



Assessing Advanced Writing Skills Using a Written Prompt: An Overview

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Agenda

New Written Prompt Task

- Background and Description
- Test Administration and Scoring
- Field test and pilot plans
- Scoring Exercise

Written Prompt -- Background

- The CASAS Functional Writing Assessment (FWA) Picture Task does not assess the highest levels of ability
- The CASAS National Consortium Writing Committee identified a need to develop a Written Prompt Task to assess higher level writing ability
- The Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) funded and worked with CASAS to develop this new writing assessment from 2006 – 2008
- Tryouts were also conducted in CT in 2007 to ensure appropriateness in the US

Written Prompt -- Background

- The Written Prompt Task is a new writing assessment in the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment series.
- The task is to write a narrative response generated by a written essay topic.
- Takes 45 minutes to one hour
- Holistically scored on a scale of 1 – 5
- Diagnostic feedback is provided
- Designed to be computer-delivered, **whenever possible**

Written Prompt -- Development

- Target population:
 - Advanced adult ESL and ABE learners and workforce participants
 - GED preparation, high school programs, NEDP
 - Transition to post-secondary
- Content of written prompts must be appropriate for both employed and unemployed test takers
- Developed 10 prompts; selected 5 for US field testing
- Plan to develop one more prompt

Placement into the Written Prompt

- In Singapore, placement based on CASAS Reading score
- CASAS is reviewing Singapore data to determine whether
 - the CASAS Reading score is a good predictor of ability to take the Written Prompt
 - and if so, what score is most appropriate

Written Prompt Development Challenges

- Placement into correct test level without immediate scoring, especially in middle levels
- Computer-generated responses vs. handwritten. Is there a bias in scoring?
- Keyboarding skills
- Directions and tutorial development
- Consideration of typos in scoring

Written Prompt Rubric Development

- CASAS researched academic essay rubrics
- Wanted continuity with Picture Task rubric
- Created/revised numerous versions
- Issues: Voice/style, key elements, formatting of rubric for holistic scoring
- Scored both Singaporean and US responses
- Developed Scoring Guidelines and Singapore Anchors
- Trained WDA staff and part-time scorers
 - good success rate

Providing Diagnostic Feedback

- Holistic scoring with targeted feedback on relevant aspects of the writing sample
- Drop-down menu items AND
- Open-ended comments
- Currently trying this out

CASAS eScoring

- New CASAS eScoring application developed for use in Singapore; available in US in about one year
- Responses uploaded after examinee finishes writing
- Responses distributed electronically to scorers
- Remote scoring by two scorers
- Resolution of differing scores coordinated by test administrator using master scorers
- Ongoing recalibration of scorers through inserted check papers

US Written Prompt Field Test Design

- Field test sites
 - Selected NEDP sites
 - Programs in CASAS Writing States
- Field test participants
 - Range of ability, age, education, and ethnicity; about equal number of males and females
 - Native and non-native speakers
- Parallel forms study
 - At least 100 test takers take a set of two prompts on the same day or within one or two days

US Written Prompt Field Test Design

- **Field test scoring**
 - Initially by a small group of CASAS staff and a few others
 - Will use initial samples collected to prepare training materials
 - Plan to train more scorers in Fall 09
- **Conduct inter-rater reliability study**
- **Conduct standard setting study**
- **Field test time frame: May 09 – May 2010**