index of "PDQ," Perceived Drafting Quality.  
Whether PDQ has any relation to writing 
performance or ability is unclear, although it is 
probably a fair index.

5. Given the fact that what is assessed is PDQ, it is 
little wonder that students see writing 
performance as comprising adequacy of content, 
handwriting, spelling, grammar, and neatness. 
Such is the case of the reports of secondary 
school students as to the most important features of 
the textual products of a school culture.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL WRITING 
ASSESSMENT: RESEARCH ISSUES

Speakers:  
Alan C. Purves, State University of 
New York at Albany 
Thomas Gorman, National Foundation 
for Educational Research, Great Britain 
Rainer Lehmann, Institute for 
Educational Research, Federal Republic 
of Germany

Introducer/ 
Recorder:  
Wayne Fenner, University of Minnesota

This session was the first of several sessions on 
research on international writing assessment. Alan Purves 
began with an overview of the background of the fourteen-
nation Written Composition Study. Begun in 1980, this 
project is the most recent undertaken by the International 
Association for Educational Achievement (IEA). Previous 
studies have examined the teaching and testing of science, 
math, reading, foreign language, and civic education. 
Unlike earlier subjects, the domain of written composition is a 
cloudy one: it is both an act of communication and 
an act of cognitive processing. Researchers, then, had 
first to define this domain, both empirically and 
theoretically. After this phase of domain specification, 
researchers designed a series of specific writing tasks and 
writing purposes to be included in the study. Third, a 
five-point scoring scheme was devised that would be valid 
and reliable across languages and cultures. Finally, raters 
were chosen and trained.

Thomas Gorman discussed the results from a recent 
writing assessment program in England in order to clarify 
what can be learned from international studies and cannot 
be learned from separate, national writing assessment 
projects. The problem of domain specification seems to 
be culturally relative. The purpose of writing varies in its 
relation to general educational aims, and specific tasks 
may or may not reflect the kind of writing that is 
generally required of students in specific schools in 
particular cultures. There is, however, remarkable 
unanimity of assessment criteria and standards of 
performance across languages and cultures. Content, for 
example, as well as form, style, and tone appear to be 
rating factors utilized internationally. As a result of the 
IEA Study, we have learned more about the relative 
difficulty of various writing tasks, and we have gathered a 
great deal of information about background variable 
relative to writing performance. These variables include 
students' interest and involvement in life at school, plans 
for future education, amount of daily and weekly 
work, and involvement of parents in the educational 
process.

Rainer Lehmann discussed the methodology of 
comparative writing assessment, specifically the 
application of multitrait-multimethod analysis to the 
problem of validating the analytical scoring scheme used 
by all countries in the IEA Study. Although his 
discussion was limited to results from the Hamburg data, 
Lehmann provided information from a non-English 
language context that appeared to confirm the IEA 
student's methods and findings.

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND RATING 
CRITERIA: AN 
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Speakers:  
Saule Takala, University of Jyvaskyla, 
Finland 
R. Elaine Degenhart, University of 
Jyvaskyla, Finland

Introducer/ 
Recorder:  
Robin Marie, University of Minnesota

This session reported on data gathered in the IEA 
(International Association for the Evaluation of 
Educational Achievement) study of Written Composition. 
The IEA study, now in its eighth year, is a large-scale 
examination of student writing in 14 countries (Chile, 
England, Finland, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, the 
Netherlands, Nigeria, New Zealand, Sweden, Thailand, the 
USA, Wales, W. Germany). An internationally developed 
scoring system was used to rate the writing tasks in terms 
of organization, content, style, tone, mechanics, and 
handwriting. In addition, students, teachers, and schools 
filled out questionnaires. These data are now being 
examined in a number of ways.

Saule Takala, one of the coordinators of this study, 
described patterns of agreement and disagreement among 
raters application of a five-point rating scale (which 
include the criterion "off the topic"). He found that raters 
behaved in a uniform manner. Most of the time, two 
readers were within one point of being in full agreement 
with each other. Beyond a one-point discrepancy on the 
rating scale, there was a significant drop in frequency (2 
points off: 5-12%; "off the topic": 2.5-7.5%, 3 points off:
index of "PDQ," Perceived Drafting Quality. Whether PDQ has any relation to writing performance or ability is unclear, although it is probably a fair index.

5. Given the fact that what is assessed is PDQ, it is little wonder that students see writing performance as comprising adequacy of content, handwriting, spelling, grammar, and neatness. Such is the case of the reports of secondary school students as to the most important features of the textual products of a school culture.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL WRITING ASSESSMENT: RESEARCH ISSUES

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TEACHING STRATEGIES AND RATING CRITERIA: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Speakers: Sauli Takala, University of Jyväskyla, Finland
            R. Elaine Degenhart, University of Jyväskyla, Finland

Introducer/Recorder: Robin Marie, University of Minnesota

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