



Title of Project:

Test-takers' Cognitive Processes during Integrated Writing Tasks
Which Use Multiple Texts and Graphs as Prompts

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Project Summary:

Integrated writing tasks for assessing the academic writing skills of second language (L2) learners have become more common in recent years (e.g. Plakans, 2008; Gebril, 2010). However, little has been studied for the use of graphic information in integrated writing (e.g. Delaney, 2008; Yu, 2009; Yu, Rea-Dickins & Kiely, 2012; Yang, 2012, 2014). This study aims to identify some of the cognitive patterns during integrated writing tasks, using the Test of English for Academic Purposes (TEAP). It investigates how test-takers (n=40) incorporate information from multiple texts and graphs in two different task features. The study employed a mixed-methods research design which consists of four phases: (1) describing participants' language proficiency in reading and writing, (2) measuring eye movements and keystrokes during integrated writing tasks, (3) finding test-taking strategies through the use of surveys, and finally (4) revealing test-takers' experience of the test through focus groups. The data from eye-movement recording and keystrokes are analysed in an attempt to explain the association between eye-movement and the effect of texts and graphs among the participants. The preliminary findings suggest that the testtakers who have lower proficiency in reading tend to rely on graphic information for composing essays and they are more affected by the types of graphs presented in the prompt. The outcomes of the study are intended to benefit test developers and teachers by gaining a clearer understand of students' cognitive processes of integrated writing between skilled and unskilled L2 learners.