Integrated reading and writing tests: assessing the academic writing construct

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Overview

• Academic writing
• Reading-to-write tests
• The new reading-to-write test
• The ratings scale
• Discussion
The Domain: Academic Writing
Academic writing

Must be ‘text-responsible’

(Leki and Carson, 1997)
Academic writing

• Relies on sources, not anecdotes.

(Moore and Morton 2005)
Academic writing

• Relies on sources, not anecdotes.
• Citations and references

(Moore and Morton 2005)
Academic writing

• Relies on sources, not anecdotes.
• Citations and references
• Summarisation and description

(Moore and Morton 2005)
Academic writing

• Informational
• Impersonal / abstract
• Non-narrative
• Not generally persuasive
• Not situation dependent

(Nesi and Gardner 2012)
Academic writing

• Knowledge demonstration
• Logical reasoning
• Knowledge translation
• Developing arguments
• Critical evaluation

(Nesi and Gardner 2012)
Testing academic writing

Why is this important?
Testing academic writing

Why is this important?

• Validity of score interpretation and use
Testing academic writing

Academic writing domain

Test content
Testing academic writing

Why is this important?
• Validity of score interpretation and use
• Positive washback
Testing academic writing

Why have an exam?
Testing academic writing

Why have an exam?

Why design a new test?
Current problems with Reading-to-write tests
Integrated Tasks Overview

1. Mining texts
2. Synthesising ideas
3. Language transformation
4. Organisational structure
5. Connecting ideas

(Knoch and Sitajalabhorn, 2013)
Integrated Tasks Overview

1. Mining texts
2. Synthesising ideas
3. Language transformation
4. Organisational structure
5. Connecting ideas
6. Criticality – commenting on texts
Reading-to-write test task 1

1. Summary of a text
2. Opinion essay on the topic of the text

(Asención Delaney, 2008; Wu, 2013)
Reading-to-write test task 1

• Summary task
  – No critical evaluation
Reading-to-write test task 1

• Summary task
  – No critical evaluation

• Opinion essay
  – Not text-responsible
Reading-to-write test task 1

• Summary task
  – No critical evaluation

• Opinion essay
  – Not text-responsible

• Both tasks on the same topic
  – Risk of topic bias
Reading-to-write test task 2

• Read 2-3 texts,
• Write essay on position
• Elicits discourse synthesis

Some people believe that global warming is damaging our planet. Others believe that global warming is not a serious problem.

Which point of view do you agree with? Why?

Give reasons and support your writing with examples.

(Gebril & Plakans, 2009)
Reading-to-write test task 2

• Test-wiseness strategy
Reading-to-write test task 2

• Test-wiseness strategy
• Undermines content validity
Reading-to-write test task 2

• Logical reasoning
• Evidence → position
Reading-to-write test task 2

• Logical reasoning
• Evidence → position
• Position → find evidence in support
Reading-to-write test task 2

- Logical reasoning
- Evidence $\rightarrow$ position
- Position $\rightarrow$ find evidence in support
- Confirmation bias
Reading-to-write test task 2

Fundamental problem:
Asks for personal response to topic
Reading-to-write test task 3

• TOEFL iBT
• Integrated task
  – Reading then listening
  – Then write about differences
• Independent task
  – Opinion essay on different topic
Summarize the main points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they oppose specific points made in the reading passage.
Reading-to-write test task 3

- Multiple tasks better than one
  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)
Reading-to-write test task 3

• Multiple tasks better than one
  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)

• Integrated task: no personal response
Reading-to-write test task 3

• Multiple tasks better than one
  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)
• Integrated task: no personal response
• Independent task: different topic
Reading-to-write test task 3

• Multiple tasks better than one
  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)

• Integrated task: no personal response

• Independent task: different topic

• Lack of critical evaluation
The New Reading-to-Write Test
The New Reading-to-Write Test

• Two texts
  – Simplified language
  – Opposing viewpoints
The New Reading-to-Write Test

What are the differences between the arguments in the two texts?

Which do you think is stronger, and why?
The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Summary – Yes
2. Paraphrase – Yes
The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Summary – Yes
2. Paraphrase – Yes
3. Referencing – Sometimes
4. Critical thinking – Usually
The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Mining texts – Yes
2. Synthesising ideas – Yes
3. Language transformation – Yes
4. Organisational structure – Yes
The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Mining texts – Yes
2. Synthesising ideas – Yes
3. Language transformation – Yes
4. Organisational structure – Yes
5. Connecting ideas – Not so much
6. Criticality – Not always
The New Reading-to-Write Test

• (Introduction)
• Summary 1
• Summary 2
• Judgement
The New Reading-to-Write Test

• What are the differences between the arguments in the two texts?
The New Reading-to-Write Test

• What are the differences between the arguments in the two texts?

• Summarise the arguments in the two texts.
The New Reading-to-Write Test

• Which do you think is stronger, and why?
The New Reading-to-Write Test

• Which do you think is stronger, and why?

• Using evidence from the texts, show which argument is better and why.
The marking criteria
The marking criteria

1. Used exact words from CEFR
   “Can do” changed to “has done”
The marking criteria

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   “Can do” changed to “has done”

2. 4 criteria; 8 levels;
Criteria not analytic
Too many levels
The marking criteria

1. Used exact words from CEFR
   “Can do” changed to “has done”

2. 4 criteria; 8 levels;
   Criteria not analytic
   Too many levels

3. 8 criteria; 4 levels
   Yet to be trialled
Discussion

• The new test
• The marking criteria
Thank you
References


