

# Extending the cooperation between EAP instructors and the faculty in developing rating scales in order to increase the validity of source-based writing assessment

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# Overview

The rationale for the study and the initial research question

The findings: similarities and differences in assessment criteria used in both EAP and PSIR courses

Results of the needs analysis for the writing center project

Changing conditions and expectations in MLP: Rater related issues

Summary and the need for further collaboration in assessment

# What is the rationale for the study?

- ▶ Research on the relation between EAP and university subject courses is gaining importance.
- ▶ It informs us on how much EAP courses serve students' needs in performing the required tasks in their **Target Language Use** situations.
- ▶ Collaboration between language teachers and content specialists is recommended in literature - this collaboration should include **assessment**.

# The Research Question

- ▶ **To what extent do the assessment criteria used for our EAP writing tasks correspond to the ones used to assess the writing tasks in Political Science and International Relations?**

# The Findings:

Large overlap between different components of assessment criteria in both courses

- a common underlying construct of academic writing skills

# I. Ground Rules and Task Conditions: Common in EAP and PSIR courses

- 1. Essays or Research Papers: partly written in class
- 2. There are rules concerning:
  - The length
  - The kinds and number of sources
  - Time allocated
- 3. Checked and penalized for plagiarism.

## II. Source-based essays- the following features are required and assessed

- 1. The integration of a number of external sources
- 2. The reading and analysis of the sources done outside class
- 3. Three citation techniques being used in the integration of sources.
  - Quoting
  - Paraphrasing
  - Summarizing

### III. The writing process is part of assessment

- ▶ Parts of the process evaluated in both courses:
  - Outline/Proposal
  - Draft
  - Responses to feedback on the outline and draft

## IV. The use of explicit criteria and descriptors

- ▶ Analytic rating scales
- ▶ Categories containing explicitly written descriptors
- ▶ The weighting of each category indicated
- ▶ Similarity in grade bands

# PSIR Essay Assessment Form: Main Component

1. Structure of the argument 40/100	Very Good	Strong	Adequate	Weak	Failing
Relevance of paper (addressing the question)					
Clear introduction, body and conclusion					
Paper develops an argument					
Use of introduction (Is central argument there?)					
Analytical effort (Is central argument well-developed and supported?)					
Logic and coherence					
Use of conclusion (Is there a summary? Is central argument there?)					

# The Findings:

Areas where EAP instructors' **assessment tools** and **perceptions** should come closer to those of subject specialist's.

# I. Synthesizing Skills

- ▶ Emphasized in PSIR essay and paper evaluation criteria **BUT** limited in EAP criteria:

# EAP Course: Assessment criteria for the Argumentative Essay (Old scale)

## ➤ Content:

▫ Each paragraph has a well-written topic sentence and is well-supported with effective citations.

## ➤ Organization:

▫ Borrowed ideas are logically and stylistically well-embedded into student essay.

## ➤ Language and Mechanics:

➤ ▫ The ideas have been properly cited with a variety of citation techniques.

## II. Better understanding of **the descriptors** used in PSIR writing assessment criteria

### ▶ Vague Terms:

- Creativity
- Originality
- Critical reflection
- Familiarity and Engagement with material

### III. Different weighting for the components of the criteria

#### ▶ In PSIR Writing Criteria:

- Clear predominance of the content and integration of outside readings:

**Content and Organization: 75% of the total score**

- Language Skills: 5 %

### III. Different weighting for the components of the criteria

- ▶ In EAP Writing Criteria:
- ▶ Content, Organization and Language Use have equal weighting.

“It is inevitable and desirable that the EAP instructor continues to emphasize good command of language.”

In Conclusion: Further collaboration between EAP instructors and subject specialists is needed in the following.

- **Working on the design and wording of criteria so that they reflect the same areas of importance**
- **Improving EAP instructor's understanding of subject specialist's expectations and inner criteria**

# Needs Analysis for the Writing Center Project

# Departments included in the study

- ▶ Teaching English as a Foreign Language
  - ▶ Economics and Administrative Sciences
  - ▶ Psychology
  - ▶ Political Science and International Relations
  - ▶ Mechanical Engineering
  - ▶ Petroleum Engineering
- (Gamze Oncul, unpublished paper)

# What is valued most in terms of writing skills?

## I. Content and Organization:

- Content knowledge
- Understanding subject matter
- Relevance to the task
- Analysis of the topic
- Clarity
- Making proper connections
- Logical progression

# What is valued most in terms of writing skills?

## II. Source Use : especially in social sciences

- Source integration
- Engagement with source materials
- Paraphrasing and summarizing skills
- Avoiding plagiarism
- Citation conventions

## ENG 102 : Assessment criteria used for the Argumentative Essay (new rating scale)

- ▶ Mining the source texts for ideas
- ▶ Selecting ideas
- ▶ Synthesizing ideas from several source texts
- ▶ Transforming the language used in the input
- ▶ Organizing and connecting ideas
- ▶ Acknowledging sources and using stylistic conventions

(Knoch & Sitajalabhorn, 2013)

## Content & Organization

**A1. The introduction** successfully gets reader's attention and follows a pattern from general to specific.

**A2. The thesis statement** successfully takes a stance with a clear argument.

**A3. Each body paragraph** starts with a well-working topic sentence and ends up with a well-working concluding remark.

**A4. Ideas** flow logically- no problem with paragraph level unity.\*

**A5. Ideas** are connected well with linking devices, reference words.\*

## Argumentation & Source Use

**B1. The discussion logically supports the stance with clear reasoning throughout the essay.\***

**B2. The discussion successfully acknowledges opposing view with relevant evidence and refutes them with logical reasoning.**

**B3. Proponent ideas are successfully supported with evidence gathered from the sources and relevant to the discussion.**

**B4. Sources are presented with a variety of citation techniques.-quote, paraphrase, summary**

**B5. Sources are successfully integrated into the discussion- *Excessive dependence on the sources deserves 0. \****

*B5\*: The paper is not a patchwork of sources cited one after another. Student voice is evident.*

**B6. The conclusion successfully restates the thesis and ends up with either giving suggestions or a striking wrap up.**

**B7. The conclusion successfully sums up the main points.**

Language & Mechanics

**C1** Appropriate and accurate language is used- *The paper does not have simple grammar errors: just a few (1-3) problems with S/V agreement, singular/plural, tense and verb form & accurate word choice.*

**C2** The paper has successfully adopted **APA in-text citation** conventions.

**C3.** The paper has successfully adopted **APA end-text citation** conventions.

**C4.** The paper has almost no problems with the **format, spelling** and **punctuation**-*line spacing, margins, page #s.*

# Rater Related Issues

# Rater training and standardization

- ▶ Very limited rater training
- ▶ Superficial nature of standardization sessions



## Different interpretations of the criteria used in integrated tasks

- ▶ The holistic nature of the rating scale added to the difficulty of scoring individual performances.

# Changes in the structure of the rating scale

- ▶ Every **feature** of the desired performance is specifically written in the form of descriptors.
- ▶ A range of points is allocated to the scoring of each **feature**.
- ▶ **16 different features** are assessed at **five levels**.

# Changes in the structure of the rating scale

- ▶ A code is assigned to each descriptor for practical purposes:
  - during standardizations
  - when reporting grades and giving feedback to students
- Ground rules are laid out explicitly.

# In Summary

- ▶ **Collaboration with a lecturer in PSIR department** with the aim of bringing assessment tools and instructors' interpretations of performances closer: little progress in the understanding of vague terms like creativity and originality
- ▶ **A writing skills needs analysis project** enlightening us on what is valued and the kinds of approach preferred by the departments
- ▶ **Changing conditions and expectations** in the Modern Languages Program : a more and up-to-date approach to standardization and an increasing need for rater training

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# Questions and comments

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