eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/

L2 writing task representation in test-like and non-test-like situations

This mixed-methods study investigates writers' task representation and the factors affecting it in test-like and non-test-like conditions. Five advanced-level L2 writers wrote two argumentative essays each, one in test-like conditions and the other in non-test-like conditions where the participants were allowed to use all the time and on-line materials they needed. The writing was done on computers and we recorded the writing process and keystrokes using the *Screen Capture Video* and *Inputlog* programs. We audiorecorded stimulated recall interviews after each writing session, with the writers reporting and commenting on their writing strategies and their reasons for following them. The findings of this study suggest that there are several factors that play a role in task representation, such as previous education, personal beliefs, and task conditions. Although these factors were present in all participants' responses, the differences in the writers' approaches to interpret and execute the writing were marked. The results highlight various pedagogical issues and options related to teaching writing in general and to the place of task representation on writing programmes in particular.

1. Introduction

In school and university contexts, assessed writing tasks are designed with certain expectations of how the writing will look on the part of the question setter. However, it is rare to find a writing assignment that is interpreted identically because of different *task representations* from student to student. Among the various definitions of task representation are those by Ruiz-Funes (2001) and Wolfersberger (2007, 2013). Ruiz-Funes (2001) speaks of task representation as "the manner in which students interpret an assigned task, and therefore, the type of paper they write" (p.226). For his part, Wolfersberger (2007) explains task representation as involving the writer's "understanding of what skills, products, and processes the task requires" (p.73). The writer thus formulates "a plan of action that will lead to a written product that appropriately fulfills the writing task" (Wolfersberger, 2007, p.73), and task representation will impact upon choices regarding "content…, arguments, text organization, style, use of source texts, and number of paragraphs" (p.88):

> …a task representation is a mental model of the finished written product as well as the necessary steps in the process to create that product. It is what a writer believes he or she needs to do to create a written product that meets the assessment criteria and perform well on the assessment. (Wolfersberger, 2013, pp.49-50)

Hence, regardless of the student's linguistic proficiency, content knowledge, and writing ability, unless his/her task representation aligns with that of the assessor's, the text will be deemed unsatisfactory or deficient when it comes to assigning it a mark.

The writer's task representation can evolve over the duration of thinking about and composing the text. Flower et al. (1990) describe how the writer may pick up clues about the assessor's representation as to what is required from the writing brief, from what the teacher/lecturer says about the task in class, and from other students (as the writer compares and contrasts his/her conceptualization of the task with that of their colleagues). For instance, in the case of a source-based writing task, do students believe the assessor requires them to merely summarize what the sources say, or are they also expected to give their own position on what they have read? Furthermore,

students' beliefs about what constitutes good writing and the advice of previous writing instructors can also have an impact on their task representation. For instance, do writers believe that they are permitted to use the first person pronoun in academic writing, or that they should ensure self-references are entirely absent? Have they been taught previously that an argumentative essay should only consist of five paragraphs, or been told that writers may vary the structure and organization of their argumentative prose? Writers will also factor in the constraints and resources available as their task representation evolves and unfolds: how much time do they have to compose? How much time are they prepared to invest, and what implications does this have for the number of sources they are prepared to consult and/or revisions they are prepared to make?

Task representation has been investigated in both L1 (e.g., Flower, 1990; Kirsch, 1988; Nelson, 1990) and L2 writing research (e.g., Basham, Ray, & Whalley, 1993; Cheng, 2009; Connor & Carrell, 1993; Li, 2013; Nicolás-Conesa, Roca de Larios, & Coyle, 2014; Petrić & Harwood, 2013; Plakans, 2008, 2010; Ruiz-Funes, 1999, 2001; Zhang, 2006), and researchers have most commonly focused on reading-to-write tasks that require writers to consult and incorporate sources into their writing (*integrated* tasks). However, focusing on students' task representation of argumentative essays where no sources are drawn upon (*non-integrated* tasks) is also important, given that this type of writing is required in large-scale academic tests like the IELTS examination as well as in university placement tests, making this particular sub-genre high stakes for all associated with it. When students are required to complete non-integrated writing tasks, they are often under time constraints; yet when integrated tasks are assigned, writers are commonly given much longer to finish their texts—sometimes a period of days or even weeks. Consequently, by means of a qualitative case study approach, we compare and contrast students' task representation in timed test-like conditions (by means of a non-integrated task) and in untimed non-test-like conditions (by means of an integrated task), enabling us to explore the extent to which these representations are associated with the conditions or with other factors and their relationship with the writing product. Our research aims to help us understand how these factors affect task representation of argumentative essays and the implications for writing assessment and pedagogy.

We now review some foundational work on task representation which focuses on both L1 and L2 writers of English. This discussion also examines and illustrates in more detail the various factors influencing how writers' task representation evolves.

2. Studies of task representation

In L1 writing, a foundational study on reading-to-write tasks involving undergraduate junior, senior, and master's students in the US was conducted by Flower (1990). The participants were asked to respond to an integrated task; to self-record and transcribe the thinking-aloud protocols generated as they composed; and to do a presentation on an interesting feature they noticed associated with their writing process. The writing task included a set of notes from various sources that disagreed with each other. Writers' responses to the task varied in their writing goals, writing strategies, organization plans, and text format. For example, one writer used the "the gist and list strategy. In her view, you read through the text with some care, find the key words in each paragraph, and summarize it trying to capture its main idea." (p. 44). In contrast, other writers "used the reading as a springboard to trigger their own ideas or response to the topic in general" (p.45). Writers' interpretation of the task resulted in five categories of responses which varied with regard to their aim, structure, and the

cognitive demands they exerted on the writer: (i) *summary,* (ii) *review and comment,* (iii) *free response to the topic,* (iv) *synthesis,* and (v) *interpretation with a purpose of one's own.*

Nelson's (1990) influential study of task representation of untimed, integrated writing tasks highlights the gaps that can exist between lecturers' and students' task representations, as well as rather depressingly shining a light on how some students subvert the lecturers' requirements and as a result minimize the task's pedagogic value, as they have little interest in deeply engaging with it. Taking a case study approach, Nelson focused on 13 US freshmen students (presumably all L1 speakers of English) over a semester who were studying various disciplines, using student writing logs, student and lecturer interviews, analysis of the lecturers' writing task instructions, and of the students' texts responding to these tasks. Collecting data from students and their markers enabled Nelson to compare and contrast students' and lecturers' actual/intended task representations for the essays. Only seven of the 13 students' task representations and responses to the essay briefs matched what their lecturers had intended. One of the focal students, Art, is an example of a writer who knowingly subverted his lecturer's task representation, given that Art was only prepared to invest the minimum time and effort into the assignment. His lecturer had produced detailed step-by-step task instructions of what should be covered, and Art ensured all these requirements were met—or appeared to be. He was required to collect data, but in fact fabricated it, and simply stopped writing once he had fulfilled the task's length requirements. And when he received feedback from the lecturer which was designed to help him revise and improve his text, he ignored it, as he refused to redraft and improve the work as his lecturer intended him to do. As Nelson explains, Art's enactment of the task requirements was at odds with his lecturer's at the *process* level, inasmuch as the lecturer required students to collect data and to carefully revise and hone their texts; but, thanks to the lecturer's detailed essay brief, Art's *product* aligned sufficiently closely with what was required to achieve a passing grade (albeit containing falsified data which went undetected).

Turning now to L2 studies, Wolfersberger (2007) focuses on four Chinese pre-undergraduate students' experiences while working on an untimed integrated task on an English academic writing course in a New Zealand tertiary college. The students, Andy, Jason, Jenny, and Lin, were required to write an argumentative piece on whether abortion was a selfish choice or not, citing at least five sources. Students were given two articles, one pro- and the other anti-abortion, which were studied in class and which could be utilized in their writing, but were also obliged to search for additional sources to draw upon. Wolfersberger interviewed each student four times, collected drafts students wrote in class and at home, and observed the academic writing class over the three-week period that students were engaged in the task. By means of the initial writer interview, Wolfersberger sought to understand students' earlier writing instruction and experiences which helped shape their task representation of the argumentative essay. He subsequently interviewed students while they were working on their drafts, eliciting understandings of the essay brief, and participants' thoughts on the teacher's feedback on their drafts, as well as gathering information on their writing processes.

A key finding of Wolfersberger, in common with other studies (Ackerman, 1990; Flower, 1990; Kobayashi & Rinnert 2008; Nelson, 1990; Plakans, 2010; Ruiz-Funes, 2001; Yang & Shi, 2003; Yeh 2009; Young & Leinhardt, 1998), was that the students displayed markedly different task representations and therefore produced very different types of texts, despite receiving the same essay brief, attending the same class with the same teacher, and working through the same two key readings. For instance, in contrast to the other writers, Andy mistakenly believed the task required him merely to write a summary of the two readings studied in class rather than to take his own position on abortion, support it with evidence and examples from other sources (in addition to the two texts studied in class), and rebut potential counter-arguments. However, this misunderstanding was corrected as a result of

teacher feedback on his draft ("you are writing a summary of two articles rather than developing an argument", Wolfersberger, 2013, p.62), illustrating Flower et al.'s point that task representations can evolve, the result of the feedback being that Andy revised 46% of his text.

Wolfersberger (2007) identified four types of factors which impacted upon the students' task representations. *Historical factors* encompasses students' previous experiences of and instruction in both Chinese and English writing, including the things their earlier IELTS writing teachers had taught them about how to organize and what to include in argumentative writing. *Teacher factors* covers the essay brief and the instructor's written and oral feedback on students' drafts, which gave the writers information on how closely their task representation matched what the teacher was expecting. *Other people factors* accounts for the influence of other parties: sometimes their classmates influenced writers' task representations during classroom interactions as students revised their texts; but at other times, the essay and the topic of abortion were discussed with people outside of class, like students' landlords or roommates. Finally, *writing process factors* trace the impact on students' task representation as they read and gained knowledge about the abortion debate, refining their texts as they interacted with their sources.

Another highly relevant study of task representation for us is Plakans (2010), given its focus on both an integrated and non-integrated task. Plakans' writers were undergraduate and graduate L2 students studying at an American university from various countries and with varying levels of English proficiency. The ten writers composed while thinking aloud and were interviewed about their previous experiences of reading and writing, and also to explain their composing processes across the two tasks. The two tasks resulted in differences in the writers' composing processes, with every participant spending longer reading the integrated task instructions, presumably because of the more complex requirement to use the source texts which was absent from the non-integrated task instructions. While six of the students constructed similar task representations for the two types of tasks, the other four understood the integrated and non-integrated tasks very differently. These four writers appreciated the need to integrate the arguments and evidence from the source texts into their own writing, meaning close examination and re-reading of the texts was necessary; whereas the other six writers merely used the source texts as tools to generate their own ideas and did not re-read them. Similar to other researchers (Petrić & Harwood, 2013; Ruiz-Funes, 2001; Wolfersberger, 2007, 2013), Plakans (2008, 2010) speculates that these two different task representations may have their origins in the writers' experience of and attitudes towards academic writing: the four writers who understood the need to integrate the source texts into their own work had previous experience of this genre of writing. Furthermore, they described how they wrote for pleasure or for social purposes (e.g., letters, diaries, poems/creative writing). In contrast, the six writers who failed to differentiate between the two tasks had less experience of integrated tasks, and were much less positive about writing: none of these students reporting writing for pleasure, "and some even revealed strategies they used to avoid writing" (p.191).

Writers' conceptualizations of the meaningfulness of the tasks and of their audience can also influence task representation. Lo and Hyland (2007) found that L2 writers may be motivated to engage with tasks that are related to their own context and which ask them for a personalized response to a "real audience" (p.228), such as writing a letter to someone who is dear to them in their family. This mooted positive impact on task engagement of writing for a real audience is supported by Fan (1993), who conducted interviews with six Hong Kong EFL students after they had composed in test-like and non-test-like situations. Writers indicated a preference for using an "achieving approach" under test-like conditions, for "playing safe", contrary to their behaviour in the non-test-like condition, where they might focus on fluency at the expense of accuracy, or come up with original, heartfelt ideas. Their

coping strategies in the test-like condition affected their level of task engagement negatively, resulting in a focus on "accuracy rather than ideas" (Fan, 1993, p.75).

Fan's findings also underline how task representation may alter depending on the precise nature of the test-like and non-test-like conditions. Writers in the former environment may have complete or partial constraints on the resources they are permitted to consult (e.g., grammars, dictionaries, other texts) and be limited to a certain time in which they must produce their text; whereas under non-test-like conditions, these constraints may be relaxed or not applied. As a result of these constraints and affordances, test-takers may adopt the "least costly" strategies in controlled environments (Hayes 1996, p.10), like choosing to plan less because of insufficient time. Reviewing studies that investigated the effect a change in the test-like environment has on writers' performance, Hayes (1996) concluded that when the environment changes—when for instance there is an increase in the task difficulty— even though writers' goals may stay the same, a change in the means to achieve them follows. Less strategically savvy writers, on the other hand, may struggle to adapt their task representations to fit the conditions, and their true abilities might not be captured by their texts when writing in controlled situations (Purpura, 1999). As a result of previous instruction, writers may follow specific processes and strategies with only a vague understanding of their potential usefulness or of the situations in which they should be resorted to (Leki, 1995; Rose, 1980).

After reviewing the above literature, it would seem that the choices writers make while responding to a task might depend to some extent on the time and resources available to them. Therefore, it is important to study task representation in different situations and when writers are constrained under different conditions. In a previous study (Khuder and Harwood, 2015), we investigated writing processes and products in test-like and non-test-like situations and found significant differences related to both process and product; our participants conducted more planning and meaningful revision and scored higher in the non-test-like situation. However, because we took a primarily quantitative perspective in our previous article, we did not report on writers' interpretation of the writing task and on the factors affecting their interpretations. Therefore, the present study does so by means of case studies, focusing on how task conditions affect writers' task representation, drawing on writers' retrospective accounts, screen capture videos, keystroke logs, writing scores, and stimulated recall interviews, addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do writers' task representations of a writing task in a test-like situation differ from those for a writing task in a non-test-like situation?
RQ2: What impacts writers' task representation in test-like and non-test-like situations?

We build upon the studies reviewed above (e.g., Fan, 1993; Plakans, 2010) which focus on writers' task representation with reference to different tasks or different situations by utilizing stimulated recall interviews and screen capture to provide particularly rich and vivid descriptions of our writers' task representation, adding to our understanding of this phenomenon.

3. Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to address our research questions and, given our in-depth treatment of each participant which utilizes multiple data sources, we take a predominantly qualitative case study approach (see Duff, 2008), enabling us to provide rich, context-

bound descriptions of our writers' interpretations of task representation across test-like and non-test-like conditions, evidenced with plentiful examples from our screen capture and stimulated recall interview data. Five L2 master's students at a UK university wrote two essays each: one in a test-like situation and one in a non-test-like situation.[i] The writing sessions were recorded using the screen capture program, *Screen Movie Studio* (http://www.mandsoft.com/), and a keystroke logging program, *Inputlog* (http://www.inputlog.net/), the keystroke logging program assisting in providing an accurate measurement of time spent on each writing process, helping us obtain a more complete understanding of writers' time management. These programs informed the stimulated recall interviews which were conducted after each session. During the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on how they interpreted the writing task at each writing stage while watching the screen-capture video (ranging between 30 minutes to two and a half hours) that had been recorded during their writing. The interview questions were also informed by the observation notes we took while writers wrote their texts; for example we observed what writers were doing while pausing (i.e., whether writers were rereading what they wrote or not looking at their texts at all). Hence these observations led to interview questions such as: "You were looking away from your text here, what were you thinking about?"; and: "You put your fingers on the keyboard and then took them away several times here, why was that?". Other questions more directly interrogating writers' notions of task representation included items like: "What do you think the writing task is asking you to do?".

3.1 Participants

The five participants in this study were L2 postgraduate students at a UK university from different L1 backgrounds studying linguistics. Participants were also selected on the basis of their second language writing proficiency (as evidenced by their test scores on the IELTS writing component of between 6 and 7, or equivalent, which they had taken as a university pre-entry requirement). These participants were selected from a larger study that examined ten participants' writing process and products (Khuder and Harwood, 2015). We chose the five richest cases to focus on here in our study of task representation, giving us the space to look at each case in some depth. For basic information on participants, see Table 1 below. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Participant information

Name	Nationality	IELTS writing score	Academic writing experience	Test taking training	Previous major before arrival in the UK
Kenan	Syrian	6	Six courses, each five months	Self-preparation using IELTS preparation book	MA English literature
Lina	Syrian	6.5	Five courses, each three months. Plus intensive one-year course on academic writing.	Nine-month IELTS preparation course	MA Language and Linguistics
Miho	Japanese	6*	One course, five months	Three-month TOEFL preparation course	BA Linguistics

| Reem | Syrian | 6.5 | Five courses, each three months. Plus intensive one-year course on academic writing. | Nine-month IELTS preparation course | MA Language and Linguistics |
| Tala | Iranian | 6.5 | Two courses, each three months | Two-month IELTS preparation course | BA Linguistics |

* IELTS scores approximately converted from TOEFL iBT writing component for comparison. The original score for both Miho and Kenan on the TOEFL iBT writing was 20. The institute accepts both IELTS and TOEFL scores.

3.2 Writing tasks

In choosing the writing tasks, we were mindful of the topic-familiarity effect. Topic familiarity is an affective factor in engaging with a task (Cumming, Kantor, and Powers, 2002) and can have a profound effect on how successful the writing is judged to be (Tedick, 1990). Thus, we chose non-academic tasks to lessen the chances that participants might be required to write about an academic topic they were highly familiar with. Since participants were studying in a foreign country having temporarily left their families to do so, the topics chosen were studying abroad and living alone (see Appendix A for prompts 1 and 2).

As typical examples of IELTS writing task 2, the writing tasks were argumentative and required at least 250 words to be completed in 40 minutes with no access to online resources or materials in the test-like condition. In contrast, in the non-test-like situation, participants had unlimited time and access to online resources. To avoid order effects, participants did the tasks over the two sessions as described in Table 2. The time the participants spent on each session is also recorded.

Table 2. Writing sessions

Name	Task condition and prompt		Time spent in each session in minutes	
	1st session	2nd session	Test	Non-test
Reem	test (prompt 2)	non-test (prompt 1)	40	75
Lina	test (prompt 1)	non-test (prompt 2)	40	54
Miho	non-test (prompt 2)	test (prompt 1)	30	45
Kenan	non-test (prompt 1)	test (prompt 2)	40	60
Tala	test (prompt 2)	non-test (prompt 1)	30	30

3.3 Procedure

To learn about the writing strategies used in these two different situations and to probe the reasons behind choosing these strategies, including writers' constructions and understandings of task representation, we used a principally qualitative approach, supplemented with quantitative data, where stimulated recall interviews were informed by screen capture video and observation notes, as described below.

3.3.1 Screen capture video and keystroke logging

In writing research, screen capture video has been shown to be a helpful tool to stimulate writers' retrospection. Abdel Latif (2008) cites several studies that used screen capture as a stimulus for writers' retrospection, such as Flinn (1987), analyzing revision behaviour, and Sirc and Bridwell-Bowles (1988), investigating composing processes. Both of these studies found that using real time playback to stimulate writers' retrospection is productive. Our study looks beyond the writing process to stimulate writers to talk about the perceived reasons/factors affecting their writing behaviour. To this end, writers' screens were captured during each writing session by using a screen-capturing tool, *Screen Movie Studio*. The keystroke logging program *Inputlog* was used in this study to provide information on how much time writers spent on a certain process. Even though *Inputlog* has many features that enable researchers to conduct a thorough investigation of the writers' writing process, here we only report the time writers spent on writing.

3.3.2 Observation

Observation notes informed our stimulated recall interviews immediately after each writing session. The first author was in the same room as the writers during each writing session and shared screens with them using Skype, taking notes on what she saw in preparation for the interviews.

3.3.3 Stimulated recall interviews

As our aim was to investigate writers' strategic behaviour and motivations while writing in two different situations, using stimulated recall interviews seemed appropriate (see Greene & Higgins, 1994). We used retrospective rather than concurrent accounts because they avoid the reactivity and the "cognitive load" issues associated with think aloud (Greene & Higgins, 1994, p.118). Additionally, we opted for a retrospective rather than a concurrent approach as our aim was not only to reveal the writing strategies but also writers' motivations for using these strategies as conceptualized in their task representation; and "[a]lthough concurrent accounts can be useful in documenting what writers do, when they are the sole source of data they can be less helpful in explaining why" (Greene and Higgins, 1994, pp.117-8). Therefore, the first author, who shared a similar profile to the participants (being, like them, an L2 master's student in Linguistics at the time of data collection, and whose equal status may have encouraged the writers to provide full and frank accounts of their task representations), conducted the stimulated recall interviews immediately after each writing session, which were audiorecorded and subsequently transcribed. Writers were asked to watch the whole screen capture video and to stop it when they wished to discuss any issue. The first author was also able to stop the video where data seemed interesting. By choosing this procedure, we were attempting to ensure that all potentially significant episodes could be discussed, including those judged to be significant by the participants. By rooting our questions in concrete, specific composing behaviours, we were also striving to reduce the risk of faulty, incomplete, or simplified recall (see Prior, 2004; Smagorinsky, 1989; Tomlinson, 1984). Hence we made our questions text specific and compared writers' task interpretation across test-like and non-test-like situations (see appendix B for sample interview questions).

3.3.4 Coding the stimulated recall data

Data from the stimulated recall interviews were used to examine the differences between the writers' motivations for their behaviours when composing during the test-like and non-test-like situations. Table 3 presents the coding scheme we developed to do so. Since the aim of the interviews was to understand writers' representation of the writing tasks under different conditions, we adapted the coding scheme from Zhang (2006, p.31), and added/deleted categories where the data seemed (not) to fit (words in **bold** are from Zhang's original scheme in the table). The categories we deleted were: comprehension and response, initial representation, and purpose. Although these categories are connected with task representation, we did not find all of Zhang's categories suited our purposes for two reasons: first, Zhang's design was different to ours, featuring think aloud as well as interviews, while we only used interviews. Second, Zhang's writing brief focused on integrated tasks only, rather than a combination of integrated and non-integrated tasks.

Table 3. Coding scheme for stimulated recall interview data

Code	Definition
Planning	**Participants' plan of a basic structure of their writing based on their initial interpretation of the task**
Revision	**Changes made to the initial** plan **in the writing process**
Strategies	Strategies participants used to fulfil the task and their reasons for using them
Control of authorial voice	Writers describing their position in the task
Audience awareness	Writers describing using a specific strategy to impress the reader

We divided interview data into units of analysis as per the coding scheme above and then asked a second rater, a PhD student in linguistics, to independently code 10% of the segmented data, resulting in a high level of inter-rater agreement (Cohen's Kappa= .93) (for a sample of the coded data, see Appendix C).

4. Results

This section reports the qualitative data derived from stimulated recall interviews, which is supported by screenshots from screen capture videos. We present our findings by organizing them around the coding scheme categories and proceeding case by case, to enable readers to compare and contrast participants in both situations, test-like and non-test-like.

4.1 Planning

Planning is the stage writers go through before they conduct the actual writing. For some writers, the "limited planners", planning was more of a straightforward process, where the differences between the test-like or non-test-like context did not have a major impact (as in, for instance, the opportunities to make use of the online resources or extra time available in the non-test-like condition). This was different for what we call the "extensive planners", who planned in detail in both situations, and the "resourceful planner", who planned according to what the situation permitted; i.e. extensively in the non-test-like situation and sketchily in the test-like situation. Both resourceful planners and extensive planners made use of the extra time and materials available in the non-test-like situation.

4.1.1 The extensive planners

Kenan

Kenan's planning of the tasks differed across situations. In the non-test-like situation, which he attempted first, because he knew he had plenty of time and online access to read about the topic, he started reading *around* rather than *on* the topic. Figure 1, which shows how he surfed the Internet in order to find interesting material, illustrates how he started reading texts related to *working* abroad while the main task asked him to write about *studying* abroad.

Figure 1. Kenan's Internet surfing behaviour

To provide more specifics of Kenan's behaviour, after googling *studying in a foreign country* pretty much immediately (9 seconds) after reading the task, he next googled *why do students work abroad?* in minute 8 and subsequently ended up googling *working abroad: why do it?* in minute 14 as the *Inputlog* log below shows (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Kenan's googling behaviour in response to the "studying abroad" task

id	type	output	startTime	startClock
3	focus	Wordlog - Microsoft Word	7706	00:00:07.706
7	focus	Studying in a foreign country	9656	00:00:09.656
419	focus	why do students work abroad?	469625	00:07:49.625
810	focus	Working abroad: Why do it? -	791237	00:13:11.237
813	focus	Google - Mozilla Firefox	795277	00:13:15.277

Kenan's reading on working abroad took him off task and resulted in his writing on working rather than studying abroad, as we see in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Kenan's text when responding to the 'studying abroad' task

Working Abroad

Most people would agree that working while studying in a foreing country has several advantages for students. For me, I find it useful when students work abroad for the following reasons. First, working in a foreing country can create a valuable opportunity for students to mix with native speakers. While it is useful to learn in academic contexts, contact with people from non-academic contexts can enhance students' social skills and provide a direct means the culture of the country they work in. Secondly, although work can take some or most of students' time, it obviously creates an opportunity to obtain practical experience which is highly important in almost all fields of study. More specifically, working in the same field of study can be especially important when they come back to their home countries and increases students' opportunities to get jobs in their home countries. a third advantag

His behaviour therefore resulted in a text that does not respond to the prompt assigned. He duly acknowledged this in the stimulated recall interview:

> **Kenan:** When I started reading around the task, I found some interesting stuff on working abroad and, you know what, I totally forgot about the main task.

In the test-like situation, however, Kenan's planning can be portrayed as more cautious and constrained. He ensured he addressed the task when he underlined the key parts of the prompt which, he said, helped him "brainstorm some ideas", and when he outlined his ideas before starting to write as Figure 4 shows.

Figure 4: Kenan outlining his ideas before starting to write

Nowadays more people are choosing to live <u>with friends or alone</u> rather than with their families. This trend is <u>likely</u> to have <u>a negative impact on communities</u>.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these opinions?

You should use your ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

1. detrimnetal to traditional social family life (feelings of anitimacy among...

2. breakup of families

3. advantages(being independent)

Although living in a family has several advantages, it can also be said

Lina

In the test-like situation, Lina planned her writing immediately after reading the prompt. She did not write down her plans. She stopped halfway through composing and paused for two minutes and from the observation notes we noted she was not looking at the text. When asked about this, she said:

> **Lina**: Here I was thinking that I can say something different about studying abroad. [But] I did not think for a moment of changing my original plan. The key idea in timed texts is to get the job done. Style not sincerity is what matters here.

In the non-test-like situation, she took her time to read the task and plan it (spending 20% of her time planning in the non-test-like situation, as opposed to 10% of her time planning in the test-like situation). She jotted down some ideas and began to elaborate them. However, she changed her plan half way through. She commented on this as follows:

> **Lina**: I have time, I can plan and re-plan. Here, I am not planning for the sake of having a better mark, because I know this idea is not better, I am re-planning because I feel better about this idea. If I did not change it, then I would go home and keep thinking about this. You know when you have an argument with someone and you go home thinking of better things you could have said to them, it is the same … This is what I like about writing, you can always change what you write, especially if you have time to do it like in this task … this is different from speaking; once said, it is out there.

4.1.2 The limited planners

Tala

Tala's planning behaviour did not differ across situations. She read the prompt quickly (taking less than a minute) and started writing immediately. She reported the following in response to the test-like situation:

> **Tala**: When I looked at the prompt, I immediately knew that I should be talking about advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad … I started with the advantages and the second paragraph was about the disadvantages.

For Tala, as long as the assessment criteria used for the test-like and non-test-like tasks are the same, she would adopt the same pre-planned approach, regardless of the extra time and resources offered in the non-test-like condition; and Table 2 shows that she was the only writer who declined to take advantage of the extra time afforded by the non-test-like situation:

> **Tala**: you said the rubric is the IELTS test one and so it is the same in both situations, so why to bother and write something different when I will be marked for what I have just written and done?

In the non-test-like situation, Tala duly responded to the task similarly as she said there was no benefit in changing her writing style. In the following excerpt, Tala summarizes how she approached the task:

Tala: I read the prompt, paraphrase it as an introduction, write a quick sentence on how this is a difficult question that one cannot agree or disagree, then I give example of how good it is followed by an example of how bad it is ... I conclude by saying that the best thing is to put things in their context and to do what is more appropriate to the culture one is living in. This will guarantee high marks.

When asked how she knows that she will be awarded high marks for her writing, Tala explained that her teacher focused only on models of good and bad writing. Tala's teacher reportedly used these models to have students produce close copies of the good texts in their own work, until they were producing similar texts each time they wrote. The pedagogical approach is less about composing and more about ensuring students can reproduce text in a near-mechanical fashion:

Tala: my teacher gave us around six essays that we should imitate when writing ... this was our homework is to write a similar essay each time ... copy some of the sentences, such as: 'given the advantages outlined above, it is quite predictable for' ... 'and way of argument ... I argue for both points suggested in the topic' ... and yes, this is to be used for any topic I am writing about.

Tala: My teacher was so strict when teaching us. She used to use words like 'should', and 'must' and 'you have to'. We used to be punished if not starting the way she wanted us to ... This is safe and I believe this is a good way as we only write in exams so what is the point of trying something new ... also, my teacher told us to copy what she gave us as good essays, even at school our homework used to be to complete incomplete sentences so I cannot feel like I want to try something new as this might lessen my marks.

It seems that Tala saw this writing process as highly successful and therefore saw no need to change it when constraints were loosened; it would work as well in the non-test-like as in the test-like condition.

Miho

In both situations, Miho took less than 25 seconds to start writing her text. She reported that her plan for any IELTS-type task will also be generated as quickly as this as, like Tala, she is equipped with a rigid pre-prepared structure:

Miho: look at the first sentence of the prompt [*Nowadays more people are choosing to live with friends or alone rather than with their families*], I should include ideas about both living alone and living with families ... I quickly say few words about each so that I can have time to recheck my grammar and the vocabulary I used.

She followed the recommended behaviour of her test-preparation home-country teacher in both situations, which does not require much planning. Miho's test training included being taught writing from teacher-produced models which broke producing the target genre down into a series of steps. Miho summarized her teachers' test instructions for producing an argumentative text:

Miho: introduction should be a rewording of the prompt; take a neutral position, first paragraph is agree and the second is disagree; draw on general and traditional examples; conclusion should be the same as the introduction; use new grammatical structure as much

as you can (passive voice) but be careful not to use grammatical structures you are not sure of (they make you lose marks); write long sentences and connect them with connectors (i.e. Wh-clauses).

4.1.3 The resourceful planner

Reem

In the test-like situation, Reem took several minutes to comprehend the writing task. She then started writing a few general phrases, such as "studying abroad positive/negative. Experience … xxx hated it … Me?". She then developed this plan into a text talking about her friend's negative experience of living abroad, before turning to her own, more positive experiences.

In the non-test-like situation, disturbingly, Reem chose the path of least resistance, simply googling the prompt (as can be seen in Figure 5) and copying some of the materials the search produced, passing it off as her own text. The availability of online materials therefore resulted in lessening the level of task engagement:

> *Int:* you have read the prompt and immediately googled it, can you tell me more about this?
>
> *Reem:* yeah, I need to know what is written on this to have a direct answer to your question … it is easier to do it this way.
>
> *Int:* but you used unreliable web pages, do you trust them?
>
> *Reem:* It is not a matter of trust … these 'unreliable pages' are more helpful than the authentic ones. Taking information from them is easier … Doctor xxx told us [in a lecture on plagiarism] that copying others' words and ideas without referring to them is plagiarizing, right?... well, these pages are without names, you can get the information you need and no one will accuse you of stealing their ideas. All one has to do is to work on the wording so you do not get caught by some kind of a plagiarism detector.

Figure 5. Reem googling the prompt in the non-test-like situation
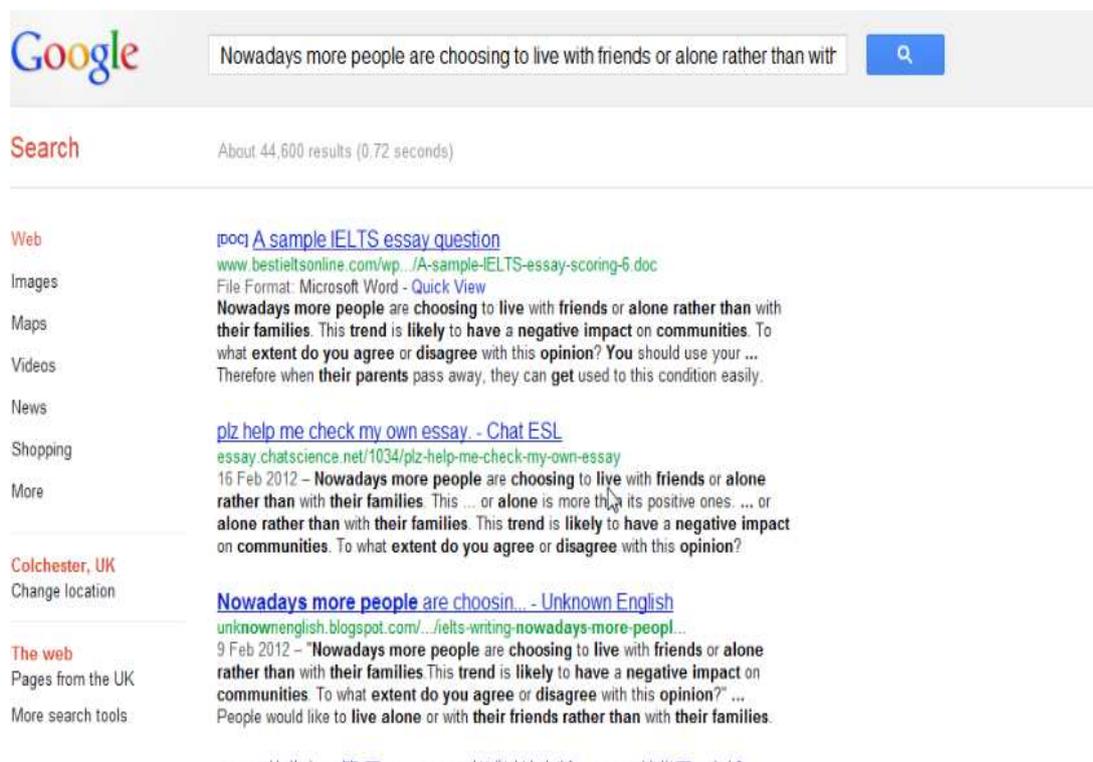
The following screenshot (Figure 6) shows part of the text Reem borrowed from in the non-test-like situation:

Figure 6. The text Reem borrowed from
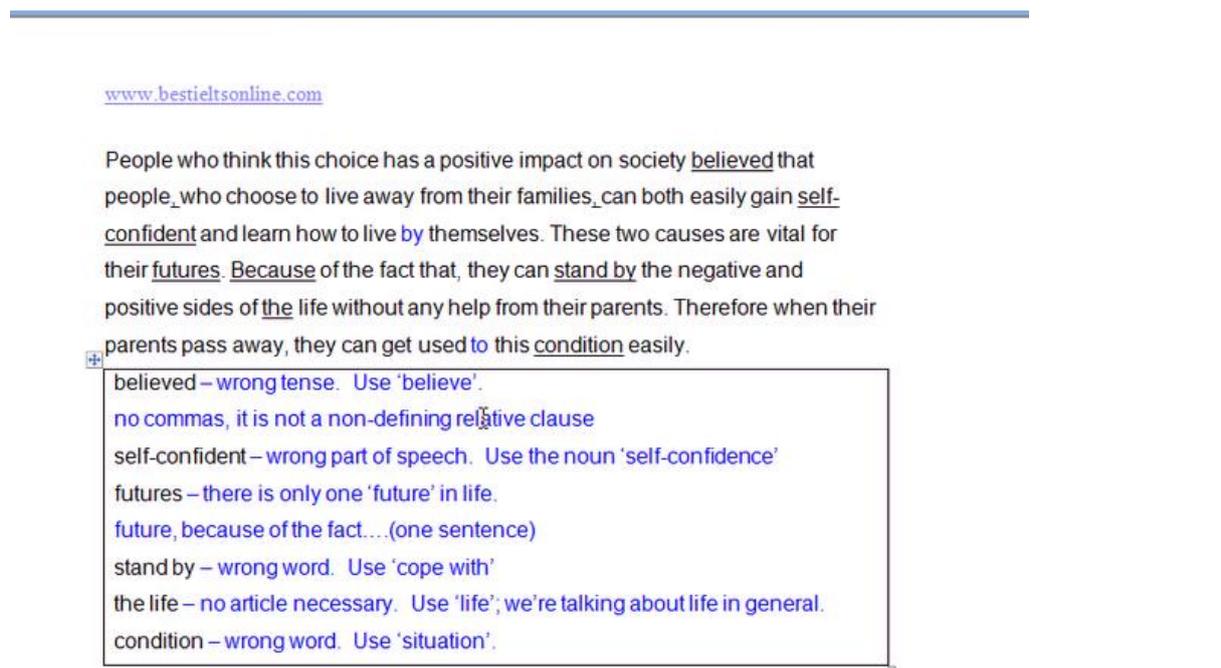
The following is an excerpt from Reem's writing where she borrows parts of the online text; copied words are underlined:

> *Some people believe that living alone or with friends has a positive impact on society because living away from one's family will provide self-confidence and will enable them to live by themselves. In the future, these causes are considered vital. This is because of the fact that people will learn to cope with various, positive and negative, situations without their parents' assistance. Hence when their parents die, they can cope easily with this situation.*

4.2 Revision

Revision behaviour relates to the changes writers made to their original plan. In this category we distinguish between two types of writers. The "surface-level revisers" mainly confined themselves to revisions of their texts' grammatical structure and lexical choices at the end of both of their writing sessions. In contrast, the "resourceful revisers" made additional changes on the meaning level when time and resources permitted them to do so.

4.2.1   The surface-level revisers

Tala

In both situations, Tala focused her revisions on the grammatical level, which she made at the very end of the task; minute 30 in both situations. She used only 2% vs 3% of her time on task making revisions during the first half of her writing in the test-like and non-test-like situation respectively, as opposed to 15% and 13% of time on task making revisions in the test-like and non-test-like situation respectively during the second half of her writing. She showed an unwillingness in both situations to change her position or any of the supporting ideas:

> **Int.:** Have you considered changing any of the examples you wrote?

> **Tala:** Change! What change? Why to make any changes when in a writing test they will judge you for your accuracy!

A sense of how these revisions are restricted to minor changes can be seen from the example text excerpts below, where Tala changed the underlined words into "by" and "would prefer":

> *When living alone, students will be more independent. For example, they would be exposed to new things.*

> *The majority of the students prefer to study abroad as it can bring more benefits.*

It seems that Tala believed that she would be judged on the grammatical level, even though she was aware that the IELTS rubric states she would be judged on the meaning level, too:

> **Int**.: You have read the IELTS rubric before doing the task, how do you think this might have influenced your response to the task?

> **Tala**: I do not think it is important. I still believe that this is out there to make people think examiners use it. What, are they going to read it for every paper they grade? I think markers will focus more how each sentence is written.

Miho

Miho was preoccupied with test technique and accuracy when revising. She felt accuracy rather than ideas and content was what mattered in the end, characterizing her revision choices in terms of levels of risk:

> **Int**: Have you tried using other strategies while writing?
>
> **Miho**: I do not like to risk it [my marks]. I prefer to keep it simple so I do not go wrong … I am not here, or in any other test situation to re-invent the wheels! … I know I revise a little, it is because I use the words and grammatical structures I am sure of.
>
> **Int**.: But in the non-test situation, you had the chance to check any vocabs and structures you wanted.
>
> **Miho**: But at the end I will be marked similarly and to be honest even in my MA assignments I do not tend to do that. I use the things I know to be safe.

She spoke of how writing for her was a task to be completed which she appears to have understood exclusively in terms of grammatical accuracy: reaching the 250-word requirement was her initial aim; only once this had been achieved would she check the writing quality.

> **Miho**: The task asks to write more than 250 words. So my first aim is to reach that and then I will read to check grammatical things.

This can be seen clearly from our quantitative data: minute 32 and 30 in the non-test-like and the test-like situations was where she started rereading the text and making revisions for about 5-7 minutes.

The following is taken from her texts where she changed the underlined words into "do find" and "there will be a tendency", exemplifying her limited revision behaviour:

> *As a student studying abroad, I <u>find</u> that studying abroad brings many advantages.*
>
> *For example, when you live alone, <u>you tend</u> to forget about the traditions of your family which can affect the society.*

4.2.2   The resourceful revisers

Kenan

In the non-test-like situation, Kenan used his original plan and rarely made any changes. However, in the test-like situation he had to adjust the outline he planned at the beginning of the writing session in order to try to finish the task on time. His poor time management, which he became aware of only halfway through the time allotted, led to him being unable to connect his ideas properly. He had organized his text around three points, but, with time running out, condensed this into two, removing

point two. What had originally been the third point ended up sitting uneasily next to point one, and the text lacked cohesion and coherence. We look at his text in more detail below.

Kenan's final text, after deleting point number two, which was about the disadvantages of living with and then moving away from family members, read as follows:

> *A strong family forms the basis of an integrated community with all its members sharing the advantages that a united family can offer. Despite these disadvantages, living away from one's family can have its own rewards.*

When talking about this extract, Kenan said that he had intended to write about the disadvantages of the breakup of families after explaining what the advantages were of having a "strong family", but time pressures meant this second point was never developed and he moved immediately instead to talk of "disadvantages" which in its present form is incongruous. He explained his behaviour by saying:

> **Kenan:** I am not used to writing small pieces in such time limits, I tried to express the ideas in the given time but when I started writing I knew I won't be able to write all that I have, so I had to delete some ideas that I cannot include… this happened to me the first two times I did IELTS and TOEFL but then I trained myself using some TOEFL writing materials and after repeating the test three times, I did it!

Reem

Interestingly, in the test-like situation, Reem was keener on revising the paper to hand in what she called a "mistakeless" text (spending 20% of her time on task on revision in the test-like situation, in contrast to just 9% in the non-test-like situation):

> **Reem**: Time constraints always make me want to give my best. I always worry when approaching the deadline and start revising really quick. In the non-test situation, and because I did not have time limits, I felt a bit loose because there is no deadline!

As expected given the above comments, Reem did not do much revision in the non-test-like situation because she did not "feel the pressure to do so" (7% of time on task was devoted to meaningful and surface revisions under the non-test-like condition; and 26% of time on task in the test-like situation).

Lina

Lina explained her greater willingness to revise substantively in the non-test-like situation as opposed to in the test-like situation (26% of time on task in the non-test-like situation compared to 13% in the test-like situation):

> **Lina:** had this happened in a timed situation, I would not have changed my argument. I worry about time limits a lot and I do believe it is essential that I finish the task on time. Remember yesterday when I did the task on studying abroad [the test-like-situation session], I remember writing something on how it helps us know more people from different cultures … well I thought about this while writing and had this idea that I was able to do this in my home country where I was able to be in touch with people from different countries who came to

study our language there but I knew I would not be able to change this as it will take me a lot of time. ... if I had the time to change it I would say culture and new places.

Lina's reference here was to her test-like-situation paragraph which starts:

The greatest advantage of studying in foreign countries is that it provides individual students with the opportunity to contact people from other countries.

As she indicated in her interview, this message remained unrevised and unchanged; in fact her position in this text is one she did not agree with. Her text continues:

This opportunity is rarely or never available at my home country.

For Lina, writing is a discovery of meaning whether in test-like or in non-test-like situations. She indicated that she always discovered her ideas in writing, even though she might not act upon that discovery of meaning in test-like situations (as in the excerpt above). The lack of time constraints in the non-test-like situation enabled her to change her writing when she thought of a new idea that contradicted her original one. She started her non-test-like writing by completely disagreeing with the idea of people living with their friends. However, by the end of her introduction, Lina had come around to the view that in fact living with friends could be justified.

> **Lina:** at first I was totally against the idea of people living with their friends, this is not acceptable in my society. However, writing made me realize that for some people it is OK as it is socially accepted so I had to go back to the beginning and change the whole argument.

Lina's first draft of her introduction read as follows:

It has been noted recently that the social life around the world is deteriorating. One aspect of this deterioration is that young people prefer to get away from their families and lead dependent life.

She duly revised the introduction to read as follows:

It has been noted recently that people are tending to leave their homes to live with their friends or alone. This issue, though might have a negative effect on the family life, it might have a good impact on the individual.

4.3 Strategies

While Tala and Miho used strategies they had learned during their previous test-training experience rather than exploiting the resources available to them, the other writers took advantage of these additional affordances, for example in their planning or revising behaviour.

4.3.1 Test-oriented strategic writers

Tala

Tala's former TOEFL preparation teacher's views seem to have affected her writing strategies in both situations. These views focused on adopting a non-controversial position so as to avoid potentially antagonizing the reader/examiner:

> **Tala**: My teacher used to say that when you have to write about a topic, try to write about the first thing that might occur to anyone's mind. Try to be as general as you can so that the examiner will not be judging you while they are supposed to be judging your writing.

In the non-test-like situation, Tala adopted the same strategy of opting for the general and eschewing personal opinions or experiences:

> **Tala:** When I read that [the prompt which asked about advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad] I thought that in general people tend to like the idea of that "studying abroad has more advantages than disadvantages because they say that it helps introducing students to a new culture and these stuff".
>
> **Int:** but do you think that this general belief is true?
>
> **Tala:** mmm ... let me think for a while ... well, not really, if I wanted to talk about my own experience then I have to say that studying back home was better because I was taught stuff which are more related to my own context and the context that I will be teaching in [as an English language teacher] ... how would knowing a new culture be helpful for my work?! If I wanted that I would have been only a tourist here and not a student.

Miho

As part of her test-oriented strategy, Miho started composing from a pre-prepared skeleton text which she fills in with the relevant information according to the prompt. In the extract below, she expanded the following pre-prepared text to form her introduction:

> *When considering ..., some people say ...., while others .... One can argue that there is some truth in both points. Therefore, I personally tend to have a neutral position to this important issue that can be related to the context that it is seen in. The reasons for this will be discussed below.*

Miho was taught to use these structures and pre-prepared skeleton texts irrespective of the writing topic. In the non-test-like situation, she spent slightly more time planning (4% of her time on task in

the non-test-like situation vs 2% in the test-like situation) and, unlike in the test-like situation, actually took a position of her own; but we see from the extract from Miho's non-test-like introduction below that her introduction followed a similar structure to the one she was taught and the one used in the test-like situation:

> *As to the experience of studying abroad in a part or whole of their course, some people say it will bring advantages to the students while other people says there will be much more disadvantages. Although both views have reasonable points, I personally agree with the former idea, studying abroad brings advantages rather than disadvantages. In the following, I will argue my point.*

Indeed, Miho's composing behaviour in the non-test-like situation was similar to the manner in which she composed under test-like conditions; she spent little time planning (4% of the total task time in the non-test-like situation vs 2% for her test-like situation) or revising (9% of total task time in the non-test-like situation vs 8% for the test-like situation). This reflects how she did not perceive any benefit of having extra time or online resources in the non-test-like situation. She finished the non-test-like task in less than 32 minutes, and responded as follows when questioned about this:

> **Int:** You finish at 32 minutes and you know you are allowed all the time you need.

> **Miho**: But this is all the time I need. There is no point of spending more time on this task as I know that what I just wrote is what the examiner needs ... I responded to the task by following what the prompt is asking me to answer step by step ... I talked about all the points included there and following the steps my teacher told me to do ... I revised for grammar and that is it ... I do not think I need to write or do anything else.

Her instrumental, test-oriented approach had been successful in the past. She thought that adopting the same approach would guarantee her a good mark in the non-test-like situation also, so saw no reason to change it.

4.3.2 Resource-oriented strategic writers

Kenan

Kenan, whose writing was off-task in the non-test-like situation (which is the session that he did first), wanted to avoid making the same mistake in the test-like situation. [ii] The strategy he used to keep his writing relevant to the topic was underlining what he believed to be the main points in the prompt (see Figure 6 above).

> **Kenan:** I thought this might help me focus on the exact words that the prompt is asking me to answer ... I will avoid using these words but maybe I will try to write the outline according to them, so instead of using the exact words, I will be explaining them.

We also see a mention in the excerpt above of another strategy that Kenan reported as beneficial, which was to write an initial outline at the start of the test-like situation session:

> **Kenan:** Knowing what I want to write about before starting to write helped me a lot and stopped me from worrying about what should I write next and whether this is related to the main topic.

Reem

In the test-like situation, Reem saw the retrieval of experiential information as an efficient way to get the task done:

> **Reem:** These are examples from my own life and experiences. I am talking here about the positive experience I went through while studying abroad. The success I am having and benefits in having this huge library and the access to the academic world. I am in the centre of academia and it is so easy to talk about this ... the prompt is asking me to draw on them and so I did ... this is the easiest way for me to get the task done on time and with the lack of extra materials [i.e., online resources].

This was in reference to the following excerpt of her text:

> *My own experience as a foreign student in an English university is a witness for the advantages of studying abroad. The five-storey library building and the massive internet resources are facilities that cannot be provided in Middle Eastern universities. Moreover, access to world-class academics who have reputation world wide is not feasible in any country.*

Her only strategy in the test-like situation was to think of her own experiences. However, in the non-test-like situation, as we have seen earlier, she googled the task prompt, accessed an online model IELTS answer, and drew upon it in an inappropriate manner to construct her answer. She explained that this was what she usually did for her MA assignments:

> **Reem**: I usually copy the task assigned to me and see what google has to say on it. This will stop me from misinterpreting the task. I sometimes do not understand what the instructors need from the task, so I just google it. It is better than asking them in person—and much easier. I sometimes google each part of the assignment aside to make sure I do not miss on anything.

Lina

In both situations, the strategy Lina used to keep her writing on track was to intentionally reproduce the exact words of the prompt in her answer:

> **Lina:** I usually use the same words as the prompt to show the reader that I have read it carefully and to stay on the safe side as I am worried to go off point.

Her introduction in the non-test-like situation read as follows (where we underline words from the prompt)

> *People might prefer <u>to live with their friends</u> or even <u>alone </u>on <u>staying with their families</u>. This <u>modern trend</u> can affect the society <u>negatively</u>. I will argue in this essay how this saying can be true for some cases.*

However, she additionally reported on a strategy in the test-like situation that helped her "get the job done":

Lina: sometimes I like to write the main idea at the end of the paragraph and to conclude differently ... I did not do this here because the topic does not need this ... it is a simple one and one needs to focus on the time too ... so you know, what matters now is to finish the task on time ... I do not have enough time to try different ways of saying things so I just try to keep it simple in exams.

4.4 Control of authorial voice

We distinguish here between three levels of authorial voice control (strong, weaker, and weak). Lina is associated with the first level as she displayed a strong voice control in both situations, test-like and non-test-like. Other writers were not as confident as Lina; their voices were not as strong and their writing was not as personal as Lina's.

4.4.1   Strong authorial voice control

Lina

Lina showed a control of authorial voice in both situations, describing her non-test-like and test-like composing respectively in the two excerpts below, with each one followed by the part of the text she was referring to in the excerpt:

> **Lina**: I thought immediately about myself and about stuff that happened to me when writing this [i.e. to address the living alone/ with friends vs. living with family task] and thought what are the advantages and disadvantages. The task is asking me to draw on personal experiences and so I did.
>
> *Another advantage living alone can provide, from my personal experience, is gaining self-confidence. Knowing that no one will be there to do it for you, you will have to do things by yourself and this can foster the "I can do anything" sense of confidence.*
>
> **Lina:** In this example, I was talking about my own experience in studying abroad and how this affected me in a negative way. I do feel comfortable when writing about my own experiences while writing because it is something that one cannot make mistakes when telling and it is easy to write the task within the time limits.
>
> *Although my experience was generally positive, it did not pass without any negative trace. At times I felt isolated because of the fact that there are not so many people form my community here. I also felt academically inferior since student from other cultures are very knowledgeable.*

Lina perceived writing as a discovery of ideas that she had not thought of before beginning to compose:

> **Lina:** writing for me is a discovery of meaning, when I write I change my own ideas and beliefs ... sometimes when I am asked a question that I have not think of before and maybe find it difficult to answer, I start writing and then I am sure something will come up when writing ... writing gives me ideas that I do not know I have.

Lina felt able to inject a personal tenor into the text as she was confident her writing abilities were strong, meaning that she did not need to direct all her attention to ensuring she was writing accurately:

> **Lina**: I am looking for something beyond grades ... my teachers, which were specialists on writing, told me that my writing is excellent; the vocabulary range I have ... the complex sentences I write ... how I am able to clarify all my ideas and how well my ideas are connected makes me think beyond just getting a high mark.

4.4.2 Weaker authorial voice control

Kenan

Kenan's lack of confidence in his own writing and ideas was reflected in his use of online resources in the non-test-like situation. While planning his writing on studying abroad, he wanted to include an example of how staying in one's own country would not give him the chance to talk to linguistics specialists in the field but then he changed his mind. He explained that by saying:

> **Kenan:** I am not sure I am using the right example here, checking what others have to say about this is always a good idea, that is why I deleted my sentence "*Working abroad has a lot to offer to workers*" and thought I should look for what other people say... The task is in English so I will check Western opinion. I am not sure that what I am about to write makes sense to a native speaker of English and whether my ideas will convince them ... I believe the underlying question here is that, "You, as a foreign language speaker, do you agree or disagree?" ... so I thought I can have a look at the way Westerners think and maybe try to say something similar.

Therefore, Kenan googled "working abroad advantages and disadvantages". He took some time to choose the page he would read. He explained his reasoning as follows, claiming he wished to find a source written by a "foreign" author (as can be seen in the fact he highlighted what he believed to be the "foreign" name of the author in Figure 7 below) which could help him ensure his argumentation was appropriate:

> **Int:** I can see that you did not go for the first choice google gave you, interesting! But why did you go for this one?
>
> **Kenan:** actually I wanted to choose something written by an author whose name sounds more or less foreign.
>
> **Int:** what do you mean by "a name that sounds foreign"?
>
> **Kenan:** an English name ...

Figure 7 Kenan's web surfing for a Westerner's opinion on the assigned topic

DETAIL-ORIENTED
Employers are searching for candidates who have an eye for detail. Going abroad will give you the upper-hand in taking note of the finer components in your work. Traveling overseas requires you to pay close attention to a great deal of information, from successfully navigating yourself through a foreign city to figuring out the safest places to keep your passport and money.

TEAM-PLAYER
Across all fields, understanding group dynamics is something that employers value in their employees. Volunteering abroad is a great way to build upon this skill. Depending on the program, you could be working closely with a group of people from a variety of countries. Working abroad or interning abroad can provide you with similar experiences. Need leadership skills? Be impressive in your interviews by talking about the time you taught a class overseas.

GLOBALLY-MINDED
Many companies, especially international ones, want employees who can think on a global scale. Going abroad will open your mind to how people from other countries perceive the world. You will be able to sell a product or service from a completely different perspective. Hiring managers see people who have traveled to different countries as open-minded and able to think outside of the box.

- -

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: _Lauren Seidl is a blogger for GoAbroad.com, the leading online resource in helping travelers find programs to work, volunteer and study abroad. When this recent graduate isn't scheming about her next adventure abroad, she can be found exploring the outdoor activities her new home of Northern Colorado has to offer._

In the test-like situation, Kenan also showed a lack of confidence in his own opinions by trying to include ideas which are not from his culture:

> **Kenan:** In writing the outline, I was thinking of examples which are taken from the Western culture like living with one's boyfriend or girlfriend so that I can attract the readers' attention and saying that this has some advantages so it is easier to convince him … I know this is against my society but still I would still add it to attract attention.

An excerpt from his text on this subject reads as follows:

> _Par example, young people might choose to cohabit with their girlfriends/boyfriends, and even though this might not be acceptable in some third-world countries, it has many advantages._

Kenan believed that writing is about conveying one's own voice but one should include experiences from the readers' background sometimes to gain a sympathetic hearing from the reader:

> **Kenan:** Writing is about expressing ideas and developing them. However, if one includes his ideas without considering others, it will be a bit difficult to draw their attention … plus, and as I said earlier, I believe that the underlying question is that "You, as a foreign language speaker,

do you agree or disagree?" and in the *Rhetorics*, Aristotle suggested that we should be careful about who is asking the question and why they are asking it.

Reem

Reem personalized the task and drew on her experiences in the test-like situation. However, she retrieved information she had to hand without problematizing the issue raised:

> **Reem**: I liked this question [talking about studying abroad] as I can easily say something about my own experience. I immediately thought of the things that made me happy and satisfied here and others which upset me and wrote them as the advantages and disadvantages.

Reem drew more on her personal experience in the test-like situation as she explained how this made it easier for her to generate a text within the allocated time:

> **Reem**: I immediately think of something that happened to me ... I guess this is the easiest way for me to finish on time ... just recall an incident and write it as an example.

In contrast, this authorial voice was less apparent in the non-test-like situation as we have seen earlier because she copied others' words. However, the presence of her authorial voice in the test-like situation can be seen to indicate that her concern and priority in both tasks is to complete them as quickly as possible, regardless of the time provided, because she thought that drawing on her experiences was the "easiest" way to do the task.

4.4.3 Weak authorial voice control

Tala

In the test-like situation, Tala wrote about living with friends, something she was experiencing at the time of the study, but when asked how she tackled the topic she generalized, rather than relating her own experiences:

> **Tala:** I tried to think what people usually do when they live with friends.
>
> **Int:** But you are living with your friends!
>
> **Tala:** Right, but still I cannot give examples from my own life, it is easier to draw on general examples than to think of one's self and experiences, no one can disagree with a general, well-known example but my personal experiences might not interest or convince others.

There follows an extract from Tala's non-test-like text where she gave a general example, and the absence of specific personal experiences is very apparent:

> *There are many valuable factors that could be experienced while studying abroad, such as: benefiting from high academic standards, getting to know new people and new culture, better job offers and etc. For example, one might face many good differences in terms of academic standards at the university they are studying in and they can gain a lot of positive experiences.*

Indeed, rather than include personal experiences of her own, Tala talked not just in very general terms, but at times in fictionalized terms. She wrote:

> *For instance, I was interested in posting my studies in English Literature in the UK. Living in the country which produced the literature helped me in absorbing this literature and visiting all the places that great poets had been to.*

and explained why she believed this fictionalized example was more suitable than narrating her actual experiences:

> **Tala:** here I say that I do a course in English literature although I am doing one in Linguistics because it is easier to explain how it is better to study English Literature in England rather than other countries but it cannot be the same when talking about Linguistics. One needs more specialized terms about teaching ... it sounds more complicated for me.

Miho

In the test-like situation, Miho was preoccupied with the text's formal requirements, rather than with expressing her own ideas and experiences as the below interview and text excerpts illustrate:

> **Miho**: When it comes to this example, I wanted to say something here [next to "homeworks" in the part of the text below] about how when someone is in trouble all the family members can go and stand by their side as this happened with one of my relatives but was not sure how the sentence structure will look like so I ignored this idea.

The relevant part of Miho's text read as follows, with the personalized example Miho spoke of nowhere to be seen:

> *When family members are living together, it is more likely that their relationships are close and people around them also know one another. For instance, if there is any need for support for childcare and homeworks, someone in family or community member could give a hand.*

Miho did not value writing as an expression of the personal, as a creative act. For her, writing is something that is an obligation one must fulfil to perform the role of the student; writing is mainly connected with examinations and is about giving the reader what they want in order to get good grades:

> **Miho**: I only write in tests as I think most students in my home country do. I was educated here [in the UK in a master's module on second language writing] on writing as a process and I wondered what the point of this! … People should get real, why to teach something that will never be used? ... One should just stick to the rules in tests and when writing MA assignments, one can easily check a published article, preferably by the doctor who is going to mark the assignment and then copy him/her and I guarantee that I can always be fine by doing this.

What we may see as Miho's rather negative views on self-representation in writing are derived from, first, the educational system; second, the fact that she only writes in exams; third, her lack of confidence in her ability to write; and lastly, a lack of motivation to try a different approach to writing as the extract below shows:

Miho: This what I was taught. I never thought of writing as something which is personal or conveys any specific idea ... I cannot recall any time where my teachers talked to me about writing ... and my reader is always the examiner, even at school when we used to write as a homework the teacher used to return it only with a grade on it ... my teacher used to say this is the only good writing and that we should start by saying this and this so I do not have the courage to start differently because then I will be risking my marks.

Rather than investing her energy into ensuring the writing captures her authentic voice, then, if additional effort is needed to ensure high grades, this is invested into performing, by, for instance, anticipating the marker's preferred style of writing and aping it. Miho's aim is to pass the exam, get good marks, and not to antagonise the examiner. She apparently saw her own views on the topics as irrelevant and immaterial, given her overriding focus on the grade not the message.

4.5 Audience Awareness

All five writers showed reader awareness. However, for three of them, the reader was both an academic reader and an examiner. This group of writers held a "dynamic conceptualization of the reader", while for the remaining two holding a "static conceptualization of the reader", the reader was only an examiner.

4.5.1 A dynamic conceptualization of the reader

Kenan

In the non-test-like situation, Kenan aimed to impress the reader by using what he described as "long words". Kenan consulted an online dictionary for more sophisticated terminology, as can be seen in Figure 8, where he was looking for synonyms for the word "work".

Figure 8. Kenan consulting the dictionary for sophisticated synonyms

Main Entry:	**work**
Part of Speech:	*noun*
Definition:	achievement
Synonyms:	act, application, article, composition, creation, deed, end product, function, handicraft, handiwork, oeuvre, opus, output, performance, piece, product, production
Antonyms:	failure, loss

Main Entry:	**work**
Part of Speech:	*verb*
Definition:	be employed; exert oneself
Synonyms:	apply oneself, be gainfully employed, buckle down, carry on, dig, do a job, do business, drive, drudge, earn a living, freelance, have a job, hold a job, hustle*, knuckle down, labor, manage, manufacture, moil, moonlight, nine-to-five it, peg away, plug away, ply, punch a clock, pursue, report, scratch, slave, slog, specialize, strain, strive, sweat*, take on, toil, try
Antonyms:	idle, laze, relax, rest

* = informal/non-formal usage

Here is an explanation for his behaviour:

> **Int:** I can notice that you kept replacing your words with ones that have the same meaning, can you tell me more about this?
>
> **Kenan:** Unusual words are appreciated and show higher standards ... lecturers in my university used to use these long and unusual words, they were very impressive when they used them ... no matter how much the idea is silly, it sounds convincing and important when using long words ... one should not give his ideas in a clear manner ... Edward Said said "the reader has got to earn it".

In the following, we show a sample taken from the conclusion of his untimed text which featured this sophisticated vocabulary that Kenan is determined to include in his writing:

> *Conjointly, I would highly admonish that students be gainfully employed while studying abroad in as much as they work part time and their work positively enhances their knowledge of the field they are enrolled in.*

The original conclusion was as follows:

> *In sum, I recommend that students work abroad during their studying as long as they work part time and positively helps their field of study.*

Not that this was confined to his non-test-like writing: it is interesting to note Kenan's behaviour in the test-like situation where he again was intent on using vocabulary he believed would "sound more impressive". This time, though, he arrived at the vocabulary in a rather different fashion: via

attempted recall, rather than via online resources (which of course he was unable to access under this test-like condition). Writing on the topic of "living with friends/alone vs. living with family", Figure 9 below shows how he brainstormed some vocabulary which he believed to be impressive and planned to include in his text.

Figure 9. Kenan's vocabulary brainstorming behaviour

1. detrimental to traditional social family life (feelings of intimacy among…

.2. breakup of families

3. advantages (being independent)

Welfare, integrated, cooperating, detrimental, intimacy, resort, interrogation, poses, gratification, aggravation, tolerated, endorse, tolerable, infrastructure
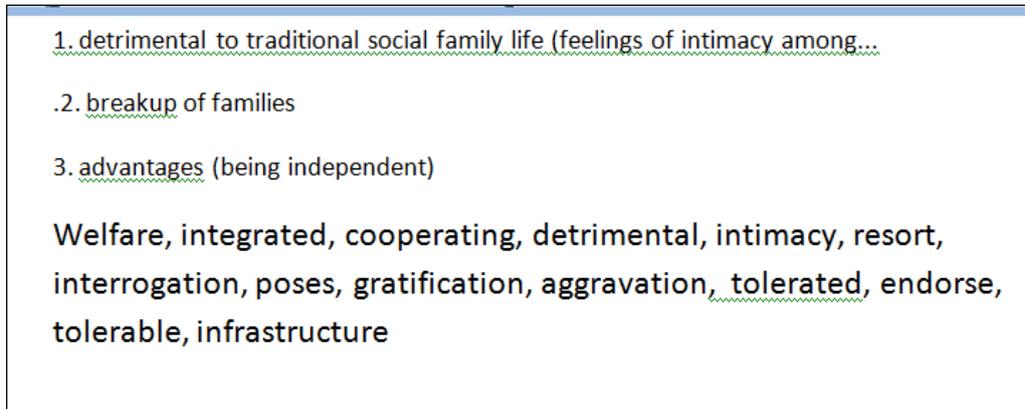
Commenting on this episode at interview, Kenan explained:

> **Kenan**: I am trying here to recall some of the vocabulary that can be related to the topic so that I can include them whenever seems appropriate ….

A look at an excerpt of his text gives us an idea of how he did indeed end up using some of these words (written in bold below for ease of reference):

> An **integrated** community is one which has the **gratifying** sense of family life, one with everyone living and **cooperating** for the **welfare** of all its members.

Reem

Reem's goal in the non-test-like situation was to project the impression that she is a "writer" rather than a "testee":

> **Reem:** I am looking beyond getting a high mark. I already have this very good text [that she copied from an online resource, discussed above] and all what I have to do is to try to make it sound more elevated. I know I copied it but you will see that reproduced it in my own language and this what writers do. Ideas are there and they just put them in their own language. I copied some words from the internet page but still the writer did not invent them, he must have copied them from somewhere else … so you see what I am saying, it is how you present the ideas and not the ideas themselves that matter here …

In the test-like situation, Reem was confident that the reader would like her writing because of prior evaluations of her work:

> **Reem:** I know that I write very nicely … all my teachers are impressed with my writing style and it does not take me time to write an excellent piece of writing ... as a matter of fact, I can

write an excellent piece only ... but some pieces take me more time than others when the subject matter differs as then where I have to tell the reader something important and something that they need to know but for today's topic, I thought it is better just to copy someone as I do not think that the reader really wants to know what I think ... they just want to see a good writing style and that is it, that is what these tests are really about.

Lina

Lina showed reader awareness in the non-test-like situation when she was worried she might create a poor impression on the reader by writing the following:

> *However, it is worth out that people who choose to live alone should be ready to face the social and religious traditions as it is not acceptable to live alone or even with friends in some societies where the surrounding might start judging them and talk negatively about them.*

She thought the reader might "think I came from a closed-minded background where we do not respect other people choices". Lina duly revised this idea to make her society "looks as it has many independent individuals" so her text read:

> *However, it is worth pointing out that people who choose to live alone should be financially dependent. That is, they should be able to feed themselves and have their own work because it is not acceptable to live alone and to be reliant on their parents.*

In the test-like situation, on the other hand, the reader for Lina was the examiner:

> **Lina**: This is a test and the examiner would care about the style I use rather than the ideas. They want a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structure and this is what they will get. Honestly, if I was told that the person who is going to mark this know me then I would have written different ideas; ideas that would reflect something different about me.

The above explains why Lina decided against changing an example that she thought may project a bad image of her culture in the test-like situation. The following is the excerpt in question from Lina's text:

> *On the other hand, it is worth mentioning here that not all people do have the ability to accept the new environment and culture to which they are thrown. This is something my friend went through at the University…*

Lina assumed that in the non-test like situation the reader would be her teacher but in the test-like situation the examiner will be unknown: "like what happens in TOEFL and IELTS exams where the reader is actually a native speaker of English that we know nothing about". Commenting on the non-test-like situation, she said:

> **Lina**: I want the reader to think that my culture is open-minded … I do not want them to think less of me.

> **Lina:** I was thinking that the reader might think of my culture in a negative way so I had to change this idea because I did not want the reader to think that we do not allow people to live and do what they like.

4.5.2 A Static conceptualization of the reader

Tala

The reader for Tala was the examiner in both situations. She tried to write what she imagined the examiner could not object to:

> **Tala**: As my teacher used to tell us, in any argumentative writing you should focus on showing the examiner that you neither agree nor disagree because he can say something against you immediately. So, the safest way would be discussing both points equally.

She did not try to convince the reader by giving appropriate examples, but rather followed the template her exam preparation had suggested: to present two points, one for and one against the statement in the question, and then take a neutral position. Below is an interview extract that gives a flavour of her instrumentally-oriented behaviour:

> *Tala:* Regardless of the situation, a test is a test; we do tests because we want high marks …. Right? …. And I know well how to do that! … what I do guarantees success as I have always had high marks, it is proved to be effective, so why to change it?

Miho

Similar to Tala, the reader for Miho is the examiner, and the key was to write something she anticipated the examiner would approve of:

> **Miho**: The task can be interesting but it does not really matter. The prompt asked to write about whatever and to give examples.
>
> **Int**: I remember that the prompt asked whether you agree or disagree, right?
>
> **Miho**: Oh, yeah about this, I do not think about it this way. I have to make the marker feel that I am in a neutral position and to provide him with examples for both with and against … To tell the truth, it was somehow difficult to find points against this issue [studying abroad] as you rarely find people talking about not studying abroad but I managed that.

In the non-test-like situation, she did not try to convince the reader by giving appropriate examples, but rather followed the template her exam preparation had suggested, presenting two points, one for and one against the statement in the question, and then taking a neutral position. She explained this in the following excerpt:

> **Miho:** this is a test … it is like a trick, if you know how to take it then you are a survivor! … and I know how since my teacher told me the most proper way to do it.

In sum, then, as has been shown, task representation can differ not only among writers but also across different situations (at least for some writers). This latter group exploited the available resources (Internet and time), changed their composing behaviour across situations and displayed various levels of dis/engagement. However, the composing behaviours and motivations of other writers (Tala and

Miho) were more static. Their approach to strategies, audience, drawing on personal experiences, planning, and revision did not really change across test-like and non-test-like situations. Table 4 summarizes these results.

Table 4. Summary of results related to writers' task representation

Theme	Kenan	Lina	Reem	Tala	Miho
Planning	Extensive planner	Extensive planner	Limited planner	Limited planner	Resourceful planner
Revision	Resourceful reviser	Resourceful reviser	Resourceful reviser	Surface-level reviser	Surface-level reviser
Strategies	Resource-oriented strategic writer	Resource-oriented strategic writer	Resource-oriented strategic writer	Test-oriented strategic writer	Test-oriented strategic writer
Authorial voice	Weaker authorial voice control	Strong authorial voice control	Weaker authorial voice control	Weak authorial voice control	Weak authorial voice control
Reader awareness	Dynamic conceptualization of the reader	Dynamic conceptualization of the reader	Dynamic conceptualization of the reader	Static conceptualization of the reader	Static conceptualization of the reader

Next, we discuss the research questions and consider the pedagogical implications of our findings.

5. Discussion

The aim of the study was to examine our subjects' task representation in two different situations, what might impact on it and its relationship to the written product. There are no clear-cut answers to our research questions in the sense that the answers are contingent. To be more precise, the answers to the research questions relate to the type of education the writer was exposed to, and to the writer's personal beliefs about writing and their objectives when writing. To put it another way, the writers in this study differ in important ways not only with regard to their writing products and processes, but also inasmuch as their divergent beliefs and objectives impact upon their representation of the writing tasks.

Next, we provide a more detailed discussion of our findings, taking each research question in turn, then focus particularly on task/writing engagement, before considering the implications of our findings for teaching writing.

5.1 RQ1: To what extent do writers' task representations of a writing task in a test-like situation differ from those for a writing task in a non-test-like situation?

Task representation is concerned with how writers interpret the writing task, which will lead to a certain writing product in a certain situation (Flower et al., 1990). We found that this interpretation process can change while writing in two different situations. These changes can be on five levels,

connecting to planning, revising, strategy use, reader awareness, and authorial voice control. However, some writers' task representation did not change.

It was expected that writers would deploy all their resources in the test-like writing task to achieve the best mark they could in that situation (Hayes, 1996). There was accordingly a considerable degree of test-savviness in evidence in the test-like situation: Kenan cutting out one of the ideas he outlined at the beginning of the task to save time, Lina retaining an idea that she was not really convinced about that she felt would persuade an examiner, Tala and Miho, experienced test-takers, responding automatically to the task without extensive planning, and Reem using a plan she believed had already proved its worth in earlier tests. These writers were strategic in the test-like situation and revised according to how much "the task permits" (Lina). They used strategies that enabled them to get the task done; something particularly clear in Miho's case, who used already-formulated sentences to finish up the task as soon as she could. Purpura (1999) talks about the importance of being strategic in test situations in order for true ability to be reflected—although it is also noticeable in our data that writers were engaged and interested in expressing themselves to a highly varied degree, and we return to the issues of test-savviness and engagement below.

Surprisingly, Miho and Tala's behaviour did not differ across situations. Their representation and interpretation of the non-test-like task remained the same because the task type (IELTS task 2) was the same. For the other writers, Kenan, Reem, and Lina, this was not the case: they made use of the materials and affordances available in the non-test-like situation. Lina even talked about how she perceived the existence of a different reader when the situation changed: more time and resources meant a reader unknown to her, rather than her familiar English teacher, influencing her arguments and essay content.

5.2 RQ2: What impacts writers' task representation in test-like and non-test-like situations?

In line with previous research (e.g., Badger and White, 2000; Plakans, 2010; Rose, 1980; Wolfersberger, 2007, 2013), factors affecting task representation include automatized composing behaviours, writers' passion for writing and writers' previous education. Earlier studies (Leki, 1995; Rose, 1980) showed how, for example, extensive planning can actually be a strategy driven by previous education. If a student has been taught to come up with a clear, thorough plan before they write, when conditions change and affordances like additional time and resources are permitted, a concomitant change of behaviour may not ensue. The same may apply for those who are taught to respond automatically without actually coming up with a plan or even properly comprehending the writing task (as was the case of Miho and Tala in the non-test-like situation).

Plakans (2010) found that writers' general passion for writing can affect their task representation, and the contrasting cases of Lina and Taha in our study provide vivid support for this position. Lina perceived writing as a discovery of meaning, while Tala did not see any point in writing except to be tested or to get a degree. These diametrically opposing views unsurprisingly coloured the writers' task representation.

Also, authorial voice control and reader awareness are factors that affect task representation (Kirsch, 1988). The extent to which writers are used to presenting their own selves and drawing on personal experiences can affect their interpretation of a writing task (Kirby, Kirby, and Liner, 2004). As Ivanič

and Camps (2001) found, task representation of writers who usually position themselves in the centre of the writing process differs from those who stand at the periphery of it. Writers in our study tended to have various approaches to authorial voice control across both situations and for some, what seemed to impact their authorial voice was the availability of external resources (Reem and Kenan). Reem copied others' words and Kenan copied others' ideas when provided with external resources. The remaining writers (Lina, Tala, Miho) were grade-oriented, all strategizing to obtain the highest mark possible in a specific situation, but differed with regard to the value they perceived of injecting the text with their own ideas and experiences.

Writers' audience awareness seemed also to impact on their task representation. Writers who perceived the reader as an examiner in both situations (Tala and Miho) interpreted the task as something they should be done with, as the only benefit they would gain was the mark. However, the reader did not hold this static status for all writers (Lina, Reem, and Kenan); for this latter group, the reader type was situation-dependent. It should be noted here that we did not provide any information on the reader in the task prompts, so they were all talking to an imagined reader.

Hence, writers' previous education, their passion for writing, audience awareness and control of authorial voice are factors that can play a role in task representation. To conclude the discussion, we focus in more detail on one particularly important aspect influencing task representation that emerged in the data—task engagement.

5.2.1. More about task engagement

Two participants showed task engagement in a manner that is worth exploring further since the very different levels of task engagement they exhibited adversely affected their writing products. In an authentic test situation, our two writers' grades would also have suffered, and given the importance of high-stakes test writing, these writers' data is worth examining and discussing in more detail. Kenan performed what can be called "over-engagement", similar to what we see in Lo and Hyland (2007). Lo and Hyland studied the effect of a new writing programme on ESL students' writing motivation and engagement, and their participant, Eva, became "so engrossed in telling a story which was important to her that she forgot about the task requirements" (p.231). In a similar fashion in our study Kenan went off-task because he was interested in the topic and became so immersed in the texts he found during his online browsing he forgot about the assigned task. Lo and Hyland's (2007) participant did not have access to online resources but went off-track regardless, showing that writers can become distracted with or without online resources; although we would nevertheless argue that the availability of online resources may increase the chances of writers becoming side-tracked.

Our second example regarding task engagement is Reem, whose lack of engagement with the writing task is manifested by her exploitation of online resources. Reem conducted little planning on her own as she depended heavily—too heavily—on online resources to construct her text. Her inappropriate use of online materials was demonstrated by the fact that her task response was simply a re-wording of the sources that she found from her googling; "near copies" in Campbell's (1990) words. Cohen (personal communication, 2012) suggests that this can be seen as a "test-wiseness" strategy: Reem took the path of least resistance and did not go through the cognitive processes the test-designers wanted her to, since argumentative essays are designed mainly to provoke critical thinking (Rottenberg, 1991). What can be called an "intentional" misuse of resources (Li and Casanave, 2012)

came about because of the lack of motivation to respond to the task (Gilmore et al., 2010). She was not motivated to convey her own experience in the writing as she did not believe it would make a difference to her final mark. Reem did not have the "desire for self-expression" (Oldfather and Shanahan, 2007, p.262) or the wish to move beyond textual reproduction. While some studies (e.g., Norton and Toohey, 2001) suggest that writers might draw on others' words to help them find their own, the fact that Reem merely reworded those of her sources—and spoke of this rewording in terms of a way to avoid her borrowing from being detected—reveals that she was making little attempt to convey her own voice but was rather content to reproduce the voice of others. We should also note that Reem's sound understanding of western notions of plagiarism did not deter her; rather, knowing what plagiarism is made her confident that she could escape detection. Ariely (2012) suggests that some cultures might consider getting away without being caught while cheating as a "clever" act, although we are well aware that Reem's actions and feelings about plagiarism may have little to do with her culture or cultural sensibilities. Moreover, Reem's level of task engagement was also affected by the availability of online materials. Lo and Hyland (2007) suggested that student writers are more engaged with tasks which ask about personal issues, being motivated to convey their own experiences. However, in our case, the online resources meant that Reem was even less engaged in the non-test-like situation writing because she was able (albeit in an unauthorized manner) to rely on others' opinions.

As discussed above, we can view Reem's behaviour through a prism of test-savviness, or we can take a more explicitly ethical stance of deploring such actions. Indeed, there are other accounts in the literature of students engaging in what can be described as cynical composing behaviour when constructing their task representations in an attempt to secure high grades (Harwood & Petrić, 2012; Petrić & Harwood, 2013; Yang & Shi, 2003); or else to complete their writing as quickly as possible (Leki, 2007; Nelson, 1990). Elsewhere in the literature, we find accounts of student writers sidestepping task requirements which ask them to argue in favour of their beliefs or preferred position, instead preferring to take the path of least resistance. Lin, one of the writers in Wolfersberger's (2007) study, for instance, initially decided to argue that abortion is a selfish choice not because of her beliefs, but because the anti-abortion article supplied by her teacher was said to consist of "very simple" words she found "easy to understand", in contrast to the pro-abortion article, which she found "hard to understand" (p.150). Similarly, another student, Jenny, decided to take a pro-abortion position because she had been able to find more pro-abortion readings; she therefore felt "it should be easier" to align with this pro-abortion position in her own text (p.195). In line with these accounts, Miho and Tala in our study made little or no distinction between the test- and non-test-like conditions, declining to take advantage of the unlimited time and additional affordances that the latter condition offered them. Rather than seeing the unconstrained condition as enabling them to take the time to make their text personal, the priority was getting the writing done with the minimum of effort. Indeed, one such time- and effort-saving strategy adopted by Reem in our study was plagiarising by cutting and pasting text from the Internet in the non-test-like condition. Finally, some of Plakans' (2010) informants who failed to differentiate the different requirements of the integrated and non-integrated tasks spoke of their lack of enthusiasm for writing, some even describing how they avoided writing at all. All of this highlights the key role that motivation and task engagement will play in writers' representations.

6. Suggestions for enhancing writing pedagogy

To sum up, the cases above show how inflexible strategy use resulted in the failure of some writers to exploit the affordances of the different conditions, spurning the opportunity to adjust their composing behaviours accordingly so as to perform to their best in each situation. This raises the question of the appropriacy of adopting a single approach to teaching writing. We saw how Miho flatly rejected the teaching of writing as a process, believing it to be "pointless," as she only wrote in exams prior to studying in the UK. However, other writers like Lina perceived writing as a voice-giver. It is important to raise students' awareness of how non-test-like writing may differ from the more rigid constraints of test-like assessments, and to equip them with strategies to write in the most appropriate manner to fit the context and the contextual conditions. As has been noted in our study, task representation may involve contradictions between what the question setter/examiner expects, what the writing teacher has their students do in class, and the process the test-taker chooses to adopt. Rather than giving student writers the impression that they can and should only approach the composing process in a mechanical, pre-scripted manner, it is important to empower test-takers to find their own voice and to see the need to alter their task representations as the situation permits.

In Nelson's (1990) study, there was a clear disconnect between some of her focal students' task representations and those of their markers. In the case of one of these students, Art, his lecturer wished the students to collect original data and to engage with their feedback and carefully revise and improve their texts; whereas Art was rather focused on passing the course by expending the minimum effort. While Art achieved the "reward" of a passing grade, however, we would argue that the other form of reward for which he should have been striving—a gain in learning—was conspicuous by its absence. Similarly, we found an unhealthy grade-centred attitude manifest by some of our writers, and this attitude was often linked in students' accounts with how their teachers had taught them to write. This impoverished writing pedagogy was at least partly responsible for socializing our informants into a deficient way of thinking about writing processes, products, and task representation. The pedagogy was focused on exam writing, and gave the impression that all academic writing was recipe-like, and that simple skeleton structures could serve as catch-alls for organizing writers' texts. Where students have been shaped by this pedagogy and/or display these attitudes, we need to consider how to convince them to adopt a different way of thinking about writing tasks. Addressing these dilemmas, Nelson argues as follows:

> …teachers need to understand the importance of accountability, or rewards, in the academic task system and to find effective ways to use it to promote learning […] We need to learn more about how particular writing tasks and classroom contexts encourage or discourage students from engaging in the thinking and writing processes we hope to promote. (Nelson 1990: 367)

In Nelson's (1990) study, detailed task instructions effectively handed uninterested students "product templates" (p.390), a tick box list which students used to ensure their own interpretation of the task requirements was sufficiently close to that of the lecturer to ensure a passing grade. However, the students did not engage in the writing and learning process as the lecturer had intended, and their essay writing experience was diminished as a result. As Nelson argues, then, in designing their task requirements, lecturers need to carefully consider both product and process aspects of the task, ensuring that their task requirements promote appropriate processes of composing, rather than allowing students "to take shortcuts…that may allow them to circumvent the writing and learning processes that assignments are intended to promote" (p.392).

The writing tasks utilized in our study allowed for mechanical responses, something which unfortunately may be expected in the timed condition (Cumming et al. 2005). However, we also saw manifestations of the same behaviour in untimed conditions; and indeed some of the writers like Miho even depended on pre-prepared sentences. Coles (1978) objects to allowing a writing task to be presented "as a trick that can be played, a device that can be put into operation ... just as one can be taught or learn to run an adding machine, or pour concrete" (pp.134, 142). On the other hand, three writers in our study who applied the knowledge transformation process and who were not intent on playing tricks on the marker did not have enough time to convey their ideas in a way to reflect their true abilities in the timed condition. These findings therefore suggest how the problem might not only lie in the test condition (i.e., timed without resources) but also in the task, as the task might allow for automatic responses.

7. Limitations and questions for further research

We close by identifying the limitations associated with this study, and by providing suggestions for further research. Our largely qualitative case study approach meant that we focus on a small number of writers; and while this methodological choice enabled us to provide detailed, contextually-bound richness, a larger sample size would have given us a better idea of the extent to which these students' highly varied task representations were typical or unusual. Future studies which feature far greater numbers of writers could also systematically investigate the relationship between task representation and variables such as participants' age, education, and L1 literacy levels. Another idea for future study would be to examine the relationships between task representation and the quality of the writers' texts. We saw, for instance, how Kenan went off-task in the test-like task because he wrote about working rather than studying abroad. In our quantitative study (Khuder and Harwood, 2015), we wanted to explore the relationships between writers' processes and the quality of the texts they produced; hence we asked three trained raters to score the students' writing using the IELTS task 2 assessment criteria that focus on task response, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, grammatical range and accuracy. In Kenan's case, then, given his departure from the task brief, the raters assigned him a very low mark (2/9) for task response (see Khuder and Harwood, 2015). A study featuring a much larger dataset could investigate task representation/writing quality relationships more systematically.

Another weakness relates to the difficulty of creating authentic, naturalistic test-like and non-test-like conditions. Like Caudery's (1990) study of timed and untimed composing, despite our best efforts to get students to take the writing tasks seriously, we concede our "test-like" condition was a mere simulation of a test, and that conditions were patently artificial. Caudery found no compelling evidence that students produced better quality writing in untimed conditions, but wondered whether his study would have yielded different results "if the students had had reason to care more about the effectiveness of their writing" (p.130), and we can ask a similar question regarding the simulated nature of the conditions in our own study. Discussing previous studies of task representation and source use, McCulloch (2013) points out that many studies of integrated writing tasks are inauthentic, in that the composing conditions therein are artificial rather than naturalistic—for instance, researchers may provide students with source texts rather than allowing them to search for their own. While test-like conditions can be simulated somewhat by the use of a timed, supervised environment, ensuring participants are compelled to finish their writing in one sitting as in exam conditions, simulating non-test-like situations is methodologically problematic. In our own work, although students were permitted unlimited time and access to resources like the Internet and dictionaries, our

writers' composing was done in a classroom rather than in their own environment, and, as in the test-like condition, in one sitting. Though in defence of our research, it is clear from our findings that, artificial conditions or not, some writers *did* present very different task representations across the conditions, as manifested in contrasting writing processes and products across the test-like and non-test-like conditions. Also worth recalling are the accounts of test-oriented writers like Reem, claiming that the task representation and processes they displayed in taking part in our study mirrored their approach to authentic tasks. Nonetheless, future researchers should strive to address McCulloch's concerns in their efforts to ensure the composing conditions are as authentic as possible. One way forward would be to adopt Wolfersberger's approach, in which task representation is studied in an authentic learning environment.

A final weakness is connected with the first author's equal status with the participants as a fellow master's student. On the one hand, this may have put writers at their ease; but perhaps it also meant that our participants took the writing tasks less seriously than if the researcher had carried greater perceived power and status. On the other hand, if the first author *had* been seen as a more powerful figure, would the writers have spoken so freely and frankly at interview about their grade-oriented, disengaged reactions to the tasks? Whatever the case, we have uncovered some unsavoury attitudes to writing, and we wish to end on a less downbeat note by stressing the importance of research which strives to understand how to engender more educative writing pedagogies and more receptive attitudes on the part of students to good writing behaviours. All of this is inextricably linked to test writing environments, in which "writing practice" must be seen as more than mechanical "exam practice". Some of our writers exhibited a thirst for self-expression and creativity which was admirable, and which we would wish to see become common currency in writing classes; and it is our hope that future researchers will identify different task types which help foster these attitudes—and that ultimately, such task types will come to feature prominently in writing briefs in both test and non-test situations.

References

Ackerman, J. (1990). Students' self-analyses and judges' perceptions: Where do they agree? In Flower, L., Stein, V., Ackerman, J., Kantz, M., McCormick, K., & Peck, W., *Reading-to-write: Exploring a cognitive and social process*. New York: Oxford, pp.96-115.

Abdel Latif, M. M. (2008). A state-of-the-art review of the real-time computer-aided research of the writing process. *International Journal of English Studies, 8*, 29-51.

Ariely, D. (2012). *'The (Honest) truth about dishonesty': How we lie to everyone—especially ourselves*. London: HarperCollins Publishers.

Badger, R. G., & White, G. (2000). A process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal, 54,* 153–60.

Basham, C., Ray, R., & Whalley, E. (1993). Cross-cultural perspectives on task representation in reading to write. In: Carson, J.G., Leki, I. (Eds.), *Reading in the Composition Classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, pp. 299–314.

Campbell, C. (1990). Writing with others' words: Using background reading text in academic compositions. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.211-230.

Caudery, T. (1990). The validity of timed essay tests in the assessment of writing skills. *ELT Journal 44,* 122-131.

Cheng, G. (2009). Using game making pedagogy to facilitate student learning of interactive multimedia. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 25*, 204-220.

Coles, J.R. (1978). *The Plural I: The Teaching of Writing*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Connor, U., & Carrell, P. (1993). The interpretation of tasks by writers and readers in holistically rated direct assessment of writing. In Carson, J.G. and Leki, I. (eds.) *Reading in the composition classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, pp. 141–160.

Cumming, A., Kantor, R., & Powers, D. (2002). Decision making while rating ESL/EFL writing tasks: a descriptive framework. *The Modern Language Journal, 86*, 67-96.

Cumming, A., Kantor, R., Baba, K., Erdosy, U., Eouanzoui, K., & James, M. (2005). Differences in written discourse in independent and integrated prototype tasks for next generation TOEFL. *Assessing Writing, 10*, 5-43.

Duff, P. (2008). *Case Study Research in Applied Linguistics*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fan, F. H. K. (1993). How examinations affect students' approach to writing. In J.B. Biggs & D.A. Watkins (Eds.), *Learning and teaching in Hong Kong: What is and what might be*. Hong Kong: Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, pp.67–76.

Flinn, J. Z. (1987) Case studies of revision aided by keystroke recording and replaying software. *Computers and Composition, 5,* 31-44.

Flower, L. (1990). The role of task representation in reading-to-write. In Flower, L., Stein, V., Ackerman, J., Kantz, M., McCormick, K., & Peck, W., *Reading-to-write: Exploring a cognitive and social process*. New York: Oxford, pp.35-75.

Flower, L., Stein, V., Ackerman, J., Kantz, M., McCormick, K., & Peck, W. (1990). *Reading-to-write: Exploring a cognitive and social process*. New York: Oxford.

Gilmore, J., Strickland, D., Timmerman, B., Maher, M., & Feldon, D. F. (2010). Weeds in the flower garden: An exploration of plagiarism in graduate students' research proposals and its connection to enculturation, ESL, and contextual factors. *International Journal of Educational Integrity, 6,* 13-28.

Greene, S., & Higgins, L. (1994). "Once upon a time": The use of retrospective accounts in building theory in composition. In P. Smagorinsky (Ed.), *Speaking about writing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 115–140.

Harwood, N. & Petrić, B. (2012). Performance in the citing behavior of two student writers. *Written Communication, 29*, 55-103.

Hayes, J. R. (1996). A new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing. In C. M. Levy & S. Ransdell (Eds.), *The science of writing: Theories, methods, individual differences, and applications.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 1-27.

Ivanič, R., & Camps, D. (2001). I am how I sound: voice as self-representation in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10,* 3-33.

Khuder, B., & Harwood, N. (2015). L2 writing in test and non-test situations: Process and product. *Journal of Writing Research, 6,* 233-278.

Kirby, D., Kirby, D.I., & Liner, T. (2004). *Inside out: Strategies for teaching writing* (3rd.ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Kirsch, G. (1988). Students' interpretations of writing tasks: a case study. *Journal of Basic Writing, 7,* pp.81-90.

Kobayashi, H. & Rinnert, C. (2008). Task response and text construction across L1 and L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 17,* 7-29.

Leki, I. (1995), Coping strategies of ESL students in writing tasks across the curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*, 235–260.

Leki, I. (2007). *Undergraduates in a second language: Challenges and complexities of academic literacy development*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Li, S. (2013). The interactions between the effects of implicit and explicit feedback and individual differences in language analytic ability and working memory. *Modern Language Journal, 97*, 634–654.

Li, Y., & Casanave C. P. (2012). Two first-year students' strategies for writing from sources: Patchwriting or plagiarism? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 2,* 165–180.

Lo, J., & Hyland, F. (2007). Enhancing students' engagement and motivation in writing: The case of primary students in Hong Kong. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16,* 219–237.

McCulloch, S. (2013). Investigating the reading-to-write processes and source use of L2 postgraduate students in real-life academic tasks: An exploratory study. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *12,* 136-147.

Nelson, J. (1990). This was an easy assignment: Examining how students interpret academic tasks. *Research in the Teaching of English, 24,* 362—396.

Nicolás-Conesa, F., Roca de Larios, J., & Coyle, Y. (2014). Development of EFL students' mental models of writing and their effects on performance. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 24,* 1–19.

Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2001). Changing perspectives on good language learners. *TESOL Quarterly 35,* 307–322.

Oldfather, P., & Shanahan, C. H. (2007). A cross-case study of writing motivation as empowerment. In S. Hidi & P. Boscolo (Eds.), *Motivation and writing: Research and school practice* (pp. 257–279). Oxford: Elsevier.

Petrić, B., & Harwood, N. (2013). Task requirements, task representation, and self-reported citation functions: An exploratory study of a successful L2 student's writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 12*, 110-124.

Plakans, L. (2008). Comparing composing processes in writing-only and reading-to-write test tasks. *Assessing Writing*, *13*, 111–129.

Plakans, L. (2010). Independent vs. integrated writing tasks: A comparison of task representation. *TESOL Quarterly*, *44,* 185-194.

Prior, P. (2004). Tracing process: How texts come into being. In C. Bazerman and P. Prior (eds) *What writing does and how it does it: An introduction to analyzing texts and textual practices*. (pp. 167–200). London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Purpura, J.E. (1999). *Learner strategy use and performance on language tests: a structural equation modeling approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rottenberg, A.T. (1991). *Elements of argument. A text and reader.* Boston: Bedford Books.

Rose, M. 1980. Rigid rules, inflexible plans, and the stifling of language: A cognitivist analysis of writer's block. *College Composition and Communication, 31*, 389-401.

Ruiz-Funes, M. (1999). The process of reading-to-write used by a skilled Spanish-as-a-foreign language student: A case study. *Foreign Language Annals, 32*, 45-62.

Ruiz-Funes, M. (2001). Task representation in foreign language reading-to-write. *Foreign Language Annals, 34*, 226-234.

Sirc, G., & Bridwell-Bowles, L. (1988). A computer tool for analysing the composing process. *Collegiate Microcomputer, 6,* 155-160.

Smagorinsky, P. (1989). The reliability and validity of protocol analysis. *Written Communication, 6,* 463–479.

Tedick, D. J. (1990). ESL writing assessment: Subject-matter knowledge and its impact on performance. *English for Specific Purposes, 9,* 123-143.

Tomlinson, B. (1984). Talking about the composing process: The limitations of retrospective accounts. *Written Communication, 1,* 429-445.

Wolfersberger, M. A. (2007). *Second language writing from sources: An ethnographic study of an argument essay task*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Auckland.

Wolfersberger, M.A. (2013). Refining the construct of classroom-based writing-from-readings assessment: The role of task representation. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 10,* 49-72.

Yang, L., & Shi, L. (2003). Exploring six MBA students' summary writing by introspection. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *2*, 165–192.

Yeh, C. (2009). Student perceptions of an EFL undergraduate research writing project. *RELC Journal*, *40,* 314-33.

Young, M.K., & Leinhardt, G. (1998). Writing from primary documents: A way of knowing in history. *Written Communication, 15,* 25-68.

Zhang, Y. 2006. *Task representation and second language writers' prior writing experience: A case study*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Purdue University.

Appendix A

Essay prompts

1- Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic: Nowadays more people are choosing to live with friends or alone rather than with their families. This trend is likely to have a negative impact on communities .
   To what extent do you agree or disagree with these opinions? You should use your ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.
   Write at least 250 words.

2- Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic: Nowadays many students have the opportunity to study for part or all of their courses in foreign countries. While studying abroad brings many benefits to individual students, it also has a number of disadvantages.
   To what extent do you agree or disagree with these opinions? You should use your ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

   Write at least 250 words.

Appendix B

Example stimulated recall interview questions
Before writing:
1- What do you think of the writing task, easy/difficult?

2- What do you think the prompt is asking you to do?

3- How did you read the prompt?

4- Can you tell me about your knowledge of the topic and whether you found the task difficult?

5- How did you plan your ideas before writing?

6- The ideas you had before you started writing, did any of them change AS you were writing?

7- What did this plan include? How did you choose to divide your ideas?

8- What were thinking of when giving this example?

After writing:
1- On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is very dissatisfied and 10 is very satisfied, how happy were you with your performance? Why?

2- Were you satisfied with the words you had for your ideas?

3- How would you describe your writing experience now?

4- Were you confident while writing?

5- Did you write the way you usually do in real life? What do you feel is the difference?

6- Are there any ideas which you wanted to include but could not because of the lack of vocabulary, structure knowledge? [Asked only after the test-like session]

7- If you could do the writing again, what would you do differently?'

8- Questions about external resources like online dictionaries and other websites the writer consulted (e.g., Why did you look at these websites? Why did you highlight the text of these websites?)

9- Finally, is there anything else you'd like to say about this writing task?

Appendix C

Sample of coded data

Code	Example
Planning	When I started reading around the task, I found some interesting stuff on working abroad and, you know what, I totally forgot about the main task.
Revision	I know I revise a little, it is because I use the words and grammatical structures I am sure of.
Strategies	I thought this might help me focus on the exact words that the prompt is asking me to answer ... I will avoid using these words but maybe I will try to write the outline according to them, so instead of using the exact words, I will be explaining them.
Control of authorial voice	I cannot give examples from my own life, it is easier to draw on general examples than to think of one's self and experiences, no one can disagree with a general, well-known example but my personal experiences might not interest or convince others.
Audience awareness	this is a test and the examiner would care about the style I use rather than the ideas. They want a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structure and this is what they will get.

---

[i] We use the terms "test-*like*" and "non-test-*like*" conditions rather than "test" and "non-test" conditions because, as the writers were well aware, we were unable to faithfully replicate *real* test, high-stakes conditions; and, as shall become clear, one of our writers in particular did not seem to take the "test" condition seriously.

[ii] Actually Kenan only became aware of how his non-test-like situation writing went off topic during the interview. Therefore, we can argue that he changed his writing strategies as a result of the interview; and so it is conceivable that without the interview, his test-like situation writing would also have gone off topic as he would have been unaware of his mistake in the non-test-like situation.