

二00一年英语写作硕士研究生入学考试试卷

2001 MA ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

I. Write a summary of 300-350 words on the following passage. Use your own words as much as you can. Note that 20% of your scores on this item will be deducted if one quarter of your summary are sentences copied directly from the original. (25%)

Doing Science

Human beings have distinguished themselves from other animals, and in doing so ensured their survival, by the ability to observe and understand their environment and then either to adapt to that environment or to control and adapt it to their own needs. The process of careful observation, perception of a pattern in the phenomena observed, followed by exploitation of this knowledge, has largely inspired the area of human activity known as "science." It has also provided the basis for the traditional methodology of science: objective observation and description of some phenomena, the formulation of a hypothesis or hypotheses about the events observed and possible relationships among them, the use of these to predict future events, the verification of the hypotheses and, on this basis, the construction of a theory of some area of natural activity.

While this process still underlies most scientific activity, the classic "scientific method" has been criticized from a variety of perspectives. To begin with, it is apparent that the "objectivity" of science and scientists strictly characterizes only the lowest order of scientific activity — observation. Even here it is doubtful whether anyone can be a truly impartial observer of events. What someone chooses to observe and the way one observes it must, after all, in part be a reflection of experience and of ideas as to what is significant. Consider, for example, the different ways in which an artist and a layman look at a painting and the different reactions they have to the same work.

The construction of hypotheses and theories reflects the scientist's interpretation of what he or she has observed even more clearly than observation. At this stage of the scientific method, an element of subjectivity is inevitably present. This can most easily be seen in the extreme case of scientists of truly creative genius. Galileo, for instance, challenged the scientists (and the church) of his day with his hypothesis that the earth revolved around the sun. A twentieth century example is Watson and Crick's discovery of the molecular structure of DNA. Clearly, science may involve not only careful observation but also a willingness to be creative; this may entail looking beyond existing paradigms governing research in a given area of study.

A further criticism of the scientific method involves the subject matter to which it is applied. The method was largely developed by physicists, chemists and biologists; it was later adopted by people working in such areas as education, psychology and sociology, where the subjects of research were often people. Although largely successful while used to study the properties of inanimate objects or plants, the traditional approach to doing science is arguably less appropriate for use with human beings. This is due fundamentally to the fact that human beings are different; each is unique and, therefore, by definition, unpredictable. The "average" person, after all, does not exist. Unlike chemicals, light rays or plants, people have feelings and free will. Their experiences are different, too. Thus, the results of an experiment with a "sample" of human beings can never safely be generalized to the "population" from which the sample was drawn,

however similar the other individuals in it may appear.

Partly as a response to criticisms such as these, alternative approaches to investigating human behaviour have become increasingly popular in the twentieth century. They include the production of ethnographies, or eyewitness accounts of life in groups and communities written from notes taken by individuals who often took part in the events they describe. Thus, anthropologists, such as the late Margaret Mead, have studied primitive societies in this way. Ethnographic procedures have also been applied in urban settings in the study of educational institutions, professions and informal groups, like street gangs and drug addicts.

Whether or not ethnography, introspection, case studies, participant and nonparticipant observation, and similar activities constitute "science" depends on one's definition of what science is. Unlike traditional scientific undertakings, research which uses these methods rarely starts out with hypotheses to test, although it may involve some informal hypothesis testing after a study has begun. Most such work is descriptive, not experimental. Practitioners explicitly interpret what they observe, and often categorize their data after the data collection process is complete and from the perspectives of the people they were observing. Their findings are often closely, even inextricably tied to the context in which the data were obtained. For this reason, they cannot be generalized to other settings, even if this was the purpose of such work. Unlike some traditional scientific research, however, what is lost in rigor and generalizability is perhaps gained in understanding. The willingness to recognize the value of these newer "unscientific" ways of doing science may be another instance of the human ability to adapt and survive, of which we spoke earlier.

- II. You have just received a letter from a friend, asking for some information about English dictionaries and asking you to recommend a suitable one to help him/her learn English. Look at the following table, then on the basis of that information write a letter recommending one of the dictionaries. Give reasons for your choice. You may call your friend John or Mary. The length of your letter should not be more than 350 words. (35%)

English Dictionaries

item	Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English	Collins English Learner's Dictionary	Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English
First Published	1948	1974	1978
words	50,000	30,000	55,000
examples	50,000	25,000	69,000
drawings	1,000	200	1,000
appendices	10	9	9
pages	1,055	640	1,303
price	¥80	¥35	¥75
binding	hardback	paperback	hardback

- III. The following are the views of those who are opposed to the death penalty:

1. The death penalty is barbaric.
2. An innocent person might be executed by mistake.
3. Capital punishment cheapens the value of human life.

Examine the above arguments carefully, and then write an essay of about 600 words making clear whether you agree with the above views. Whatever position you take, you have to justify your decision. Give a title to your essay. (40%)