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## SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL CHECKING AND ITS RELATION TO SCHOLASTIC ACHIVEMENET

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### ABSTRACT

The present study explores the relationship between response checking style on Semantic Differential and achievement level. The sample consisted of four schools of two types-two schools with high academic standard and two schools with an average High Achievers (HA) and Low Achiever(LA) were selected each student evaluated a number of concepts against the scales. The responses of HA and LA were analzed in terms of three response categories - extreme, neutral, and discriminatory judgements. Results indicated that irrespective of school, the HA gave more discriminatory response, than the LA. The LA, on the other hand, used the extreme judgement more frequently. The Chi-square value (significant beyond .01 level) further supported test of overall differences in response checking style between HA and LA.

### INTRODUCTION

As early as 1946, Osgood found very marked differeces in what he called personal 'style' in checking Semantic Differences (SD) Scales. Literature has also indicated that scale checking is related to mental disorder, intelligence, response conflict, personality and anxiety (Osgood, et al., 1957 ; Rundquist, 1966; Harigopal, 1973). Osgood invented the sematic Differential "... to measure the

cannotative meaning of concepts as points in what he called the semantic space" (Kerlinger, 1973). It is important to note that the Semantic Differential is not a test which measure the essential dimension of meaning and attitude but a technique for the measurement of attitude.

In some earlier studies Opal & Son (1979, 1980, 1981) made attempts to determine the attitudes of High Achievers (HA) and Low Achievers (LA) by the SD techniqe. These

studies further gave rise to a scope of exploring the relationship of response checking style, particularly in relation to achievement level of the respondent.

In fact in the works of Osgood and Harigopal, mentioned along did show that on seven point scale, the more intelligent respondents used the discriminatory points much more frequently than the low intelligent respondents who use the extreme judgements more frequently. The aims of the present study is to explore the relationship between response checking style on Semantic Differential and achievement level.

**METHOD**

**SAMPLE:** The sample involved two types of schools - one, a school maintaining a high academic standard, i.e, securing atleast 75% and above in the school certificate and an average school securing at the most 50% in the school certificate. Thus the sample in these studies involved two schools of high standard, both including High Achievers (HA) as well as Low Achievers (LA). Within each school, the achievement level was based on the preceeding annual examination. Students from each class were ranked according to merit. Within the first twenty students 10HA (5 boys and 5 girls) were selected and within the last 20 students, 10LA (5 boys and 5 girls) were selected for the study. Thus from each class, 20 students were selected. The total sample seleted was as follows:

TABLE I

SAMPLE SELECTED				
	Class	High	Low	Total
		Achievers	Achievers	
School A	SS1	10	10	20
School B	SS1	10	10	20
School C	SS1, SS2, SS3	30	30	60
School D	SS1, SS2, SS3	30	30	60
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>160</b>

School A and School C were of high standard, and School B and School D were of average standard;

**MEASURING OF DATA**

The sample of the present study consisted of four sample groups. Each student evaluated a number of concepts against nine scales (using a seven point scale). Students of school A and B evaluated 25 concepts and students of schools C and D evaluated 31 concepts. The concepts were: Mother, Father, Siblings, Home, Pocket money, Failure, Recreation, School assembly, Head-girl/boy, Teacher, Discipline, Student, Career, Books Home-work, Cooperation, Competition, Friends, Study, Principal, Examination, School, Uniform, Myself, Being, Accomplishment, Story-books, Stealing, Day dreaming, Laziness and Self-confidence. The last six concepts were not executed by school A and B. The nine were:

- Evaluative Factor: Good-bad, Beautiful-ugly and Pleasant-unpleasant.
- Potency Factor: Strong-weak, Active-passive and Heavy-light.
- Activity Factor: Fast-slow, Sharp-dull and obvious- subtle.

**RESULTS**

The responses of each subject were scored in terms of checking position on continuum. It is important to point out that the primary concern of the investigation was to determine the forcefulness of responses for HA and LA, and not to determine the negative and positive attitudes of the students, i.e, the attitude towards each concept was not of interest. Thus, the number of extreme judgements, namely, position 1 and 7, neutral judgements, position 4 and intermediary judgements, positions 2,3,5 and 6 were pooled together for all the concepts for two achievement levels, thus making three response categories.

**TABLE II**  
**SHOWING THE FREQUENCIES, AVERAGE AND PERCENTAGE OF JUDGEMENTS FOR HA AND LA FOR FOUR SCHOOLS**

School Achievement Level			Judgement		
			Extreme	Neutral	Discriminatory
A	HA	Scores	529	221	1500
		Average	52.9	22.1	150.0
		%	23.51	9.82	66.67
	LA	Scores	821	431	998
		Average	82.1	43.1	99.8
		%	36.49	19.16	43.91
B	HA	Scores	589	294	1367
		Average	58.9	29.4	136.7
		%	26.18	13.07	60.76
	LA	Scores	1183	351	716
		Average	118.3	35.1	71.6
		%	52.58	15.6	31.82

C	HA	Scores	2089	1675	4606
		Average	69.33	55.87	153.8
		%	24.85	20.25	66.15
	LA	Scores	3599	1563	3208
		Average	119.97	52.1	106.93
		%	43.00	18.67	38.33
D	HA	Scores	2542	1661	4167
		Average	84.73	55.37	183.9
		%	30.36	19.85	49.78
	LA	Scores	3724	2189	2457
		Average	124.10	72.97	189
		%	44.49	26.15	29.35

Table II Shows the frequency and percentage of judgements for HA and LA for four different schools. Table III shows the Chi-square values for overall differences in scale checking style.

**TABLE III**  
**SHOWING CHI-SQUARE VALUES FOR OVERALL DIFFERENCE IN SCALE CHECKING**  
**STYLE FOR FOUR SCHOOLS AT THE ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL**

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	X <sup>2</sup>
HA VS LA (SCHOOL A)	23.08**
HA VS LA (SCHOOL B)	30.12**
HA VS LA (SCHOOL C)	22.36**
HA VS LA (SCHOOL D)	20.13**

\*\*Significant beyond 01 level

The scores in Table III indicate that irrespective of school (A, B, C or D) the HA in comparison to LA give at least 50% discriminatory responses. The range of discriminatory responses for HA (for all the four schools) is 50% to 66%. On the other hand, the range of discriminatory responses for LA is 29% to 43%. The LA tend to give more extreme judgements, the range being 36% to 52%. Whereas for the HA the range for extreme judgements is 23% to 30%. The chi-square values in Table III (significant beyond .01 level) give further support to the above results.

#### DISCUSSION

An explanation for such results has been suggested by Osgood et al., (1957). Semantic Differential can be interpreted on three "difficulty" levels of the judgement process: (1) an "all-or-nothing," black-white decision being the easiest; (2) a "neither" judgement as intermediate in difficulty; and (3) more finely graded judgements as being the most difficult. The results of the present study show that the LA seem to take the least difficult way out while responding to the S.D. This is done by giving more extreme or neutral judgements towards any concept. They thus treat these as their anchor points and respond in this fashion. The LA proneness to "Black-White" judgements seem to indicate some form of "escapism," i.e., they do not wish to exercise their judgemental powers and take the least difficult way out of the situation. Harigopal (1973) also found

similar results - the LA used to extreme judgements 50% Opal and Sen (1980) and Opal and Sen (1981) concluded that LA show indifference or have a negative attitude towards the various concepts studied. Such an attitude is perhaps a characteristic way of responding for LA.

The HA, on the other hand, seem to exercise their judgemental power and use discriminatory positions more frequently. According to Osgood's three levels of difficulty, the HA group seems to give the most difficult responses. They seem to respond to each concept carefully weighing the type of response to be given. One to the characteristics of HA is that they are conscientious of giving their "true" feelings as per specific instructions and respond in this particular fashion. Clarity of thought process may lead them to use all the seven points on the scale discriminately.

As also discussed by Osgood (1957) the present findings of a relationship between style of responding and achievement level involves a methodological issue-are each subject's scores to be standardized before further analysis? There are two alternatives: (1) if we standardize scores, it means that inspite of definite scale positions and instructions, same scale positions have different meanings to different subjects, e.g. that a position two means the same thing as one to a subject who rarely uses extreme judgements and (2) if scores are not standard-



ized, assuming consistent meaning of scales, any differences found can be attributed to the fact that people do show real individual differences due to personality factors, achievement, intelligence, anxiety, and mental disorders (Osgood et al., 1957; Harigopal, 1973; Rundquist, 1966), while responding to the scales. Thus, a person who rarely uses the extreme positions may be constricted in his outlook, may be cautious about committing himself on anyone extreme side. Or an individual favouring a neutral position may be following the Golden Mean Principle, i.e., they follow the least committal path. The second alternative seems to be more tenable as standardization might lead to loss of valuable information.

Thus, the present finding indicate a relationship between response style and achievement level. But this may be related to some personality factors in the individual. Rundquist (1966) found some relationship between response characteristic and personality measurement. Thus, there is further scope of investigation, which may reveal certain personality pattern of the individual which probably influence his response style.

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