A CASE STUDY OF THE COMPOSING PROCESSES OF
THREE BILKENT FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN A
TEST-TAKING SITUATION

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES AND LETTERS
OF BILKENT UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BY
TIJEN KARGIOĞLU AKADA
AUGUST 1994

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ABSTRACT

Title :   A case study of the composing processes of three
          Bilkent first-year students in a test-taking
          situation
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This descriptive case study was an empirical investigation of the composing processes of students in a test-taking situation. The subjects were 3 volunteer EFL (English as a foreign language) first-year students at Bilkent University, which is an English-medium university in Turkey.

The data were collected from direct observations while the subjects were writing their midterm examinations and from interviews with the subjects that took place immediately after the examinations were completed.

The results showed that the subjects' composing processes in a test-taking situation were similar to the composing processes of student writers in non test-taking situations (Pianko, 1977; Sommers, 1980; Zamel, 1983). The followings are some of the important similarities. During prewriting the subjects generated some general ideas to develop in their writing. However, they did not feel obliged to use these general plans. Planning was also done during pausing and rescanning. Similar to other student writers (Sommers, 1980), their primary focus of revising was surface-level concerns such as grammar, spelling, and lexical mistakes rather than revisions of content of their writing. All subjects stated that

they tried to follow their teachers' instructions about essay writing.

Although the subjects knew that they would be graded, they did not seem to commit themselves to the writing tasks by making use of the whole examination time. This may closely be related to test-anxiety, in which avoidance and escape are common behaviors (Deffenbacher, 1986).

The results supported the findings of previous research on school-sponsored writing. The subjects did not commit themselves to the topics. They considered the writing unimportant, a task they had to fulfill for the sake of a grade. They stated that they did not have a real message to give about their assigned exam topics and that the teachers were not interested in the content of their essays. The subjects focused on form rather than content. Based on these results, it is suggested that writing instructors should spend more time on prewriting to generate content and focus on content rather than surface-level concerns while revising.

BILKENT UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES AND LETTERS

MA THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM

August 31, 1994

The examining committee appointed by the
Institute of Humanities and Letters for the
thesis examination of the MA TEFL student

Tijen Kargioglu Akada

has read the thesis of the student.
The committee has decided that the thesis
of the student is satisfactory.

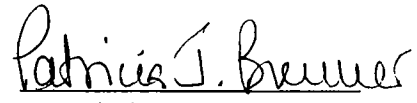Thesis Title   : A case study of the composing
                    processes of three Bilkent
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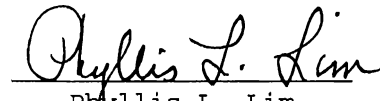
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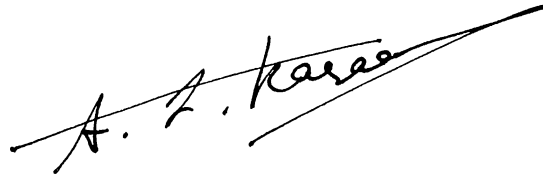   Bilkent University, MA TEFL Program

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Feyza Ozertem (1953-1994).

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Writing has always had a place in English language teaching

(ELT). The need for learning to write in English for academic

purposes has been recognized by an increasing number of people

(White, 1981). This holds true for native speakers of English

(L1 speakers) and for learners of English as a second language (ESL)

as well as for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Traditionally, writing was considered an extension of grammatical

competence. Teaching writing was regarded the same as teaching

grammar (Efe, 1993). Students' deficiencies in writing were viewed

as a result of their linguistic incompetence, their lack of mastery

of grammar and language use (Efe, 1993). Therefore, early writing

textbooks were designed to teach mechanical aspects of writing

(Emig, 1971). Since this traditional approach was concerned with

form, teachers concentrated on the correction of syntactic and

mechanical problems in student writing in an effort to help students

improve their writing ability (Gök, 1991). This writing instruction

which focused on rules, patterns and style confined attention to the

finished product (Saskin, 1992). Nevertheless, students kept on

producing weak essays (Efe, 1993), indicating that this type of

instruction was unsuccessful at improving students' ability to

write. Consequently, researchers realized that the investigation of

students' written products could not give them a view of how

students write or of students' needs in terms of instruction (Zamel,

1983). As a result, rather than studying the products, the idea of

studying L1 composing processes was suggested by Braddock, Jones and

Schoer in 1963 (cited in Hillocks, 1986). Many researchers followed

their recommendations and advocated the need for studying composing

processes. One of the researchers, Hairston, voiced this need by

stating that:

> We cannot teach students to write by looking at what they have
> written. We must also understand how that product came into
> being, and why it assumed the form that it did. We have to
> try to understand what goes on during the act of writing ...
> if we want to affect its outcome. We have to do the hard
> thing, examine the intangible process, rather than the easy
> thing, evaluate the tangible product. (cited in Zamel, 1983,
> pp. 165-166)

The result of Braddock et al.'s (1963) invitation to work on

composing processes was the focus shift from the written product to

the writing processes in composition theory and research (Cannon,

1987).

Early examples of the focus shift in composition research from

product to process dealt with L1 writing processes. Emig's classic

study (1971), which dealt with the composing processes of native

speaker high school students, was the first important work in the

field. Emig's study revealed the non-linear nature of the writing

process and the diversity and individuality of the subjects' writing

processes (Zamel, 1983). It also found that writers do not start

with predetermined ideas in mind. Rather, they continuously

discover what they want to say while they are writing. Another

major study, by Pianko (1977), investigated the nature of collegiate

writing by comparing writing processes of different groups of native

speaker college freshman writers: writers of different abilities,

ages and sex. Pianko investigated these different types of writers

to see whether these different categories of writers have similar

writing processes to those of younger writers examined by previous

researchers such as Emig (1971), and whether writing processes

differ according to these variables. She agreed with Emig that writers do not have a clear picture of what they will write before they begin to write but that they find meaning as they write. She also found that all her subjects preferred self-initiated writing over the teacher-initiated writing, and that they viewed school-sponsored (teacher-initiated) writing as something to be finished as quickly and effortlessly as possible in order to fulfill a school requirement (Pianko, 1977). Additionally, Pianko (1977) indicated that composing processes of students during school-sponsored writing were "inhibited" (p. 11) in that students do not spend a long time for prewriting activities, planning, writing, and rereading, and they revise very little.

Guided by L1 writing theory and research, ESL researchers began to investigate the nature of ESL writing processes in the 1980s. Zamel (1983) agreed with Pianko that writers explore, create, and clarify their ideas and reformulate them through writing, and that they also discover and employ new ideas that come out as they write. Zamel (1982), in describing the composing processes of advanced ESL students, concluded that similar to L1 writers, ESL writers also experience the composing period as a process of exploration of meaning. In addition, she found that composing processes of individual ESL writers are varied; these writers apply a great variety of individual strategies before and during writing. Also, in comparing the composing processes of skilled and unskilled ESL writers, Zamel found that unskilled ESL writers do not view the writing period as a span in which they can discover what they want to say. In other words, unskilled writers rarely view writing as a process of discovering their ideas (Zamel,

1983). Unskilled writers believe that writers know what they will

say before they start writing, and, therefore, unskilled writers do

not explore their thoughts while writing (Zamel, 1983). Rather,

unskilled writers are likely to be adherent to their early decisions

and not to explore new thoughts on paper (Zamel, 1983).

Although the findings of these researchers are varied and some

aspects may be controversial, one common point in their methodology

is that their subjects composed in non test-taking situations.

However, students do not always compose in such situations. Since

they have to take tests to meet the requirements of academic life,

tests are an indispensible part of academic study. As White (1981)

put it, writing tests have long been one common method of testing,

and essay examinations have frequently been used to evaluate

students' academic performance (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel

and Hughey, 1981). Jacobs et al. mention the importance of

considering purposes of tests and identify two purposes: testing

the growth of the process of student writing and testing the

product. They assert that a test may either examine "a direct

outgrowth of certain learning activities, including ... advance

preparation for the test composition" (p. 17), or it may be an

impromptu test that concentrates on the product and ignores the

process. Jacobs et al., mentioning the importance of the time

factor in the composing process, also state that:

> Obviously, a closely-timed impromptu test can hardly begin to
> tap the writer's resources in the whole composing process,
> other than to require that all of the process skills be
> compressed into a speeded time frame, with the result
> resembling only vaguely what writers usually do in processing
> written discourse. It is important to remember this serious
> limitation of a timed, impromptu test. (p. 17)

In addition to the time limitation variable that influences the composing process, a test anxiety variable cannot be ignored when students write for test-taking purposes. Test-taking anxiety has been recognised to have a clear connection to second language performance (Macintyre and Gardner, 1991), as many teachers of English recognise. According to Mayerhof (1992), regardless of the extent to which students study and regardless of whether they are good or poor students, students suffer from fear of failure which may cause them to either perform unsuccessfully or fail a test. Students are also conscious of this. Students who are native speakers of English very often complain about the deterioration of their writing when they are in test-taking situations (O'Brien, 1988). A small-scale questionnaire was distributed by Manchester University to 80 students, and the results showed that 72% of the students preferred writing for continuous assessment (which involves no time constraints) over writing in examinations (which involves time constraints) (O'Brien, 1988). The 28% of the students who preferred continuous assessment of their course work mentioned their poor performance on tests. One student voiced that he became "far-too-rushed" and therefore, "sloppy" (p. 67). Another student pointed out that his thinking processes became limited and his written work reflected serious organizational problems.

Although writing teachers and students are aware of differences between students' writing performance in test-taking and non test-taking situations, there is a dearth of literature in this area. As Hudelson pointed out, it seems that the more researchers and teachers discover about the second language writing process, the more questions need to be answered. Additionally, the lack of

studies on various aspects of composing processes of writers from every culture around the world has also been recognized (Krapels, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

A review of the literature also shows a lack of research on Turkish EFL university students' composing processes in academic essay writing in test-taking situations. This study will investigate the composing processes of three Turkish first-year students at Bilkent University, Turkey, in a test-taking situation. The following research question was addressed: What are the composing processes of three EFL students at Bilkent University, Turkey, in a test-taking situation? Although the results may not be generalizable to every academic setting, the identification of these composing processes of EFL writers will be beneficial for EFL writing instructors who teach academic essay writing courses in Turkey.

Awareness of writers' composing processes in a test situation is of significant value. If writing instructors become more aware of the processes that Turkish students undergo when writing under test-taking conditions, the instructors will be in a position to suggest a variety of strategies to increase students' success. EFL instructors' understanding of their students' composing processes will enable them to develop techniques which may, in turn, improve their students' present strategies so that they can be more successful in writing examinations.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the previous chapter the shift from the product to the process of writing in composition theory, the findings of the L1 and L2 process research were briefly mentioned, and the deterioration of student writing in a test-taking situation was discussed. This chapter discusses the findings of the L1 writing process research, studies on L2 composing processes, and finally, student writing in test situations.

Studies on L1 Composing Processes

The early studies on composing processes directed attention to L1 writers. The first pioneering study to deal with composing processes of L1 students was Emig's 1971 research. She introduced the case study design into writing-process studies, which was then applied by several writing process researchers (Krapels, 1990). Her case study investigated the composing processes of eight students. Six of her twelfth grade subjects were recommended as "good" writers and the other two were "interested in writing but not particularly able as writers" (p. 29). Emig met each subject four times and had them compose aloud to a tape, a commonly used technique in most process research, in which a subject was asked to think aloud as he or she composed (Raimes, 1985). Emig (1971) described the composing aloud process as a writer's externalisation of his composing processes. Meanwhile, Emig was also observing and making notes on her subjects' writing behaviors (Emig, 1971). Emig collected data from her subjects' composing-aloud audiotapes, from her notes taken during her observations, and interviews during which each subject gave his or her writing autobiography which consisted of "related

reading experiences and descriptions, and evaluations of the

teaching of writing he had experienced" (p. 30) as well as the

answers that the subjects gave to Emig's questions about their

writing behaviors (Krapels, 1990). In addition, the subjects'

writing products done in the past were collected. The data

suggested the non-linear nature of the composing process (Zamel,

1983). In contrast to the commonly held belief that the writing

process consisted of the three stages, namely planning, writing, and

revising which occurred in a linear order, Emig's study showed that

these stages occur and reoccur throughout the process. Emig also

identified two types of stimuli that start and keep the writing

process going: self-initiated (self-encountered) and other-

initiated (the most common type of which in a school setting is

teacher-initiated, also called school-sponsored). She revealed that

different composing processes are applied for these two types of

writing. If writing was self-initiated her subjects allocated more

time on prewriting and planning behaviors than if it was teacher-

initiated. Prewriting is defined as the part of the composing

process which "extends from the time a writer begins to perceive

selectively certain features of his inner and/or outer environment

with a view to writing about them ... to the time when he first puts

words or phrases on paper elucidating that perception" (Emig, 1971,

p. 39), and planning is defined as "the setting of parameters,

general or specific, for the composition to be written. Planning

behaviors can be mental, written or both." (Pianko, 1977, p. 7)

Pianko (1977) did another major study on the composing

processes of college students. Her study was the first

comprehensive study that investigated the characteristics of

different groups of college students. The subjects were 17 L1

college students classified as remedial or traditional, typical

college entrance age or older, and male or female. The subjects

gave the researcher a chance to see whether these different groups

of writers have similar writing patterns to those of younger writers

studied by previous researchers, such as Emig (1971), and to see

whether writers of different categories have common writing

characteristics. The subjects were assigned to write five writing

episodes, each of which required a 400 word essay, one per week, in

any of the descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative

modes of writing. Each subject was directly observed at least for

one writing session and was videotaped. In addition, the subjects

were interviewed afterwards about their composing behaviors. At the

end of the direct observations and the interviews, several

dimensions in the students' composing processes were identified.

These dimensions are prewriting, planning, composing (three major

types of behaviors mainly writing, pausing, and rescanning were

recorded in the composing stage), as well as rereading, stopping,

contemplating the finished product, and handing in of the product

(for definitions of these terms, see Appendix C). By directly

observing her subjects, Pianko obtained some quantitative data,

namely the length of time spent for certain behaviors such as

prewriting, composing, and rereading, and the rate of composing, as

well as the number of times certain behaviors occurred such as

revising, pausing, writing drafts, and rescanning. In addition, she

also gathered information concerning the subjects' writing

behaviors, attitudes and feelings during the composing period such

as their attitudes toward the writing, stylistic concerns,

consideration of purpose, knowledge of ideas, their concerns about writing from the interviews themselves. She also collected data from the interviews in which the subjects reported their past writing experiences and their previous feelings about their writing. The ample data showed that all subjects, regardless of their school class status (remedial or traditional), age (under or over 21), or sex, preferred writing on topics of their choice over the given ones, getting feedback over getting teacher evaluation, and doing free writing over academic writing (Pianko, 1977). Pianko, like Emig, also found her 17 subjects spent little time on prewriting. She also recognized major differences between remedial and traditional writers' writing behaviors. The traditional writer subjects were found to spend more time on prewriting activities (about 45 seconds more), paused twice as many times during composing, and rescanned three times more than the remedial writers. Pianko defined pausing as "a break in the actual writing for the purpose of thinking ... or for diversion" (p. 7) and rescanning as "a rereading of a few words, or sentences, or a paragraph" (p. 7) during which revisions can possibly be made. For some students, the aim of pausing was to find out what to write next. The aim of most rescannings for students was "to reorient themselves to what they had just written for the purpose of deciding what to write next" (p. 10). Sometimes, they paused just to rest and rescanned to revise what they wrote. However, other students paused mostly "for diversions or for hoping that the correct spelling, correct word, or what to write next would appear to them" (p. 10). Further, the study found that the traditional writers wrote more words per minute than the remedial writers. That finding suggested that the remedial

writers were overly concerned with "mechanics and usage and correct wording during composing" (p. 13), which caused them to write fewer words than the traditional writers during the same amount of time. Additionally, although there was a word requirement, most of the subjects were not concerned with the number of words they wrote so they did not count them to see whether they wrote the required number of words. Although Pianko's subjects were allowed to take as much time as they needed provided that the writing would be finished that afternoon, another finding was that most of her subjects wrote only one draft, showing that the subjects view the school-sponsored writing task as something which is not worth committing themselves to. In the final analysis, school-sponsored writing was found to provide little satisfaction to the subjects.

In addition to Pianko, who studied different groups of writers, Perl's studies (1979, 1980) also illustrated differences between skilled and unskilled writers. These studies revealed that similar to skilled writers, unskilled writers also discover their ideas through the act of writing (cited in Zamel, 1983). Perl pointed out differences in unskilled and skilled L1 writers' writing behaviors. Unskilled writers were the ones who were prematurely concerned with accuracy; because of this, they were not successful at exploring their ideas (cited in Zamel, 1983). This finding supports Pianko's finding that remedial writers were worried more about stylistic concerns than the content. Another point which separates unskilled writers from skilled writers is that unskilled writers plan less, and when they plan, they tend to stick to their earlier plans more than skilled writers do (Raimes, 1985). It seems that writers' adherence to their previous planning limits their

exploration of new ideas that can occur during composing. In
addition, unskilled writers do not rescan their products as much as
skilled writers do. Whenever unskilled writers rescan, it is more
for correcting surface-level errors (grammar, spelling, and
mechanical errors) than for "assessing the fit between their plans
and the product" (Raimes, 1985, p. 230). Unskilled writers also
revise for the purpose of editing with a focus on the form rather
than the content (Raimes, 1985). This finding was also supported by
Sommers' (1980) study on L1 writers. She found that unskilled and
skilled writers revealed different revising behaviors. Unskilled
writers were more concerned with revising vocabulary items to avoid
repetition of words, and they viewed revision as a rewording
process. In other words, the main revision concern of unskilled
writers was making lexical changes rather than semantic changes
(Sommers, p. 347). On the other hand, skilled writers revised their
work mainly for the purpose of "finding the form or shape of their
argument" (Sommers, p. 349). Sommers' skilled writers viewed their
revision process as a recursive activity as Perl's skilled subjects
also did, an activity in which they discovered what they wanted to
say first, and dealt with lexical concerns later. Perl's and
Sommers' findings depicted that unskilled writers are concerned with
form so much "that the ungoing process of discovery is constantly
interrupted" (Zamel, 1980, p. 270). These findings were supported
by Rose (1980), who studied people with writer's block. He
indicated that "blockers" (Rose, 1980, p. 390) are very much
concerned with mechanics, correctness and form (cited in Zamel,
1983), which inhibits the exploration of ideas, whereas the 'non-
blockers' "while operating according to certain rules and plans,

were also aware that these rules and plans are subject to modification" (Zamel, 1980, p. 270).

Research on the composing processes of L1 writers shows that both skilled and unskilled writers discover and create meaning during the act of writing (Zamel, 1983). While writing "ideas are explored, clarified, and reformulated, and ... new ideas suggest themselves and become assimilated into the developing pattern of thought" (p. 166). However, skilled writers tend to include recent ideas in their writing whereas unskilled writers are less likely to let themselves explore their ideas on paper, and adhere to their previous plans (Zamel, 1983).

Studies on L2 Composing Processes

First language writing process research guided second language writing specialists, and researchers started to investigate the composing processes of second language writers (Krapels, 1990). An important finding of L2 writing research is the discovery of similarities between L1 and L2 writing processes (Hudelson, 1988). However, all findings of first language writing research do not apply to ESL writing research, probably, as Krapels suggested, because the research contexts are different; that is, in one case writing occurs in the first language whereas in the other, writing is done in the second language.

Early studies on L2 composing processes tended to focus on all aspects of L2 writing processes (Krapels, 1990). Early researchers investigated L2 writers' composing behaviors particularly to identify successful and unsuccesful writing behaviors (Krapels, 1990). However, later studies limited their scopes with certain

writing behaviors, certain types of writers and characteristics of L2 writing (Krapels, 1990).

An earlier study on ESL writing processes was conducted by Chelala (cited in Krapels, 1990). The focus of her case study was composing and coherence. Chelala worked with two Spanish women who composed aloud four times and were interviewed twice. Chelala analyzed the coherence of the subjects' written works. She reported effective and ineffective writing behaviors and identified the use of the first language both during prewriting and composing (Krapels, 1990) as ineffective behaviors. However, these findings were contradictory to the findings of later researchers (Krapels, 1990). After Chelala's study, another study by Jones (cited in Krapels, 1990) also investigated two L2 writers: one 'poor' writer who was a Turkish graduate student and one 'good' writer who was a German attending his freshman level studies. Jones compared effective and ineffective writing behaviors. He analyzed the two subjects' behaviors in terms of generating and reading the text (Krapels, 1990). Jones found that the poor writer did not generate ideas while the good writer did. Jones ended up by saying that the difficulty of the poor writer in L2 writing resulted from lack of competence in composing rather than linguistic incompetence in L2.

Jones's findings (cited in Krapels, 1990), which suggested that competence in the composing process was more important than the linguistic competence in L2 in achieving L2 writing proficiency, were reinforced by findings of Zamel's 1982 study (Krapels, 1990). Zamel pointed out that "competence in the composing process was more important than linguistic competence in the ability to write proficiently in English" (Krapels, 1990, p. 40). Zamel (cited in

Krapels, 1990) investigated eight proficient ESL writers by

conducting interviews with them and analyzing their written work.

In addition to the similarity between the composing behaviors of

Zamel's ESL subjects and those of L1 writers, Zamel (cited in

Krapels, 1990) also suggested that if writers view composing as a

process they will improve their written products.

Zamel also did another study on composing processes. Her

second study (1983) dealt with six advanced ESL writers. This time,

she changed her research design, directly observing her subjects

during the composing process, and then interviewing them after the

writing was completed. She mentioned that her 1982 study, which

analyzed the subjects' written work, did not directly observe but

only inferred what the subjects' composing processes were.

Explaining her preference for direct observation, Zamel (1983) said

that direct observation is more accurate than only interviews,

because observation lends itself to recording students' writing

behaviors and the content of their writing. Because of this, she

conducted direct observations in her second study. Zamel mentioned

that, similar to L1 writers, ESL writers also write in a recursive

process, meaning that planning, drafting, reading, rereading and

revising take place throughout the composing process (cited in

Hudelson, 1988). Zamel said that:

> Proficient ESL writers, like their native language
> counterparts, experience writing as a process of creating
> meaning. Rather than knowing from the outset what it is they
> will say, these students explore their ideas and thoughts on
> paper, discovering in the act of doing so not only what these
> ideas and thoughts are, but also the form with which best to
> express them. (Zamel, 1983, p. 168)

Her second study (1983) recognized differences between skilled

and unskilled writers. One difference was that Zamel's skilled

writers wrote for a longer time than the unskilled writers. The
skilled writers also spent more time on revising. The skilled
writers, first, focused on getting the ideas across and usually they
revised at the discourse level, experienced the recursive nature of
writing, and edited at the end (cited in Krapels, 1990). However,
the least skilled writer she observed paused frequently from the
outset and revised words and phrases which made changes in form
rather than the content. These findings were similar to the
findings of previous L1 researchers such as Sommers (1980). Zamel's
study also indicated that linguistic problems caused by writing in a
second language concerned her advanced ESL writers the least. The
skilled writers were found to design strategies to advance their
ideas without being hindered by lexical and syntactic problems such
as putting a question mark next to the English word that they were
not sure of, leaving a space for the appropriate word or words, and
writing the word(s) in their language (Zamel, 1983). The findings
of Zamel's study on advanced ESL writers showed that writing in a
second language did not influence the composing processes of second
language writers. ESL writers showed similar composing processes to
L1 writers of previous researchers such as Pianko (1977) and Sommers
(1980).

On the other hand, Raimes' 1985 study on unskilled ESL writers
pointed out similarities as well as differences between the
composing processes of L1 and L2 writers. One point she mentioned
which also agreed with Zamel's (1983) finding was that Raimes'
unskilled ESL writers produced language and ideas in a similar
manner to that of advanced ESL writers. She identified similar
behaviors of her eight unskilled L2 subjects and unskilled native

speaker writers. Her unskilled subjects did very little planning, prior to and during the actual writing. This finding supported Perl's (1979) study on unskilled L1 writers. However, Raimes also had some findings contradictory to Perl's study on unskilled L1 writers. Raimes claimed that her subjects revealed commitment to the writing task and they gave more importance to generating ideas than to finding errors. Raimes pointed out that although certain similarities between L1 and L2 writers are exhibited, there are differences as well as similarities. Before Raimes' study, L2 researchers concentrated on the similarities between L1 and L2 writing processes, but Raimes' study emphasized the difference between them (Krapels, 1990).

Raimes also stressed the differences among L2 writers. She claimed that the L2 writer cannot be defined because L2 writers' types, ages, educational backgrounds and instructional needs on writing in a foreign language are varied (cited in Krapels, 1990). In addition to variables such as culture, background, age and needs of writers that cause differences in their L2 composing processes, another important variable which may influence the L2 composing processes may be the writing context in which students are asked to compose, such as test-taking situations.

Student Writing in Test-Taking Situations

Previously-mentioned studies illustrate aspects of L1 and L2 composing processes in situations in which the focus is neither assessment nor test-taking. However, most school-sponsored writing is assessed. As Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen's study (1979) reported, student writing in the pupil to examiner category covers the highest proportion of school-sponsored writing. Pupil to

examiner is defined as a category of student writing in which the audience is the teacher and the purpose is to be assessed. One way of assessing students' academic performance is through testing. As Britton et al. reported, writing may become a common way of testing in school. Essay tests are a principal means of assessment which offer several advantages such as familiarity to both the test-takers and the users of test results, and easiness of setting topics (Weir, 1987). During essay examinations, students are expected to compose on a test topic or test topics within a given time limit. Jacobs et al. (1981), in reporting the importance of the time variable in tests, mentioned that the time limitation will affect students' writing proficiency and they will not compose proficiently if they do not have enough time. They said that a closely-timed impromptu test may result in "all of the process skills be[ing] compressed into a speeded time frame, with the result resembling only vaguely what writers usually do in processing written discourse." (p. 17). Although negative effects of a time limitation on essay exams were recognised, no research which investigated the composing processes of students in an essay examination was reported.

In addition, another time-related variable, test anxiety, frequently restrains students' composing processes. Test anxiety has attracted several researchers, who have mentioned its impacts on academic performance (Bruch, Pearl, Giordano, 1986; Deffenbacher, 1986; Smith, Arnkoff, Wright, 1990). It was revealed that the performance of anxious students may be limited in tests and examinations (Macintyre and Gardner, 1986). Another investigation by Deffenbacher (1986) indicated that evaluative stress, that is, stress caused by being evaluated, interferes with the performance of

high test-anxious students, and that, as a result, they perform

poorly. He further said that high test-anxious students' complex

problem solving strategies are directly or indirectly affected.

He also suggested that students' awareness of a time limitation

distracts their cognitive processes, which also may affect their

composing processes. Writing is considered a cognitive process

(White, 1988), and cognitive processes are found to be distracted by

several constructs resulting from the test-taking situation, namely,

worry, emotionality and task-generated interference. Task-generated

interference refers to the tendency of test takers to spend too much

time on the wrong tasks such as unsolved problems and to become too

preoccupied with time limits (Deffenbacher, 1986). It was stated

that students' performance may decrease as they spend time on

irrelevancies. As Deffenbacher put it, these constructs have been

found to be "related to poorer performance" (p. 636).

In addition to researchers' recognition of the negative

effects of test anxiety on students' performance, teachers are also

aware of this dynamic. Mayerhof (1992), an English lecturer,

believes that if students are to perform efficiently, test anxiety

is the major factor to overcome. She says both good and weak

students suffer from text anxiety and consequently they frequently

end up with poor performance or they fail. Another teacher, Howe

(1988), states that the University of Buckingham, recognizing the

needs of ESL students, provides them with information on 'Coping

with Examination Stress' and 'Preparing for Examinations'. She also

reports that student misallotment of time is observed as the major

cause of failure in examinations. In addition, she mentions that

overwork and overworry, which she says are the symptoms of anxiety,

can have "disastrous effects on the students' performance in the examination" (p. 62). She further claims that "a student who normally writes reasonably error free language, can, under stress, make serious linguistic and cognitive errors" (p. 62). When one student from her sample was asked to produce writing under non test-taking conditions, such linguistic and cognitive errors did not appear. As both Howe (1988) and Mayerhof (1992) stated, students' performances may drop in test situations.

These findings were also supported by O'Brien's (1988) study, which focused on students' preferences for continuous assessment over writing for test-taking purposes. O'Brien's study was conducted at Manchester University, where native English students frequently complain about the deterioration of their writing when they take a test. Answering a questionnaire, students pointed out their weak performance in test-taking situations. One student said his style deteriorated and he became only concerned with getting the facts down. Another student also indicated that his constant anxiety turned to panic because of time limitations and he could not think efficiently. The result was serious organizational problems in his writing that dissatisfied and even embarrassed him. Of all the subjects who answered the questionnaire, 72% preferred assessment by coursework rather than by taking tests. In order to clarify differences between students' writing performances in test taking and continuous assessment situations, students' written products were analyzed. Significant organizational and stylistic differences between the products in these two situations were revealed. For example, in tests students used fewer instances of the passive voice, using instead a number of personal pronouns which

is not considered a suitable writing style for academic tasks. On the other hand, when composing for continuous assessment, students ended up applying a more formal, and, therefore, a more academic style than in the test-taking situation.

Summary

Several researchers (e.g., Emig, 1971; Perl, 1983; Pianko, 1977; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1983) have studied the characteristics of L_1 and L_2 composing processes and identified several writing behaviors for several types of writers. However, all of the previous studies were conducted in non test-taking situations with no time constraint. Since the educational system places a great deal of importance on exams, the identification of students' composing processes in test-taking situations deserves investigation. Although the deterioration of student writing in a test-taking situation is known, there is no research identifying the specific composing strategies exhibited during test-taking situations which may affect L_2 writing quality. This study, therefore, investigated L_2 students' writing processes in a test-taking situation with the hope of getting an understanding of the strategies that operate during test-taking. The study will focus on the composing processes of Turkish university students in a writing test. The findings will help instructors to better understand the composing strategies that are used under examination conditions, and thus should give ideas for providing their students with suggestions on how to improve their writing strategies.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

While many studies have explored composing processes under

non test-taking situations, this study investigated the composing

processes of first-year (freshman) students at Bilkent University,

Turkey, in a test-taking situation. It was assumed that students'

composing processes differ under a time constraint, and that a test

situation causes a deterioration of writing quality.

Similar to previous process-centered research, this is a case

study, which is viewed to be the most effective method of

investigating composing processes (Zamel, 1983). Similar to

previously employed research methods of studies on composing

processes (Zamel, 1983), the researcher directly observed the

subjects while they were composing and conducted interviews with

them after the completion of the task.

This chapter discusses the methodology in detail. Information

about the setting and the subjects who participated in the study is

given. The materials/instruments, and the procedure are also

explained.

Setting

This study was conducted at Bilkent University, which is an

English-medium university. Students take an English proficiency

examination before they start academic studies in their fields.

If they are successful on this exam, they are directly placed into

their first-year (freshman) courses. If they fail the examination,

they study English at BUSEL (Bilkent University School of English

Language) for one or two years until they are able to pass the

proficiency examination. Then, they may start their first-year

studies. All first-year students, regardless of whether they came through the BUSEL preparatory school or were exempted in the English proficiency examination, take obligatory first-year English. Depending on their results on the proficiency examination, they attend either English 101-102 courses (less advanced) or English 103-104 courses (more advanced) for two semesters. The aim of the freshman English courses is to prepare the first-year students to meet the academic standards required by an English-medium university. As one component of this course, the students receive instruction on academic essay writing (for further information about the syllabus, see Appendix G).

<p align="center">Selection of Subjects</p>

The researcher asked 14 of her fellow English instructors at Bilkent University for permission to visit their classes. By appointment, the researcher visited the 11 freshman English classes to explain the aim of her study and ask for volunteers to participate. The names and the telephone numbers of 18 volunteers were recorded. The researcher contacted all 18, and 6 volunteers whose course schedules matched the researcher's were chosen. Because the midterm examination would take place on three consecutive days, which would allow the researcher to observe only 3 subjects altogether, the researcher needed 2 students on each day, 1 as subject and 1 as a back-up subject. Although only 3 became the subjects of the actual study, all 6 students participated in the pilot study. The 6 students were given consent forms designed by the researcher (see Appendix A), which informed them about the procedure. In addition, a personal information form prepared by the researcher (see Appendix B) was also given to the subjects to elicit

personal information about them. All 6 students were highly motivated to cooperate with the researcher. One of them voiced her enthusiasm by saying "your research makes me feel important."

Out of the 6 participants, 3 of them were the actual subjects of the study. At the time of the study, which was conducted during spring semester, 1994, the 3 subjects were attending English 102 courses. They agreed to take the midterm examination in the presence of the researcher, and then to be interviewed by the researcher.

The first subject, Güçlü (pseudonym), was born and raised in Ankara. He is 20 years old. He has studied English for 10 years. He first started learning English at primary school and received both his primary and secondary education at the same private school in Ankara where the medium of instruction was English. He was exposed to formal instruction in writing in English in his secondary education. Presently, he is a first-year student at the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of Economics, Bilkent University. He is a non-prep student who was directly placed in English 101 in the fall semester, 1994, on the basis of the proficiency examination. At the time of his participation in this study he had already received formal instruction on academic essay writing in English 101 and he was attending English 102. He likes writing, and he often does self-initiated writing. He keeps a journal regularly and writes poems. He believes that self-initiated writing improves his writing ability by creating familiarity toward writing and improving his self-esteem. He also does teacher-initiated writing such as homework

assignments, essays, and summaries as well as writing in examinations.

The second subject, Hande (pseudonym), was also born and raised in Ankara. She is also 20 years old. She has been receiving formal instruction in English for eight years. She received her primary education at a Turkish state school and first started learning English in her preparatory year at an Anatolian high school where the medium of instruction was English. She also received formal instruction in writing in English during her secondary education. Presently, she is a first-year scholarship student at the Faculty of Engineering, Department of Electrics and Electronics, Bilkent University. She is also a non-prep student who took English 101 in fall and English 102 while this study was being conducted. She says she enjoys writing. She keeps a journal as a classroom requirement, but she does not believe that self-initiated writing improves her writing ability. She states that she has difficulty in finding what to write in her journal and, therefore, ends up writing only simple sentences. Additionally, she writes the required essays and summaries, takes notes during the lectures, and writes examinations at school.

The third subject, Mert (pseudonym), is from Bursa and is also 20. He studied at a private elementary school where he first started to learn English, and then he studied at an English-medium Anatolian high school. He is a non-prep student at the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of International Relations. At the time this study was undertaken, he had completed English 101 and was attending English 102. He claimed that he was a poor writer. He, therefore, stated his willingness to

participate in the study by saying that identifying his writing behaviors may help him discover his weak points in writing, and consequently, help him become a better writer. In addition, he said that he did not do any self-initiated writing; he did only teacher-initiated writing.

<div align="center">Materials/Instruments</div>

<u>Personal Information Form</u>

In order to collect detailed data about the subjects, a personal information form designed by the researcher was given to the subjects (see Appendix B). This form obtained information about educational background, previous instruction the subjects had received in writing, and the kinds of writing (self-initiated and teacher-initiated) that the subjects did. The questions elicited information about schools that the subjects had previously attended, the medium of instruction in these schools, whether they were ex-prep or non-prep students, their present faculties, and their present level of English (102 or 104). They were also asked whether they had ever received any formal instruction in writing in English or in any other language they might speak, and, if so, where and for how long. The subjects were additionally asked whether they did any self-initiated writing or not, if they believed that self-initiated writing improved their writing ability, and finally, what kind of teacher-initiated writing they had done.

<u>Observation Outline</u>

The writing processes of the students were directly observed by the researcher during both the pilot observation sessions and the actual midterm examination. Similar to Zamel's (1983) methodology during these observations, the students' writing behaviors and the

content of their writing were noted. The observed writing behaviors were prewriting, planning, composing (three types of which were writing, pausing, rescanning), rereading, stopping, contemplating the finished product, and handing in the product (for the definitions of the composing behaviors, see Appendix C).

Interview

Immediately after the completion of the midterm exam, each subject was interviewed. Similar to Pianko's (1977) study, each subject was questioned concerning his or her exhibited writing behaviors. In addition, the subjects were also asked questions about their attitudes toward the writing and testing.

Procedure

Pilot Observations

Six students participated in the pilot study. Each student was observed twice during pilot observations, which were conducted before the actual midterm examination. During these pilot sessions the researcher sat next to each student and recorded his or her writing behaviors as well as the content of the writing.

The Examination Day

The study was conducted while the subjects were taking their English midterm examinations for spring semester, 1994. The examination took place on three consecutive days from March 21-23, 1994, because of the large number of first-year students from various departments scheduled to take the examination. Thus, three students from various departments who were scheduled to take three different midterm examinations on three consecutive days were observed and interviewed.

The Midterm Examination

The midterm examination was 110 minutes and constituted 35 points of the semester grade. Because it aimed to test the reading and writing skills that the students were taught, it consisted of two components: reading and writing. The subjects were not observed during the reading component but only during the writing. The writing section, in which the students were instructed to write a 300 (± 50) word essay, was worth 10 points of the total 35 points of the midterm. The test takers determined how the time would be allocated to these two parts of the exam.

The three subjects were given three different midterm examinations, the topics of which differed according to their departments (for the topics of the midterms, see Appendix F).

The Examination Place

The midterm examination took place in a room where the researcher and the each individual subject were alone. The reason for the use of a special room was because both the subjects and the researcher preferred it this way (for further information, see Appendix D).

The Examination Procedure

On each examination day, the researcher was given one examination paper by the secretary of the English unit and met the individual EFL subject scheduled for that day in a special room at Bilkent University. The process was repeated three times over three consecutive days. On each day the researcher observed the individual EFL student, then interviewed him or her in the same room immediately after the examination was over. In other words, the researcher proctored for each subject during the examination,

observed and recorded his or her writing behaviors during the writing, as well as the content of the writing, and interviewed him or her after the completion of the task. During the midterm examination the normal examination procedure at Bilkent University was in operation. Each subject was given the examination paper with the assigned topic and a blank paper by the researcher. Then, each subject was allowed to finish the examination in the time frame that was announced on the cover page of the examination paper, which was 110 minutes. The researcher started timing when the subject received the examination paper and let the subject work on it during the assigned time span. While each subject was writing the essay on the given topic, the researcher observed and recorded the subject's writing behaviors as well as everything he or she wrote. As Emig did in her 1971 study, the researcher sat next to the subject as the subject wrote, and took notes. After the declared examination time was over, the researcher asked each subject to hand in the examination paper. The researcher then interviewed each subject in English. Each interview took approximately half an hour. These interviews were audiotaped, then transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. During the analysis procedure the method of analysis designed by Pianko (1977) was applied (see Appendix E).

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter aims at answering the research question: What
are the composing processes of EFL first-year students at Bilkent
University in a test-taking situation? The data came from two
sources: direct observations of the composing processes of three
students during an actual test-taking situation, and interviews with
the subjects which were conducted right after the examinations were
completed.

The data that came from the above two sources were analyzed.
This chapter presents the method of analysis of the data and the
findings of the research.

The Method of Data Analysis

Each subject was directly observed while writing a midterm
exam and then interviewed about his or her writing behaviors and
attitudes toward the writing. As the subjects were writing their
essays, certain writing behaviors were focused on. These seven
composing behaviors in the writing process are defined by Pianko as
follows:

Prewriting--what occurs from the moment writers receive the

assignment until they put their first words on paper.

Planning--the setting of parameters, general or specific, for the

composition to be written. Planning behaviors can be mental,

written, or both.

Composing--what occurs between the writing of the first word on

paper and the final stopping of writing. There are three major

types of behaviors exhibited during this process--writing,

pausing and rescanning:

Writing--the writing of the text.

Pausing--a break in the actual writing for the purpose of

thinking ... or for diversion.

Rescanning--a rereading of a few words, or sentences, or a

paragraph. It is not a rereading of the entire script.

During rescanning, revisions are usually made, most of which

are single word, multiple word, or punctuation changes. At

this time writers might also contemplate what they are

writing.

Rereading--when this occurs, writers reread the entire script for

the purpose of seeing what has been accomplished, revising and

proofreading, and, in some cases, for deciding on a conclusion.

In many instances, rereading is done also for the counting of

words.

Stopping--stopping occurs when students·think they have written all

they wish to about that topic and for that particular time.

Contemplating the finished product--after gathering all papers,

writers usually contemplate the finished product. The

contemplation is most often of quite brief duration.

Handing in of the product--this is characterised by the clearing of

the desk and the physical stance of the writer. For some

writers, the procedure is quick and easy, whereas for others, a

long ritual has to be carried out. (Pianko, 1977, pp. 7-8)

During the direct observations, these behaviors were observed

and data about each behavior were recorded in order to analyze the

writing behaviors. This method of analysis was taken from Pianko

(1977), Items 1-9 (see Appendix E). The collected data included how

much time elapsed for the writing behaviors and the number of times

these behaviors occurred (see Tables 1 and 2), as well as the

content of what the subjects wrote. Following the direct

observations, the subjects were interviewed and data about their

composing behaviors and attitudes toward the writing were elicited.

The interview questions were taken from Items 10-14 of Pianko's

(1977) method of analysis (see Appendix E). Each interview took

approximately half an hour, and took place immediately after each

subject had finished the examination.

<div align="center">The Presentation of the Findings</div>

<u>Data Analysis of the Direct Observations</u>

The subjects were observed by the researcher while writing a

midterm exam. The exam time was 110 minutes for the reading and

writing components together. The subjects were only observed during

the writing component of the test, which varied according to the

subjects' individual paces. Subject 1 took 48 minutes; Subject 2

needed 37.5 minutes; and Subject 3 spent 25 minutes on writing.

Table 1 presents the quantitative findings of the length of

prewriting time, composing time, rate of composing, and rereading

time. The rate of composing is the mean number of words written per

minute, including all pauses, rescannings, revisions, and rereading.

The rereading time refers to the length of time spent rereading the

final script, including making revisions (see Appendix E).

Table 1

Duration of Certain Writing Behaviors

	Subjects		
Behaviors	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3
Prewriting time (minutes)	2.50	2.00	0.50
Composing time (minutes)	45.50	35.50	24.50
Rate of composing (words/minute)	7.60	13.40	11.90
Rereading time (minutes)	1.50	3.00	1.50

Table 2 presents quantitative data on the number of revisions per 100 words as well as the number of pauses, drafts and rescannings that were observed to occur within the exam period.

Table 2

The Frequency of Certain Writing Behaviors

	Subjects		
Behaviors	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3
Revisions (per 100 words)	8.67	4.32	2.05
Pauses	35	44	29
Drafts	1	1	1
Rescannings	28	23	8

<u>Writing Behaviors Exhibited During Composing</u>

Data on the subjects' writing behaviors as observed during the composing process as well as information from the interviews with the subjects in which they were questioned about their writing behaviors are included here. The first aspect of the writing process is the prewriting stage.

<u>Prewriting</u>. Prewriting occurs before words are put on paper (see Appendix C). This stage also includes planning. It started with the subjects' reading the assigned topics. All three said in the interviews that they elicited their ideas about the topic and mentally selected some of their ideas to expand on while leaving others aside. Therefore, they roughly planned what their focus should be. The mean time which elapsed for the prewriting stage for the three subjects was 1.66 minutes, ranging from 0.5 to 2.5 minutes (see Table 1). This short time span for the prewriting stage is a concurrent finding of research on students' school-sponsored writing (Pianko, 1977).

<u>Planning</u>. The second aspect of the writing process is planning. All subjects said they planned before they started writing as a part of prewriting as well as during the actual composing. The subjects' planning behaviors were mental and/or written. Subject 1 and Subject 2 employed mental and written planning, both reporting that they started off with mental planning when they received the topic; then they put their ideas as informal notes on paper. These two subjects did not, however, employ extensive written planning, such as a detailed outline. On the other hand, Subject 3 said he did only mental planning. When planning, all subjects said they thought of how to start the

introduction, what ideas would be included in the introduction (the thesis sentence) and how these ideas would be advanced in the body. As they voiced it, they envisioned the main points of the whole essay. In addition, the subjects said that, although they envisioned including some main points in their essays before they started writing, they did not feel obliged to adhere to their planning. All subjects said they often excluded previous ideas as new and better ideas suggested themselves. As Subject 2 voiced it, "I may not obey my previous planning. As new ideas come to my mind, and as far as I like them, I include these ideas and change the route of my writing." This finding is similar to Rose's non-blocker writers (cited in Zamel, 1982), who had some general plans before they started writing, but also knew that these plans might change. On the other hand, all subjects emphasized that if they are asked to make a detailed outline as a part of the exam they would adhere to their early plans and not include ideas that occur later.

Composing. The subjects were asked to compose a 250-350 word essay in their midterm examination. The subjects were observed while composing essays ranging from 292 to 477 words. Subject 1 wrote an essay of 346 words in 45.5 minutes; Subject 2 wrote 477 words in a period of 35.5 minutes; and Subject 3's essay, which was completed in 24.5 minutes, was composed of 292 words. In calculating the average number of words per minute, the figures indicate that the words per minute (the rate of composing) for Subject 1 was 7.60, for Subject 2 was 13.43, and for Subject 3 was 11.91 (see Table 1). As Table 1 shows, Subject 1 wrote the fewest words per minute during composing. As Table 2 reveals, within his composing time of 45.5 minutes, Subject 1 paused 35 times (once

every 1.3 minutes), rescanned 28 times (once every 1.62 minutes),

and revised 8.67 times per 100 words. The many pauses, rescannings,

and revisions decreased Subject 1's pace and he was the slowest.

Subject 1, who revised the most, seemed very much concerned with his

mistakes and this affected his rate of composing negatively. This

was similar to Pianko's remedial writers who were overly concerned

with mechanics, usage and correct wording, therefore, wrote less

words in the same amount of time than the traditional writers.

Subject 2 wrote the most words per minute, 13.40. Within her

composing time of 35.5 minutes she paused every 0.8 minutes,

rescanned every 1.54 minutes, and revised 4.32 times per 100 words.

The fact that Subject 2 wrote more words per minute yet rescanned

more frequently shows that she was probably focusing on ideas rather

than on single words. When interviewed, Subject 2 also supported

this, saying she was focusing on how to combine her new ideas with

the written ones. Subject 2 also revised about half as much as

Subject 1. Subject 2 spent less time on revisions; therefore, she

ended up with a quicker pace than Subject 1. Subject 3, who had

the shortest composing time, 24.5 minutes, composed an average of

11.90 words per minute. He paused 29 times (once every 0.84

minutes), rescanned 8 times (once every 3.06 minutes), which was the

least, and revised an average of 2.05 times every 100 words. His

rescannings and revisions were much less frequent than Subject 1 and

Subject 2's. He exhibited similarities with Pianko's (1977)

remedial writers, who paused and rescanned less than the traditional

group of writers. Bearing the nature of pauses and rescannings,

which include planning, in mind, and Subject 3's calling himself a

poor writer, the conclusion may be that Subject 3 plans less while

writing, which is a common characteristic of unskilled writers (Raimes, 1985). The data support the non-linear nature of writing, a concurrent finding of several writing process studies in which it is suggested that certain writing behaviors occur and reoccur throughout the process (Emig, 1971; Pianko, 1977; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1983).

The mean composing time for the 3 subjects is 35.16 minutes. The subjects, although they had time left in the exam period, chose not to spend more time on the exam. Knowing that they would be graded did not encourage them to work longer. This is a previously-mentioned finding of research on school-sponsored writing: Students view school-sponsored writing tasks to be fulfilled as quickly and effortlessly as possible (Pianko, 1977). This lack of commitment may also be related to test anxiety. The subjects may also be exhibiting avoidance and escape behaviors as a result of their anxiety (Deffenbacher, 1986).

During the composing time, the subjects, in addition to writing, also exhibited non-writing behaviors such as pausing and rescanning. When questioned about the nature of their pauses, all subjects said when they paused they sometimes planned what they would write next. Sometimes they paused to think about how to bridge the previously written parts with the ideas they had in mind. Sometimes the subjects said they paused because they lost their concentration for what the researcher called either external or internal reasons. External reasons include such distractions as noise coming from the corridor. Internal reasons, as Subject 1 exemplified, are those such as thinking about where to go after the examination or what to do in the evening. Sometimes the subjects

said they paused because they felt something was wrong with the word

or the sentence they had just finished. In this case, the subjects

rescanned what they had just written to find the mistake. The

subjects also did revisions when they rescanned. They said they

sometimes rescanned to look for and revise grammatical or spelling

mistakes and/or repetitious words, suggesting that the subjects

focused on such surface-level mistakes. This finding coincides with

Sommers' study (1980), which indicated that student writers were

mostly concerned with revising repetitions in words. Repetitions of

ideas do not seem to be paid attention to.

Rereading. All subjects spent very little time rereading.

Subject 1 did not even reread the whole text after he finished

writing; rather, he skimmed through the text. When questioned about

his behavior in the interview he said "I wanted to read the text,

but when I read the introduction I felt very much bored. This

paragraph [paragraph 4] seemed very long. I thought something was

wrong with it. Therefore, I read it only. I skimmed the others

[paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6]." When rereading, Subject 1 corrected

two grammar and one spelling mistake and changed one word. Although

the test required the subjects to write a certain number of words,

Subject 1 did not count the words. Subject 2 spent 3 minutes

rereading the text. She reread the whole text and added a title

during rereading. She also added 3 words. Like Subject 1, Subject

2 also did not count the number of words. Subject 3 reread the text

in 1.5 minutes. He also revised while rereading, adding 2 words and

changing 2 words. He put the title last; also, he did not count the

number of words. None of the subjects counted the number of words

although there was a word requirement. Although it was a test

situation which required that the subjects write a certain number of words, EFL subjects also did not seem particularly concerned with the number of words they wrote to meet the requirement, similar to Pianko's L1 subjects (1977).

Stopping, contemplating the finished product, and handing in of the product. These writing behaviors happened in a very short time. When the subjects stopped, they immediately handed in their papers to the researcher. All subjects wrote only one draft during the process. Although the subjects finished writing before the assigned time, they did not want to write a second draft. In addition, all 3 subjects did not want to make any major changes in their essays after they finished. The subjects voiced similar points about their making no major changes, and said because of the time limitation and their tiredness if they were to rewrite several points, these points would not have been improved. For that reason they said they left the drafts as they were. Findings indicate that some writers need to renew their creativity and intellectual energy after writing for a certain time span (Pianko, 1977). All subjects may have felt similarly.

When the subjects were questioned about their feelings, they all said they were very happy to finish. Subject 1 said "I was very much bored; now I am happy that it is over." Subject 2 said "I am not satisfied with what I wrote, but finishing a task, even if you are not satisfied with it, gives you relief." The third subject also was very happy to finish the task. He said he thought one exam was over and out of his way. The subjects' ideas toward writing in a test also seem similar to other school-sponsored writing tasks.

Pianko (1977) stated that her subjects viewed writing tasks as something to be done for others which they wanted to finish quickly.

The following part discusses data gathered from the interviews. The questions relate to aspects of writing which are not observable and come from Pianko's method of analysis, 10-14 (see Appendix E).

Attitude toward the writing and the consideration of purpose. These two items were found closely related to each other. All subjects expressed negative attitudes toward the writing. They said they did not like what they had written, and they felt they could have done better. However, they did not want to revise paragraphs or longer chunks of information. Although they had time enough left to revise at least some points they did not show a commitment to doing that. The subjects` negative attitudes toward the writing may be closely related with their consideration of purpose. Despite the fact that they were writing a midterm exam, all 3 subjects believed that this writing was not "important". Subject 2 said, "I write for the sake of writing. I know I have to write something with an introduction, with a thesis sentence followed by paragraphs with topic sentences and finally a conclusion at the end." Subject 1 did not feel positive about the purpose of the writing. He said "I am not writing for carrying my message about the topic I am writing. I do not have such an aim here. The topic is not interesting, and I do not have any outstanding ideas about it. I just write simple things that everybody agrees on. I do not make any claims; I do not try to prove anything." Also, Subject 2 reported that the factor of the purpose of the audience who reads her essay affected her. She said, "The aim of the reader [the teacher] is not reading an essay.

She reads to give grades." Additionally, Subject 2 pointed out the difference between writing in tests and writing for newspapers. She said "In tests, the reader [the teacher] is not interested in learning my ideas about the topic. If I were to write to a newspaper I definitely would give more value to it. Because the reader will read it for the purpose of taking something out of it. But the teacher reads it just to give grades. That is, she [the teacher] does not have much expectations; neither do I." What she expected, she said, was just a passing grade. Subject 3 also reacted to the topic he wrote about, saying "the topic is so much mentioned in the media that I am tired of seeing it again. Everything was said about it. I do not think there is anything new that I can say." (see Appendix F, for the topics) He also suggested that the teachers should make the students write about more interesting topics such as Brazilian carnivals.

Stylistic concerns. All subjects showed some amount of stylistic concern. Subject 1 and Subject 2 said that they tried hard to keep the thesis in mind and expand the ideas in the thesis sentence to develop the ideas in the body paragraphs that were stated in the thesis. Subject 3 said he wanted to balance the length of the body paragraphs, and tried to have them look approximately the same but longer than the introduction and the conclusion. All subjects also voiced that they tried to use as many markers (however, but, also, first, second, etc.) as possible to combine the ideas, as they had been instructed by their classroom teachers. They said they also paid attention to their teachers' instructions about essay writing, for example, writing a thesis sentence and topic sentences.

Knowledge of ideas. All subjects said they had some ideas about the topics (see Appendix F) prior to writing. Since the topics had been chosen from popular subjects, the subjects expressed no difficulty in getting ideas about the topics. They also said the reading sections on the exam, which were related to the writing topics, helped the writers and gave them ideas. Subject 1 said he was faced with similar topics in the newspapers every day since the elections would be held in two weeks' time. Subject 2 said she had expected something about science in the exam because she was studying at the Faculty of Engineering, and the science topic, therefore, did not surprise her. Subject 3 said he was so accustomed to hearing about the topic [Bosnia] in the media that he had no difficulty in eliciting his ideas about it. The 3 subjects said when they read the topics, they thought of their ideas about the given topics and determined 3 or 4 related items to mention in their thesis sentences and to be developed in the body.

When questioned about the number and the selection of the ideas to be included in the thesis sentence, all subjects said they did not start with decisions to include, for example, 3 major ideas in their thesis sentences, but the topic itself determined how many or what ideas to be included in their essays.

Writer's concerns. All subjects exhibited concerns about grammar and spelling mistakes and repetitions of words. While writing, all subjects paused from time to time and revised several items in their essays. The revised points were concerned with grammar, mostly tenses and subject-verb agreement. Also, the subjects revised their spelling mistakes. For example, Subject 2 managed the correct spelling of cough after her third attempt.

In the interview, she said if she has not written a word for a long time, the automatic spelling of the word does not occur to her easily; she has to try to remember how to spell it. Subject 1, talking about the same issue, said he may have many spelling mistakes because he forgets to include all letters in a word. He said he tried to revise his spelling mistakes as much as possible. Subject 3 added that he was trying to avoid too much repetition in his wording. He said he realized that he used the word <u>that</u> a few times in the same sentence and wanted to change the structure of the sentence to lessen the number of <u>that</u>s used. The data indicated that the subjects' concerns with their writing were surface-level. This finding was similar to the findings on poor writers' composing behaviors (Sommers, 1980).

On the other hand, the subjects did not state any concerns about their limited vocabulary resulting from writing in a foreign language. They seemed to have several strategies to compensate for their lack of vocabulary. Subject 1 said that "If I don't know the exact word I use a word that gives a similar meaning." Subject 2 said that she did not hesitate to use any words that sounded correct to her. She said "If I don't know the correct word exactly, and if I think a word which I read or heard somewhere is the word that I want, I use it." Subject 3 also said that if he cannot find a word he tries to explain it. He exemplified that if he had not known the word <u>rabies</u> he would have said "the illness that results from a sick dog's bite." As Zamel's study (1983) mentioned, similar to ESL students, EFL students also develop several strategies that enable them cope with the difficulty of writing in a foreign language.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This research was conducted to identify subjects' composing processes in test-taking situations. A summary of the results with recommendations is presented, followed by assessment of the study and suggestions for further research.

General Results and Recommendations

The research showed that the composing processes of these subjects in a test-taking situation are similar to the composing processes of student writers during school-sponsored writing in non test-taking situations studied by previous researchers (Pianko, 1977; Sommers, 1980; Zamel, 1983). Among the most striking similarities are the following. The subjects did not seem to commit themselves to the writing tasks although the subjects knew that they would be graded. They did not make use of the whole examination time. Their negative attitudes may have resulted from their consideration of the purpose of the writing. They said that because the reader [the teacher] was not interested in learning their ideas, the task was not meaningful for them. Moreover, the subjects said they would have preferred to write on topics other than the assigned ones, saying that the assigned topics were not interesting. They concentrated on the form, which they said they would be graded on, and attempted to follow the instruction they had received on the rules of essay writing such as having a thesis sentence and writing topic sentences.

In addition to these similarities above, there were other common points. Their exhibited writing behaviors were of different lengths and frequencies, revealing individual differences among the

subjects' writing behaviors. Additionally, although the subjects

generated some general ideas during prewriting to develop in their

writing, they did not feel obliged to use these general plans. This

finding overlaps with Zamel's statement (1982) about Rose's non-

blocker writers, who do not feel obliged to stick to the rules and

plans that they generated before they started writing but feel free

to develop new ideas as they arise and drop previous ones. Planning

was also done during pausing and rescanning, which indicates that

planning occurs throughout the writing process (Emig, 1971; Pianko,

1977). The subjects revealed variation in number of pauses,

rescannings, and revisions. During some of the pauses and

rescannings, the subjects exhibited revision behaviors, primarily

focusing on surface-level problems such as grammar and spelling

mistakes and repetitions of words. They did not attend to revise

the content of their writing. When mentioning their revisions, they

said they revised the points that they felt violated the instruction

their teachers gave. They indicated that they tried to follow

instructions they received from their teachers. Because their

teachers focused mostly on form rather than the development of ideas

in essays, the subjects' revision concerns were similar.

Factors that they voiced such as the time limitation and their

tiredness seemed to limit their creative thinking. This information

also supported findings that some writers need to renew their

creativity and intellectual energy after writing for a certain time

span (Pianko, 1977). On the other hand, although they did not seem

satisfied with the work that they produced, they did not use the

full examination time to come up with improved writing. This

behavior may have resulted from their feeling that they could not

improve their content in a limited time span. Another reason the subjects may have left the tasks before the examination time was over because of the test-anxiety factor. As Deffenbacher stated, test anxiety indirectly motivates avoidance and escape behaviors that disrupt the taking of exams (1986).

<u>EFL Students' Ideas Concerning Writing in a Test Situation</u>

The subjects exhibit lack of commitment to writing tasks in exams. They state that their teachers are not interested in the content, but rather its form. The subjects, therefore, do not focus on the content. Additionally, they do not like to write about topics that are not of their choice. They feel that because they do not have any specific and significant messages to convey about the assigned topics, they are not satisfied with their writing. They also say that in such a limited time they cannot write better products.

One other aspect is, knowing that they will be graded, they try to follow their teachers' instructions on writing. They say they want to pay attention to their grammar, spelling and wording mistakes as well as essay mechanics such as having a title, having a thesis and topic sentences, and using writing markers to combine sentences and body paragraphs.

<u>Suggestions for EFL Students in a Test Situation</u>

At the beginning, students need to explore their ideas in order to discover what to write about (Zamel, 1982). The prewriting process helps students create ideas to begin their writing and develop the content. As the findings of this research indicated, students spend very little time on prewriting in a test situation, and they do not pay attention to improving the content of their

writing. However, the longer they spend on prewriting, the better they will develop their focus. Students also plan during the prewriting period and later develop their ideas as informal notes on paper. Research shows that these general guidelines help them limit their thesis sentences at the beginning and give them ideas to include in their essays (Zamel, 1982). In addition, all subjects were willing to improve their previous plans and to include new ideas that suggest themselves during the actual writing. However, if they had been asked to do extensive planning such as a detailed outline at the beginning, they would have sticked to this outline and would not have included recent ideas to develop their content. Detailed outlines limit the subjects' exploration of ideas. Therefore, students should avoid making detailed plans; rather, they should be open to new ideas (Zamel, 1982).

Also all subjects employed revisions. They were observed to revise by focusing on mechanical, grammar, and spelling mistakes while writing a test. Such details decreased the subjects' rate of composing. If students are less concerned about surface-level mistakes than content, they will be able to speed up their rate as well as to produce better content. In other words, if students move their revision focus from the product to the content of writing, their products may also improve.

Assessment of the Study and

Suggestions for Further Research

This study was conducted as a case-study of three first-year students at Bilkent University to investigate their composing processes in a test-taking situation. Because the research design required the researcher to observe the subjects during the midterm

examination which was given on three consecutive days, the researcher was able to conduct the research with only three subjects. Therefore, the findings of the study are not generalizable for composing processes of all EFL students in test-taking situations. Such a study might be conducted with more students in an effort to extend the generalizability of the findings.

The subjects of this research were not chosen among test-anxious students; rather, they were selected randomly. As research indicates that high test-anxious students end up with poor performances on tests (Deffenbacher, 1988), another study may be conducted to identify the composing processes of high test-anxious students as compared with the composing processes of low test-anxious students.

In addition, the three subjects revealed similar profiles in that they were all 20-year-old native Turkish speakers who were private high school graduates exempted from prep school English study attending freshman English courses at a private university. A similar study may be conducted among students of less homogeneous characteristics to spot differences in composing processes.

Finally, this research did not consider writing quality in test-taking situations, only composing behaviors. Further studies may illuminate the relationship between writing quality and composing behaviors in a test-taking situation.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a descriptive case study, the aim of which is to identify composing processes of Turkish EFL first-year (freshman) students at Bilkent University in a test-taking situation. In order to identify composing processes of Bilkent students in a test situation you are being asked to take your English midterm examination in the presence of the researcher in a special room at Bilkent University throughout which you will be observed, and later interviewed by the researcher.

Your participation in the study will bring invaluable contributions to Turkish EFL teachers' understanding of students' composing processes. Any information given to the researcher will be kept confidential and your name will not be released. Also you are free to withdraw from the study at any time if you should wish. I would like to thank you for your participation in advance. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.

home: 417 40 29

office: 266 40 40 - 1434

Tijen Kargioglu Akada

MA TEFL PROGRAM
BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

Patricia J. Brenner

MA TEFL PROGRAM
BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

I have read and understood the instruction above. I know that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I hereby accept participating in your study.

Name   : _____

Department: _____

ID Number : _____

Signature : _____

Appendix B

Personal Information Form

Participant's pseudonym:
Present Faculty and the Department :
Level of English   : o 102   o 104

Educational Background

Names of the schools	City	Years	Medium of instruction (Turkish, English or other)	Have you received any formal instruction in writing?

How long have you been receiving formal instruction in English? ____ yrs.

Have you studied at BUSEL or come through the exemption exam?

    o Studied at BUSEL   o Passed exemption exam

If you came through BUSEL, how long did you study at BUSEL? _____ yrs.

Have you ever had a writing course in English? o YES   o NO

If yes, please specify where and how long. _____ _____

Do you speak any other language (please specify): _____

Did you receive any formal instruction on writing in this

language: o YES o NO

If yes, please specify where and how long. _____ _____

Do you do self-initiated writing? (ex; letter writing, keeping

a journal etc.)   o YES   o NO

If yes, please specify: _____

Do you believe self-initiated writing impoves your writing skill?

    o YES   o NO

If yes, how? _____

What kind of teacher-initiated writing do you do?

(ex; homeworks, exams, note taking in the lectures etc.)

_____

Appendix C

<u>Definitions of Composing Behaviors</u>

Based on observations of students composing and on answers to interview questions, certain dimensions of the composing process and the behaviors which characterize them were noted. These dimensions are defined and characterized are as follows:

Prewriting--what occurs from the moment writers receive the assignment until they put their first words on paper.

Planning--the setting of parameters, general or specific, for the composition to be written. Planning behaviors can be mental, written, or both.

Composing--what occurs between the writing of the first word on paper and the final stopping of writing. There are three major types of behaviors exhibited during this process--writing, pausing and rescanning:

Writing--the writing of the text.

Pausing--a break in the actual writing for the purpose of thinking ... or for diversion.

Rescanning--a rereading of a few words, or sentences, or a paragraph. It is not a rereading of the entire script. During rescanning, revisions are usually made, most of which are single word, multiple word, or punctuation changes. At this time writers might also contemplate what they are writing.

Rereading--when this occurs, writers reread the entire script for the purpose of seeing what has been accomplished, revising and proofreading, and, in some cases, for deciding on a conclusion.

In many instances, rereading is done also for the counting of
words.

Stopping--stopping occurs when students think they have written all
they wish to about that topic and for that particular time.

Contemplating the finished product--after gathering all papers,
writers usually contemplate the finished product. The
contemplation is most often of quite brief duration.

Handing in of the product--this is characterised by the clearing of
the desk and the physical stance of the writer. For some
writers, the procedure is quick and easy, whereas for others, a
long ritual has to be carried out.

<u>Note</u>. From Pianko, 1977, pp. 7-8

Appendix D

The Examination Place

The researcher's preference for being alone to observe the students in a special room on a one-to-one basis is for the following reasons: The researcher did not want to observe the subject in the presence of the other examinees, because she did not want to irritate other examinees by her presence. In addition, as the researcher wanted to interview the subjects immediately after they took the examination, the university assigned a room for the researcher in which she could both observe and conduct interviews with the subjects.

The subjects also preferred to be alone with the researcher in a room different than the examination room because they preferred to be in one-on-one contact with the researcher. Their preference for being alone with the researcher may have resulted from the pilot observations which were conducted with each subject on a one-on-one basis in the same room at Bilkent University. Each student, prior to the midterm examination, met the researcher twice in the room and wrote on an assigned topic while the researcher observed the subject. Thus, the subjects were used to being alone with the researcher and observed by her.

Appendix E

Method of Analysis

The variables which characterize the writing processes of the subjects are as follows:

1. Prewriting time--the length of time spent from the moment the assignment is received until the first word is written.

2. Composing time--the length of time from the writing of the first word until the completion of rereading and revising.

3. Rate of composing--the mean number of words written per minute (including all pauses, rescannings, revisions, and rereading).

4. Rereading time--the length of time spent rereading the final script, including making revisions.

5. Revising--the number of revisions per 100 words.

6. Pauses--the number of times pauses occurred during composing.

7. Draft--the number of drafts written for a writing episode.

8. Rescanning--the number of times rescanning occurred during composing.

9. Planning behavior--mental or written.

10. Attitude toward the writing--positive or negative.

11. Stylistic concerns--interest in organization and paragraph development.

12. Consideration of purpose--concern for a clear purpose for the writing.

13. Knowledge of ideas--the need to set some definite parameters (ideas) prior to the commencement of writing.

14. Writer's concerns--getting ideas across, mechanics

(includes spelling) and usage, and the correct choice of words.

Note. From Pianko, 1977

Appendix F

<u>The Midterm Topics</u>

Subject 1 (Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences,

Department of Economics)

The Midterm Topic: "Can charisma alone enable a leader to

manipulate public opinion?"

Subject 2 (Faculty of Engineering, Department of Electrics and

Electronics)

The Midterm Topic: "What should the role of science/scientists be?"

Subject 3 (Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences,

Department of International Relations)

The Midterm Topic: "What could the future of the UN [United

Nations] be in Bosnia?"

Appendix G

Bilkent University

1993-1994 Academic Year Fall Semester

Eng 101 & 103 Syllabus

to develop an overall awareness of the use of English in an academic environment
to create an awareness of the rhetorical organization of a text to create an awareness of how a reader/listener interacts with the writer/speaker to introduce note-taking skills through content maps
to develop an awareness of the rhetorical organization of a text to develop note-taking skills through content maps
to analyze the rhetorical organization of a text
to show the relationship between decoding its rhetorical organizational pattern and comprehending a given text
to make students aware of the importance of titles in predicting text content

to show the importance of background information in comprehending a text
to show how references and transitions function
  a. in achieving textual coherence
  b. in enabling readers to follow the flow of discussion in a given text

to make students aware of the importance of graphic representations in predicting text content

to exploit the title and the pictures to predict the text content
to extract, and differentiate between major and minor points in a text
to focus on implied thesis statements
to focus on the importance of transitions in
  a. achieving textual coherence
  b. enabling readers to predict text content

E v a l u a t i o n I
to introduce and practise summary writing through outlining and paraphrasing
E v a l u a t i o n II
to show how to formulate thesis statements to practise writing introductions and conclusions
to practise formal essay writing process
E v a l u a t i o n III