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Discourse Approaches to Writing Assessment

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Abstract:

At present, mastery of English for educational and professional purposes contributes significantly to expansion of the role of English as a language of world communication. In this context, the teaching--and, consequently, the assessment--of EFL/ESL writing is receiving more attention than ever before. This chapter argues that, although this renewed interest in the evaluation of

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writing has resulted in advances in the field of language testing, it has by and large failed to incorporate insights gained from recent developments in text analysis. There is a considerable gap between current practices in writing assessment and criteria suggested by advances in knowledge of discourse structure. We illustrate this gap by contrasting current practices in the scoring of two major EFL/ESL writing tests with knowledge of text characteristics generated from recent developments in text analysis. The review concludes by making the case for bridging the gap and by proposing a model of writing assessment that incorporates both linguistic and discorsal features of texts.

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