



DEVELOPMENT AND VALDATION OF WRITING COMPETENCY TEST OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE (WCTEL)

Atia Arshad, PhD Scholar, Department of Education, University of Gujrat, Gujrat

Muhammad Bashir Gondal, Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Gujrat, Gujrat

Mobeen Ul Islam, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Gujrat, Gujrat

ABSTRACT- The most commonly used tool for assessment of student's knowledge is the essay type test and its quality depends upon its validity. The purpose of this paper is to develop and administer an achievement test to evaluate secondary school students' writing competency. It was necessary to check the validity of the test to ensure accuracy of assessment. For this purpose, item analysis of essay type questions was done through calculating Facility value, FV and discrimination index, DI of questions given in Pilot testing, in which 150 students from two schools of district Gujrat, were selected; two parallel version questionnaires were developed due to length of test, as there was total fourteen questions so each version consisted of seven items. The importance of item analysis is highlighted from the fact that almost fifty percent of questions were rejected after item analysis. The result of study also provides a way to initiate a change in designing a fair assessment test for students. Items with average difficulty and high discrimination should be included in examinations to improve assessment standard.

Keywords: English Language, Writing Competency, Secondary Level, Validation

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the procedure of learning and getting knowledge & skills. This procedure started and then developed gradually; today it is one of the keystones in the development of societies and humanities (Gibson, 2006). For the country to be advance, for the development of civilization, education is vital (Cleary, 2001). Teaching learning process either it is formal or informal is chiefly accomplished through language. Language is important for making utilization of information (Shale, 1988). A person needs language to convey wishes, thoughts, intentions, feeling and any type of information in a written form (Pamela, 1991). It is a fact that English is a lingua franca (international language). Most of the people communicate with each other by using English as a medium. In the scholarly field it is usually said that one needs to "learn English or die" (Viereck, 1996). English language consists of four competencies; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Although the importance of all four skills is equal yet writing is considered as most important of the four language competencies. Since writing has both physical and intellectual viewpoints, it is the hardest language competency; even native speakers suffer while demonstrating a good control of writing (Johnstone, 2002). Writing is the central skills of the English language (Geiser, 2001). In Pakistan, English language is being taught as a compulsory subject at almost all levels of education (Shoukat, 2015). But our national educational curriculum does not demand such shallow practices rather it evidently emphasizes on capability of transactional, creative, persuasive and expository writing. Hence, Pakistani secondary school students require writing skills for a number of educational purposes including writing tasks given by the teachers and taking tests and final examinations (Dar, 2015). Moreover, writing is the skill that most students are slightest capable in when getting another dialect (Sarala, 2015). Writing skill is imperative to survey messages for educational and profession purposes particularly in Pakistan as on the ground level all type of assessments are taken through this channel (Berman, 2010). Different types of questions were used in order to evaluate the students like multiple choice questions, short answer type, essay and modified essay type question. The essay tests are still commonly used tools for evaluation, despite the increasingly wider applicability of the short answer and objective type questions. There are certain outcomes of learning (e.g., organizing, summarizing, integrating ideas and expressing in one's own way) which cannot be reasonably measured through objective type tests. Essay type tests provide a better representation of pupil's real achievement in learning.

The premise of the study is quality assessment of English language writing competency whether the tool used for making assessment test is standard or not and the test used for assessing the students' abilities is valid or not. An achievement test aligned with national curriculum for English language was designed to measure secondary school students' English language writing Competency, but before launching this test the validity of the test was ensured by item analysis. Item analysis becomes a scientific method through which tests can be improved, and academic integrity is upheld.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

English is taught as an essential discipline from class one to graduation in Pakistan. Students experience difficulties in its mastering as English is second language for Pakistani students. In Pakistan obtaining command over English has become a key to achievement and a standing symbol.

To learn English, it is necessary to know all its skills. From all the competencies the writing competency is regarded complex, as it calls for writers to possess vocabulary as well as syntactic information, and method of organizing sentences, to have the ability to produce excellent writing (Tangpermpoon, 2008). Actually, the students are generally not expert in 2nd language which leads to their incapacity to get excessive instructional achievement at vast scale. (García, 2018). Writing is the most challenging competency and there is a meaningful link between the writing produced by students and classroom instructional practices (Fisher, 2012). The writing skills of Pakistani students are alarmingly weak and inferior, despite the fact that people who are using English language have intensely increased to 49% in 2003 as it was only two percent in 1961 (Dar, 2015). Pakistani English language teachers are familiar with some writing skill techniques, such as, brainstorming, outlining and pre-writing discussions on the topic, but most of them do not apply these approaches in classrooms because of various reasons that include restricted curriculum, lack of time and learners' weak educational background (Warsi, 2004). Writing competency is categorized in different forms like: expressive, narrative, expository and persuasive and transactional (Duke, 2012). Expository, is when the author means to notify, describe or define their subject to the reader. Descriptive, explain things with detail by using a lot of great visual words with the help of which one can imagine to see the person, place or thing we are writing about. Item analysis provides feedback to the examiner and is destined for the understanding level of students by assessing the questions given in examination. Reliability and validity of test is checked by item analysis. Item analysis explains that how easy and difficult the questions are and whether the questions were enough valid to meet the level of students of all types. The objective of our study was to calculate the Item analysis (facility value and discrimination index) of questions given in achievement test of English language writing competency for grade ten students and observes the adequacy of questions framed for evaluation of writing competency through item analysis which is valuable procedure performed after the examination that provides information about the reliability and validity of a test item.

It also tells how difficult or easy the questions were, calculated by the facility value (difficulty index) and whether the questions were able to discriminate between students who performed well on the test, from those who did not, the discrimination index.

Item analysis brings to light test quality in the following ways:

Item Difficulty Index: Finds out whether the exam question is too easy or too hard? If everyone gets a particular answer correct, there's less of a way to tell who really understands the material with deep knowledge. Conversely, if everyone gets a particular answer incorrect, then there's no way to differentiate those who've learned the material deeply.

According to Kathleen M. Bailey, Difficulty level actually tells how easy a test item was for the students on whom it is being administered. I.F. is a number, typically printed as a decimal, ranging from 0.0 to 1.0. (Bailey, 1998). It depicts the quantity of people who got the item right (out of all the people who took the test).” The formula of the difficulty level of each item in large group is stated below (Heaton) In which:

FV: The index of difficulty, R: The number of correct answers, N: The number of students taking the test. P: The difficulty level of all items, B: The total number of difficulty level of each item, Σ : Sigma (Total) N: The total number of test items (Arikunto, 2006)

The scale of the difficulty level of all test items ranged from 0.00 to 1.00. It can be interpreted in the rank scale of difficulty level, as follow:

Table-1.1: The Rank Scale of Level of Difficulty

P	Classifications
< 0.30	Difficult
0.30 – 0.70	Moderate
> 0.70	Easy

The rank scale above, shows the easiness and the difficultness of test items

Discrimination Index (DI): Does the exam question discriminate between students who understand the material and those who do not? Exam questions should find out the varying degrees of knowledge students have on the material, reflected by the percentage correct on exam questions.

This index indicates the ability of a question to discriminate between a higher and a lower ability student. This is calculated by the formula: DI value is expressed in as a fraction. Its range is 0-1.0. Its maximum value is 1.0, which indicates an ideal question with perfect discrimination between HAG and LAG. Its value could extend from -1.00 to + 1.00. This minus value is called as negative discrimination which means that more students in the lower group are answering that item correctly than students in the higher group. Recommended value is >0.25 Acceptable with revision is 0.15-0.25 Discard the question if <0.15. Item analyses helps in finding specific technical flaws in the questions and offers criteria for its improvement. It also surges the skill of examiners in item writing. It enhances further discussion in class and ultimately improving the learning teaching process. A good item is the question, which about half the class can answer i.e., FV of 50%. FV is a useful tool testing adequacy of classroom teaching. A good value of FV suggest that subject area is well known to student, has been well taught, questions has been properly framed. Besides the FV, a good item is one of which Discrimination Index (DI) value is 0.35 or more than 0.35.

Table-1.2: The classifications of the index of Discriminating Power (D)

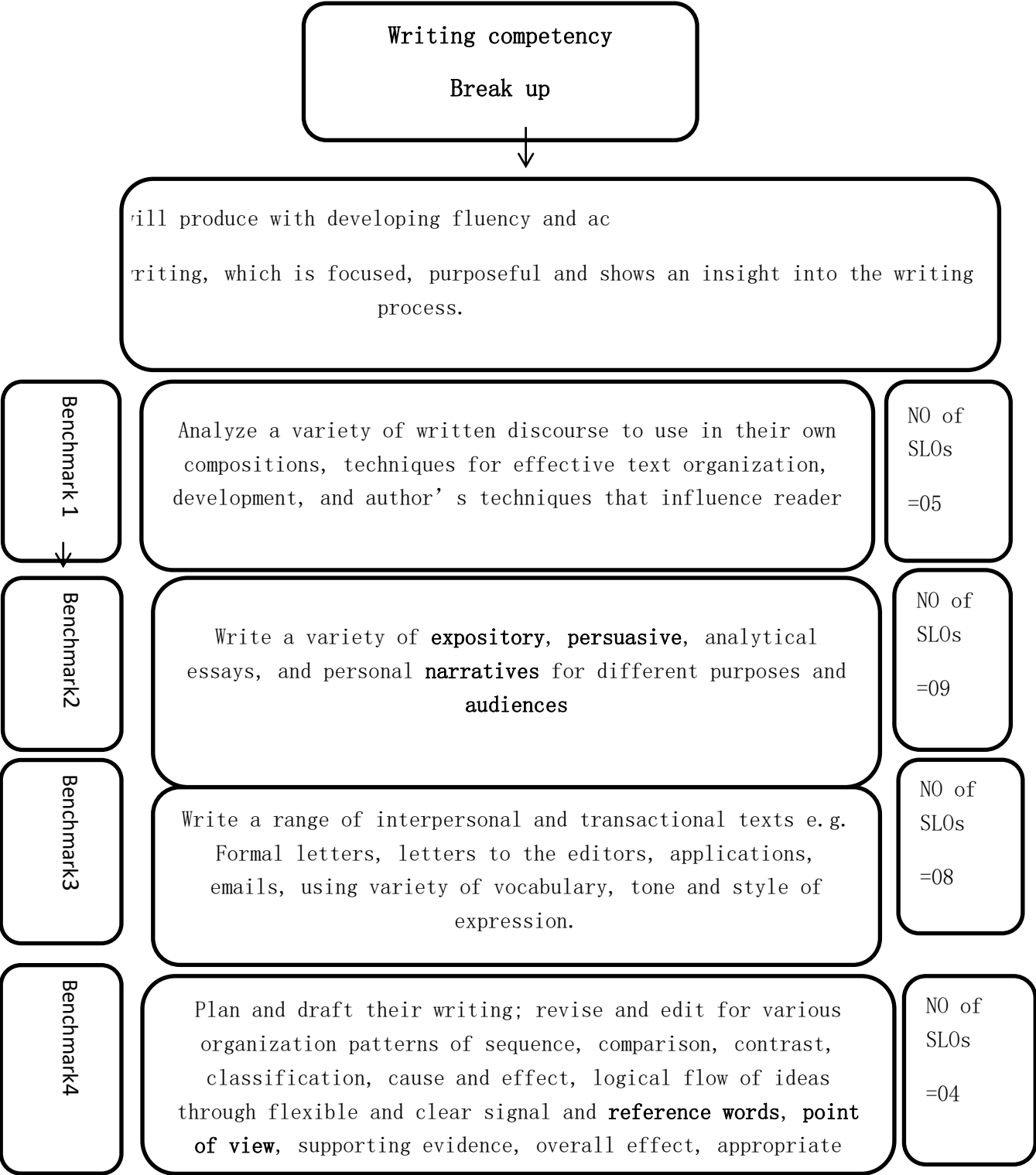
Index of Discriminating Power	Classifications
0.70 – 1.00	Excellent
0.40 – 0.70	Good
0.20 – 0.40	Satisfactory
≤ 0.20	Poor
Negative value on D	Very poor

METHODOLOGY: In order to improve the writing and other three skills of students, national curriculum of Pakistan has been developed that focuses on almost all aspects of English language. There are four bench marks in writing competency. Detail is given in figure no. 1.1

An accomplishment test was created to survey the writing competency of students at secondary school level. This test was planned as per writing competencies of English language and its sub skills, as per National Curriculum for English language for secondary school (SSC) level. While designing test, all related issues were taken under consideration e.g., students' grade level, family background of students, educational background, and the student learning outcomes (SLOs) which are determined for Secondary school level students. All the 4 benchmarks of writing were evaluated.

Total fourteen test items comprising on two versions were selected as sample of the study. This test was administered on 150 secondary school students of grade ten from public as well as private sector schools. Pilot testing was used for testing validity of the question paper

Writing competency Break up (figure No. 1.1)



III. METHODOLOGY

All the selected questions were based on SLOS, mentioned against each bench mark in national curriculum of Pakistan. Initially total 14 items were designed. First two questions were selected from bench mark no.1 which has five student learning outcomes. Five items were framed from benchmark no. 2 with four selected students learning outcomes and five total SLOs. Four questions were from benchmarks number 3 which has total six SLOs. There are four SLOs in bench mark no. 4; three questions were framed from it. Detail is given in table no. 1.3.

Table-1.3: Detail of benchmarks, SLOs and selected items for piloting

Bench Mark	TOTAL SLOs	SELECTED SLOs	Number of Items
1	5	1	2
2	9	4	5
3	6	3	4
4	4	2	3
Total	24	10	14

In this way the test was consisting of fourteen types of questions including restricted response (RR) and open-ended questions (OEQ). Piloting testing is very helpful in the fact that it ensures that a tool works well with respondents. It also helps in verifying the clarity of questions, and removing ambiguous language (Cohen, 2013). Two versions of test items were designed and each version was comprised on 7 test questions. Two parallel test items against each selected SLO were designed.

Classical Testing Theory (CTT) demonstrates that number of respondents for pilot testing should be three times more than the number of test items, therefore 150 students of class 10th were selected for piloting testing, beyond the sample hence two test versions were designed in order to overcome the time management issues as most of the questions were open ended and required time to solve them. These students for test purpose were selected from Two schools named as i.e., Dare Arqam model school Mukabir campus for boys and GGMHSS Gharib Pura district Gujrat. Test was conducted, checked, scored, analyzed. Students gave input after test that was saved and then changings were made in wording, test language according to the requirements of students. The instrument was launched after proper procedure of piloting for validation and reliability. All the questions were carefully designed and checked for self and expert validity, as (Cohen, 2013) states that validity is an important requirement and a criterion for both qualitative and quantitative research. In order to understand the language structure and to know the precision of test, the selected items were keenly observed. A committee of ten members with full command over subject was asked to examine the contents validity, and give their expert opinions about the reliability of assessment test. Students happily participated in Test as students were motivated by researcher to participate in test fearlessly and give fair and unbiased result of their abilities. Test was for two hours and administered in their routine classes. The result of piloting study was compiled and student's difficulty level and discrimination index of both the versions 1 and 2 was calculated by keeping in view the performance of students in test. All selected questions were checked and improved by taking expert opinion from ten different universities scholars. The formula $(n_e - N/2)/(N/2)$ given by lawshe 1975 was used manually to check the validity of data. This formula was used to calculate the CVI and CVR of tested data.

Table-1.7: CVI& CVR through Expert opinion

Measuring secondary school students' English language writing competency through assessment tasks aligned with curriculum (CVR + CVI BASED ON EXPERT OPINION)

Sr. No	Names	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	CVR
1	Dr. Bashir Gondal UOG	E		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	0.8
		N	√										
		U											
2	Dr. Sher zaman UOG	E		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	0.8
		N	√										
		U											
3	Dr. Shafqat shah UOG	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
4	Dr. Mobeen ul Islam UOG	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
5	Dr. Ahme Bilal UOG	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
6	Dr. Mushtaq Malik UOS	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
7	Dr. Mehfooz ul Haq SSS	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
8	Dr. Zafar AIOU	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
9	Dr. Zaheer	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
10	Dr. Saif Ullah UOG	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
11	Shamas Sulaman	E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	1
		N											
		U											
	TOTAL												9.6

Formula CVR = $(n_e - N/2) / (10/2)$ Formula CVI = $9.6 / 11 = 0.8$ CVR Added Value / No. of Items

Reliability

A good test has many characteristics and reliability is one of them. Reliability is basically linked with the steadiness and uniformity of assessments. (Airasian, 2001). Reliability is concerned with the steadiness and uniformity of assessments. (Popham, 2006). Reliability is used in same meaning as consistency. There are two ways in which reliability of assessment can be ensured named as Scorer reliability and Intra judge reliability. The researcher scored the same test twice but found no difference in results. On the other hand, Intra judge reliability is the extent to which different observers or raters agree with one another as they mark the same set of papers” (Sax, 1997) and if two or more scorers give equal scores for the same

performance. The researcher took services of three Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) who were teaching English to grade ten and at the same time working as sub examiner with Boar of Intermediate & Secondary Education (BISE) GRW. But results were almost same for all.

After piloting test data was collected and it was assessed with keen effort. For this purpose, the Scoring rubrics were designed effectively and referred throughout the checking process. The responses of the questions were checked by the subject matter expert teachers and then rechecked by the researcher herself to ensure accuracy and reliability.

IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The entry and coding of collected data was done by using SPSS software. Variables were defined by specifying the required information for each variable. Before starting data analysis, the data set was checked for errors. It is very easy to make mistakes when entering data, and unfortunately some errors can completely mess up our whole analyses. So, data was entered very carefully. Filtered and checked.

The students were arranged into HAG (High ability groups) and LAG (Low ability groups) and AAG (Average ability groups) for both versions. In version no 1, High ability groups contain 24 top ranker students and low ability group also have 24 lower ranker students while 27 students were ranked in average ability groups. Marks distribution was made in which question no 1, 2, 4 and 6 were given total 10 marks each while question no. 3 5 7 were given 20 marks each.

Mark ranges were decided for each type of question with the help of expert team who finalized the score range and mean value calculation of questions. Students who achieved marks in the range of 7-10 i.e. 'A' were considered as correct whereas marks in the range of 4-6 i.e., 'B' of were considered as near to correct. The students who achieved marks in 1-3 i.e., 'C' range were taken as near to incorrect and students with 0 marks i.e., 'D' were considered as incorrect. After we have calculated data the discrimination index DI and facility value FI were calculated.

Table-1.8: Table of Marks Ranges of Version 1

Marks range	7-10	4-6	1-3	0	Total Number of Considered students	
HAG	A	B	C	D		
Q1	18	06	00	00	24	
Q2	16	08	00	00	24	
Q3	01	05	16	02	24	
Q4	01	13	10	00	24	
Q5	00	03	11	10	24	
Q6	02	08	13	01	24	
Q7	16	04	00	01	24	
LAG	Q1	05	12	02	05	24
	Q2	05	14	02	03	24
	Q3	00	00	04	20	24
	Q4	00	01	06	17	24
	Q5	00	00	15	09	24
	Q6	00	00	09	15	24
	Q7	06	00	05	05	24
AAG	Q1	13	08	01	00	27
	Q2	07	13	00	00	27
	Q3	00	20	14	13	27
	Q4	00	00	20	07	27
	Q5	00	01	26	00	27
	Q6	00	02	18	07	27
	Q7	00	07	18	02	27

For version no 2, mark ranges were finalized for each type of category ABCDF for total number of students. Students who achieved marks in the range of 14-20 were taken as correct answer i.e. 'A' and students with mark range in between 8-13 were considered as near to correct i.e., 'B'. The students with mark range 1-7 were considered as near to incorrect. 'C' whereas students with marks 0 were considered as incorrect i.e., 'D'.

Table -1.9: Table of Marks Ranges of version 2

Marks range	14-20	8-13	1-7	0	Total Number of Considered students
HAG	A	B	C	D	
Q1	4	18	0	0	22
Q2	7	15	0	0	22
Q3	0	17	5	0	22
Q4	6	15	01	0	22
Q5	3	4	15	0	22
Q6	21	01	0	0	22
Q7	18	4	0	0	22
LAG					
Q1	0	11	11	0	22
Q2	1	16	1	4	22
Q3	0	10	8	4	22
Q4	1	2	7	12	22
Q5	0	0	12	10	22
Q6	6	13	3	0	22
Q7	5	13	4	0	22
AAG					
Q1	2	24	5	0	31
Q2	6	23	2	0	31
Q3	21	9	1	0	31
Q4	3	22	6	0	31
Q5	2	2	22	5	31
Q6	28	3	0	0	31
Q7	23	8	0	0	31

For version no. 2 After we have calculated data the discrimination index (DI) and facility value (FI) were also calculated.

As a result of piloting process, the final selection was made and only six appropriate test items were finalized for final selection. Details is given in table 1.4.

Table-1.4: QUESTIONNAIRE VALIDATION DETAIL VERSION NO.1

Q. No	Statement	BM	SLO	DI value	Difficulty	Range
Q1	Subject verb agreement	BM 1	1.3. Appropriate pronoun antecedent relationship and transitional devices within the paragraph.	0.48	0.45	Recommended
Q2	Fact and opinion	BM 1	1.5. Incorporate evidences, facts, opinions and analogies to support the key idea	0.37	0.45	Accepted
Q3	Visit to historical place	BM 2	Write a persuasive/argumentative essay on a given topic	0.04	0.4	Discarded
Q4	Account of eid ul fitar	BM 2	2.3. Write a personal narrative (autobiographical):	0.01	0.13	Discarded
Q5	Application	BM 3	3.3 Write and revise applications to people in extended environment using correct format, layout and tone.	0.04	0.13	Discarded
Q6	Essay outline	BM 4	4.1. Select and use a variety of pre-writing strategies such as brainstorming, mind mapping, outlining etc.	0.22	0.25	Accepted with revision
Q7	punctuation	BM 4	4.8. errors of punctuation and spelling	0.25	0.18	Accepted

Item no.1 was recommended with DI value 0.48 and FV value 0.45. Item no.2 was accepted with 0.37 DI and 0.45 FV. items number 3,4 ad 5 both were discarded with both values less than 0.20, Item number 6 was accepted with revision with DI 0.22 and FV 0.25, Item no.7 was also accepted with DI value 0.25 and FV 0.18 as shown in table 1.4.

Table-1.5: QUESTIONNAIRE VALIDATION DETAIL VERSION NO 2.

Table-3.8: QUESTIONNAIRE VALIDATION DETAIL VERSION NO2						
Q. No	Statement	B.M	SLO	DI value	Difficulty	Range
Q1	Use of cell phones	BM .2	2.2. Analyze to use in their own writing, features of an expository composition showing comparison and contrast.	0.18	0.20	Accepted with revision
Q2	First day in grade10	//	2.3. Write a personal narrative (autobiographical)	0.27	0.28	Accepted
Q3	Summary of the paragraph	//	2.5. Use summary skills to write summary/ précis of simple passages.	0.10	0.19	Discarded
Q4	Application	BM .3	3.3 Write and revise applications to people in extended environment using correct format, layout and tone.	0.23	0.13	Accepted with revision
Q5	Outline of essay	BM 4	4.1. Fill in forms legibly, following instructions and supplying correct information	0.14	0.07	Discarded
Q6	Form filling	BM. 3	3.8. Fill in forms legibly, following instructions and supplying correct information	0.68	0.73	Recommended
Q7	Rearrange	BM. 1	Chronological/sequential and spatial order of arranging detail.	0.59	0.61	Recommended

From second parallel version, the items number 1 was accepted with revision with DI 0.18 and FV 0.20, Item No. 2 was accepted with DI 0.27 and FV 0.28. Item no.3&5 were discarded with both values i.e., DI & FV less than 0.20. Item 4was accepted with revision with DI 0.23 and FV 0.13. Item no. 6&7 were recommended with both the values more than 0.50.

After item analysis only six items were selected for the final test as shown in table.

Table-1.6: Detail of benchmarks, SLOs and selected items for final research work

Bench Mark	Total SLOs	Selected SLOs	Number of Items
1	5	1	1
2	9	3	3
3	6	1	1
4	4	1	1
Total	24	06	06

The table 1.6 shows the brief description of the final test which was finally administered. Here four bench marks along with 24 SLOs is given from which 6 SLOs are finalized by taking in considerations the National curriculum 2006 for English language (compulsory) for secondary classes.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study highlights the importance of item analysis i.e., discrimination index and difficulty index of questions. The main objective of our research study was to validate the questions designed to assess writing competency of secondary level students in English language. Recommended & acceptable ranges showed that these questions have good ability to distinguish between the three group i.e., high ability, low ability group and average ability groups. Results also highlighted the use of items analysis that it can be used in future examination system so that a fair testing can be generated by keeping all students under consideration. The researcher hopes that the result of the item analysis can be beneficial for English language teachers or the test makers to improve their competencies to make a good test item. The study shows that item analysis is very useful technique for ensuring the validity of tests. Results shows that fifty percent of questions were discarded as a result of item analysis. Without item analysis the scores achieved by the students may be misleading. So, keeping in view the importance of item analysis it is recommended for all sort of open-ended questions before administering them for getting valid and reliable picture of students' performance.

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