DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: A METHODOLOGICAL TOOL FOR AN EFL COURSE: THE CASE OF IELTS TEST PREPARATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to illustrate what discourse analysis is and how it can contribute to our learning and teaching practical English usage. Firstly, we provide an overview of discourse, discourse analysis, and discourse structure. Secondly, we address the practicalities of how to apply discourse analysis to English language teaching, providing readers with a workable example using one particular approach to teaching a practical English course, say, an IELTS preparation class. In this case, discourse analysis is actually a methodological tool, which easily lends itself to the investigations of textual and linguistic properties and language skills development in an IELTS preparation course.

Key words: Discourse; Discourse Analysis; IELTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis has become a large field and is no longer restricted to the structural analysis of texts. van Dijk (1983) proposed that there had been a paradigm shift from a focus on the "system" of language, explicitly accounted for within structural and generative-transformational grammar to a new emphasis placed on the analysis of language use (e.g., within cognitive and sociocultural contexts), on language use as social action (e.g., within the study of so-called speech acts [821), and on the analysis of "natural" data (e.g., everyday conversations). Due to the growing interdisciplinary study of discourse, we would like to elaborate on the use of discourse analysis to learning and teaching practical English. By using a descriptive research method, we would address the practicalities of how to apply discourse analysis, providing readers with a workable example for the analysis of a discourse and in such the application discourse analysis has become a methodological tool, which lends itself to the investigations of textual and linguistic properties and language skills development in an

IELTS preparation course.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Discourse and discourse analysis

Broad as it is assumed (Stubbs, 1983, p.12; Tannen 1989, p.6-8), discourse has been mainly defined from either a formalist viewpoint as a stretch of coherent language units larger than a sentence (Harris, 1952, p.7; Stubbs, 1983, p.1; Crystal, 1992, p.25; Partridge, 2006, p.1) or a functional approach as 'language in use' (Cook, 1989, p.6; Brown and Yule, 1983, p.1; van Dijk, 1997a, p.2; Gee, 2011, p.16). Central to his research findings, Harris (1952), the first linguist who refers to the concept of discourse analysis in his article 'Discourse Analysis', proposes that discourse is the next level of linguistic constituents above the sentence. He focused on structural attributes of discourse and used them as a key point to distinguish discourse from a random sequence of sentences.

Harris initiated the term *discourse analysis* believing that this application had something to do with both the formal or structure paradigm and the functional trend of a discourse example. It refers both the analysis of a text beyond the sentence limit and the correlation between culture or nonlinguistic behaviors and linguistic behaviors. Later, Schiffrin (1994) treated discourse analysis as both 'the study of language use above and beyond the sentence' (p. 170) or intra-sentential relations that tie the units of discourse to each other and the functional perspective of it. Brown and Yule's (1983) conception seems to be compatible with this paradigm as they believed that the "analysis of discourse, necessarily, is the analysis of language in use, […] not restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs" (p. 1). Showing a parallel approach, Cook (1989) stated that discourse analysis is the study of formal links in a discourse including verb form, parallelism, reference, lexical, chaining, substitution, repetition, ellipsis and conjunctions. However, he also justified "why formal links are not enough" by stressing the importance of language functions both macro and micro and the social and cultural background of language communication. Paltridge (2012) again stressed on the "patterns of language across texts" and the "relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used".

However the question of why discourse analysis is important should be discussed. Cook (1989) states that "ironically, it is a sentence linguist [Zellig Harris] who both coined the term discourse analysis and initiated a

search for language rules which would explain how sentences were connected within a text" (p.13) and concluded that "if we are to find the answer to the problem of what gives stretches of language unity and meaning, we must look beyond the formal rules operating within sentences" (p.13) and this is what is broadly known today "discourse analysis". Controversy has also flourished over the matter of sentence well-formedness and if it can ensure that a text does make sense with grammatical sentences. Such kind of debates provokes an assumption that some rules rather than prescriptive grammatical ones may be at work and Yule (1985) concludes that attaining an interpretation of the messages we receive and making our own messages interpretable is not a matter of linguistic form and structure alone. Language users know more than that and they know the 'discourse' rules. Even Chomsky's theory of linguistics which had been assumed to weigh more on linguistic forms such as syntax added the concept of *linguistic performance* which involves the different ways in which knowledge is used in communication. Such requirements further strengthen a fact that we should study language in use rather than the language itself, and discourse analysis is an answer to this.

2.2. Discourse structure

From the two groundbreaking papers: one from Harris (1952) and the other from (Mitchell, 1957), the study of discourse analysis started to thrive. Though both of these two pioneers did not offer the internal structure of a discourse, this does not mean that a spoken discourse was devoid of any structure. Diverse as it is, the structure of a discourse is of two paradigms: one that shows the macro structure of a discourse and the other concerning the micro-constituents in a discourse itself. As early as in 1970, Labov in his book "The Study of Language in its Social Context" suggested the overall structure of a discourse representing pre-ordered components of a text. Based on Labov (1970), Courthart (1977; 1985) states that discourse analysis is to 'discover the rules for the production of coherent discourse and to describe the conversational structure [generated] (Courthard, 1985, p. 6). Brown and Yule (1983) emphasize the linearization organization of texts or "staging" in the representation of discourse structure. Cook (1997, p. 44) further strengthens this perception by portraying discourse as a "moving film, revealing itself in time." Discourse, in this sense, is known to be composed of a series of components coherently tied up: the prior one of which serves as a

foregrounding for the upcoming and the sequence extends to the final one. Another school of thought is the constituent structure of discourse built upon the interdependent ranks of it. This structure has already been akin to the one employed by the earlier researchers of spoken discourse who came from the Birmingham School of Linguistics, of which Sinclair and Coulthard were the influential figures. The story is different when it comes to micro-structure of discourse. Most discourse analysts or linguists reach a consensus that discourse is split into micro-components of syntax, semantics, lexis, rhetoric, all which constitute the larger pattern of discourse.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Research objective

This study aims to investigate the application of discourse analysis to practical English learning courses. Despite a range of studies about the discipline, the present study focuses on the effectiveness of analyzing and completing IELTS test papers when test takers are trained about discourse analysis and have an insight into the structure of discourse. The following two research questions are set: 1) how do micro discourse features support the test takers to realize the correct answers? and 2) how does the understanding of macro discourse structure enhances the chance to get correct answers?

3.2. Research method

First, a statistical analysis has been conducted on the total of 30 IELTS complete tests to figure out popular question types in reading, listening, writing and speaking tests. Then the descriptive and interpretative research method has been used to figure out what discourse features can be realized in the test papers and how the understanding of these features helps to shed light on the analysis of different question types, better the overall comprehension of the tests and thereby improve the test takers' performance.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
4.1. The realization of micro discourse features facilitates the analysis of test questions

The first feature to be mentioned is **lexical cohesion** or "relationships

in meaning between lexical items in a text and, in particular, content words and the relationship between them" (Paltridge, 2006, p.133). In fact, the skill of paraphrasing is of top concern in an IELTS test paper and to achieve such skill, the test takers are supposed to be able to identify the synonyms and antonyms in a text.

From statistical analysis, the most popular question types in IELTS reading tests are Yes/No/Not Given or True/False/Not Given and Multiple choice (see table 1). Both these question types require test takers to realize the representation of lexical cohesion via what we have known as synonym, antonyms, or hyponyms. Let's have a look at Extract 1:

Extract 1

"The government took care to protect the general populace from potentially harmful medical practice. The Tang legal code was the first in China to include laws concerned with harmful and heterodox medical practices. For example, to treat patients for money without adhering to standard procedures was defined as fraud combined with theft and had to be tried in accordance with the legal statues on theft. If such therapies resulted in the death of a patient, the healer was to be banished for two and a half years."

Question 34

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the reading passage?

In boxes 31-37 on your answer sheet write

YES   ***if the statement agrees with the information***

NO   ***if the statement contradicts the information***

NOT GIVEN   ***if there is no information on this in the passage***

34. Doctors who behaved in a fraudulent manner were treated in the same way as ordinary criminals during the Tang era (IELTS Practice Test Plus 1, p. 126)

Test takers are required to identify the synonymous words in paragraph 5 of the test. For example "fraudulent manner" is similar in meaning to fraud or "theft" and "criminal" is in a hyponymy sense. With grammatical and lexical knowledge, test takers can easily come to a conclusion that the answer is 'YES'.

Similarly, in order to select correct answers from A to E in a listening task

from Extract 2, listeners should be well aware of the synonymous relation between the given alternatives and information provided in the conversation:

Extract 2

According to the manager, which TWO things can make the job of kitchen assistant stressful?

A- They have to follow orders immediately
B- The kitchen gets very hot
C- They may not be able to take a break   D- They have to do overtime
E- The work is physically demanding

And here is the recording:

"Now you may have heard that this can be a stressful job, and I have to say that can be true. You'll be working an eight hour day for the first week, though you'll have the chance to do overtime after that as well if you want to. But however long the hours are, you'll get a break in the middle. What you will find is that you're **on your feet all day long**, lifting and carrying, so if you are not fit now you soon will be! You'll find you don't have much chance to take it easy – when someone tells you to do something you need to do it **straightaway** – but ….(IELTS Cambridge 12, p.12)

By realizing that "on your feet all day long" means the work is physically demanding and "straightaway" means "immediately", listeners may find it easier to select correct answers.

The second discourse feature to be mentioned is **Reference.** Realizing reference relation between lexical items in a reading passage supports the test takers to get a correct answer. Please have a look at extract 3:

Extract 3

"Not surprisingly, considering his dislike of vague terminology, **Dr Biner's** new standards are highly detailed. In essence, **he** calls for a realistic assessment of the nature and quantity of the workload when designing and recruiting for jobs, and training in workload management for staff."

Questions 27-32

Classify the following statements as referring to

A- Rob Briner   B- Richard Chiumento

C- Cary Cooper   D- Janet Fairweather

Write the appropriate letters in boxes 27-32 on your answer sheet

29- Companies should estimate the requirements for a job before appointing managers

(IELTS Practice 1, p38-39)

In this case, it is of no challenge to figure out the correct answer A (Rob Briner) for statement 29 "Companies should estimate the requirements for a job before appointing managers" thanks to the knowledge of lexical cohesion, say, reference.

Lexical chains is another notion that the test takers should keep in mind. This textual feature helps them to identify the gist of a reading passage through a lexical chain or keep track of a listening section. Whenever one is expected to deal with the "list of headings" question in an IELTS reading test, s/he should be well aware of how reiteration works in a paragraph. For example to find a correct heading for the following paragraph in extract 5:

Extract 4

LIST OF HEADINGS

i-	The long term impact
ii-	A celebrated achievement
iii-	Early brilliance passes unrecognized
iv-	Outdated methods retain popularity
v-	The basis of a new design is both
vi-	Frustration at never getting the design right
vii-	Further refinements meet persistent objections
viii-	Different in all respects
ix-	Bridge-makers look elsewhere
x-	Transport developments spark a major change

"Just as railway bridges were the great structural symbols of the 19th century, highway bridges became the engineering emblems of the 20th century. The invention of the automobile created an irresistible demand for paved roads and vehicular bridges throughout the developed world. The type of bridge needed for cars and trucks, however, is fundamentally different from that needed for locomotives. Most highway bridges carry lighter loads than railway bridges do, and their roadways can be sharply curved or steeply sloping. To meet these needs, many

turn-of-the-century bridge designers began working with a new building material: reinforced concrete, which has steel bars embedded in it. And the master of this new material was Swiss structural engineer, Robert Maillart. (IELTS Practice test Plus 1, p.45)

Words in a lexical chain which are highlighted provide hints for the test takers to select the heading "Transport developments spark a major change"

Substitution and Ellipsis is another feature that should be focused on. These discourse features empower the readers to realize the relations between linguistic items within sentences or a paragraph as in Extract 5

Extract 5

> **B.** It's easy to say agriculture has to do better, but what should this friendly farming of the future look like? Concerned consumers come up short at this point, facing what appears to be an ever-widening ideological divide. In one corner are the techno-optimists who put their faith in genetically modified crops, improved agrochemicals, and computer-enhanced machinery; in the other are advocates of organic farming, who reject artificial chemicals and embrace back-to-nature techniques such as composting. Both sides cite plausible science to back their claims to the moral high ground, and both bring enough passion to the debate for many people to come away thinking we're faced with a stark choice between two mutually incompatible options.
>
> **C. Not so**. If you take off the ideological blinkers and simply ask how the world can produce the food it needs with the least environmental cost, a new middle way opens.

Questions 5 – 9

> **Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage**
>
> *YES* if the statement agrees with the information
> *NO* if the statement contradicts the information
> *NOT GIVEN* if there is no information on this

6. There are **only** two options for farmers; they use chemical fertilizer or natural approach.

(https://ieltsmaterial.com/ielts-reading-actual-test-4-in-2016-with-answer-key)

The test takers' ability to realize that "**not so**" is a case of substitution and ellipsis will more likely empower them to have a correct answer of "NO" for the question

Conjunctions, in addition, are indispensible features in IELTS test papers, enabling listeners to keep track of the recording, identify a shift in the focus of a question, and be well-prepared for the key point when a new question is raised. They are also called "discourse markers" by many (van Dijk, 1979, Schiffrin, 1987, Fraser, 1990; Bell, 1998; Blakemore, 2002), which plays a role in managing the flow and structure of discourse.

Here below is an extract taken from a listening test with a myriad of cohesive devices. Being well aware of this discourse feature, test takers can easily follow the speaker's lecturing and find it easy to identify the information to be filled in the given note below:

Extract 6

Question 31-40

Complete the note below:

The use of soil to reduce carbon dioxide (CO_2) in the atmosphere

Rattan Lai:

- Claims that 13% of CO_2 in the atmosphere could be absorbed by agricultural soils
- Erosion is more likely in soil that is (31)……………
- Lal found soil in Africa that was very (32) …………..
- It was suggested that carbon from soil was entering the atmosphere

Soil and carbon

- plants turn CO_2 from the air into carbon-based substances such as (33) ……….
- some Co_2 moves from the (34) …….of plants to microbes in the soil

carbon was lost from the soil when agriculture was invented

The transcript

As we saw in the last lecture, a major cause of climate change is the rapid rise in the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere over the last centure. If we could reduce the amount of CO1, perhaps the rate of climate change could also be slowed down. *One potential method* involves enhancing the role of the soil that plants grow in, with regard to absorbing CO_2, Ratten Lal, a soil scientist from Ohio State University, in the USA, claims that the world's agricultural soils could potentially absord 13 percent of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere – the equivalent of the amount released in the last 30 years. And research is going on into how this might be achieved.

Las *first came to the idea* that soil might be valuable in this way not through an interest in climate change, but rather out of concern for the land itself and the people dependent on it. Carbon rich soil is dark, crumbly and fertile, and retains some water. *But erosion can occur of soil is dry*, which is a likely effect if it contains inadequate amounts of carbon. Erosion is of course bad for people trying to grow crops or breed animals on that terrain. In the 1970s and 80s, Lal was studying soils in Africa so devoid of organic matter that the ground had become extremely hard like cement. There he meet a pioneer in the study of global warming, who suggested that carbon from the soil had moved into the atmosphere. This is now looking increasingly likely.

Let me explain. For millions of years, carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have been regulated, in part, by a anatural partnership between plants and microbes – tiny organisms in the soil. Plants absorb CO_2 from the air and transport it into sugars and other carbon-based susbtances. While a proportion of these carbon products remain in the plant, some transfer from the roots to fungi and soil microbes, which store the carbon in the soil. (IELTS Cambridge 11, p.122)

Finally, the realization of **theme and rheme** is always a prerequisite in the analysis of all types of IELTS questions. Such knowledge is bound to help the test takers to accelerate the speed at which they can comprehend a question and hence complete the test. Theme, which comes first in a question, signals the topic and enables the test takers to stay focused, an important condition required in a successful exam; however, rheme or what follows the theme provides the controlling idea - a feature that the test takers take into account to clear up information ambiguity and decide on the accurate answer. In a number of reading questions, theme may occur more than once, yet, rheme with its uniqueness constraints the readers' choice.

Look at Extract 7, the understanding of theme-rheme relation may support the test takers to find the correct answer faster as *theme* is identical in all cases. To match an appropriate list of information in a page long passage, the readers are supposed to focus more on rheme of the sentence

Extract 7

Lists of opinions

A. Neuromarketing could be used to contribute towards the cost of medical technology
B. Neuromarketing could use introspection as a tool in marketing research.
C. Neuromarketing could be a means of treating medical problems
D. Neuromarketing could make an existing problem worse
E. Neuromarketing could lead to the misuse of medical equipment
F. Neuromarketing could be used to prevent the exploitation of consumers

(IELTS Practice Test Plus 2, p.121)

From Extract 8, test takers are required to choose the correct heading for each paragraph and they may fall trap of the test designers if fail to realize different rhemes that come after the same theme in headings (i) and (ii); headings (iv) and (x); or heading (vii) and (ix). The ignorance of this concept may lead to a wrong choice.

Extract 8

	List of headings	Sections
I	The **disappearance** of traditional playground sports	Section A:..
Ii	The **disappearance** of classic playground games	Section B:...
Iii	The dangers of the playground	Section C:..
Iv	The best **traditional games** in Britain	Section D:..
V	Possible explanations for the bans	Section E:..
Vi	Not a very British bulldog	Section F:..
Vii	No real supports for the bans	
Viii	Differing opinions about the bans	
Ix	No supports for playing	
X	A closer look at some **traditional games**	

4.2. The realization of discourse macro-structure betters the understanding of an IELTS test

Statistical analysis conducted on 30 IELTS test papers with the total of 90 reading passages and 120 listening sections. Overall, the organization of reading passages falls into 4 different patterns (as seen in Table 2) with the most dominant being pattern 3 (51%) and the least popular pattern 4 (9%). It is noted that a full-component passage concludes 4 different parts: background, problem, solution and evaluation; however, most of the reading passages consist of only three components.

Organizational pattern of IELTS reading

	Pattern 1:	Pattern 2:	Pattern 3:	Pattern 4:
Stage 1	Background	Problem	Background	Background
Stage 2	Problem	Solution	Problem	Problem
Stage 3	Solution	Evaluation	Evaluation	-
Stage 4	Evaluation	-	-	-
Number	30	10	46	4
Percentage	31%	11%	51%	9%

Background refers to the topic or the subject matter of the reading passage. It also may be about the physical, social, emotional or cultural setting in which the topic is brought about or even the reason why the debate or issue that follows is brought to light. *Problem* means the detailed description of the topic. It is elaborated in a certain logical development which can be a cause and effect relation, a chronological sequence, a process, a listing, a comparison and contrast pattern, or a general to specific argumentation. *Solution* is the actions taken to solve the problem mentioned above while *evaluation* refers to the writer's opinion about what has happened or been afore-mentioned. Thanks to the full understanding of the organization pattern of a reading passage or a listening section, the test takers may be able to locate the required information from the reading or listening passages more easily and at a faster clip. Anyway, it is speed and accuracy that play the most important role in the successful fulfillment of a test paper.

It is easy to realize that the passage in Extract 9 is organized according to Pattern 4 with the background (paragraph A) and a detailed explanation of the topic in form of listing relation in the 5 next successive paragraphs (B-F). The task requirement is to match the information with a suitable paragraph so question 2 is obviously the background of the topic

"Six thinking hats" while other remaining questions ideally fit in each paragraph with each hat to be described.

Extract 9

SIX THINKING HATS

A- Faced with a number of choices, we may find it hard to make a decision, or may always approach problems in the same way. Emotional people, for example, may not consider decisions calmly and rationally. Many successful people think from a very rational, positive viewpoint, and this is one reason for their success. Often, though, they fail to look at a problem from an emotional, intuitive, creative or negative viewpoint. By always using a positive approach, they may underestimate possible difficulties – such as resistance to their plans – and be under prepared for dealing with future problems.

B- "Six thinking Hats" is a valuable technique for increasing the effectiveness of decision making. Created by Edward de Bono, it makes you consider the decision from a number of perspectives, forcing you to add different ways of thinking to your usual approach. This gives you a fuller view of a situation. As a result, your decisions and plans will be ambitious, creative and sensitive to the needs of others. They will be carried out effectively, and you will be prepared for the

The passage has six paragraphs labeled A-F. Which paragraph contains the following information.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

1- A method of thinking which discourages objections to suggestions
2- A potential disadvantage of considering a problem from only one angle.
3- Possible benefits of identifying negative aspects of a plan
4- How the Six Thinking Hats technique can help to prevent conflict in a meeting.
5- A method of thinking where one person in a group changes the style of thinking that is required.
6- A description of decisions made using the technique
7- How to use what you already know
8- A way of making you feel more cheerful

When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for Black Hat thinking, and so on.

unexpected. You can use Six Thinking Hats with other people or on your own. With others, it has the nenefit of blocking the confrontations that happen when people with different thining styles discuss the same problem.

C- Each "Thinking Hat" is a different style of thinking. With the White Thinking Hat you focus on the data available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them. This is where you analyse past rends, and try to work out from historical data what might happen in the future. "Wearing" the Red Hat, you look at problems using intuition, instantaneous reactions, and emotion. Also try to think how other people will react emotionally. Try to understand the responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

D- The Blue Hat stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings.

E- Using Black Hat thinking, look at all the bad point sof the decision. Look at it cautiously and defensively. Try to see why it might not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan. It allows you to eliminate them. Alter them, or prepare contingency plans to deal with problems that might arise. Black Hat thinking helps to make your plans tougher and better able to survive difficulties. It can also help you to spot fatal flaws and risks before you start on a course of action.

F- The Yellow Hat encourages you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it. Yellow Hat thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult. The Green Hat stands for creativity. This is where you can develop creative solutions to a problem. It is an unstructured way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas. A whole range of creativity tools can help you here.

It is not only the reading passage that requires the test takers to fully comprehend its organizational pattern. The writing, speaking, and listening task will all be fulfilled provided that the test takers know how to organize their written paper or oral performance coherently or are capable of realizing

the coherent way in which a conversation or lecture is presented in the listening section. Moreover, one of the marking criteria in a writing test is coherence and cohesion. Ideas should be organized in a certain logical pattern which is most notably argument, cause and effect, problem and solution, or discussion. Regarding the speaking test, candidates are assessed about how well they can address the question and extend their answer. The extension of candidates' response will become ridiculous if it does not follow any organizational pattern. Following is an example illustrating how important the macro-structure of a discourse is in a speaking test.

Extract 10

Examiner: What food do you like?

Candidate: Well, I am passionate about Italian food especially pizza and pasta. You know my girlfriend is an Italian so she often prepares these types for me and gradually my love for them grows bigger.

Examiner: Do you eat fast food?

Candidate: I must say not. Such habit really does detriment to my health. You know, with a high intake of fat, salt and additive, fast food if consumed regularly surely makes me overweight. What's more, it may increase the risk of getting heart diseases or diabetes, the top culprit of increased death toll among the elderly.

The speaker's capability to present his response coherently and cohesively from general to specific and make it well supported with facts and examples may bring him more chance to get a high band score.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

When discourse analysis goes beyond the structural linguistic analysis, it is no longer a discipline of theoretical intent. The application of discourse analysis to practical English learning and teaching has become more common and in this paper it is used to support IELTS test takers to better their test taking skills; and thereby improve their overall performance. As the key to success in an IELTS test is the ability to identify the task, accelerate the test taking process, master the specific reading skills, and make an accurate decision, the realization of micro discourse features, for sure, helps the test takers locate the required information in the reading or listening passage more quickly and this skill is also able to increase the

accuracy of their choices. In addition, the ability to realize the overall macro discourse structure of the test enables test takers to exclude distractors and come up with the correct answer more effectively.

To sum up, a good understanding of discourse and discourse analysis theory empowers the test takers to increase the efficiency of test question analysis, better their understanding of the tasks, and likely enhance the test score.

Word count: 5098

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