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## OBJECTIVE VERSUS SUBJECTIVE TESTS IN MODERN LANGUAGES

By LOUIS H. LEMPER

**A**N EXPERIMENT to determine the relative validity of objective and subjective or essay type tests was recently performed by instructors in a number of departments of the Kansas State Agricultural College. Two tests covering the semester's work were formulated, one of the objective and the other of the subjective type. The latter was graded by from three to five instructors independently of each other. The three grades were then averaged and compared with the rating in the objective test and with the students' rating in the general intelligence test given at the beginning of the freshman year. The results of only the tests in French will be given here.

Twenty-eight took the tests. The intelligence test rating of only fifteen of these was available. Three instructors graded the subjective type test, which consisted of conjugations, rules with examples, translations from French to English and from English to French. No instructions were given as to how to grade, but the eight questions of the test were about of equal importance. The objective test consisted largely of French sentences with blanks to be filled in. Instead of whole conjugations, a number of verb forms were given in English and the translation into French called for. Each point was given a definite value so that no matter who scored the paper, the result would be the same. Incidentally it may be remarked here that this is the characteristic which determines whether a test is objective or subjective.

The results were as follows. The grades given by the three instructors to the subjective test showed an average deviation from each other of five and four tenths with five cases out of the twenty-eight where the average deviation from each other was more than eleven. In eight cases the grades given by two of the instructors deviated by ten or more. There were deviations of 30, 24, 18, 17, etc. Ranking the papers according to their grade, one of the instructors would have placed the paper which showed

the deviation of thirty in the ninth place from the top while the other would have placed it in the twentieth. Final grades are recorded as E, G, M, P, C, F. There is a difference of about 7 per cent in the successive grades of this scale. Thus while one of the instructors would have given this paper a grade of G, the other would have marked it F.

Ranking the objective test papers according to their score and the subjective test papers according to the average of the grades given by the three instructors, we find the following correspondence:

Obj.	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12
Sub.	28	27	25	21	24	15	22	16	23	20	10	19	26	14	6	13	12
Obj.	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1						
Sub.	1	11	5	8	17	3	4	7	2	9	18						

When these grades are distributed approximately according to the normal curve of distribution—the actual distribution made represented a rather flattened curve—there is in no case a difference of more than two steps in the scale of grades E, G, M, P, C, F, and only eight cases where there is a difference of one step. Students who were repeating the subject because of failure a previous time did relatively better in the subjective test. This is what might be expected. Such students ultimately memorize certain rules, conjugations, etc., that are likely to appear in a subjective examination. They may be able to conjugate “finir” in the imperfect tense but they are at a loss to translate “we were finishing.”

Fifty minutes were allowed to complete the objective test and seventy minutes for the subjective test. More students finished the former in the time allowed than did the latter. The objective test papers could be scored in about one third the time it took to grade the subjective type.

The following table shows the comparison between the students' rank in the general intelligence test and the results in the objective and subjective tests. As was previously stated, the general intelligence rating of only fifteen students was available. The relationship is presented in this visual way rather than by the correlation coefficient in the belief that it will be intelligible to a larger number of readers. Though the correlation is very low it is evident that it is higher between the general intelligence

ranking and the objective test than between the former and the subjective test.

Gen. int. rating	86	83	80	72	53	48	47	45	38	36	31	30	29	23	19
Obj. test rating	14	11	21	10	27	9	25	20	15	23	8	3	12	22	16
Sub. test rating	6	1	16	11	27	5	21	23	14	11	8	2	12	22*26*	

The number of cases in this experiment was so few that objection might be raised to drawing conclusions from the data. Consequently none will be presented in this article.

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\*These were the papers of students who were repeating the course.