Task #2

After reading Gomez et al.’s (2007) “Proficiency descriptors based on a scale-anchoring study of the new TOEFL iBT reading test” article, I took 9 questions based upon 2 passages from Hackers iBT TOEFL. The questions are categorized into low, intermediate, and advanced level across the three purposes—factual information extraction, determining rhetorical purpose, and reading to learn.

According to this article, the factual information questions are focused on measuring the test takers’ comprehension ability. The test takers at the low level have limited ability to comprehend each sentence and connect the information across the sentences. Moreover, when the questions are paraphrased significantly, they show difficulty finding correct answers.

The test takers at the Intermediate level understand each sentence better and connect information across the sentences. They can find out correct responses when the questions are paraphrased significantly. The high level test takers are able to understand and connect information even if there are very low-frequency vocabulary and high level of “conceptual density” (p. 435) in the text.

Rhetorical Purpose questions test the ability to recognize the purpose of the text. The test takers at the low level identify the author’s purpose when it is clearly indicated or easy to infer from the text. The test takers at the Intermediate performance level can understand the purpose of reading when it is somewhat implicit or not easy to infer from the text. The high level test takers find out the purpose of reading even in the conceptually dense text.

Reading to learn test questions assess the test takers’ ability to abstract the major ideas from the reading passage to connect and integrate the information as a coherent whole. The test forms
are shown as summary or table completion. The low level test takers can draw major ideas from a text when the information is clearly presented, or explained. Text takers at the Intermediate level are also able to abstract the major idea from the text containing the more complex syntax and vocabulary if the text is not dense. Test takers at the High level are able to abstract the major ideas even when the text is dense and contains complex language.

Test sample

This task #2 offers me some clues how to distinguish question types depending on the students’ level and test purposes. I took passages from iBT TOEFL test as a well-known standard test form, then I divided test questions into factual information, rhetorical purpose and reading to learn across the low, intermediate and high level.

I. Refer to the following passage.


Development of State

A critical problem in anthropology is the transformation from egalitarian to state societies, or the conversion of bands or tribes to chiefdoms and eventually, hierarchically-organized states. With community management as the primary ambition, humans seem to organize themselves in a variety of ways, some facile in nature and others multifarious and complicated.

The simplest form of human society is an egalitarian structure in which kinship ties are crucial to community cohesion. A band society is usually no more complex than a congregation of extended families, having little need for formal regulations or leadership because the communities are small enough that habits, customs, and domestic power are shared equally.
Should an individual show unusual charismatic qualities, such as a great sensitivity to public opinion, he or she may take on an intermittent leadership role, but this position is voluntary, and rarely permanent and will dissolve after the death of the individual. In a larger egalitarian society, a tribe, several families come together clearly bounded by traditional values and belief systems. Primordial ties remain privileged and norms are situated among familial relationships. When disputes break out, they are mediated by a group of elders with many years of experience, who often offer advice when major decisions must be made that will affect the entire group. At times, disagreements may be settled with a dual, and if underlying rules of the community are broken, the violator will be punished by the clans, reinforcing a homogeneous, parochial and stable ideological environment.

These deep-rooted customs are threatened in times of scarcity of food and members of band or bribe seek out other egalitarian societies to from inter-marriage alliances that will help both populations manage unpredictable resources. Mingling, however, can be detrimental to community cohesion, forcing aggregates to cope with diverse and often conflicting life philosophies. If discord between kin groups is unavoidable, the one way to circumvent war is to establish an unbiased, institutionalized leader or chief who can settle conflicts and invoke appropriate retribution for crimes.

From this arrangement, a more complex framework develops, led by a centralized leadership where power can be exercised over the whole population through a hierarchical structure and a monopoly of command. Called chiefdoms, these societies are generally composed of subsidiary communities surrounding one main population and are controlled by one office positioned in that primary location. Power is usually administered by a single kin group or an individual supported by a theology that situates the head of the society in a dogmatic role, one that is passed down to a
child through a supernatural authority. Under a patriarchal scheme, this usually presents as a king transmitting his power by primogeniture, meaning to the first-born son.

Chiefdoms can essentially be characterized by universal inequity between the elite and the common people. The power imbalance is validated through a coordination of economic resources, wherein lower class peasants work in agriculture and trade to provide food and other goods for the higher class, who in turn reciprocate by fulfilling certain social roles such as mediators. In its most pronounced version, chiefdom leadership will not only forestall external invaders but also intervene in domestic disputers by imposing a series of punitive laws. Constant threat of force ultimately sets up political control over the peasants, but often leads to friction between the two stratified groups of people. For this reason, chiefdoms are fairly unstable and predisposed to a pattern of degeneration and renewal. Animosity between the classes may be alleviated through a judicial system that provides third-party representation for the rights of each, but without a fully implemented political system with visible offices bound by territorial boundaries and differentiated by strict codes, the chiefdom will not develop into a more progressive society.

To become an advanced state-run civilization would require further augmentation of instructions, fulfilled by a bureaucratic apparatus. As the population increases and higher agricultural yields are achieved, more labor energy and finances are funneled into government architecture to pay for dedicated positions to support the entrenched centralized leadership. National identity within this highly intricate composition develops over a long period of time, and is frequently reinforced through public display of power.

1. The word they in the passage refers to (d) (Low, Factual information)

   a) ties
b) norms

c) relationships

d) disputes

(This question is categorized into the factual information, low level because test takers can answer correctly with limited ability to understand individual sentences.)

2. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the underlined sentence in the passage? (a) (High, Factual information)

a) Conflicts are sometimes solved by combat, and in order to maintain the status quo, a transgressor will be disciplined by the community.

b) While sometimes grievances can be settled through duels, more serious cases are decided by the group as a whole.

c) For very serious offenses, the perpetrator will undergo severe sanctions and be excluded from the community.

d) Breaking the rules of the group is considered one of the most serious infractions and often will lead to rigorous punishments.

(This question is categorized into the factual information, high level because it is significantly paraphrased, has very low-frequency vocabulary and has a high level of conceptual density.)

3. It can be inferred from the passage that the primary difference between the leaders of chiefdoms and egalitarian societies is (a) (Intermediate, Factual information)

a) the manner in which power is passed to the successive generations

b) their abilities to appoint qualified individuals to public officials

c) the number of people with whom the leader must share power

d) the admiration by the populace over whom they control
(This question is categorized into the factual information, intermediate level because test takers need greater ability to connect information across two or more sentences and recognize information when it is significantly paraphrased.)

4. In paragraph 6, the author mentions advanced state-run civilization in order to ( b )

(Intermediate, Rhetorical purpose)

a) contrast its institutions to those of tribes
b) show the next stage in the evolution of state
c) explain the benefits of centralized power
d) suggest the demerits of previous social systems

(This question is categorized into the rhetorical purpose, intermediate level because the test takers can give correct answer when they understand the purpose of specific information within the paragraph somewhat implicit or not easy to infer from the text.)

II. Refer to the following passage.


Heat Islands

In 1880s, the city of Los Angeles was a desolate chunk of land on the western coast of the United States. As pioneers migrated westward, they settled in the area, built widespread irrigation, planted orchards, and became some of the wealthiest farmers in the country. Over time, however, the cool fruit trees were overcome by hot pavement and tall buildings, temperature, often 10 degrees higher than in the suburbs and continuing to increase by about one degree every decade. Isothermic maps of a region, which show the geographic distribution of
the monthly or annual average temperature values, indicate a heat spike in the location of the city that is likened to the contours of an island, and for this reason the phenomenon is called an Urban Heat Island, or UHI.

It often develops in tandem with metropolitan progress and appears in other major population centers. Scientists are becoming more convinced that Urban Heat Islands increasing the demand for refrigeration and air conditioning in warmer climates. This, in turn, leads to higher energy consumption and puts strain on local power plants that produce heat-trapping greenhouse gases. In addition, higher average temperatures can cause a startling change in wind patterns, rainfall, and the amount of artificial ozone-producing smog in affected areas, leading to detrimental climate changes for outlying agricultural regions.

Facing such urgent environmental concerns, geologists have now delved into finding ways to combat these phenomena by looking at their root causes. Tall buildings and urban structures, a city’s geometrics, greatly influence the city temperature by providing surface areas that display a greater ability to trap and retain heat than their natural surroundings. Albedo, the fraction of reflected light, is diminished by the implementation of darker building material, such as asphalt and black rooftops, which due to its color, absorbs the majority of the radial spectrum and does not reflect much radiation back into the environment. This causes warmth to linger even after sunset and provides no way for the city to cool itself down. Mediterranean cultures have attempted to counter this trend by using low-absorption terracotta and fair hues of building pains and a larger proportion of the sun’s rays are bounced back into the atmosphere. By comparison, Americans have constantly concentrated more on the aesthetic qualities of their architecture, using inefficient but visually pleasing resources. Studies now show that the importance of color
is so striking that temperature differences between a light rooftop and a darker one can exceed 70 degrees.

The second main determinant is the lack of vegetation in urban environments. As more people move into cities and away from rural communities, trees and vegetation are displaced to make way for new roadways and other infrastructure. Planners shift their attention away from replacing lost greenery toward the construction of enough residential and commercial buildings to accommodate the increasing population. They fail to notice the obvious ways in which trees can reduce heat -- by limiting wind speed or by shading buildings and intercepting sunlight by absorbing the radiation through their foliage.

Covering an air conditioning unit with vines, for example, can keep the machine cool and allow it to function more efficiently. Deciduous trees planted on the west and south sides, which are the sunniest, of buildings can provide enough shade to cut down energy consumption by up to 30%. Furthermore, shrubs and bushes can neutralize atmospheric heat by releasing water through evapotranspiration like when a person sweats during physical activity. A plant takes in groundwater through its roots and secretes it through pores in its leaves. A large tree may produce up to 40 gallons of water in a day, effectively eliminating as much heat as a 100 W bulb left on for eight hours. The neutralizing effect of this process can greatly lower the temperature in an urban environment. A concentrated effort to create more green space within cities would not only enhance the city’s beauty, but also most importantly, temper the conditions found in hot cities.

1. According to the passage, an Urban Heat Island is termed so because ( b ) (Low, Factual Information)

   a) the temperature of the city is significantly greater than that of the suburbs
b) an isotherm in the urban area resembles the contour line of an island

c) it usually happens in heavily industrialized areas of major isles

d) the location of the city in which it occurs is isolated from other areas

(This question is categorized into factual information low level because the it repeats particular words in the text like “Isothermic maps of a region, … is likened to the contours of an island”)

2. According to paragraph 3, deep colored buildings contribute to a rise in temperatures by (c)

(Intermediate, Factual information)

a) increasing the amount of radiant energy reflected

b) inhibiting the absorption of energy by nearby plants

c) not giving off a great deal of heat into the atmosphere

d) requiring occupants to use higher levels of energy

(This question is categorized into factual information intermediate level because it significantly paraphrased the information in the text like “absorbs the majority of the radial spectrum and does not reflect much radiation back into the environment” however, it is not very complex in the concept.)

3. The word itself in the passage refers to (d)

(Low, factual information)

a) radiation

b) warmth

c) sunset

d) city

(This question is categorized into the factual information, low level because test takers can answer correctly with limited ability to understand individual sentences.)
4. In paragraph 3, the author mentions Mediterranean cultures in order to (a) (Intermediate, Rhetoric purpose)
   a) contrast their response to the UHI to that in America
   b) emphasize the ill effects of buildings painted in dark colors
   c) argue that America’s overuse of energy causes heat islands
   d) show beauty and function can both be incorporated into design

(This question is categorized into rhetoric purpose, intermediate level because it asks the purpose of referring to specific information in the text and it is not explicit and easy to infer like “Mediterranean culture attempted to counter this trend by using low-absorption terracotta and fair hues of building pains and a larger proportion of the sun’s rays are bounced back into the atmosphere. By comparison, Americans have constantly concentrated more on the aesthetic qualities of their architecture, using inefficient but visually pleasing resources.” Specifically “counter this trend” and “by comparison” are used as clues to choose correct answer.)

5. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the underlined sentence in the passage? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information. (c) (Intermediate, Factual information)
   a) If a city concentrated more upon nature, then it would look much more attractive.
   b) With the increasing temperatures, cities have been turning to green spaces as a solution
   c) For both appearances and temperatures, urban areas need more greenery.
   d) Making green tracks of land adds to the beauty of urban areas to a great extent

(This question is categorized into factual information, intermediate level because it significantly paraphrased the sentence but not so complex in the content.)
6. An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. (Reading to learn, intermediate)

Urban Heat Islands are created by the confluence of humorous factors that raise the ambient temperatures.

- c) Smog in industrial cities is growing worse due to the increasing temperature.
- d) Los Angeles has suffered from Urban Heat Islands more severely.
- f) Densely packed buildings reserve much solar radiation and release it slowly

(These reading to learn test questions assess the test takers’ ability to abstract the major ideas from the reading passage to connect and integrate the information as a coherent whole. The summary question suggests six answer choices and asks to choose three correct ones. This question is categorized into intermediate level because it requires the test takers to abstract the major idea from the text containing the more complex syntax and vocabulary. The text is considered not dense.)

**Task #3**


After reading two articles, I selected two texts, one is culturally biased and the other is culturally neutral and revised a summary writing prompt along with an evaluation rubric. The expected audiences are EFL college students in the U.S.A. in the high level because for the ESL students the summary writing is considered as an integrated reading skill.

**Culturally biased article**


I consider this article as culturally biased because it contains some misconception of foreign marriage among Russian women and foreign men, and a biased opinion towards Australian women. I think this article has a tendency to generalize to the readers.

**70 Brides for 7 Foreigners**

Russia seems to be turning into a major exporter of brides. Almost 1,500 marriages with foreigners are registered in Moscow every year. Another 10,000 women go to the international marriage agency Alliance each year, according to a poll, and 23 percent of Russian mothers would like their daughters to marry foreign citizens. Russians brides have always been prized by
Foreigners—ever since the time of Yaroslav the Wise [an eleventh-century grand prince of Kiev], whose daughter became the queen of France. But during Joseph Stalin’s time, the attitude toward marriages to foreigners was intolerant.

In the 1960s, the registration of foreign marriages was resumed, and since then the trickle of Russian brides abroad has turned into a powerful torrent. Tens of thousand of Russian women dream of an advantageous marriage and look for foreign husbands. How? One way is through personal ads in newspapers. One ad read: “Man from Australia (37, 5 feet 5, 132 pounds) seeks short (5 feet, 1 to 5 feet 5), slender woman, 22-29 for marriage.” The man is from Sydney. His mother advised him to marry a Russian woman because Australian women are very liberated, change men like gloves, and do not do housework. Russian women, in the opinion of the placer of the ad, love to clean, cook, stay home, and have children. In two days, he got 100 calls.

Many women are not shy about going to dating agencies. Alliance is one of the largest in Moscow, with branches in Russia’s large cities and abroad. It has been flourishing for more than five years. The director, Tamara Alekseyevna Shkunove, is an academician and director of the Russian Institute of the Family at the International Academy of Information Systems and deitor in chief of Moskovskay Brachnaya Gazeta (the Moscow Marriage Gazette).

Each day about ten women go to the agency, but only two to three of them are put in the files. There are criteria for selection. First, you must be successful in your professional milieu. Second, you must know a foreign language. And third, you must meet a standard of “European look”: bond with blue eyes, slender with long legs. Of the 2,000 women a year who get into the files, only five percent get married. Of the 200 who have married recently, one was lucky enough to become the wife of a millionaire.
There are 700 foreign men in the files, mostly from the United States, Germany, and Britain. Up to 300 men apply annually. They must meet only one requirement—that they be well-to-do. The information on the man’s passport is checked, and a call is made to his place of work.

Once a husband is found, the next stop is Wedding Place Number 4, the only place in Moscow that registers marriages to foreigners. Each year, 1,200 couples get married there. In 1992, the bridegrooms came from 96 countries. The greatest number came from the United States; in second place was Israel, followed by Turkey and Bulgaria.

Registration requires a passport and a guarantee from the groom’s embassy that there are no obstacles to his getting married. The French embassy, for example, takes a very serious attitude toward marriages to foreign women. It requires that the French groom obtain certification of his “legal capacity for marriage.” If an embassy official registers a couple that has not passed the requisite medical tests, the official is fined. Stiff requirements are also imposed by Germany.

The Wedding Palace requires confirmation that, in the given country, a marriage to a citizen of another state is valid. After all, in a number of countries a foreign wife and her children could find that they have no property rights. In Syria, for example, marriage to a foreigner is considered invalid without special permissions.

Many countries are trying to erect barriers to the marital migration from Russia. For example, one Moscow woman tried for nine months to get permission to go to the United States, where her fiancé was waiting for her.

Another couple wanted to get registered in Canada. The fiancé was called to the Canadian embassy for an interview, but an entry visa was never granted. “Prove that this isn’t a fictitious marriage,” they said.
Many Russian women who marry foreigners quickly divorced and come back. The reasons are well known: a sense of second-class status, a language barrier, and financial difficulties.

Deceptions are frequent: One “sweetheart” described his home as a palace with a fountain, but, in reality, it turned out that he lived in a small cottage without a bathtub.

Source “70 Brides for 7 Foreigners” World Press Review tschur@worldpress. Org (S.Kuzina)

Culturally neutral article

I took this article from New York Times. This article is about the group farming, it is based on the common experiences of some people and contains positive opinion to healthy food and community.

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW: Growing Together
By CHRISTINE MUHLKE
Published: October 8, 2010

When I began writing about American farmers and food artisans for this magazine’s Field Report column two years ago, I set out to learn the story behind the people whose ingredients were driving chefs to create great dishes. Little did I know it would become a column about communities - of producers, of customers, of eaters and enthusiasts.

After transcribing the first five or so interviews, I adopted the shorthand “comm”: “I don’t think that I would exist w/o the comm of ppl that are my customers and my suppliers,” I typed for Jeff Ford, a baker in Madison, Wis. “We’re showing how to build a local comm, we’re not showing them how to farm,” I scribbled for Tim Young, a Georgia marketing-service entrepreneur turned farmer. “Another piece for me about urban homesteading is rebuilding comm — it’s such a cliché — but rebuilding comm around food,” said Anya Fernald, a consultant for food businesses in Oakland, Calif. In a recent interview with Evan Dayringer, a farm apprentice, there are 26 comms in the course of three hours. At this point, my computer just fills in the word after the second M.
What are they talking about when they talk about community? In their case, it’s the network of people that they gradually knit around themselves based on a shared interest in food, from the grain supplier to the bakery apprentice to the farmers’ marketers and restaurateurs who order the loaves. It’s the schoolteacher who buys bread every week who eventually asks the baker if he’ll teach her students how to make pizza dough. It’s the cheese maker who trades for baguettes. It’s the sous-chef who receives the daily delivery and becomes a drinking buddy.

In even simpler terms, community is built upon conversations. People like to eat, and they like to talk about it. Ask a stranger anywhere in the world what or where he likes to eat, and chances are he’ll open up. (I’ve unexpectedly gotten out of speeding tickets because I told the officers I was hurrying to get to a local restaurant or gristmill before it closed.) Working and living around food allows you to interact mainly with people who find pleasure in similar things — which could, of course, become frustratingly limiting. But according to the men and women I’ve interviewed for Field Report, this sense of connection with and appreciation by the people around them makes the crushing work and razor-thin margins worth it. As Jeff Ford of Cress Spring Bakery, who sells to some of the 20,000 visitors to the Madison farmers’ market every Saturday, told me, “People hand me money all day and tell me they love what we do, so it’s really not work at that point, it’s my social life.”

Food communities take many forms. Not all of them have the righteous, rarefied aura of the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in San Francisco or the cool graphics of the food vendors at the Brooklyn Flea. And not all of them begin with a financial transaction. There are cookie swaps, canning parties, community-supported agriculture, crop mobs, cooking clubs, cow shares and more — all of which are subject to the preciousness, insularity and childish infighting of a self-selecting group. (The politics of potlucks). And then there is the Web, where strangers bond over their lack of conviction about a certain pizzaiolo, form underground restaurants based on a chef’s disregard for the place of figs in California cooking or cheer on a home cook from Tel Aviv in an online recipe competition.

While these small-food communities are growing in pockets of America, typically around cities and universities, they have yet to become the norm. The number of farmer’s markets increased to 6,132 this year from 1,755 in 1994, but fast food is still a $170 billion industry — up from $6 billion in 1970. Class issues are inevitable with a movement driven by the college educated, regardless if they can sweat $25 for the chicken they believe is the only kind of chicken people should be eating. And the fact remains that those who are growing, distributing and serving this
food can’t always afford to buy it. The idea of good food for all is still fairly (organic, heirloom apple) pie in the sky.

**Or is it?** The strongest example of a food community I’ve seen was in Detroit, where a vibrant farming scene has sprung up literally from the ashes. In a neighborhood that is a true food desert — there are no national chain grocery stores within city limits; more than 90 percent of food providers are places like convenience and liquor stores — I watched young men and old women socialize while picking collard greens in abandoned lots brought back to life by the Urban Farming organization. There was no fence, no supervision, no charge. Some of these people — neighbors — haven’t spoken to each other since the 1967 riots, the Urban Farming organizer Michael Travis told me as we watched. But, he added, not all of the visitors know how to cook those idealized greens. That’s another program they are working on.

A few miles away was a model of the new scrappiness that has taken root around food, one that relies on collaborative rather than conspicuous consumption. I visited a block where young artists and college debtors have formed a wonky farm village, a postindustrial, preapocalyptic vision, complete with pheasants running between the raised garden beds built with floorboards ripped from an abandoned factory. I was shown around by Carolyn Leadley, who grows sunflower sprouts in her attic and bikes with them to restaurants and farmers’ markets for cash and trade. Why go back to the land when it’s cheaper in the city?

Some people want to become their own closed-loop supply chain; others wish to cut out price-jacking middlemen. In order to do so, they are learning to raise, butcher and cure meat; to grow and preserve fruits; tend and pickle vegetables; make bakery-quality bread in a cast-iron pot; turn milk into cheese; and mill grain — the better to make your own moonshine. The government has realized that it has to regulate them: the Michigan Cottage Food Operation bill was signed in July.) Since these skills are decreasingly passed on by elders, Americans of all ages have been signing up for classes, apprenticing with experts, chatting up farmers and heading online to share their findings. Friendships are made, networks are formed, and delicious things are shared.

The new food movement is still labeled as Do It Yourself, but it’s really Do It Ourselves. As Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food organization, told attendees at Slow Food Nation in 2008, “Happiness and pleasure involve depending on others.” In this case, dessert is included.

*Christine Muhlke is the food editor of the magazine.*
Rubrics for summary

4 points - Excellent

Clear main idea in the first sentence
Most of the important details are included
Details are in a logical order
Ideas are connected to make the writing flow and not added or changed from the original
It uses a writer’s own words
Author restates the main idea again as a conclusion without writing it the same as in the first sentence

3 points - Good

Clear main idea in the first sentence
Important details are included but some might be missing
Ideas are in logical order and a few parts are added or changed from the original
It uses usually the writer’s own words
Restated main idea doesn’t differ from the first sentence

2 points - Below average

Main idea is unclear — not specifically stated in the writing
Some critical information is missing
Ideas are in a random order and not logical and some part are added or changed from the original
It uses the almost exact language of the text
Restated main idea is not in this piece of writing
I point - Ineffective

The main idea is not present in the first sentence of the writing

Contains only some details

Ideas are not in logical order and many parts are added or changed from the original

It uses the exact language of the text

Missing a concluding sentence with the restated main idea

Task #4

For this task, I would like you to select one of the passages you have used for #2 and create both a chart completion task as well as a reading to integrate task. I included rubric as well. To complete the category chart questions, it is required for the test takers compare, analyze and categorize the information in the reading material. Therefore readers need to find out the different contents of each category and develop their logical judgment. The related, but contrastive information is usually referred, so this task will develop students’ careful reading and clear understanding of information.

Refer to the “Development of State” in task #2. Select the appropriate phrases from the answer choices and match them to the type of civilization they represent. The following is taken from “Hackers TOEFL Reading iBT Edition”

Answer Choice

a) Harmony in communities is maintained by conventional norms

b) Future rulers are chosen by their hereditary relationships

c) Funds and labor are diverted from agricultural endeavors to bureaucratic work
d) Socioeconomic differences can be a major source of friction

e) A group of elders takes on a leadership role.

f) An offender against the community rules is punished to appease the victims.

g) Judiciary systems offer arbitration between social strata.

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