

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL DURATION:
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINESE AND MALAY
PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER IN EDUCATION
AT MASSEY UNIVERSITY

NORANI BTE MOHD SALLEH

1981

1826.1.18

ABSTRACT

The present study is concerned with childrens' judgement of the duration of historical events, distant and recent, and, in particular with ethnic differences in a multi-cultural setting. It was designed to seek relationships between;

- (i) the ways in which children construct the duration of historical events using time cues, and
- (ii) race and sex differences in such construction.

The study was confined to Malay and Chinese primary school children in Malaysia. The sample consisted of 436 students, all in the 12 year age group. This age group was chosen because many of the studies relating to time and time judgement (e.g. Wallace and Rabin 1960) suggested that the development of a time concept occurs in children approximately at the same age and is generally expected to become fully established by the age of eleven years.

The investigation was carried out in two phases. The first phase comprised a group test designed to;

- (i) assess group performances in judging the duration of historical events and
- (ii) permit the selection of students for subsequent in depth interviews.

The interview which constituted the second phase, was divided into five separate parts. Its purpose was mainly to uncover the ways in which children used time cues in coming to conclusions about the duration of historical events and, in particular, beginning and end points.

The data from the group test were quantitatively analysed using analysis of variance to yield mean score differences between groups. The bulk of the findings from the interview questions are presented in the form of graphs, tables and profiles.

The group test findings indicate that there is little difference between sub samples in the way in which children come to conclusions about the duration of historical events. However, there is some relationship to be found between certain categories of answers and student performances in judging the duration of historical events. Dates of the events, in particular the beginning and end dates, were shown to be relevant to the process. Some of the other alternatives (other than the conventional scale of measurement e.g. dates) used by the children to come to conclusions about the duration of historical events are interesting. Many of them indicate the involvement and synchronization of two or more disciplines on which historical events bear. This knowledge is important because children can then be taught to develop the necessary frame of mind for cross discipline reference and consensus on historical time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is impossible to acknowledge all the assistance and help that I have received directly or indirectly. However, I should like to offer special thanks, firstly to the New Zealand Government. The Commonwealth Scholarship provided the opportunity to undertake the study while Miss Anderson's understanding and efficiency indeed made it possible.

On the academic side, it is a pleasure to acknowledge my debt to Professor R.S. Adams for his support and assistance throughout. I owe a very special debt to my supervisor Dr Roy Shuker - his encouragement, diligent guidance and, even more his patience were all most helpful. Thanks are also due to Ms Roselyn Dixon and Ms Dorothy Gardiner for proof reading and editing the thesis. I would also like to thank Mrs Veronica Lobb for typing the final draft.

Lastly I should like to express my gratitude to my family for their encouragement and support during the time of my study in distant New Zealand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	3
CHAPTER II	17
CHAPTER III	31
CHAPTER IV	35
CHAPTER V	79
APPENDICES	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY	93

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Schools, enrolment, students & teachers (31.1.80)	20
2. Sample, for group test x school and race	21
3. Sample, school and race for interview (Phase II)	25
4. Group Test Scores: Totals, Means and S.D.	32
5. Sub-Group Comparison: Means	32
6. Group test scores x school: Totals, means and S.D.	33
7. School Comparison Means	33
8. Sub-Division of respondents into Malay and Chinese Sub-Groups	36
9. Sub-Division of respondents into high and low sub-groups	36
10. Sub-division of respondents into male and female sub-groups	37
11. Question 1 - Category i responses	45
12. Student responses to the two comparative sets of events	49
13. Responses to categories of answers x groups	49
14. Question II - Category i Responses	56
15. Total Scores of Malay and Chinese Students' Knowledge of beginning and end dates of the four events and number of students who referred to Category g, in Interview Question I	61

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
16.	Total scores of high and low score groups of students' knowledge of beginning and end dates of the four events and the number of students who referred to Category g, in Interview Question 1	62
17.	Total scores of male and female students' knowledge of beginning and end dates of the four events and the number of students who referred to Category g, in Interview Question I	63
18.	Groups' score for both the 'yes' and 'no' responses to Interview Question IV	65
19.	Groups' scores for both the 'yes' and 'no' responses to Interview Question V	68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Derivation of Interview Groups	19
2. Interview Questions.	26a
3. Question 1 - Categories Mean Scores: Total Sample	39
4. Question 1 - Category Mean Scores X Groups	40
5. Question 1 - Category Mean Scores: Malay and Chinese Sub-groups	41
6. Question 1 - Category Mean Scores: High and Low Score Sub-Groups	42
7. Question 1 - Category Mean Scores: Male and Female Sub-groups	43
8. Students' responses to the two comparative sets of events	51
9. Malay and Chinese students' responses to categories of answers with regard to the two sets of comparative events	52
10. Male and female students' response to categories of answers with regard to the two sets of comparative events.	53
11. High and low students' responses to categories of answers with regard to the two sets of comparative events	54