Development of a Rating Scale for Elementary EFL Writing

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Abstract : In EFL programs, rating scales used in writing assessment are often constructed by intuition. Intuition-based scales tend to provide inaccurate and divisive ratings of learners' writing performance. Hence, following an empirical approach, this study attempted to develop a rating scale for elementary-level writing at an EFL program in Saudi Arabia. Towards this goal, 98 students' essays were scored and then coded using comprehensive taxonomy of writing constructs and their measures. An automatic linear modeling was run to find out which measures would best predict essay scores. A nonparametric ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis test, was then used to determine which measures could best differentiate among scoring levels. Findings indicated that there were certain measures that could serve as either good predictors of essay scores or differentiators among scoring levels, or both. The main conclusion was that a rating scale can be empirically developed using predictive and discriminative statistical tests.