sun (

PASSAGE 6

1. The recent introduction of paper and quasi-paper clothing carried the trend towards disposability a step further. 2. Fashionable boutiques and working-class clothing stores have sprouted whole departments devoted to gaily coloured and imaginatively designed paper apparel. 3. Fashion magazines display breathtakingly sumptuous gowns, coats, pyjamas, even wedding dresses made of paper. 4. The bride pictured in one of these wears a long white train of lace-like paper that, the caption writer notes, will make 'great kitchen curtains' after the ceremony.

5. Paper clothes are particularly suitable for children. 6. Writes one fashion expert: 'Little girls will soon be able to spill ice-cream, draw pictures and make cutouts on their clothes while their mothers smile benignly at their creativity'. 7. And for adults who want to express their own creativity, there is even a 'paint-yourself-dress' complete with brushes. Price: \$2.00.

from Future Shock by Alvin Toffler

14. "QUASI" (sentence 1) means II..... ( )

15. "THE TREND TOWARDS DISPOSABILITY" (sentence 1) suggests that

1. people are buying goods with a limited life span with the intention of discarding them rather than repairing them
  2. it is a modern tendency for fashion to change very quickly
  3. modern clothing is easily disposed of
  4. people are always looking for new excitements
  5. in the modern world nothing is permanent; everything is transient
- ( )

6. In which of the numbered sentences of the first paragraph do you detect a note of humour? ( )

7. A "BOUTIQUE" (sentence 2) is

1. a florist's shop
  2. a spray of flowers worn in a buttonhole
  3. a dress shop
  4. a small shop which specializes in fashionable clothing and/or accessories
  5. a Greek form of mandoline
- ( )

8. "BENIGNLY" (sentence 6) means

1. kindly
  2. calmly
  3. vacantly
  4. good-humouredly
  5. graciously
- ( )

9. The use of the word "CREATIVITY" (sentence 6) is ironic because

1. modern life is never truly creative
  2. mothers would normally regard the children's activity of drawing on the cutting up clothes as destructive
  3. mothers know the real meaning of creativity
  4. mothers spend their free time "CREATING" their own clothes out of paint and paper.
  5. the dividing line between destructive and creative activity is very fine.
- ( )

10. The following numbered sentences, which are given in the wrong order, comprise the next paragraph of the book Future Shock. Which of the sentences do you think would logically introduce this next paragraph.

1. Soon it will be.
  2. At \$1 29 each, it is almost cheaper for the consumer to buy and discard a new one than to send an ordinary dress to the cleaners.
  3. But more than economics is involved, for the extension of the throw-away culture has important psychological consequences.
  4. Price, of course, is a critical factor behind the paper explosion.
  5. Thus a department store features simple A-line dresses made of what it calls 'devil-may-care cellulose fibre and nylon'.
- ( )

1985  
UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

SCREENING TEST FOR ENGLISH I STUDENTS

-----  
IF YOU HAVE A CREDIT IN PRACTICAL ENGLISH OR YOU ARE REPEATING  
ENGLISH I YOU DO NOT NEED TO WRITE THIS TEST  
-----

You will be given time to read the instructions before the test begins.

Complete the following section:

SURNAME: .....  
FIRST NAMES: .....  
DATE OF BIRTH: .....  
PROPOSED FACULTY: .....  
REGISTRATION NUMBER: .....  
TODAY'S DATE: .....  
MATRICULATION ENGLISH SYMBOL: .....

Now Read These Instruction:

- . This test consists of two sections. Section A includes a series of extracts, each extract being followed by questions. Section B requires you to write a short composition.
- . You may or may not agree with the ideas included in a passage; the questions aim solely at testing whether you have understood the passage.
- . You may re-read each extract as often as you wish but if you cannot answer a question, do not spend too long on it; go on to the next one. Try to complete as many items as possible, but it does not matter if you do not finish the test.
- . In most of the questions you are given five answers, from which you must choose the best one. Several of the suggested answers may be correct - choose THE ONE ANSWER THAT SEEMS BEST. Use a letter (a, b, c, d, or e) to indicate the answer.
- . In a few questions you are asked to invent or to complete a word, e.g. a question might be: "Liberal means G .....S" - where the correct answer is GENEROUS. You may be given letters at the beginning or end of the word as a guide to the answer but the length of the dotted line is NOT an indication of the length of the word required.

Whenever you are asked the meaning of a word, given the meaning that it has in its present context. For instance, the context would decide whether ART means painting or deceit.

Be ready to find some humour in some of the passages.

You will be given 30 minutes to answer Section A and 10 minutes to answer Section B.

NOT TURN OVER THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

SECTION A

PASSAGE 1:

The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world - the very nature of its life.

from *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson

1. "Lethal" (line 3) means  
a. poisonous;    b. causing death;    c. chemical;    d. plastic;    e. harmful.    ( )
2. The phrase "assaults upon" (line 1) could best be replaced with  
a. pollution of;    b. developments of;    c. interference with;    ( )  
d. attacks upon;    e. growth on.
3. The subject of the passage is:-  
a. the changing nature of the world;    b. the evil that exists in the world;  
c. man's pollution of the earth with chemicals and radiation;  
d. radiation fallout;    e. the world of nature.    ( )
4. A synonym (word of similar meaning) to "pollution" is C.....
5. A synonym for "environment" (line 1) is S .....
6. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably expect this book to be  
a. a novel;    b. a collection of short stories;    c. a collection of  
eighteenth-century essays;    d. a factual account of a modern problem;  
e. an autobiography.    ( )
7. "The chain of evil" (line 4) refers to  
a. an amulet;    b. the curse of Satan;    c. a series of related ill  
effects;    d) evil consequences;    e. unwelcome occurrences.    ( )
8. "Universal" (line 7) suggests the problem  
a. originates in outer space;    b. affects every being on earth;  
c. is widespread;    d. is of enormous proportions;  
e. includes other planets in the solar system.    ( )
9. A synonym for "alarming" (line 1) is D.....G

PASSAGE 2:

Geographically, Zululand rises steeply from the Indian Ocean in a series of terraces, first of coastal bush-covered plains, then of swelling parklands, then of broken hill country girdled with many dense forests and, finally, of high and open prairies, all intersected by river torrents in bushy valleys. In Shaka's time a land free everywhere to all, to roam and hunt and cultivate at pleasure; with neither roads nor bridges, nor towns, nor any mode of artificial conveyance or inter-communication, but dotting the landscape on every hillside were human habitations, each consisting of a circle of beehive huts enclosed within a fence, and themselves surrounding a central cattle-fold - each such circle the homestead of a single polygamous paterfamilias, each hut the one-roomed residence of one wife and her children.

from *Shaka Zulu* by E.A. RITTER

10. A word which could be used in the passage instead of "girdled" (line 4) is  
a. encircled; b. dotted; c. interspersed; d. surrounded  
e. separated. ( )
11. A synonym for "dense" (line 4) is t..... ( )
12. A "prairie" (line 5) is ( )  
a. a desert; b. cultivated lands; c. the domain of wild beasts;  
d. dense bush; d. level grassland without trees. ( )
13. "Torrents" (line 5) suggests that the rivers were ( )  
a. quiet and meandering; b. broad and sluggish; c. violent and rushing;  
d. very full of water; e. within steep chasms. ( )
14. The scene could be described primarily as ( )  
a. agricultural; b. industrial; c. urban; d. rural e. savage ( )
15. The huts are described as "beehive" (line 10) because ( )  
a. of their colour; b. of their shape;  
c. there are many of them like the cells of a beehive;  
d. there are many people living in them resembling bees in a hive  
e. they are in the open country where wild bees are found. ( )
16. "Polygamous" (line 13) means ( )  
a. a joint family; b. having more than one husband;  
c. an extended family; d. having more than one wife;  
e. worshipping more than one god. ( )
17. Why, do you think, was the cattlefold at the centre of the homestead or kraal? ( )  
a. It was easier to build it that way;  
b. In order to protect the cattle at night;  
c. So that the cattle were easier to find;  
d. Cattle were objects of worship;  
e. The people liked to hear the cattle when they went to sleep. ( )

PASSAGE 3:

(1) What is especially admirable about Bristol is that it is both old and alive and not one of your museum pieces, living on tourists and the sale of bogus antiques. (2) It can show you all the crypts and gables and half-timbering you want to see; offers you fantastic little old thoroughfares like Narrow Wine Street; but yet has not gone "quaint" but is a real lively bustling city, earning its living and spending its own money. (3) The slave trade on whose evil proceeds this city flourished once, is now only a reminder of man's cruelty to man; the port, depending on the shallow twisting Avon, is only a shadow of its old self; but Bristol lives on, indeed arrives at a new prosperity. (4) The smoke from a million gold flakes solidifies into a new Gothic Tower for the university; and the chocolate melts away only to leave behind it all the fine big shops down Park Street, the pleasant villas out at Clifton, and an occasional glass of Harvey's Bristol Milk for everybody. (5) The docks may not be what they were (though I believe you can still hop off a tram here and straightway board a ship for America), but then Bristol has now pushed itself out to sea at Avonmouth.

From *English Journey* by J.B. Priestley

18. *Bogus* (sentence 1) means the opposite of G .....
19. In Bristol buildings of historical and architectural interest are N.....S.
20. The words lively and bustling (sentence 2) show that the writer found Bristol:
- a. forgetful of its history;    b. a little too commercially minded;  
c. stimulating;    d. noisy;    e. engrossed in its own affairs.    ( )
21. "The smoke ..... university" (sentence 4) means that the University:
- a. is hidden behind industrial smoke;  
b. has a tower for which a tobacco firm found the money;  
c. is built on a site formerly occupied by a tobacco factory;  
d. is so near to a cigarette factory that they seem one building;  
e. uses its scientific knowledge to study the manufacture of cigarettes.    ( )
22. "And the chocolate ..... everybody" means that the chocolate:
- a. sells rapidly;    b. makes all classes in Bristol prosperous;  
c. loses its place as Bristol's leading industry;  
d. is forgotten as we think of the fine shops;  
e. is sold by the first small shops we pass, but not by the finest and biggest.    ( )
23. Bristol has:
- a. made its port more important than ever;  
b. developed new industries to replace old ones;  
c. declined owing to competition from Avonmouth;  
d. relied considerably on the tourist trade;  
e. neglected its picturesque old streets.    ( )

PASSAGE 4:

1. Education has long been an avenue of social mobility. 2. In England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there were numerous examples of villeins being fined for sending their sons to school without the permission of their lords. 3. They willingly paid these fines, not so much to see their children educated as to secure their freedom from bondage, as a way of helping them escape from their class background. 4. By the end of the fourteenth century some children of the peasant class were managing to enter grammar schools so that they could rise in the social scale. 5. In the mid-nineteenth century the new middle classes which arose as a result of the Industrial Revolution 'looked to the schools to provide ... a common platform enabling their sons to associate on equal terms with those of families who, if increasingly outdistanced in income, still diffused a faint aroma of social superiority.'

From *Little England on the Veld* by Peter Randall

24. "Social mobility" line 1) is  
a. social superiority;    b. the ability to change one's social status;  
c. the movement of people in groups;    d. frequent changes of identity;  
e. popular migration ( )
25. The historical period which is mentioned in sentence 2 is  
a. 1301 - 1400  
b. 1300 - 1399  
c. 1200 - 1399  
d. 1201 - 1399  
e. 1201 - 1400 ( )
26. "Villeins" (line 3) are  
a. wicked people  
b. peasants  
c. feudal serfs  
d. people who are vilified  
e. oppressed people ( )
27. The villeins willingly paid the fines exacted by their lords (line 5) because  
a. they wished their children to have a good education  
b. they wanted to set their children free  
c. they wanted their children to have opportunities which they had not enjoyed  
d. they saw education as a means of escaping from the bondage of class into which they were born  
e. the feudal system was oppressive. ( )
28. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably assume the subject of this book to be  
a. education and class  
b. the decline of the feudal system  
c. the rise of the middle classes  
d. the history of education  
e. social prejudice. ( )
29. A synonym for "bondage" (line 6) is S.....
30. An antonym for "bondage" (line 6) is F.....

PASSAGE 5:

1. Over the Plains of Ethiopia the sun rose as I had not seen it in seven years. 2. A big, cool, empty sky flushed a little above a rim of dark mountains. 3. The landscape 20 000 feet below gathered itself from the dark and showed a pale gleam of grass, a sheen of water. 4. The red deepened and pulsed, radiating streaks of fire. 5. There hung the sun, like a luminous spider's egg, or a white pearl, just below the rim of the mountains. 6. Suddenly it swelled, turned red, roared over the horizon and drove up the sky like a train engine. 7. I knew how far below in the swelling heat the birds were an orchestra in the trees about the villages of mud huts; how the long grass was straightening while dangling flocks of dewdrops dwindled and dried; how the people were moving out into the fields about the business of herding and hoeing.

8. Here is where the sun regulates living in a twelve-hour cycle. 9. Here the sun is a creature of the same stuff as oneself; powerful and angry, but at least responsive, and no mere dispenser of pale candlepower.

from *Going Home* by Doris Lessing

- . By describing the sky as "empty" (sentence (2) the author emphasizes
  - a. the fact that there were no other aircraft around;
  - b. the vastness of the African sky;      c. the absence of bird life;
  - d. the desolation of the scene;      e. the fact that the sky was usually crowded. ( )
  
- . The writer describes the birds as "an orchestra" (line 8) because
  - a. they were arranged in ranks;      b. they were beginning to sing;
  - c. their various voices combined to create a harmonious, musical sound;
  - d. they were reminiscent of Greek classical dancers and musicians;
  - e. everyone in the village was listening to the birds. ( )
  
- . The people whom the writer mentions (sentence (7) line 10) are
  - a. Africans;      b. peasant farmers;      c. shepherds;      d. agronomists;
  - e. Ethiopians. ( )
  
- . Sentence (8) line 12) implies that
  - a. the people live "by the clock";      b. life is very ordered;
  - c. people lived close to nature;      d. day and night are of equal length;
  - e. the sun rules people's lives. ( )
  
- . "The landscape ..... gathered itself from the dark" (sentence (3) line 3) mean that
  - a. the landscape became visible;
  - b. the land had a wrinkled appearance as if it had been gathered;
  - c. the land was separated from the darkness;
  - d. the land was created from the darkness;      e. the sun was rising. ( )
  
- . In sentence (9) the writer is
  - a. describing the power of the sun;
  - b. comparing the African sun and the Northern European sun;
  - c. showing her feelings towards the sun;      d. personifying the sun;
  - e. attempting to describe sun-worship. ( )
  
- . A "dispenser of pale candlepower" (sentence (9) line 14) is
  - a. someone who sells or distributes candles;      b. a means of measuring light;
  - c. a metaphor to describe weak sunshine;      d. a candelabra for white wax candles;
  - e. the winter sun. ( )

PASSAGE 6:

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.

From Milton's "Areopagitica"

38. This writer argues that a virtuous person should not .....D  
evil people.
39. Instead, he should .....K them out, either to convert or  
defeat them.
40. *Adversary* means .....ENT.
41. A *cloistered virtue* never .....RES out to look for adversaries.
42. Not without dust and heat reminds us that the virtuous life demands  
.....RT from us.
43. That *immortal garland* is:
- a. endless success;
  - b. eternal goodness;
  - c. lasting fame;
  - d. permanent popularity;
  - e. enduring eminence. ( )
44. Which of the following Biblical quotations is *nearest* in spirit to the  
extract?
- a. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;
  - b. Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and you shall find;
  - c. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works;
  - d. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit;
  - e. Agree with thine adversaries quickly. ( )

## UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

## SCREENING TEST FOR ENGLISH I STUDENTS

-----  
 IF YOU HAVE A CREDIT IN PRACTICAL ENGLISH OR YOU ARE REPEATING  
 ENGLISH I YOU DO NOT NEED TO WRITE THIS TEST  
 -----

You will be given time to read the instructions before the test begins.

Complete the following section:

SURNAME: .....

FIRST NAMES: .....

DATE OF BIRTH: .....

PROPOSED FACULTY: .....

REGISTRATION NUMBER: .....

TODAY'S DATE: .....

MATRICULATION ENGLISH SYMBOL: .....

Now Read These Instruction:

1. This test consists of two sections. Section A includes a series of extracts, each extract being followed by questions. Section B requires you to write a short composition.
2. You may or may not agree with the ideas included in a passage; the questions aim solely at testing whether you have understood the passage.
3. You may re-read each extract as often as you wish but if you cannot answer a question, do not spend too long on it; go on to the next one. Try to complete as many items as possible, but it does not matter if you do not finish the test.
4. In most of the questions you are given five answers, from which you must choose the best one. Several of the suggested answers may be correct - choose THE ONE ANSWER THAT SEEMS BEST. Use a letter (a, b, c, d, or e) to indicate the answer.
5. In a few questions you are asked to invent or to complete a word, e.g. a question might be: "Liberal means G .....S" - where the correct answer is GENEROUS. You may be given letters at the beginning or end of the word as a guide to the answer but the length of the dotted line is NOT an indication of the length of the word required.
6. Whenever you are asked the meaning of a word, give the meaning that it has in its present context. For instance, the context would decide whether ART means painting or deceit.
7. Be ready to find some humour in some of the passages.
8. You will be given 30 minutes to answer Section A and 10 minutes to answer Section B.

DO NOT TURN OVER THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

SECTION A

PASSAGE 1:

1. By being so long in the lowest form I gained an immense advantage over the cleverer boys. 2. They all went on to learn Latin and Greek and splendid things like that. 3. But I was taught English. 4. We were considered such dunces that we could learn only English. 5. Mr Somervell - a most delightful man, to whom my debt is great - was charged with the duty of teaching the stupidest boys the most disregarded thing - namely, to write mere English. 6. He knew how to do it. 7. He taught it as no one else has ever taught it. 8. Not only did we learn English parsing thoroughly, but we also practised continually English analysis. 9. Mr Somervell had a system of his own. 10. It was a kind of drill. 11. We did it almost daily. 12. As I remained in the Third Fourth three times as long as anyone else, I had three times as much of it. 13. I learned it thoroughly. 14. Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence-which is a noble thing. 15. And when in after years my school-fellows who had won prizes and distinction for writing such beautiful Latin poetry and pithy Greek epigrams had to come down again to common English, to earn their living or make their way, I did not feel myself at any disadvantage. 16. Naturally I am biassed in favour of boys learning English. 17. I would make them all learn English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honour, and Greek as a treat. 18. But the only thing I would whip them for is not knowing English. 19. I would whip them hard for that.

from *My Early Life* by Winston S. Churchill

1. The advantage which Churchill gained over the cleverer boys was that
  - a. he didn't have to learn Latin and Greek
  - b. he was taught English well
  - c. he stayed in the lowest form longer than they did
  - d. he did not have to work so hard
  - e. he had a very understanding teacher
2. The opposite of "IMMENSE" (line 1) is M.....
3. A "DUNCE" (line 3) is
  - a. a clown
  - b. a stupid person
  - c. a member of the lowest class in the school
  - d. a late developer
  - e. a misfit
4. Which of the numbered sentences in the passage would you regard as being ironic
  - a. sentence 1
  - b. sentence 3
  - c. sentence 5
  - d. sentence 8
  - e. sentence 14
5. The author's debt to Mr Somervell was that
  - a. he made learning interesting
  - b. he was a very good teacher
  - c. he was kind to him
  - d. he did not force him to learn Latin and Greek
  - e. he taught him English syntax
6. An "EPIGRAM" (line 15) is
  - a. a witty essay
  - b. an inscription on a tombstone
  - c. a letter
  - d. a short poem or saying expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way
  - e. a poetic account of the deeds of a hero or heroes
7. A synonym for "ESSENTIAL" (line 12.) in this context is F .....
8. Which word best describes the English language from the author's point of view.
  - a. useful
  - b. common
  - c. simple
  - d. noble
  - e. disregarded
9. This extract suggests that the whole book is
  - a. a novel
  - b. a biography
  - c. an autobiography
  - d. a history of Harrow sch

PASSAGE 2:

Our epoch has been given many nicknames - the Age of Anxiety, the Atomic Age, the Space Age. It might, with equally good reason, be called the Age of Television Addiction, the Age of Soap Opera, the Age of the Disk Jockey. In such an age the announcement that Poetzl's pure science had been applied in the form of a technique of subliminal projection could not fail to arouse the most intense interest among the world's mass entertainees. For the new technique was aimed directly at them, and its purpose was to manipulate their minds without their being aware of what was being done to them. By means of specially designed tachistoscopes words or images were to be flashed for a millisecond or less upon the screens of television sets and motion picture theatres during (not before or after) the programme. "Drink Coca-Cola" or "Light up a Camel" would be superimposed upon the lovers' embrace, the tears of the broken-hearted mother, and the optic nerves of the viewers would record these secret messages, their subconscious minds would respond to them and in due course they would consciously feel a craving for soda pop and tobacco. And meanwhile other secret messages would be whispered too softly, or squeaked too shrilly, for conscious hearing. Consciously the listener might be paying attention to some such phrase as 'Darling, I love you'; but subliminally, beneath the threshold of awareness, his incredibly sensitive ears and his subconscious mind would be taking in the latest good news about deodorants and laxatives.

from *Brave New World Revisited* by Aldous Huxley

10. "Epoch" (line 1) means  
a. century      b. generation      c. nation      d. era      f. world      (
11. "Awareness" (line 18) means  
a. wakefulness      b. alertness      c. consciousness      d. intelligence  
e. knowledge      (
12. A "threshold" (line 17-18) is  
a. a threshing floor      b. a storage place for grain      c. an entrance  
d. a barrier      e. a limit      (
13. "Our epoch" has been called the Space Age because:- (line 1)  
a. we do not have sufficient space to live in      b. we are aware of the need for space  
c. of the problem of over-population      d. of the exploration of space  
e. of the United States' space programme      (
14. *Subliminal* (line 5) means  
a. under the moon      b. sub-conscious      c. sublimely happy      d. hypnotic  
e. psychological      (
15. An "entertaine" (line 6) means  
a. one who is entertained      b. a comedian      c. an impresario  
d. an advertiser      e. an audience      (
16. The purpose of subliminal projection was (line 5)  
a. to add variety to television and film programmes  
b. to persuade viewers to follow a course of action without their conscious knowledge  
c. to increase the sales of "Camel" and "Coca-Cola"  
d. psycho-analysis of film spectators      e. to provide information which is not relevant to the particular film      (
17. "Incredibly" (line 18) means  
a. unbelievably      b. unusually      c. credulously      d. amazingly      e. extremely      (

PASSAGE 3:

1. As I walked through the wilderness of what remained of the world of Father Lynch and his 'little guild', I saw much to disturb me. 2. Here was the last vestige of the parish garden where the bulldozers, earth-movers, grabbers and cranes had frozen into that peculiar menacing immobility giant machines  
5 assume when switched off; left as if stunned, open-mouthed, gaping at the human foolishness of wishing to stop work when they are strong and willing to continue. 3. They stood silent, it being Sunday, resting from their merciless preparation of this new site for one of the enormous hostels of  
10 the huge University of National Christian Education, widely declared to be the largest in the southern hemisphere. 4. I looked around me and found the work nearly complete. 5. However, the machines had stopped eating for the moment; ours is a holy land and even the destruction of redundant churches halts on the Sabbath.

From *Kruger's Alp* by Christopher Hope

18. A "vestige" (line 3) is
- a. an item of clothing
  - b. a memory
  - c. a reminder
  - d. a trace
  - e. a plant
19. The writer describes the machines as "merciless" (line 8) because
- a. he doesn't like machines
  - b. he was fond of Father Lynch
  - c. he loved the old church
  - d. they are symbolic of the new order
  - e. he doesn't like change
20. The writer sees the changes which are taking place as
- a. threatening
  - b. hopeful
  - c. long overdue
  - d. tragic
  - e. logical
21. Which of the sentences would you regard as being bitterly ironical?
- a. sentence 1
  - b. sentence 2
  - c. sentence 3
  - d. sentence 4
  - e. sentence 5
22. The "holy land" referred to in line 12 is
- a. Jerusalem
  - b. Mecca
  - c. South America
  - d. Zimbabwe
  - e. South Africa
23. "Redundant" (line 12) means
- a. Protestant
  - b. archaic
  - c. superfluous
  - d. avante garde
  - e. irrelevant

PASSAGE 4:

The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials. This pollution is for the most part irrecoverable; the chain of evil it initiates not only in the world that must support life but in living tissues is for the most part irreversible. In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world - the very nature of its life.

from *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson

24. "Lethal" (line 3) means  
a. poisonous      b. causing death      c. chemical      d. plastic      e. harmful      ( )
25. The phrase "assaults upon" (line 1) could best be replaced with  
a. pollution of      b. developments of      c. interference with  
d. attacks upon      e. growth on      ( )
26. The subject of the passage is:-  
a. the changing nature of the world      b. the evil that exists in the world  
c. man's pollution of the earth with chemicals and radiation  
d. radiation fallout      e. the world of nature      ( )
27. A synonym (word of similar meaning) to "pollution" is C.....
28. A synonym for "environment" (line 1) is S .....
29. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably expect this book to be  
a. a novel      b. a collection of short stories      c. a collection of  
eighteenth-century essays      d. a factual account of a modern problem  
e. an autobiography      ( )
30. "The chain of evil" (line 4) refers to  
a. an amulet      b. the curse of Satan      c. a series of related ill effects  
d. evil consequences      e. unwelcome occurrences      ( )
31. "Universal" (line 6) suggests the problem  
a. originates in outer space      b. affects every being on earth  
c. is widespread      d. is of enormous proportions  
e. includes other planets in the solar system      ( )
32. A synonym for "alarming" (line 1) is D.....G

PASSAGE 5:

As the eighteenth century passed into the nineteenth the people of England had reason to congratulate themselves. Gazing across the Channel they observed country after country groaning under military despotism. They observed the fate of France, bled white for Napoleon's wars, passing from revolution to revolution; Spain starving under military oppression; Austria, ruled by an army, where even to speak of liberty was a crime. They alone were free. Thanks to their military system, the country which had the finest troops in Europe, which had broken Napoleon's power in the Peninsular and crushed him at Waterloo, had not, and had never shown any signs of having, a revolutionary army.

from *The Reason Why* by Cecil Woodham Smith

33. The English people could congratulate themselves (line 2) because  
a. they had defeated Napoleon    b. they had not suffered a revolution  
c. they were not starving like the Spanish    d. they had freedom of speech, unlike the Austrians    e. They were free of military despotism ( )
34. The author is writing of a period of history  
a. a century ago    b. in the Middle Ages    c. in the first millennium  
d. nearly two hundred years ago    e. before Jesus Christ ( )
35. "*Despotism*" (line 4) is  
a. a military government    b. a tyranny    c. an oligarchy    d. a democracy  
e. a monarchy ( )
36. A word which could replace "*observed*" (line 3) in this context is S .....
37. What figure of speech is "*groaning*" (line 3)  
a. simile    b. metaphor    c. personification    d. alliteration    e. oxymoron ( )
38. A synonym for "*fate*" (line 4) is D.....
39. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably expect this book to be  
a. a novel    b. a collection of eighteenth century essays    c. an autobiography  
d. a history    e. a collection of short stories ( )
40. "*crushed*" (line 10.) means  
a. killed    b. defeated    c. annihilated    d. destroyed    e. crippled ( )
41. According to the writer, the people of England had not suffered a military revolution because  
a. they had the finest troops in Europe    b. they had a tradition of liberty  
c. of their military system    d. they had freedom of speech  
e. they were not oppressed ( )

PASSAGE 6:

A Robinson Crusoe or Swiss Family Robinson instinct is latent in most of us, perhaps from our childhood games of housebuilding, and since I came to Camusfearna ten years ago I find myself scanning every weird piece of flotsam or jetsam and considering what useful purpose it might be made to serve. As a beachcomber of long standing now I have been amazed to find that one of the commonest of all things among jetsam is the rubber hot-water bottle. They compete successfully — in the long straggling line of brown sea-wrack dizzy with jumping sandhoppers — with odd shoes and empty boot-polish and talcum-powder tins, with the round corks that buoy lobster-pots and nets, even with the ubiquitous skulls of sheep and deer. A surprising number of the hot-water bottles are undamaged, and Camusfearna is by now overstocked with them, but from the damaged ones one may cut useful and highly functional table mats.

from *Ring of Bright Water* by Gavin Maxwell

42. "A Robinson Crusoe or Swiss Family Robinson instinct" (line 1) is  
a. the ability to tell adventure stories    b. the tendency to be marooned  
on desert islands    c. the innate ability to make household articles from  
wreckage or discarded objects    d. a longing for the life style of the  
nineteenth century    e. the ability to adjust to life on a desert island    ( )
43. "Latent" means (line 1)  
a. unpunctual    b. dormant    c. inherited    d. present    e. existing    ( )
44. "Scanning" (line 3) means  
a. examining    b. considering    c. collecting    d. selecting  
e. contemplating    ( )
45. "Flotsam" and "jetsam" (line 3) is  
a. rock and seaweed    b. wreckage floating in the sea and washed ashore  
c. object    d. wood    e. fish and coral    ( )
46. From the evidence provided in the passage we can deduce that the writer was  
living in  
a. Jamaica    b. Scotland    c. Hawaii    d. Egypt    e. The North Pole    ( )
47. "Ubiquitous" (line 10) means  
a. fossilized    b. numerous    c. encrusted with coral    d. common  
e. found everywhere    ( )
48. A "beachcomber" (line 5) is  
a. a surfer    b. a sunworshipper    c. a vagrant who lives on beaches  
d. a scavenger    e. a person who lives near the sea.    ( )
49. The opposite of "useful" (line 4) is F .....
50. A synonym for "useful" (line 12) is S .....

UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLECOMPREHENSION TEST FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

You will be given time to read the instructions before the test begins.

Complete the following section:

SURNAME: . . . . .

FIRST NAMES: . . . . .

DATE OF BIRTH: . . . . .

PROPOSED FACULTY: . . . . .

REGISTRATION NUMBER: . . . . .

TODAY'S DATE: . . . . .

MATRICULATION ENGLISH SYMBOL: . . . . .

Now Read These Instructions:

1. This test consists of two sections. Section A includes a series of extracts, each extract being followed by questions. Section B requires you to write a short composition.
2. You may or may not agree with the ideas included in a passage; the questions aim solely at testing whether you have understood the passage.
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4. In most of the questions you are given five answers, from which you must choose the best one. Several of the suggested answers may be correct - choose THE ONE ANSWER THAT SEEMS BEST. Use a figure (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) to indicate the answer in the brackets provided.
5. In a few questions you are asked to invent or to complete a work, e.g. a question might be: "Liberal means G . . . . .S" - where the correct answer is GENEROUS. You may be given letters at the beginning or end of the word as a guide to the answer but the length of the dotted line is NOT an indication of the length of the word required.
6. Whenever you are asked the meaning of a word, give the meaning that it has in its present context. For instance, the context would decide whether ART means painting or deceit.
7. Be ready to find some humour in some of the passages.
8. You will be given 30 minutes to answer Section A and 10 minutes to answer Section B.
9. Please write in ink.

DO NOT TURN OVER THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO

PASSAGE 1

Geographically, Zululand rises steeply from the Indian Ocean in a series of terraces, first of coastal bush-covered plains, then of swelling parklands, then of broken hill country girdled with many dense forests and, finally, of high and open prairies, all intersected by river torrents in bushy valleys. In Shaka's time a land free everywhere to all, to roam and hunt and cultivate at pleasure; with neither roads nor bridges, nor towns, nor any mode of artificial conveyance or inter-communication, but dotting the landscape on every hillside were human habitations, each consisting of a circle of beehive huts enclosed within a fence, and themselves surrounding a central cattle-fold - each such circle the homestead of a single polygamous paterfamilias, each hut the one-roomed residence of one wife and her children.

from Shaka Zulu by E.A. RITTER

1. A word which could be used in the passage instead of "GIRDLED" (Line 3) is  
1. encircled    2. dotted    3. interspersed    4. surrounded    5. separated    ( )
2. A synonym for "DENSE" (line 3) is ~~Thick~~.....    ( )
3. A "PRAIRIE" (line 4) is  
1. a desert    2. cultivated lands    3. the domain of wild beasts  
4. dense bush    5. level grassland without trees    ( )
4. "TORRENTS" (line 4) suggests that the rivers were  
1. quiet and meandering    2. broad and sluggish    3. violent and rushing  
4. very full of water    5. within steep chasms    ( )
5. The scene could be described primarily as  
1. agricultural    2. industrial    3. urban    4. rural    5. savage    ( )
6. The huts are described as "BEEHIVE" (Line 9) because  
1. of their colour    2. of their shape    3. there are many of them like  
4. there are many people living in    the cells of a beehive  
   them resembling bees in a hive.  
5. they are in the open country where wild bees are found    ( )
7. "POLYGAMOUS" (line 11) means  
1. a joint family    2. having more than one husband    3. an extended family  
4. having more than one wife    5. worshipping more than one god    ( )
8. Why, do you think, was the cattlefold at the centre of the homestead or kraal?  
1. It was easier to build it that way    2. In order to protect the cattle at night  
3. So that the cattle were easier to find    4. Cattle were objects of worship  
5. The people liked to hear the cattle when they went to sleep    ( )

PASSAGE 2

How the days fly, Amma took to saying. She usually said it at Deepavali, and when new years and birthdays came round, but now that the date for Miss Mendoza's visit was fixed she said it almost every day. It drove Aunt Alamelu frantic. She said she knew she was getting older minute by minute, but was there any need to be constantly reminded? She was quite caustic, the truth of the matter was she disapproved of Miss Mendoza's ways, which were modern. Cosmopolitan, said Lalitha, who knew a lot of words like that, used them when she was in the mood to disparage village life, which was often. Westernized, Appa backed her up, he liked Indians to be Westernized, which advanced them into the big world instead of remaining static in a backwater. Amma was ambivalent; she admired Miss Mendoza for the way she ran her school, and all the lovely things she taught Lalitha, but she would not have wanted her daughters to be unmarried teachers like her. Saroja wouldn't have wanted that either. She wanted lots of lovely cuddly babies, and, as Appa said, the way society was organized you had to be married for that. A peasant's ambition, Lalitha called it, but Saroja did not feel herself demeaned by that, there were lots of qualities to peasants that she greatly admired.

from *Two Virgins* by Kamala Markandaya

9. "CAUSTIC" means (line 5) ( )
1. bitter 2. sarcastic 3. unkind 4. burning 5. outspoken
10. Which of the following would be an apt description of Aunt Alamelu? ( )
1. she was highly strung 2. she was neurotic 3. she was impatient and bad-tempered 4. she was obsessed with the thought of growing old 5. she was conservative and old-fashioned
11. "COSMOPOLITAN" means (line 6) ( )
1. ultra modern 2. avant-garde 3. belonging to many parts of the world 4. urban 5. of the cosmos or universe
12. This extract suggests that the book may be concerned with ( )
1. customs associated with Deepavali 2. the autobiography of a school teacher 3. the tensions between traditional customs and beliefs associated with village life and the values of modern Western civilisation 4. the role of women in the modern world 5. life in a village in India
13. "AMBIVALENT" (line 10) means ( )
1. ambitious 2. undecided 3. having opposite feelings 4. in a dilemma 5. able to use her right and left hands with equal dexterity
14. Which of the following best describes Saroja? ( )
1. she was very maternal 2. she was a confused young girl 3. she was humanitarian 4. she was loving and sympathetic towards people 5. she was proud of being a peasant
15. "DEMEANED" means (line 15) ( )
1. undignified 2. insulted 3. impoverished 4. upset 5. humiliated
16. Appa felt that life in the village was ( )
1. not progressive 2. quiet and peaceful 3. scenically beautiful 4. slow 5. passive
17. "DISPARAGE" means (line 7) ( )
1. to speak slightly of 2. insult 3. criticize 4. disgust 5. describe
8. From the passage you can deduce that ( )
1. Amma is the mother of Lalitha and Saroja 2. Appa is the son of Amma 3. Lalitha is older than Saroja 4. Aunt Alamelu is Appa's aunt

PASSAGE 3

1. By being so long in the lowest form I gained an immense advantage over the cleverer boys. 2. They all went on to learn Latin and Greek and splendid things like that. 3. But I was taught English. 4. We were considered such dunces that we could learn only English. 5. Mr Somervell - a most delightful man, to whom my debt is great - was charged with the duty of teaching the stupidest boys the most disregarded thing - namely, to write mere English. 6. He knew how to do it. 7. He taught it as no one else has ever taught it. 8. Not only did we learn English parsing thoroughly, but we also practised continually English analysis. 9. Mr Somervell had a system of his own. 10. It was a kind of drill. 11. We did it almost daily. 12. As I remained in the Third Fourth three times as long as anyone else, I had three times as much of it. 13. I learned it thoroughly. 14. Thus I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence-which is a noble thing. 15. And when in after years my schoolfellows who had won prizes and distinction for writing such beautiful Latin poetry and pithy Greek epigrams had to come down again to common English, to earn their living or make their way, I did not feel myself at any disadvantage. 16. Naturally I am biassed in favour of boys learning English. 17. I would make them all learn English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honour, and Greek as a treat. 18. But the only thing I would whip them for is not knowing English. 19. I would whip them hard for that.

*from My Early Life by Winston S. Churchill*

19. The advantage which Churchill gained over the cleverer boys was that
1. he didn't have to learn Latin and Greek
  2. he was taught English well
  3. he stayed in the lowest form longer than they did
  4. he did not have to work so hard
  5. he had a very understanding teacher
- ( )
20. The opposite of "IMMENSE" (line 1) is M.....
- ( )
21. A "DUNCE" (line 3) is
1. a clown
  2. a stupid person
  3. a member of the lowest class in the school
  4. a late developer
  5. a misfit
- ( )
22. Which of the numbered sentences in the passage would you regard as being ironical?
1. sentence 1
  2. sentence 3
  3. sentence 5
  4. sentence 8
  5. sentence 14
- ( )
23. The author's debt to Mr Somervell was that
1. he made learning interesting
  2. he was a very good teacher
  3. he was kind to him
  4. he did not force him to learn Latin and Greek
  5. he taught him English syntax
- ( )
24. An "EPIGRAM" (line 13) is
1. a witty essay
  2. an inscription on a tombstone
  3. a letter
  4. a short poem or saying expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way
  5. a poetic account of the deeds of a hero or heroes
- ( )
25. A synonym for "ESSENTIAL" (line 11) in this context is F .....
- ( )
26. Which word best describes the English language from the author's point of view.
1. useful
  2. common
  3. simple
  4. noble
  5. disregarded
- ( )
27. This extract suggests that the whole book is
1. a novel
  2. a biography
  3. an autobiography
  4. a history of Harrow school
  5. a treatise on education
- ( )

PASSAGE 4

As the eighteenth century passed into the nineteenth the people of England had reason to congratulate themselves. Gazing across the Channel they observed country after country groaning under military despotism. They observed the fate of France, bled white for Napoleon's wars, passing from revolution to revolution; Spain starving under military oppression; Austria, ruled by an army, where even to speak of liberty was a crime. They alone were free. Thanks to their military system, the country which had the finest troops in Europe, which had broken Napoleon's power in the Peninsular and crushed him at Waterloo, had not, and had never shown any signs of having, a revolutionary army.

from *The Reason Why* by Cecil Woodham Smith

28. The English people could congratulate themselves (line 2) because
1. they had defeated Napoleon
  2. they had not suffered a revolution
  3. they were not starving like the Spanish
  4. they had freedom of speech, unlike the Austrians
  5. They were free of military despotism
- ( )
29. The author is writing of a period of history
1. a century ago
  2. in the Middle Ages
  3. in the first millennium
  4. nearly two hundred years ago
  5. before Jesus Christ
- ( )
30. "DESPOTISM" (line 3) is
1. a military government
  2. a tyranny
  3. an oligarchy
  4. a democracy
  5. a monarchy
- ( )
31. A word which could replace "OBSERVED" (line 2) in this context is S .....
- ( )
32. What figure of speech is "GROANING" (line 3)
1. simile
  2. metaphor
  3. personification
  4. alliteration
  5. oxymoron
- ( )
33. A synonym for "FATE" (line 4) is D.....
- ( )
34. On the basis of this extract one could reasonably expect this book to be
1. a novel
  2. a collection of eighteenth century essays
  3. an autobiography
  4. a history
  5. a collection of short stories
- ( )
35. "CRUSHED" (line 8) means
1. killed
  2. defeated
  3. annihilated
  4. destroyed
  5. crippled
- ( )
36. According to the writer, the people of England had not suffered a military revolution because
1. they had the finest troops in Europe
  2. they had a tradition of liberty
  3. of their military system
  4. they had freedom of speech
  5. they were not oppressed
- ( )

(a) Over the Plains of Ethiopia the sun rose as I had not seen it in seven years. (b) A big, cool, empty sky flushed a little above a rim of dark mountains. (c) The landscape 20 000 feet below gathered itself from the dark and showed a pale gleam of grass, a sheen of water. (d) The red deepened and pulsed, radiating streaks of fire. (e) There hung the sun, like a luminous spider's egg, or a white pearl, just below the rim of the mountains. (f) Suddenly it swelled, turned red, roared over the horizon and drove up the sky like a train engine. (g) I knew how far below in the swelling heat the birds were an orchestra in the trees about the villages of mud huts; how the long grass was straightening while dangling flocks of dewdrops dwindled and dried; how the people were moving out into the fields about the business of herding and hoeing.

(h) Here is where the sun regulates living in a twelve-hour cycle.

(i) Here the sun is a creature of the same stuff as oneself; powerful and angry, but at least responsive, and no mere dispenser of pale candlepower.

*from Going Home by Doris Lessing*

37. By describing the sky as "EMPTY" (sentence (b) line 2) the author emphasizes
1. the fact that there were no other aircraft around
  2. the vastness of the African sky
  3. the absence of bird life
  4. the desolation of the scene
  5. the fact that the sky was usually crowded
- ( )
38. The writer describes the birds as "AN ORCHESTRA" (line 9) because
1. they were arranged in ranks
  2. they were beginning to sing
  3. their various voices combined to create a harmonious, musical sound;
  4. they were reminiscent of Greek classical dancers and musicians
  5. everyone in the villages was listening to the birds.
- ( )
39. The people whom the writer mentions (sentence (g) line 11) are
1. Africans
  2. peasant farmers
  3. shepherds
  4. agronomists
  5. Ethiopians
- ( )
40. Sentence (h) (line 13) implies that
1. the people live "BY THE CLOCK"
  2. life is very ordered
  3. people live close to nature
  4. day and night are of equal length
  5. the sun rules people's lives.
- ( )
41. "THE LANDSCAPE ..... GATHERED ITSELF FROM THE DARK" (sentence (c) line 3) means that
1. the landscape became visible
  2. the land had a wrinkled appearance as if it had been gathered
  3. the land was separated from the darkness
  4. the land was created from the darkness
  5. the sun was rising
- ( )
42. In sentence (i) the writer is
1. describing the power of the sun
  2. comparing the African sun and the Northern European sun
  3. showing her feelings towards the sun
  4. personifying the sun
  5. attempting to describe sun-worship
- ( )
43. A "DISPENSER OF PALE CANDLEPOWER" (sentence (i) line 15)
1. someone who sells or distributes candles
  2. a means of measuring light
  3. a metaphor to describe weak sunshine
  4. a candelabra for white wax candles
  5. the winter sun
- ( )

PASSAGE 6

1. The recent introduction of paper and quasi-paper clothing carried the trend towards disposability a step further. 2. Fashionable boutiques and working-class clothing stores have sprouted whole departments devoted to gaily coloured and imaginatively designed paper apparel. 3. Fashion magazines display breathtakingly sumptuous gowns, coats, pyjamas, even wedding dresses made of paper. 4. The bride pictured in one of these wears a long white train of lace-like paper that, the caption writer notes, will make 'great kitchen curtains' after the ceremony.

5. Paper clothes are particularly suitable for children. 6. Writes one fashion expert: 'Little girls will soon be able to spill ice-cream, draw pictures and make cutouts on their clothes while their mothers smile benignly at their creativity'. 7. And for adults who want to express their own creativity, there is even a 'paint-yourself-dress' complete with brushes. Price: \$2.00.

from *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler

44. "QUASI" (sentence 1) means H..... ( )
45. "THE TREND TOWARDS DISPOSABILITY" (sentence 1) suggests that  
1. people are buying goods with a limited life span with the intention of discarding them rather than repairing them 2. it is a modern tendency for fashion to change very quickly 3. modern clothing is easily disposed of 4. people are always looking for new excitements 5. in the modern world nothing is permanent; everything is transient ( )
46. In which of the numbered sentences of the first paragraph do you detect a note of humour? ( )
47. A "BOUTIQUE" (sentence 2) is  
1. a florist's shop 2. a spray of flowers worn in a buttonhole 3. a dress shop 4. a small shop which specializes in fashionable clothing and/or accessories 5. a Greek form of mandoline ( )
48. "BENIGNLY" (sentence 6) means  
1. kindly 2. calmly 3. vacantly 4. good-humouredly 5. graciously ( )
49. The use of the word "CREATIVITY" (sentence 6) is ironic because  
1. modern life is never truly creative 2. mothers would normally regard the children's activity of drawing on the cutting up clothes as destructive 3. mothers know the real meaning of creativity 4. mothers spend their free time "CREATING" their own clothes out of paint and paper. 5. the dividing line between destructive and creative activity is very fine. ( )
50. The following numbered sentences, which are given in the wrong order, comprise the next paragraph of the book *Future Shock*. Which of the sentences do you think would logically introduce this next paragraph.  
1. Soon it will be. 2. At \$1 29 each, it is almost cheaper for the consumer to buy and discard a new one than to send an ordinary dress to the cleaners. 3. But more than economics is involved, for the extension of the throw-away culture has important psychological consequences. 4. Price, of course, is a critical factor behind the paper explosion. 5. Thus a department store features simple A-line dresses made of what it calls 'devil-may-care cellulose fibre and nylon'. ( )