

Determining the Number of Words Required to Fulfil the Writing Task in an English Proficiency Exam with the Raters' Scores

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Abstract : The aim of this study was to determine the minimum, and maximum number of words that would be sufficient to fulfill the writing task in the local English Proficiency Exam (EPE) produced and administered at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. The relationship between the number of words and the scores of the written products that had been awarded by two raters in three online EPEs administered in 2020 was examined. The means, standard deviations, percentages, range, minimum and maximum scores as well as correlations of the scores awarded to written products with the words that amount to 0-50, 51-100, 101-150, 151-200, 201-250, 251-300, and so on were computed. The results showed that the raters did not award a full score to texts that had fewer than 100 words. Moreover, the texts that had around 200 words were awarded the highest scores. The highest number of words that earned the highest scores was about 225, and from then onwards, the scores were either stable or lower. A positive low to moderate correlation was found between the number of words and scores awarded to the texts. We understand that the idea of 'the longer, the better' did not apply here. The results also showed that words between 101 to about 225 were sufficient to fulfill the writing task to fully display writing skills and language ability in the specific case of this exam.

Keywords : English proficiency exam, number of words, scoring, writing task

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