

Simple or detailed assessment
criteria? Analysis of Beginners'
Japanese exam marking scheme at a
STEM university

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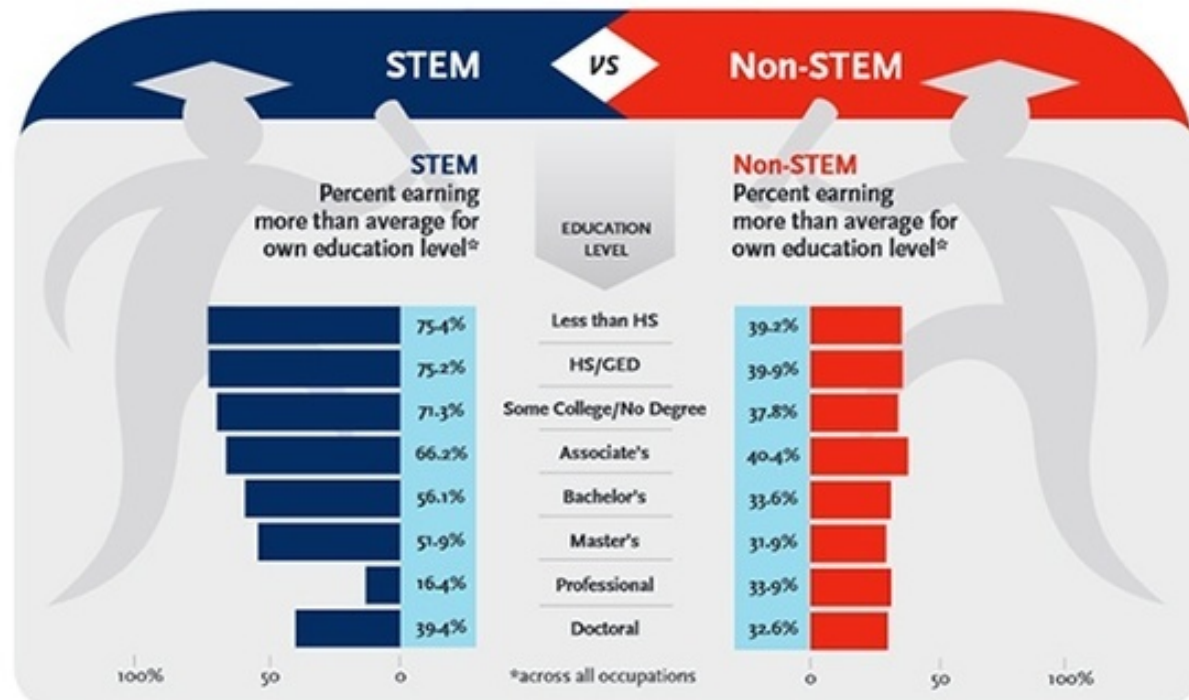


Q1: Please raise your hand if think that grading student writing based on assessment criteria is a subjective process ?

Q2: Please raise your hand if you think teaching STEM students and non-STEM students does not make any differences in language teaching?

STEM

Science • Technology • Engineering • Math



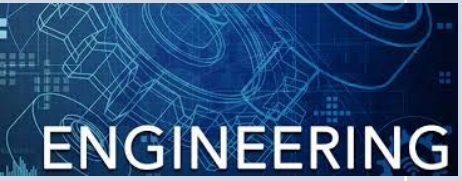

Different pedagogical disciplines

Knowledge application and integration (Smart & Ethington, 1995)

'Knowledge acquisition' (Young ,2010, 119)

'sophistication of understanding, interpretation & judgement' (Young ,2010, 119)

	Hard (science-based subjects)	Soft (humanities/social sciences)
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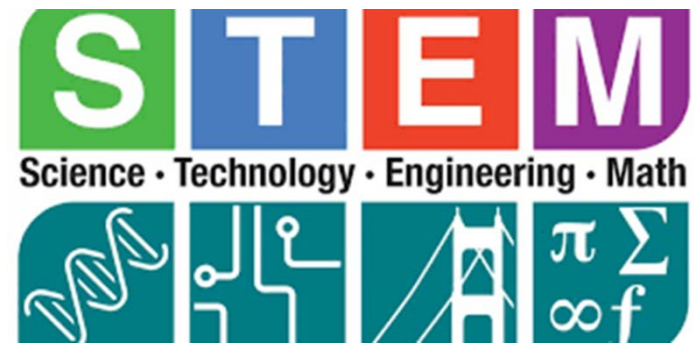
Applied	Hard applied  ENGINEERING	Soft applied  MANAGEMENT EDUCATION
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Pure	Hard pure  Chemistry & Physics	Soft pure  WHAT CAN I DO WITH A MAJOR IN: ? ANTHROPOLOGY AND HISTORY Register @Handshake March 1, 2018 - 11am and 2pm UH 251
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Neumann, Parry & Becher (2002)

→The sample of this presentation = hard pure & hard applied disciplines

Knowledge acquisition



Main cognitive purposes:

Hard pure (Chemistry & Physics)

- Enhance students' logical reasoning

Hard applied (Engineering)

- Problem-solving and practical skills

Practical competence and ability to apply theoretical idea to professional context

Students' characteristics:

1. Good retentive memory for facts.
2. Ability to solve logically structured problems.
3. Adeptness in quantitative calculation.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Theory

Power Distance
(High vs. Low)

Individualism
(vs. Collectivism)

Masculinity
(vs. Femininity)



Uncertainty
Avoidance
(High vs. Low)

Long-Term
Orientation
(vs. Short-Term)

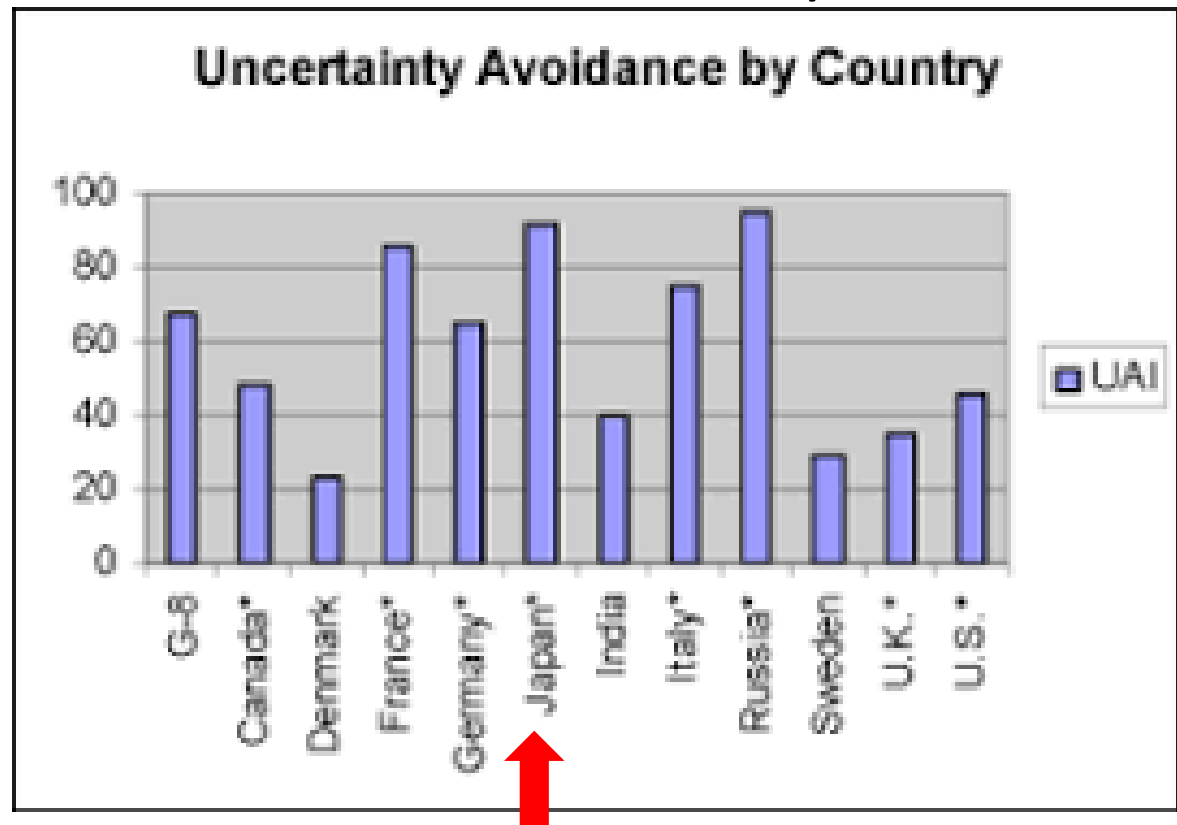
Dimension	Description	Example
High Context	Communication includes other cues such as body language, use of silence, implying a message. Very little is in the coded and explicit part of the message.	Japan Arab Countries Greece Spain Italy England
Low Context	Communication predominantly explicit statements. Ambiguity is disliked, bluntness is valued	France North America Scandinavian Countries Germanic Countries

Hall (1976)
High vs
Low
context
culture



Uncertainty avoidance

- ‘the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situation’ (Hofstede et al., 2010, 191)



Uncertainty avoidance

Strong uncertainty avoidance

- students comfortable with structured learning situations and concerned with **right answers**, precision and punctuality come naturally and fear of ambiguous situation and unfamiliar risks' (Hofstede, 1991, 125)
- 'they (students) are expected to be rewarded for **accuracy**' (Hofstede et al. 2010, 205)

Weak uncertainty avoidance

- students are comfortable with **open-ended** learning situations and concerned with good discussion.
- Precision and punctuality have to be learned and they are comfortable in ambiguous situation and with unfamiliar risks'

Control vs. Freedom

Control

- Right answer/One correct answer
- Accuracy

Freedom

- Open-ended learning/Open-ended questions



Who prefer Strong vs. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance culture?

Those who prefer **Strong** Uncertainty Avoidance in university context:

1. Those who were educated in Strong Uncertainty Avoidance culture
2. Those who study and teach STEM subjects
3. The lower track students who study language in a mixed ability class

Those who prefer **Weak** Uncertainty Avoidance in university context:

1. Generally, Anglophone countries are labelled as Weak Uncertainty Avoidance nations
2. Those who study and teach arts or music subjects
3. The high track students who study language in a mixed ability class



Accuracy vs. Creativity



- Value **accuracy**



Higher marks are given to the students who produced writing with accurate vocabulary and grammar use

- **Strong Uncertainty**
Avoidance culture

- Value **creativity**



-Higher marks are given to the students who use more advanced vocabulary and grammar which is beyond their level in spite of errors.

- **Tolerance for error**
 - **Weak Uncertainty**
Avoidance culture
- Overlook the basics.

High vs Low context culture (Hall, 1976)

High context culture

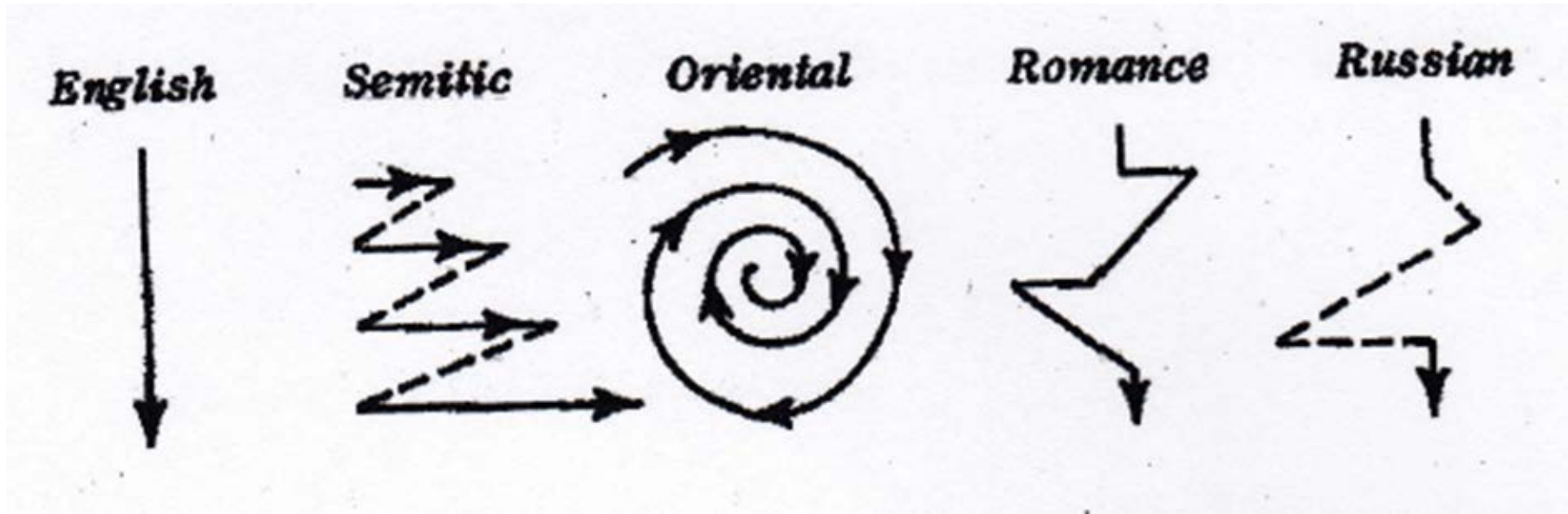
- ‘very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message’ (Hall, 1976, 79)
- ‘HC cultures tend to use **indirect**, non-confrontational, and **vague language, relying on the listener’s or reader’s ability to grasp the meaning from the context** (Hall, 1976, 84)

Low context culture

- ‘the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code’ (Hall, 1976, 91)
- ‘LC cultures tend to use a more direct, confrontational, and explicit approach to **ensure that the listener receives the message exactly as it was sent**’ (Hall, 1976, 84)
- ‘Result-oriented’
- E.g. detailed job description

- ‘In Anglo-Western academic culture, the writer is responsible for direct and explicit construction of meaning, while Confucian-heritage writers show respect for their readers by presenting material without spelling out its relevance and allowing the readers to draw inference from it. (Charnock, 2010)

‘logic which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of culture; is not universal’



Oriental writing is summarised by **‘the approach of indirection’** which is explained ‘turning and turning in a widening gyre’ (Kaplan, 1966, 17).

(Kaplan: 1966: 21)

High vs low context and collectivist vs individualist culture

High context culture and collectivist

- ‘**Information** belongs to the group, not the individual. That way, individuals are linked together into a collective... In group-oriented cultures, **what is known by one member of a group is known by all members of the group**’ (Varner & Beamer, 2005, 241).

Low context culture and individualist

- ‘In individual culture, what is known by one individual is not automatically the property of the group’ (Varner & Beamer, 2005, 241).

Method

- Sample

Japanese Beginners' language summative assessment criteria for written section at a British university which teaches students whose major is only STEM subjects and medicine in 2016/17

Course work (40%), Final exam (40%), Oral (20%)

Breakdown of final exam: Grammar & Reading (30%) and Writing (10%)

Procedure

Categorisation 2

Categorisation 1

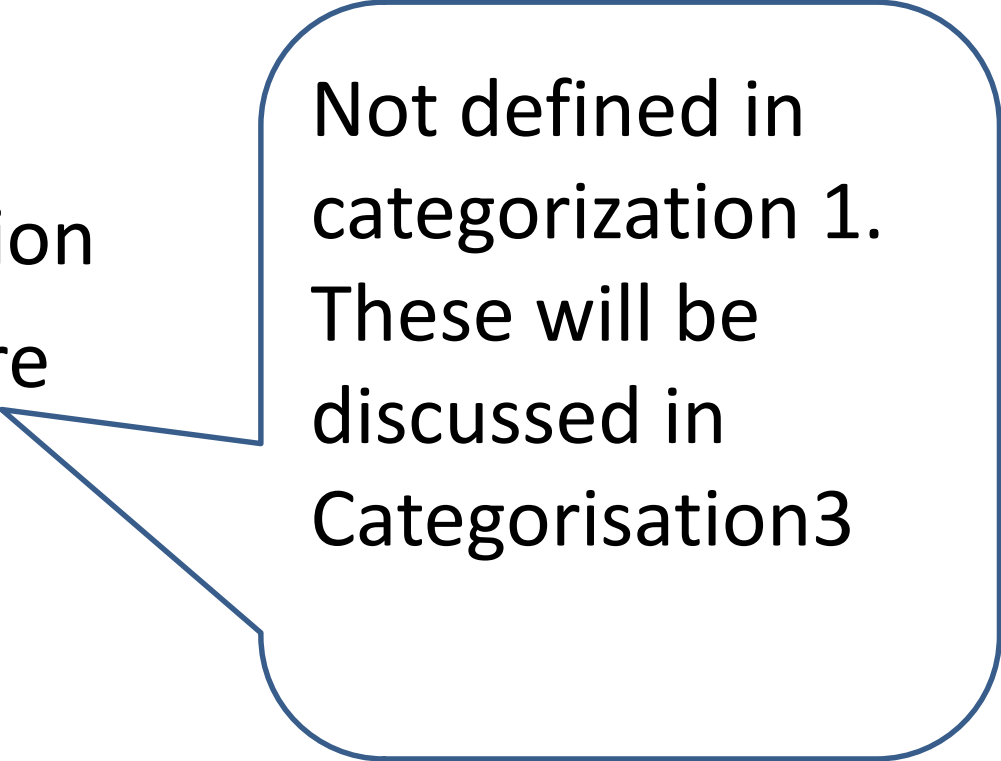
	Assessed criteria	e.g. content
Scoring criteria		
e.g. 70+%		

Categorisation 3

Result: Categorisation 1 (categories to be assessed)

- 4 categories

1. Vocabulary
2. Spelling
3. Content & Organisation
4. Grammar & Structure



Not defined in categorization 1. These will be discussed in Categorisation3

Result: Categorisation 2 (scoring criteria and guide)

80s	Exceptionally good. Very rare to give over 80%, (it is possible to give over 80% but only in rare circumstances).
70s	Excellent. It is beyond expected average.
60s	<p>The average is 65%, which is expected that of the students achieved to be a satisfactory level. When students achieved the satisfactory, Between 60 and 64% is what is called average. Between 66 and 69% is above average.</p> <p>The majority of students may be awarded between 66 and 69 %.</p>
50s	This is below average. These students need to work harder.
40s	40-40% is still a pass mark, but these students need significantly improvement.
30s	If there are any students who are applicable in this case, please consult me.

In addition, the following deductions may apply:

- With regards to how to use Japanese grid paper
 - e.g. Small characters are not written at the top right corner of one box.
 - e.g. Full stops start from the top of the first box on the grid paper.
 - e. g. Repetition of the same mistakes (up to twice): 1 point deduction.
 - e.g. Repetition of the same mistakes (more than three times): 2-3 points deduction.
- With regards to the number of words
 - e.g. Reduce points according to the required lines of the Japanese grid paper.

Result: Categorisation 3

1) Vocabulary

‘Please check if the students use various studied vocabulary from L1-8. (Family terms, occupation, age, nationality, place and item names, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, time expression, katakana words)’.

2) Spelling

- ‘Please check if students write hiragana and katakana accurately. We consider if students write them nice and neat or difficult to read?’
- 70+%: If there are hardly any mistakes
- 60s: There are mistakes but is acceptable, this is considered as average
- 50s: You can see quite a few mistakes. This is considered as below average
- 40s (There are cases of below 40%): There are many mistakes and students do not understand the basic grammar and writing rules’

3) Content & Organisation

- 'The Content is rich and interesting?'
- At this level, students have limited 'Vocabulary' & 'Grammar' so the rich and interesting 'Content' may not be apparent.
- But those who use various learned 'Vocabulary' and 'Grammar' points is usually rich and interesting enough.
- In other words, those who have a few mistakes but do not include various learned 'Vocabulary' & 'Grammar' points are not so rich and interesting in 'Content'.

- Do paragraphs exist?
 - Do sentences flow naturally?
 - The sentences are coherent and make sense?
 - Do the students use grid paper correctly?
-
- ‘individuals are linked together into a collective...
... In group-oriented cultures, what is known by one member of a group is known by all members of the group’ (Varner & Beamer, 2005, 241).

4) Grammar & Structure - 1

- 'Please check if students have used **studied** **'Grammar' correctly** and include various grammar points. You also include particle mistakes in this category.'

4) Grammar & Structure - 2

Very specific description to Beginners'

- State name, affiliation, nationality and age.
- Verbs with correct and different particles (to, by, with, at, from, to), object particles for specific verbs. Plus points are given for the correct use of 'nowhere' and/or 'nothing'.
- **Plus points** are given for the correct use of adverbs such as 'sometimes', 'always', 'very' and 'not very'.
- **Plus points** are given to the correct use of connectors such as 'and' and 'then'.
- Some adjectives: **Plus points are given** to the use of negative forms.

4) Grammar & Structure - 3

- ‘Please write down **correct** grammar underneath the grid papers. By doing this, you will see how many grammar points students used and the variety of their usages. This also helps the second markers to mark.’
- ‘it is helpful for the **second markers** to underline in red where students used incorrect grammar (but you don’t have to correct them as students do not see these scripts)’
- ‘**individuals are linked together into a collective... In group-oriented cultures, what is known by one member of a group is known by all members of the group**’ (Varner & Beamer, 2005, 241).

3 Stages of marking and grading

- 1) The first marker has to count how much grammar and vocabulary mistakes there are in each students' essay writing and record the number to justify their marks awarded;
- 2) Taking into account the number of the highest (Maximum) and the lowest (Minimum) students' number of mistakes, the average number of mistakes is determined by the first marker;
- 3) Based on the Max, Min and Average number of mistakes, the benchmark is created by the first marker.

Conclusions

- High context, collectivist and strong uncertainty avoidance culture.
 - Emphasis of correct answers and accuracy, which shows strong uncertainty avoidance culture
 - Vague and indirect instructions were observed, which shows high context and also collectivist culture
- Categorisations 1 & 2 were not very detailed (simple), but deduction points and plus points in Categorisation 3 were written very specifically and in detail.
- Use of quantitative method to justify their marks to the second and external markers
- Strength of this assessment criteria
 - ⇒ the quality of the grading is more standardised and consistent
- Weakness of this assessment criteria
 - ⇒ time consuming, additional work

Recommendations to managers/directors who coordinate languages



- Revise periodically the definition of categorisation 1 to examine if there are any duplicated categories and update the unclear, ambiguous or inappropriate definitions
- It is worth considering incorporating some aspects of the assessment criteria in this presentation if you wish to enhance the language teachers' grading quality consistent and standardised.

Recommendations to Language teachers



- Inform students whether the focus is on accuracy or creativity.

Accuracy vs. Creativity? The Debate.



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What about your institution?

1. What subject do the majority of your students study at your university?
2. Do you agree with the naming of simple assessment?
3. Do you think your institution's assessment criteria is similar to the one in this presentation?
4. How many criteria do you have in Categorisation 1 and what are they at your university?
5. Do you think that your institution's assessment criteria is clear and not duplicated ?
6. Does your institution focus on accuracy or creativity?