Title of Project:
The Effects of Primacy on Rater Cognition:
An Eye-tracking Study

Researcher:
Laura Ballard
Michigan State University
Ballar94@msu.edu

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Paula Winke
Michigan State University
winke@msu.edu

Laura Ballard

Project Summary:
I investigate how *primacy* affects raters' rubric use for essay scoring. *Primacy* concerns the order of categories on a rubric: the most primed category is the left-most category; the least primed is the right-most. I investigate: the amount of rater attention to rubric categories depending on position, and whether category position affects (1) raters' category-importance assignment; (2) raters' score assignments; and (3) category reliability.

I employ a mixed-methods, within-subjects design. I will divide 32 novice raters into two groups, training each group on one of two rubrics: a base rubric from Polio (2013) and a modified rubric with reversed-category order. After training, each rater scores 20 English-as-a-second-language essays on an eye-tracking computer, allowing me to record raters' attention to rubric categories. Raters then complete a criteria-importance survey, criteria-retention task, decision-making-process outline, and interview. Five weeks later, I will retrain each group on the opposite rubric and repeat the entire procedure.

Rasch analysis will be used to investigate rater severity and inter-rater reliability. Essay scores from rating-time 1 and rating-time 2 across groups (base rubric vs. modified rubric) for each category will be compared using a RM ANOVA. The eye-tracking metrics will be used to analyze how long each rater focused on each rubric category, the order of category use, where raters looked within the categories, and their focus trajectory. For qualitative data, I will use grounded theory to illustrate how primacy may shape raters' behaviors and score-assignments when rating. I will provide practical considerations for rubric design and rater training.