THE CONSTRUCTION AND STANDARDISATION OF A TEST

IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR THE GRADE ELEVEN (YEAR TWELVE)

CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

This study consists of the construction of a standardised test in English for Grade Eleven (Year Twelve) students in the Arts and Commerce streams of the Colombo South Educational Region in order to diagnose their problems. This study was undertaken for two reasons. Firstly, there are very few standardised tests in English in use in Sri Lanka today. Secondly, a good knowledge of English is essential for the target population because it is these students who have been considered fit for higher education.

A trial test was first conducted. On the basis of an item analysis of the results, the final form of the test was formulated. This test was administered to a representative sample of 174 students in July 1985. Part I consisted on 30 multiple choice items to test recognition of structures. Part II consisted of open-ended questions to test structures, reading-comprehension, cloze procedure and composition Part II was essentially a test of production. For the results, the reliability and validity of the test was calculated. Norms for the test were also derived.

The results revealed that the schools with better facilities, situated in a better locality and with pupils of a higher socio-economic background fared better in the test as a whole as well as in Parts I and II than those schools with lesser facilities situated in poorer localities and with pupils with a lower socio-economic background. The results also revealed that the marks gained by all categories of pupils is much higher in the recognition tests than in the tests of production. The test also revealed that recognition testing does not discriminate effectively between those who know and those who do not know. On the other hand, in Paper II, which tests the skill of production, there was a marked difference in the results of the three categories of schools. Moreover, the overall scores in this test were much lower than the scores in the test of recognition. The test also revealed that spelling, the modal construction, clause structures

tense formations, question forms and the passive voice were the key areas of language which presented difficulty to all categories of students. As this test is standardised and norms have been derived, it can be used by English teachers in Sri Lanka to diagnose weak areas in English among their pupils. Remedial action can be initiated based on the results obtained by administering this test.