Examining the Validity of the IELTS Reading Test

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Abstract: *IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is the world's proven English language test. It is one of the pioneers to test the four skills of English language, and continues to set the standard for English language testing today. This thesis focuses on the validity of reading test in IELTS by examining 48 reading materials, analyzing text forms, text topics, text length, sentence types and text readability among which sentence length and percentage of long words are included, through which the validity of the reading test can be inferred. With specific data, the investigation reveals that IELTS is a secure, valid and reliable indicator of true-to-life ability to communicate in English for education, immigration, and professional accreditation albeit with some deficiencies.*

Keywords: IELTS Examination; reading test; validity.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brief Introduction to IELTS Examination

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is jointly managed by three partners, the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the British Council and IDP (International Development Program) Education Pty Limited (Cambridge ESOL 4). It has an excellent international reputation, and is accepted by over 9,000 organizations worldwide, including schools, universities, employers, immigration authorities and professional bodies. IELTS aims to reflect the English level of English language users at study, at work, and at play, in new life abroad. There is almost an exam weekly in the world. IELTS exams all four English skills — reading, writing, listening and speaking, and the full mark of each section is 9 points (according to the official website of IELTS: http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/choose-ielts/what-ielts).

According to Cambridge ESOL Examinations, IELTS consists of four components. All candidates take the same Listening and Speaking tests. There is a choice of Reading and Writing tests according to whether a candidate is taking the Academic or General Training module. The Academic module is intended for candidates wishing to study at undergraduate or postgraduate levels, and for those seeking professional registration. The General Training is intended for candidates washing to migrate to an English-speaking country, and for those wishing to train or study at below degree level (4).

The academic reading test comprises three sections, with 3 texts normally followed by 13 or 14 questions for a total of 40 questions overall. IELTS is scored on a nine-band scale, with each Overall Band Score corresponding to a descriptive statement which gives a summary of the English language ability of a candidate classified at that level (Cambridge ESOL 7).

1.2 Purpose and Significance

In foreign or second language testing, reading comprehension plays an increasingly significant role that few language teachers and learners would agree against the importance of it.

The total score of reading test also accounts for a large part. In IELTS exam, reading test accounts for a quarter of the whole score. From this point of view, it can be said that in order to design a successful test, it is necessary to give more consideration to reading test.

IELTS Examination, as a mainstream English exam for studying, working abroad and immigrating, however lacks enough studies on its reading texts analysis and validity exploration. This thesis therefore intends to conduct an evaluation of the quality of reading texts in IELTS. The IELTS reading texts are selected from journals, books, magazines and newspapers. The topics of reading materials cover various aspects. Test quality is largely determined by validity. Therefore, text forms, text length, text topics, sentence types and text readability are to be investigated in the thesis. Data are collected from 48 reading passages selected in Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9 concerning the quality of respects mentioned above. Findings from the relevant information are assumed to have implications for test designers, teachers, learners and prospective test takers who are concerned with IELTS reading test.

Practically, this study provides references for test designers to improve the design of reading test, which aims to raise its validity. Pedagogically, this research would help teachers and students have a better understanding of reading test of IELTS. Therefore, teachers and students can obtain beneficial feedbacks for effective language learning and teaching.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis constitutes four chapters. Chapter 1 is a brief introduction to this thesis including an overall introduction to IELTS

Examination, and purpose and significance of this study. In chapter 2, the nature of reading and its test validity and previous studies concerned are reviewed respectively. Chapter 3 mainly analyzes test validity from different angles and reveals its implications. The last chapter is conclusion part in which major findings are summarized and implications discussed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Review of Reading Test

There have been large amount of works done by linguists concerning reading process. Goodman claims that reading is not a precise process of perception and identification but a "psycholinguistic guessing game" (128). Widdowson perceives reading as a writer-text-reader communication in which the writer expresses a specific meaning through the text and the reader attempts to recognize the meaning by reading. Nevertheless, the view of Weir (64) that reading is a selective process taking place between the reader and the text, in which background knowledge and various types of language knowledge interact with information in the text to contribute to text comprehension is the most popular view on the nature of reading.

2.2 Review of Reading Test Validity

Henning defines validity as follows: "validity in general refers to the appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure what it is purported to measure" (89). Messick describes validity as "an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores" (13). To put it simply, validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure.

There are several approaches to test validity: content validity, criterion-related validity, construct validity and face validity. Hughes defines them separately: a test is said to have content validity if its content comprises a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc.; criterion-related validity is to see how far results on the test agree with those provided by some independent and highly dependable assessment of the candidate's ability, and this independent assessment is thus the criterion measure against which the test is validated; a test, part of a test, or a testing technique is said to have construct validity if it can be demonstrated that it measures just the ability which it is supposed to measure; a test is said to have face validity if it looks as if it measures what it is supposed to measure (22-27).

Alderson points out that when the author narrows down his or her concern to reading texts, content validation will imply a comprehensive investigation of text topic, text type and genre, literariness, text organization, linguistic variables, and text readability (60).

2.3 Review of Previous Reading Test Studies

Considering reading materials, Gillian states that the process of understanding different genres demands different cognitive abilities of readers. Different types of texts provide readers with various aspects of knowledge and meanwhile expand their vision. Specific text type can predict the future performance of test takers of specific major. The findings of Kobayashi's (2002) study suggest that it is essential to know in advance what type of text organization is involved in passages used for reading comprehension tests and further suggest that different test formats, or even different types of items within the same format, seen to measure different aspects of reading comprehension.

In terms of formats of reading tests, Weir indicates that multiple-choice tests exhibit almost complete marker reliability as well as being rapid and often cost less to mark than other forms of written test (103). Heaton states that true/false test is of considerable use for inclusion in class progress tests chiefly because, unlike multiple-choice test items, it can be constructed easily and quickly, allowing teachers more time for other tasks (172). He also indicates that the true/false test may fail to discriminate widely enough among the testees unless there are a lot of items. The other disadvantage is that it can encourage guessing.

This research however, centers upon reading texts of reading comprehension, mainly focusing on content validity of reading texts.

3. ANALYSIS OF TEST VALIDITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, data are collected from 48 reading texts which are all academic module selected from Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9. Text forms, text length, text topics, sentence types and text readability are main aspects investigated. The results are illustrated through tables and charts. Major implications are also discussed in this chapter based on statistics revealed.

3.1 Text Forms

According to Nuttall, a linear text is an expression of ideas in sequences of sentences and paragraphs, while non-linear texts include things such as titles (or subtitles), forewords, figures, graphs, etc. that accompany the linear text (45).

Reading texts containing both linear and non-linear forms are generally taken as more authentic mainly because the most popular reading materials, such as in newspapers and magazines in people's real life are linear combining non-linear texts. Since the reading test of IELTS is designed to measure candidates' general proficiency of reading in real context, texts provided should be similar to reading materials in real life. In this respect, the analysis of text forms or text authenticity is a necessity for examining test validity.

To get the results, the author calculates the proportion of two text forms of 48 reading materials in Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9. Table 1 below shows the results.

Table 1: Text Forms in IELTS Reading Test

	Solely Linear Form		Linear and Non-linear Forms Combined	
	No.	%	No.	%
Cambridge IELTS 6	1	8.3	11	91.7
Cambridge IELTS 7	0	0	12	100
Cambridge IELTS 8	0	0	12	100
Cambridge IELTS 9	1	8.3	11	91.7
Total	2	4.2	46	95.8

Table 1 shows sharp contrast in text forms used in IELTS reading section that most texts adopt a combination of both linear and non-linear forms. However, most texts in other reading tests such as CET4, CET6 and TOEFL are in solely linear form. As is mentioned before, using non-linear text form can reinforce authenticity of a text. Thus, from the perspective of text forms, reading test in IELTS is more authentic and thus more valid.

The adoption of linear and non-linear combined form of IELTS reading materials indicates that most of reading passages include titles, pictures, forewords or tables. Thus fast catching the key information of graphs and figures appears necessary. Similarly, reading articles or news in foreign newspapers and magazines may be helpful for grasping the meaning of whole passage in IELTS reading test.

3.2 Text Topics

Although most text readability formulas may not take topics or background knowledge into account, it is important to see whether reading texts in IELTS reading test have covered major topic areas with balanced proportion. If not, test takers of a specific major may have advantages when attending the exam.

The author attempts a classification of major topic areas of the various reading texts in IELTS by reference to the classification of types of "sciences" in Microsoft encyclopedia: *Microsoft Encarta 2004*. According to *Microsoft Encarta 2004*, sciences (which means "knowledge" in Greek) can be classified into five main branches: mathematics, physical sciences, earth sciences, life sciences, and social sciences. A sixth branch, technology, draws on discoveries from all areas of science and puts them to practical use. Each of these branches consists of numerous subdivisions. After carefully studying the topics of reading texts in some English exams, the author finds that mathematics is seldom included as a major topic in reading texts and no mathematics is ever included in some large-scale English exams like CET, TOEFL and IELTS. Therefore, the branch of mathematics is exempt from later discussion. The following is a brief introduction to the definition and major sub-branches of each of the five branches of sciences according to Microsoft encyclopedia: *Microsoft Encarta 2004*.

Physical Sciences

Physical Sciences "investigate the nature and behavior of matter and energy on a vast range of size and scale" and include mechanics, thermodynamics, electromagnetic radiation, chemistry, astronomy, astrophysics and cosmology.

Earth Sciences

Earth Sciences "examine the structure and composition of our planet, and the physical processes that have helped to shape it" including geology, geography, mineralogy, oceanography, hydrology, climatology, paleontology and palynology.

Life Sciences

Life Sciences include "all those areas of study that deal with living things", such as biology, botany, zoology, microbiology, genetics, exobiology, anatomy, physiology, clinical fields related to medicine such as cardiology, urology, oncology, and pathology and ecology.

Social Sciences

Social Sciences "explore human society past and present, and the way human beings behave" and include sociology, social

psychology, anthropology, political science, law and economics.

Technology

Technology means the practical application of scientific knowledge of all the above four types. For example, technology is used in designing machinery, materials, and industrial processes. In general, this work of putting science into technology is known as engineering, including branches such as aeronautical engineering, marine engineering, civil engineering, computing engineering, genetic engineering, etc.

Since *Microsoft Encarta 2004* points out that "classifying sciences involves arbitrary decisions because the universe is not easily split into separate compartments", it is hardly possible to absolutely distinct text topics accurately on the basis of any proposed categories.

Dividing the total number of 48 IELTS reading texts into each type of topics, the number and percentage of each type of topics are obtained.

Table 2: Text Topics in IELTS Reading Test

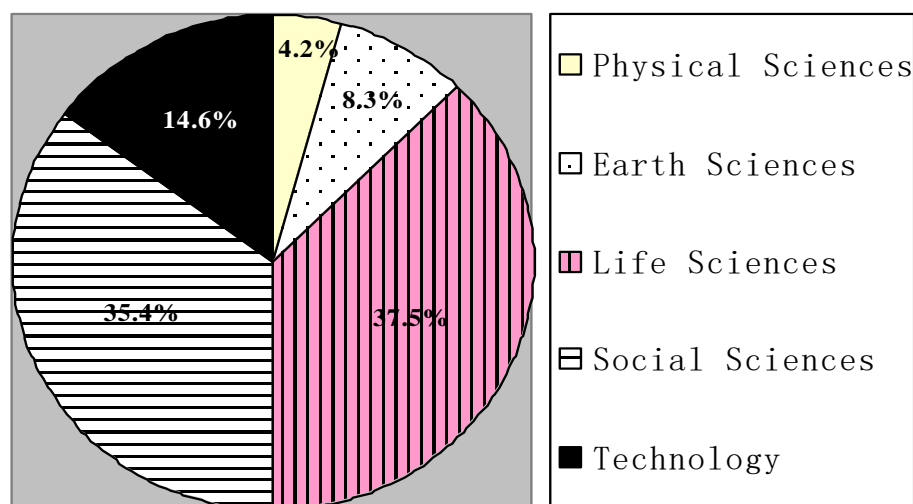|	Physical Sciences	Earth Sciences	Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Technology
Cambridge IELTS 6	0	1	2	8	1
Cambridge IELTS 7	1	1	5	3	2
Cambridge IELTS 8	0	2	6	2	2
Cambridge IELTS 9	1	0	5	4	2
Total	2	4	18	17	7

Figure 1: Percentage of Each Type of Topics in IELTS Reading Test

It can be seen from the table and pie chart that the 48 IELTS academic reading materials selected from Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9 cover all five aspects. More exactly, the total number of life sciences is 18 which accounts for 37.5% as the largest part, and then followed by social sciences which occupies 35.4% with a total number of 17. The proportion of technology is 14.6% involving 7 passages. Physical sciences represent the least percentage of 4.2% with only 2 texts included, which is half of earth sciences including 4 texts.

To draw a comparison, the author cites a table concerning total number of the five types of topics within reading texts of CET4 conducted by Zhang Shuqi in 2006 (Note: reading texts analyzed in this thesis contain 97 passages from CET4).

Table 3: Total Number and Percentage of Each Topic in CET4

	Physical Sciences	Earth Sciences	Life Sciences	Social Sciences	Technology	Total
CET4	3	5	4	76	9	97
Percentage (%)	3.1	5.2	4.1	78.4	9.3	100

Source: Zhang Shuqi, 2006

As clearly illustrated in tables above, the percentages of different types of topics show various emphases on specific topic areas in the selection of reading texts. Reading test in CET4 selects a majority of passages with social sciences topics (78.4%), far exceeding those topics of other sciences and technology, while reading test in IELTS academic module has paid relatively equal

attention to passages with topics of life sciences and social sciences, and those with topics of other sciences and technology.

Here it implies that in terms of topic coverage, IELTS reading test is more comprehensive and thus more likely to be content valid as well as more reliable.

Since the type of social sciences accounts for the largest proportion among all text types, reading articles and news concerning social sciences can be helpful for practicing. In the same way, knowing more social sciences knowledge can help understand some phenomena and latest discoveries appearing in IELTS reading texts. By contrast, physical sciences is the least possible text topic appearing in IELTS reading test which suggests that students may pay less attention to passages about this topic.

3.3 Text length

The analysis regarding text length of reading test is crucial for the evaluation of content validity since it has impact on the reading skills applied.

Text length in this thesis can be taken as the quantity of words in IELTS reading texts. To ensure the counting is reliable, it is indispensable to clarify the counting of words. A compound form which includes a hyphen or hyphens (down-to-earth, one-third, etc.), contracted form (let's, it's, etc.) or abbreviation (UNESCO, NASA, etc.) will be counted as one word. The titles, subtitles and footnotes will also be counted.

There are altogether 48 reading materials in Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9. The result is illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Text Length in IELTS Reading Test

	⬜800	800-1000	⬜1000	Total	Average
Cambridge IELTS 6	4	8	0	12	845
Cambridge IELTS 7	2	8	2	12	903
Cambridge IELTS 8	4	7	1	12	865
Cambridge IELTS 9	3	8	1	12	871
Total	13	31	4	48	871

As can be seen from the table, among Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9, reading passages in Cambridge IELTS 7 have the largest number of average words since there are just two passages whose words are under 800 which is the least compared with the other three books, and two passages whose words are over 1000 which is the most. By contrast, Cambridge IELTS 6 owns the least average words. To be more specific, there are 4 passages under 800 words and no passage over 1000 words. Among 48 reading materials, 31 passages are within the word range 800-1000, 13 passages are under 800 words. The average words in IELTS reading texts are 871 and the time limit of one passage on average is 20 minutes.

Generally speaking, words of reading comprehension in domestic tests for rudimentary ESL (English as a second language) students should be controlled within 250, for intermediate ESL students within 350, and for advanced ESL students within 600 (Zhang Jingyu 98). The number of words in a text is usually within 350 in China's domestic tests.

In contrast, the number of words in an IELTS reading text is around 900. In average passage length, IELTS reading texts are far longer than reading texts in other domestic tests. Words arriving at 800 on average in academic module can well examine the English proficiency of those who plan to go abroad and study further. IELTS reading test's face validity is also embodied in its text length.

Moreover, text length influences the reading strategies. Long texts can be used to test scanning, skimming and fast reading skills. In testing context which usually sets a time limit, text length also influences the speed of reading and thus the difficulty of comprehension.

Since the text length is seldom over 1000 words, reading too long a passage may not be necessary when preparing the exam. Also, reading too short an article is unadvisable since it can hardly practice the reading strategies adopted in IELTS reading test. It can be concluded that IELTS reading comprehension mainly tests the ability to grasp the structure and content of a passage, scanning key information, analyzing and comprehending.

To demonstrate in more detail, the author combines the text topics and text length together to see the potential correlation between a specific topic and its average length.

Table 5: Text Length of Each Type of Topic

	⬜800	800-1000	⬜1000	Average Text Length
Physical Sciences	1	1	0	828
Earth Sciences	0	4	0	909
Life Sciences	4	12	2	887

Social Sciences	6	10	1	853
Technology	2	4	1	867

As can be seen from Table 5, there is no passage more than 1000 words on the topic of physical sciences. All the articles on earth sciences have similar length of 800 to 1000 words. The average text length in the topic of earth sciences is the longest with 909 words and physical sciences the shortest with 828 words. In general, the average text length of different topics varies not much.

3.4 Sentence Types

Traditionally, sentence is the minimum part of language that expresses a complete thought. Bloomfield defines the sentence as "one not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form" (170). Therefore, a thorough analysis of sentences is necessary to know about the organizational characteristics of the texts.

Sentences may be classified along the intersecting dimensions of structure and function (Hu 89). Here are some of the approaches. The traditional approach presents a binary division in terms of structure as follows:
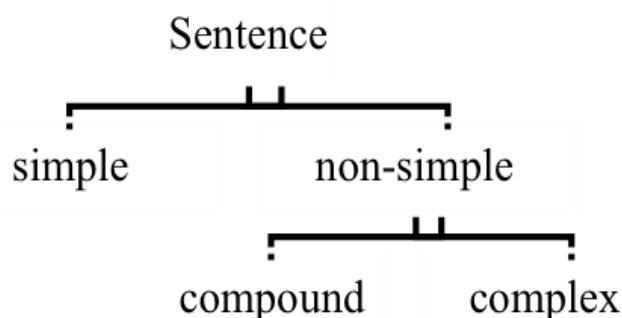

Figure 2: Classification of Sentence Types

A simple sentence consists of one and only one independent clause and no subordinate clause. A compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses and no subordinate clause, linked by a coordinating conjunction or by semicolon without a conjunction. The independent clauses express the related and equally important meaning. A complex sentence consists of one and only one main clause plus one or more subordinate clauses (Liu 27).

The author selects 4 texts from Cambridge IELTS Books 6 to 9 (one text per book of approximately the same word length to average text length). The distribution of three sentence types in reading passages is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Sentence Types in IELTS Reading Test

	Total Sentences	Simple		Non-simple			
				Compound		Complex	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Text 1	35	10	28.6	3	8.6	22	62.9
Text 2	51	14	27.5	2	3.9	35	68.6
Text 3	37	13	35.1	6	16.2	18	48.6
Text 4	38	15	39.5	2	5.3	21	55.3

From Table 6 it can be concluded that complex sentences account for the largest proportion among all three sentence types, especially in Texts 1 and 2 with 62.9% and 68.6% respectively, far exceeding simple sentences.

The more complex a sentence, the more difficult it is for one to understand. Likewise, the use of complex sentences makes the text harder to grasp and comprehend. Thus it demands higher English proficiency.

Now that the complex sentences occupy the largest percentage of all sentence types (more than half of all sentences in most cases), it can be helpful to break down a sentence into components and analyze its constituent structure for scanning a passage.

3.5 Text Readability

3.5.1 Sentence length

Here the author chooses sentence length as a major index of grammatical difficulty of a text. There are many researchers reporting on a positive correlation between scores on a grammar test and those on a reading test (Bailey 56). The indication here is that sentence length, representing grammatical difficulty of a text, has a potential upon the difficulty of reading test.

As a matter of fact, other factors such as sentence types and structures a sentence adopts also influence grammatical difficulty. Nonetheless, longer sentences are more likely to have more complicated sentence structure, such as more clauses.

Many previous researchers indicate that sentence length can be taken as an index of syntactic complexity. McWhorter argues that longer sentences make reading more difficult and tend to slow reading speed (187). Besides, foreign psycholinguists usually regard the mean length of children's utterances as an important index of child linguistic development to reflect individual differences in language competence (Qi and Chen 256). According to Qi and Chen, these psycholinguists have found evidence during the research that the mean length of individual children's utterances increases as they grow up, implying that longer sentences are generally more complex and difficult to grasp. In addition, many reports have obtained approximate findings that formal texts, which are generally considered more difficult to comprehend, have longer sentences than informal texts.

Average number of words per sentence is taken as one frequently adopted unit of sentence length. Sentence length in a reading passage of reading tests may vary a lot. It is usually hard to observe the average sentence length of a reading passage. The author conducts a statistical analysis of sentence length of reading passages in IELTS academic reading test. The four reading texts are the same texts analyzed in sentence types.

Table 7: Average Sentence Length in IELTS Reading Test

	Text Length	Total Sentences	Average Sentence Length
Text 1	881	35	25.2
Text 2	870	51	17.1
Text 3	883	37	23.9
Text 4	901	38	23.7
Total Average Sentence Length			22

As Table 7 shows, the total average sentence length is 22. To be more exact, among these four texts, Text 1 owns the longest average sentence length while Text 2 is the opposite. The text type of Text 1 is life sciences and Text 2 Technology which implies that text type of life sciences may have the potential of having longer sentences and technology shorter. Since sentence length indicates syntactic difficulty, 22 show little difference compared with other large-scale English exams.

By calculating the data in Table 7, the gap between the maximum and the minimum average sentence length in IELTS is 8.1 words, nearly half a sentence. The indication is that in terms of stability, average sentence length variations in IELTS poses necessity and leaves room to improve reliability in this area. Test designers may take the average sentence length into account in case that it varies too much which may affect the outcome.

3.5.2 Percentage of long words used

Similar to the relationship between sentence length and syntactic difficulty, percentage of long words is here considered as a major index of a reading text's lexical difficulty. Many researchers like Grabe have reported a positive correlation between scores on a vocabulary test and those on a reading test, implying the effect of vocabulary on reading test performance. Grabe further stresses the important role of vocabulary as a predictor of overall reading ability (375-406).

Long words are usually viewed as more difficult vocabulary. It is generally observed that the longer a word, the more difficult it is to comprehend. As is known to all, vocabulary is generally classified into basic or core vocabulary and less frequent vocabulary in accordance with their frequency of utilization. According to Bailey, there are approximately 2000 words that account for 80% of the words found in average texts (25). Thus low frequency is viewed as a main reason to explain why a word is difficult to understand.

Longer words are characterized by more syllables or letters, as are implied in many formulas of readabilities such as Gunning Fog Index[1]. According to Gunning Fog Index, long words are those with three syllables or above (except for special terms in capital). The proportion or percentage of long words in a reading text can be calculated by dividing the number of long words by the total word number. The counted results of long words percentage of IELTS reading texts are presented below (Note: the four reading texts are the same texts used while analyzing sentence types and length):

Table 8: Percentage of Long Words Used in IELTS Reading Test

	Long Words	Text Length	Percentage of Long Words (%)
Text 1	143	881	16.2

[1] In linguistics, the Gunning Fog Index measures the readability of English writing. The index estimates the years of formal education needed to understand the text on a first reading. The test was developed by Robert Gunning, an American businessman, in 1952 ("Gunning Fox Index").

Text 2	71	870	8.2
Text 3	99	883	11.2
Text 4	145	901	16.1
Total	458	3535	13

From the table it can be found that the total percentage of long words is 13%. Since percentage of long words indicates lexical complexity, 13% shows little variation compared with other large-scale English exams. The difficulty of IELTS reading texts are equivalent to instruction manuals in terms of readability (according to Gunning Fog Index, readability indexes between 12.6 and 13.7 are of the difficulty of instruction manuals).

By calculating the figures in Table 8 above, the gap between the maximum (16.2%) and the minimum (8.2%) percentage of long words in IELTS is 8%. This indicates that in terms of stability, percentage of long words variation in IELTS poses necessity and leaves room to improve reliability in this area. Test designers may take the percentage of long words into account in case that it varies too much which may affect the outcome.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined concisely the reading test in IELTS with respect to the main qualities of the proficiency test, focusing in particular on validity. The investigation is conducted from aspects of text forms, text topics, text length, sentence types and text readability.

Major findings concerning test validity are: 1) IELTS reading materials are mostly in linear and non-linear forms combined; 2) reading texts in IELTS are more evenly distributed among a variety of topics with the type of social sciences accounting for the largest proportion and physical sciences the least; 3) the average text length is 871 words; 4) complex sentences account for the largest percentage of all sentence types, more than half of all sentences in most cases in IELTS reading texts; 5) sentence length is fairly acceptable and the percentage of long words corresponds to the difficulty of instruction manuals according to Gunning Fog Index.

The major findings in the thesis have reference value in reading part for IELTS Examination learners and teachers.

Major implications here are: 1) reading texts of IELTS provide texts with more authentic forms so that reading articles or news in foreign newspapers and magazines may be helpful for grasping the meaning of whole passage; 2) knowing more social sciences knowledge can help understand some phenomena and latest discoveries appearing in IELTS reading texts and on the contrary, physical sciences is the least possible text topic appearing in reading tests which means that students may pay less attention to passages on physical sciences; 3) the text length is seldom over 1000 words, so reading too long a passage may be unnecessary when preparing the exam; 4) practicing analyzing the sentence constituents can be helpful for scanning a passage; 5) the gaps between the maximum and the minimum sentence length and percentage of long words need to be narrowed down for test designers.

From the investigation, it can be inferred that generally speaking, the text has a relatively high validity even though it has some deficiencies that make the test not so perfect.

Of all the investigations the author has done, there are some limitations in need of clarification: 1) when the test takers are conducting the test, they have to go through reading questions as well, which also account for words. Since this thesis mainly focuses on texts of reading test, the words are not counted which may influence the accuracy of the results; 2) the quantity of samples explored in sentence types, sentence length and percentage of long words is inadequate; 3) the time limit of IELTS Examination is not mentioned and considered when examining the test validity.

Considering all the deficiencies of the exploration, future research can: 1) take into reading questions account; 2) add more new samples in order to exemplify the tendency and make the results more accurate; 3) meanwhile combine the text content and time limit together to analyze.

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