

# Study on the Content Validity of College Entrance Examination English based on Gaokao Assessment Framework

## -- Taking 2021 National College Entrance Examination English Paper A as An Example

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### Abstract

Based on the Gaokao Assessment Framework, this paper studies the content validity of the national college entrance examination from the four levels of “necessary knowledge, key abilities, subject literacy and core values” by borrowing the relevant concepts of the General Senior High School Curriculum Standard and China’s Standards of English Language Ability. It is found that the content validity is good, but there are still some areas for improvement: 1) It is important to strengthen the examination of text knowledge, functional knowledge and social language knowledge; 2) Key abilities should be highlighted, such as practical operation ability and thinking ability; 3) It is necessary to increase the examination of subject core competences; 4) The way to test core values should find more scientific methods.

### Keywords

National college entrance examination; Content validity; Gaokao Assessment Framework.

### 1. Introduction

College entrance examination is one of the most important examinations for selecting talents in China. At the same time, the college entrance examination is a high stakes examination. Therefore, the validity of this examination is particularly important. Based on Gaokao Assessment Framework, it defines the core functions, examination contents and requirements [2]. This is of great significance for the college entrance examination to strengthen morality, cultivate people and guide teaching. Therefore, this paper analyzes the content validity of 2021 national entrance examination a based on Gaokao Assessment Framework, in order to provide some opinions on college entrance examination proposition and high school English education.

### 2. An Overview of Content Validity

The content validity of college entrance examination refers to whether the questions formulated meet the test purpose and whether the samples are reasonable. For example, according to the needs of selecting talents, English examination should test students’ core values, subject core competences, key abilities and necessary knowledge. If it meets the requirements, the content validity is good. Chen Wencun (2020) [6] pointed out that validity is to check whether the test questions meet the purpose and how the test results achieve the purpose. Yang and Huizhong. (2001) [7] pointed out that content validity is related to whether the test content is sufficiently representative, which is related to the comprehensiveness of the test content. Liu Runqing (1991) [8] pointed out that content validity is the representation of content, which involves sample problems and reflects the degree of expected test tasks.

Gaokao Assessment Framework is formulated according to the party's education policy and relevant documents on education reform, and is intended to guide the content reform and proposition evaluation of college entrance examination. Therefore, it is quite scientific to evaluate the content validity of college entrance examination English. In addition, the author will also use the relevant concepts of curriculum standard and China English proficiency scale for analysis.

### 3. An Overview of Test Content

Among the core functions, examination contents and examination requirements stipulated by Gaokao Assessment Framework, the examination content is an important basis for analyzing content validity, including four levels of "necessary knowledge, key ability, subject core competences and core value" [10]. The Ministry of Education (2019) point that the evaluation system stipulates that the necessary knowledge refers to the knowledge system composed of the facts, concepts, technologies and principles, which is necessary for learners to understand, analyze and solve problems in their future study and life [10].

The key ability includes analysis ability and problem-solving ability for learners who are about to enter colleges and universities. The assessment framework summarizes three key ability groups in combination with the core competences and the actual cognitive development of students. Students can rely on knowledge acquisition ability group to acquire knowledge and realize lifelong learning. And the practical operation ability of language can give students the ability to deal with crises and seize opportunities. Thinking cognitive ability can enable students to have a rigorous scientific attitude and use their own rational thinking and perceptual thinking to deal with problems.

Subject core competences are the concentrated embodiment of the value of subject education. It is a necessary prerequisite for students to form correct values, necessary character and key abilities. The curriculum standard stipulates that the core competences include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability [1].

Core values require that learners who are about to enter colleges and universities need the integration of necessary good political quality, ideological and moral character and scientific methods, so that students can have correct value and emotional attitude in the face of difficulties. Actively guide students' all-round development of good moral cultivation, struggle spirit, responsibility, health awareness and labor spirit.

### 4. Content Validity Analysis

Through a careful understanding of the definition of "necessary knowledge, key abilities, subject core competences and core values", the author will analyze the content validity according to the above-mentioned four levels. After the author's repeated analysis and modification, the following evaluation results are formed.

#### 4.1. Analysis of "Necessary Knowledge"

In listening comprehension, it tests much textual knowledge and functional knowledge, and the proportion of textual knowledge is higher than functional knowledge. It shows that the examination attaches importance to the setting of oral communication situation, and requires students to grasp the main information in dialogue or monologue, eliminate interference information, understand the speaker's point of view and intention, grasp the implied meaning in the discourse, so as to choose the correct answer.

Reading comprehension is different from listening comprehension. The former pays much more attention to functional knowledge. It also underlines the importance of knowledge in text layout and sentence cohesion, and the ability of inferring implication according to logical

relationship between sentences and paragraphs. It also examines whether students can extract specific information and main idea in the text, or whether they can explore the author's intention and other functional knowledge.

In the part of language knowledge and application, the cloze is readable and the story is complete, which makes it easy for candidates to understand and answer questions. The paper examined many verbs, followed by nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Text completion also examined the basic language knowledge.

In writing part, the proofreading uses the questionnaire survey. It is a very novel style for this examination because has never seen before. The written expressions test the application of comprehensive language knowledge. The theme of writing is Chinese traditional culture, which can enhance cultural self-confidence.

In general, this part has examined the necessary knowledge carefully. The distribution of knowledge is reasonable and has good content validity. Among them, grammar knowledge, discourse knowledge and functional knowledge have been involved. However, social language knowledge such as language style, dialect, variant and so on have not been tested.

#### **4.2. Analysis of “Key Abilities”**

Listening comprehension mainly examines the knowledge acquisition ability group and thinking cognitive ability group, among which the language decoding and induction ability and generalization ability are stressed. In this part, students are asked to understand real intention, emotion and implication of speakers. Generally speaking, there are various ways of asking questions in the listening part, mainly in the way with special questions of “what, which, where, how, why”, which requires candidates to answer the main idea of the dialogue, the attitude and emotion of the interlocutors, and understand the relationship between the interlocutors. However, it rarely involves the practical operation ability group, which affects the content validity of the college entrance examination to a certain extent.

Reading comprehension involves three ability groups. There are five aspects in the centralized examination: (1) Understand specific information; (2) Find out the main idea; (3) Understand the real emotional attitude; (4) Reasoning and judgment; (5) Word meaning guessing. Reading comprehension is the basis of all abilities. Students need to understand the real meaning conveyed by the author. And it also tests many abilities of induction and generalization, examining whether students have the ability to summarize passage, etc. The language expression ability is mainly reflected in five out of seven. Students need to understand the logical then they can choose the correct answer.

Cloze and text completion both test the students' reading comprehension ability and language expression ability, mainly their basic language knowledge. Cloze focuses on the ability to understand the context and infer and judge. Text completion needs to carefully analyze the article to determine the answer.

In the writing part, the form of proofreading has not changed. The theme of written expression is about Chinese traditional culture. For candidates, the topic is familiar and easy to write. The three key competency groups were also examined, requiring highlighting the theme, writing reasons and expressing gratitude.

The above analysis shows that this test examine the three key ability groups of key ability, but we can find that the thinking cognitive ability group, among which deductive reasoning, critical thinking and abstract thinking should be the necessary thinking ability of high school students. Reading comprehension is based on multiple choice questions, and maybe short-answer questions similar to TEM4 or TEM8 can be considered. Of course, this requires the full discussion of the expert group to decide, and the evaluation system of short-answer questions needs to be carefully formulated to ensure the fairness of the examination.

### 4.3. Analysis of “Subject Core Competences”

The listening part focuses on the examination of language ability and thinking quality, attaches considerable importance to students' basic knowledge, induction and logical thinking. However, it lacks the examination of cultural awareness and learning ability. The examination part of reading comprehension is similar to that of listening, but there are also differences. Reading comprehension pays more attention to the examination of students' thinking quality, which also meets the requirements of the examination outline. Text completion introduces the beauty of Xi'an. It is also a discourse to enhance cultural self-confidence. Writing comprehensively tests language ability, cultural awareness and thinking quality, enhances students' understanding of Chinese traditional culture, and has a positive feedback of English teaching in senior high school. As mentioned above, discourse types include practical writing, exposition, narration and argumentation, which provide rich styles for language learning. However, these styles are relatively conventional. In addition, there are almost no interviews, advertisements, cartoons and other texts, and these styles are often used in daily life, so experts can take them into consideration.

### 4.4. Analysis of “Core Values”

At the National Education Conference, president Xi Jinping said that we should integrate morality education into all the aspects of teaching. As a link between primary education and higher education, the college entrance examination should take morality education as a benchmark to cultivate students' correct outlook on life and world. It can be seen that the core value of this test is mainly reflected in the promotion of culture, physical and aesthetic education, interpersonal relationship and ecological protection.

- a) Promote Chinese culture and enhance the “four self-confidence”. The theme of Text completion of this paper is traditional Chinese culture. In writing part ask to write a passage about traditional Chinese culture.
- b) Attach importance to physical and aesthetic education. Both listening and the reading comprehension involve sports. These texts guide the students to form a good habit of life, to keep doing exercise. What's more, the first reading passage is about an introduction of landscape photography and two photographers. These articles highlight the importance of improving students' aesthetic appreciation and good habits formation.
- c) Advocate harmonious interpersonal relations and protect the ecological environment. The listening comprehension guides students to form a good relationship of unity, mutual assistance and mutual concern with their friends and relatives. These discourses provide students with rich thematic significance, guide them to live in harmony with nature and protect the environment.

## 5. Conclusion

In general, the overall content validity of this college entrance examination is quite good, involving essential knowledge, key abilities, subject core competences and core values. However, in the process of proposition, the coverage proportion of necessary knowledge needs to be further demonstrated. Especially the examination of textual knowledge, functional knowledge and social language knowledge should be strengthened. At the same time, key abilities should be paid more attention. Some important English abilities, such as practical operation ability and thinking cognitive ability, should be remedied as far as possible to avoid negative impact on English Teaching in primary and secondary schools. At present, the examination of subject core competences is not completely. Researchers need to explore more in this area to improve the content validity. Finally, college entrance examination English

papers have made a lot of useful exploration in covering core values, but whether there are more scientific operation methods needs to be strengthened.

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