

CAROLIEN H.M. SMITS¹**Introduction**

The concept of everyday memory was developed out of dissatisfaction with the memory measures available until recently. Traditionally, memory measures have been constructed for use in a laboratory setting. The criticism of these measures focused on the abstract material which was used, which bore little relevance to the daily life of older adults, and on the procedures followed, which presumably put younger testees at an advantage over older adults, because the former have become more familiar with these tests through their education and work. Everyday Memory tests are claimed to be strongly related to everyday life. Aspects of memory often included are prospective memory (remembering to do something at a particular time) and intentional (purposeful) and accidental (unintentional) learning.

Procedure

The LASA Everyday Memory test (EMT) was constructed from the Rivermead Behavioural Memory Test (Wilson *et al.* 1985) and a Canadian interview questionnaire (Forbes 1992). The items were mixed in with various parts of the general interview. The respondent was asked to remember to choose the right color ballpoint in a subsequent task (Pen), to remember the name of a girl in a photograph (Photo), to ask the interviewer to return a personal belonging at a particular time (Object) and to recall at the end of the interview if four particular questions had been asked during the interview or not (Quest).

The item score was 2 when the correct response was given without any cues from the interviewer, 1 after a correct response which was cued

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and 0 when the respondent did not give the right reaction, even after being cued. The four Quest items were summed and divided by four to obtain the Quest-total score. Finally, all item scores (using the Quest-total score) were summed to obtain the EMT-total score.

Results

Table 1 lists the psychometric properties of the Everyday Memory test.

Tabel 1
Descriptive statistics of the Everyday Memory Test

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis	n
Pen	1.40	.92	-.78	-1.36	3063
Photo	1.50	.75	-1.10	-.34	2921
Object	1.30	.58	-1.18	-.64	2909
Quest	1.80	.31	-1.80	4.00	2878
Total	6.00	1.50	-.68	-.07	2858

It is clear from Table 1 that the items of the EMT were on average not difficult for our respondents, resulting in a somewhat skewed distribution, except for Object. The questions at the end of the interview (Quest) and the name of the girl in the picture (Photo) were the easiest items.

As a result of the distribution of the four EMT-items over the interview, the non-response over the items differs. Pen was the only item included in both the regular and the short version of the interview (178 respondents), which is why this item has the highest number of respondents. On average, non-response increased when the questions were asked further on in the interview, because a small but increasing number of respondents broke off the interview.

The items do not correlate strongly with each other, resulting in an internal consistency of .38 (standardized Cronbach's alpha). However, when one item (Pen) is deleted from the scale standardised Cronbach's alpha rises to an acceptable .41.

Table 2 shows the correlations of the EMT-scores with age and education.

Table 2
Correlations between Everyday Memory Test and age and education

	Age	Education
Pen	-.11	.08
Photo	-.27	.14
Object	-.24	.14
Quest	-.19	.12
Total	-.31	.19

All correlations significant at $p = .0001$

The correlations of EMT with age are significant, but fairly modest. Older respondents perform less well on this memory task than younger respondents. The association with education is also significant, but even more modest than the age correlation. On average EMT performance is better for those respondents who have had more education.

In comparison with our traditional memory test, the 15 Words test (Chapter 10), the correlations with age and education of the EMT were weaker. It may be assumed that everyday memory is influenced by additional factors such as general intelligence, motivation and personality factors. This assumption needs further elaboration in future research.

Table 3 displays the results of analyses of gender differences. Only the scores on item Photo are significantly higher for our female respondents than for their male colleagues. As a result, the EMT total score also differs significantly between men and women. This difference, however, is fairly small, reaching significance due to the power of the large sample.

Table 3
Gender differences in Everyday memory Test (Anova)

	Cell means		P-value
	Male	Female	
Pen	1.36	1.40	ns
Photo	1.46	1.56	.000
Object	1.33	1.33	ns
Quest	1.81	1.82	ns*
Total	5.97	6.12	.012

* not significant

Conclusions

The Everyday Memory test is still in an experimental phase. The findings show that it has acceptable psychometric properties, but that there is room for improvement. The associations with age, education and gender are in line with earlier findings (West, Crook and Barron 1992).

References

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