

## Consistency in inconsistent responses to multiple-choice tests

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The assessments conducted by multiple-choice tests often used as an indicator of the level of knowledge or skills the score obtained from the number of questions answered correctly. This score, however, may be obtained from different responses, some of them setting an aberrant response pattern (ARP), for example, such as when difficult questions are answered correctly, yet very easy questions are answered wrong.

In this work we aim to provide evidence on whether the presence of ARP in multiple-choice tests corresponds to isolated features, or else it can be considered a consistent style of the person.

The answers to two tests for evaluating basic competencies of Spanish and Catalan applied during the academic year 2012-13 to students of 4 ESO in Catalonia are analyzed. 56158 students completed the Spanish test and 56450 the Catalan test. The average proportion of correct answers in the tests was 0.83 and 0.81 respectively, with standard deviations of 0.09 and 0.14. The percentage of students who had a score associated with PAR was 29.3% in the Spanish test and 24.5 % in the Catalan test. 8.5% of students answered during the two tests following an atypical pattern.

Atypical answers to a test cast doubt on the validity of the resulting scores. The fact that this form of answer is kept in different tests can indicate the presence of any structural problems in the teaching-learning process. Some of these problems may be related to deficits in classroom work, with poor study guidelines, with test anxiety or simply with test cheating.

**Key words:** multiple-choice tests; aberrant response patterns; learning styles