

**TITLE: Raters' Perceptions of the Appropriateness of Textual Borrowing in Integrated Writing Tasks**

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**Introduction:** A recent study (Weigle & Montee, 2012) revealed that the Georgia State Test of English Proficiency (GSTEP) raters disagreed about the severity of different types of textual borrowing (e.g., minimal paraphrases without citing the source, lengthy quotes), suggesting that additional rater training might be needed to resolve such disagreements. The GSTEP is used to assess academic English language ability for applicants to Georgia State University and incoming international students. Therefore, the GSTEP rubric needs to be improved so that raters will be consistent in their handling of borrowed material from the source texts.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine raters' opinion of the appropriateness of textual borrowing on the integrated writing part of the GSTEP. The writing section of the GSTEP includes an essay that is based on two texts that students read and respond to. Although integrated reading/writing tasks are thought to be more authentic than independent writing tasks, there is always a danger that students will borrow heavily from the source texts in writing their essays rather than using their own language. Raters faced with such essays need to know how to factor instances of textual borrowing from the source texts into their ratings.

**Method:** To address the issue of rater perceptions of the appropriateness of textual borrowing, data will be collected over ten interviews with ten different trained GSTEP raters over the course of several weeks. Each participant will be given paragraphs to read from eight GSTEP essays that have been marked with an ID number ranging from 001 to 008. Once the rater has read the paragraphs, he/she will be asked a series of questions regarding the effective or ineffective use of source text in the essays. The interview will then conclude with the rater scoring each essay on the Likert scale of 1-5 (one being extremely inappropriate and five being extremely appropriate) determining the appropriateness of each incident of textual borrowing. Each interview will take about one hour.

**Results:** The results of the study will suggest that writers' uses of source texts on integrated writing and reading tasks produce a significant role in how raters identify and score their writing. The breakdown of the study will propose that textual borrowing in GSTEP essays is assessed mainly with detail to how the source text language is used in the student's essay: raters undoubtedly give importance to the skill of selecting and using ideas from the source to upkeep their own ideas, and to point those ideas correctly towards their authors .

**Conclusion:** The results of the study will provide some evidence as to what is considered appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to textual borrowing in integrated writing tasks. From a practical perspective, the project will improve scoring reliability and validity of the GSTEP. From a theoretical perspective, this study will help us understand more about how raters respond to textual borrowing in integrated writing tasks. Such tasks are becoming more common in international tests of English (e.g., the TOEFL) and the effects of textual borrowing

on raters are an underexplored area of validity research.

**Recommendations:** Questions will still linger about how to train raters to score integrated tasks appropriately, mainly if they comprise considerable amounts of textual borrowing. This study, however, will contribute to both the understanding of rater perception of the appropriateness of textual borrowing and how the GSTEP rubric can be improved so that raters will be reliable in their handling of borrowed material from the source texts.