

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS' ENTRANCE EXAM SCORES AND  
STUDENTS' SCHOOL PERFORMANCE  
A PILOT STUDY

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## **Summary**

This study sets out to investigate predictive validity of the Early Diagnostic Test (EDT)/Oral Diagnostic Test (ODT), the entrance exam of the Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation (GSTI) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), USA. The EDT/ODT scores of students' will be compared with students' GPA and the scores of professional exam taken at the end of the two-year course. The study will focus on two aspects: finding correlations between these three different data sets; suggesting alternative testing options that can complement current EDT/ODT. The alternative testing options will be explored to find ways to measure cognitive skills of an applicant. Some of the suggested test methods for aptitude testing in the field of T&I training, such as paraphrasing test, recall test, and cloze test will be administered to incoming students of the GSTI. The findings are hoped to provide direction for GSTI efforts to improve current entrance exam process.

## **Keywords**

Aptitude testing, test design, interpreter/translator training, norms, predictive validity, reliability, linguistic competence, cognitive competence.

## **Research problem**

A valid and reliable entrance exam holds key to the success of the future curriculum success (Roy: 1984). With a proliferation of BA/MA level interpreter/translator training institutions, selection process has gained much attention as it is believed that an institution renowned for rigorous selection process attracts a large number of highly talented students (Keiser 1978: 12).

There are three major assessment components at the GSTI: EDT/ODT; course exams represented by GPA; professional exam taken upon completion of the two-year course. These three sets of data of 30 students over four-year period were collected for comparison. The biggest challenge is that all three data are in different format and the raw data presents too many variables for statistical analysis. The EDT/ODT data and the professional exam data were manipulated to produce a numeric data for the comparison with the GPA data. Each student's GPA in each course was consolidated into three different sets of GPA: 1<sup>st</sup> year GPA; 2<sup>nd</sup> year GPA; cumulative GPA.

A lot of faculty members at the GSTI share the concern that there have been inconsistencies in terms of predictive validity of the EDT/ODT. The validity issue, i.e., the question of 'is the EDT/ODT measuring what it is set out to measure,' is raised by many faculty members at the GSTI, including the researcher. In this regard, two elements come in play as underlying concerns: the EDT/ODT design; EDT/ODT administration procedure. The EDT/ODT consists of nine sections; essay writings in A and B languages; translation into A and B languages; abstract writing; pronunciation; abstract thinking; extemporaneous speeches in A and B languages. An investigation is needed to see if these nine sections of the EDT/ODT are relevant to the norms for test measures defined by the GSTI along with interpreting and translation competences. The EDT/ODT is a self-administered off-campus test, which raises concerns of non-compliance of the honor system, namely cheating. This is an issue that needs to be addressed when alternative test methods are explored. Alternative test methods will be geared towards testing cognitive skills required for interpreting and translation.

## **Literature review**

The literature review will focus on the following areas:

- Aptitude Test: Gerver et al. 1989, Lambert 1991, Lidvall 1967, Longley 1989, Moser-Mercer 1983, 1985, Pippa and Russo 2002, 2004, Sawyer 2004,
- Interpreting/translation competence: Kalina 2000, Keiser 1978, Moser-Mercer 1994, Pöchlacker 2004
- Correlations between EDT/ODT and school performance: Arjona 1994, Monty 1998, Tapalova 1998
- Validity and reliability: American Psychological Association 1954, Cronbach and Snow 1977, Gipps 1994, Messick 1989, Wrightstone et al. 1956
- Norms: Chesterman 1993, Gronlund 1998, Nord 2001, Shlesinger 1999, Toury 1995,

## **Research questions and hypotheses**

The pilot study was launched with the goal of tracing predictive value of the GSTI's entrance exam, EDT/ODT using EDT/ODT data, GPA data, and professional exam data of 30 students over four-year period between 2003 and 2006. The pilot study aims to address following

questions on relations between EDT/ODT and GPA, EDT/ODT and professional exam, and GPA and professional exam:

- 1) Is there any relationship between students' EDT scores and the degree of their success in the two-year course in terms of GPA?
- 2) Is there any relationship between students' EDT scores and the degree of their success in Professional Exam?
- 3) Is there any relationship between the degree of the students' success in GPA and Professional Exam?

The hypothesis drawn from above questions is "Students who receive higher score in EDT/ODT (higher acceptable rate) are more likely to receive higher GPAs through out the 2-year course and have higher pass rate in professional examination at the end of the 2- year course." The hypothesis is tested with the focus on the predictive validity of the EDT/ODT.

### **Research methodology**

The EDT/ODT scores, GPA of core courses, and professional exam of students graduated between 2003 and 2006 will be collected. Statistical analysis on these three data sets will show if there are correlations between these data sets. As mentioned above, EDT/ODT data and professional exam data will be converted to numeric data. In other words, ordinal scales of each section of EDT/ODT will be converted to show acceptable percentage value of each student. Likewise, ordinal scales of professional exam will be converted to show pass percentage value of each student. Alternative test options will be tested on incoming students at the GSTI and the test data will later be compared with their EDT/ODT scores, GPA and professional exam scores. A questionnaire for faculty survey will be conducted to gather faculty perception on the current practice and the purpose of the EDT/ODT. The questionnaire will be distributed and collected via email. The Survey results will also be used for input for exploring additional test options to complement the EDT/ODT.

### **Research material**

The subjects of this study are 30 students who entered the Korean Program of the GSTI between 2001 and 2004 (graduating class of 2003 through 2004). Of the four-degree tracks offered at the GSTI, data of the MACI and MATI degree track students is used. Data sets consist of EDT/ODT scores; GPA in core courses in translation, consecutive interpreting, and

simultaneous interpreting; professional exam scores.

Alternative test options will be explored and test methods suggested by other researchers of previous studies will be replicated.

A questionnaire will be designed for faculty survey. Most of the questions in the questionnaire will be based on an ordinal scale and a few open-ended questions will also be included in the questionnaire.

### **Expected results and benefits**

This study is expected to offer insights into the current practice of the entrance exam at the GSTI, EDT/ODT. At the same time it will review the norms of the EDT/ODT administration along with the competence area and level expected of applicants. The acquired knowledge is hoped to highlight much needed attention on the aptitude testing in the field of T&I training. The findings from the study are expected to contribute to the GSTI efforts to improve current EDT/ODT process.

### **Transfer of results**

This study is expected to be followed by an expanded doctoral thesis. I also hope to publish the study in international journals and present it at academic conferences. The most immediate form of transfer of results will come in modified version of the EDT/ODT.

### **Work schedule**

2008 (July) – 2009 (June):

Formulating concepts and background reading on general assessment and measurement, aptitude testing, T&I competence, test design

Pilot test of alternative test options for the EDT/ODT (September)

2009 (July) – 2010 (June):

Data collection and statistical analysis

Faculty survey

Writing Thesis

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