

IELTS Preparation Practices: Argumentative Writing Development

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This paper reports on a recent investigation into literacy practices in a formal IELTS (Academic Version) preparation course in Tehran. The purpose of this study was to look at class tasks that generate opportunities for developing written argumentative texts. The focus was on aspects of written argument literacy practices. Students whose first language is not English seek to continue their education in English-medium-universities. They are required to sit for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to evidence their language proficiency. Despite meeting the required IELTS band scores, a number of them face difficulties and may underachieve in academic requirements. To address this problem this study aimed to investigate and analyze class tasks. In particular it examined the development of academic argumentative writing. In this ethnographic study I taught and recorded an IELTS academic preparation class for five months. Classroom discourse analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics were used to support the analysis. This paper discusses the objectives of the program and addresses the findings.

Key words: literacy socialization, literacy development, systemic functional linguistics, IELTS, academic preparation practices

INTRODUCTION

Students from different countries whose first language is not English

(hereafter, referred to as Other Than English as First Language or ‘OTEFL students’) apply to further their education in English-medium universities such as Australian universities. OTEFL students are expected to read and prepare academic texts, attend lectures and take notes, participate in tutorials, and listen to seminars conducted in English (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006; Coley, 1999; Wicks, 1996). They are required to show evidence of an appropriate level of proficiency in the English language as one of the prerequisites for entry into English-medium universities. The universities have set minimum language proficiency levels, with IELTS a preferred test for entrance into universities (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006; Feast, 2002).

I conducted this study both because previous studies (Brown, 1998; Green, 2006; Mickan & Motteram, 2008) had called for further investigation into IELTS preparation courses and also to contribute to the literature.

Background

It is assumed that IELTS test-takers who meet band scores requirements will be able to cope with the multiplicity of tasks in tertiary studies (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006). However, English-medium universities have realized that an increasing number of OTEFL students with the required IELTS band scores experience communication problems, and may fail in meeting academic requirements in their initial higher education studies in English-medium communities (Coffin, 2004; Feast, 2002; Green, 2006; Moore & Morton, 2005).

IELTS (Academic Version) is designed to assess test-takers’ ability to understand and produce written and spoken language expected of students in English-medium universities (Bayliss & Ingram, 2006; Jakeman & McDowell, 1996). But the findings of some studies (Coffin, 2004; Malcolm & McGregor, 1995) do not support this claim. Unless a test assesses what it claims to be assessing, questions may be raised about its validity. The language abilities measured by a testing tool should correspond to language abilities which will be used in the non-test situation (Bachman, 1995). The washback effect

(Cheng & Watanabe, 2004) refers to the way the design of a test influences classroom discourse and educational resources in test preparation. This may affect test-takers' results and the expert knowledge they gain in order to function in their academic careers (Green, 2006). Thus, the suitability of IELTS as an entry requirement has been questioned (Read & Nation, 2005). This has raised questions about literacies experienced in IELTS academic preparation classes (Brown, 1998; Coffin, 2004; Moore & Morton, 2005).

Previous Studies

Despite significant investigation into argumentative writing, there has been little research into class tasks for developing argumentative writing in IELTS academic preparation classes. Studies to date have included a comparison of university writing and IELTS writing (Moore & Morton, 2005), while retrospective analysis of writing scores on official versions of the IELTS test was conducted by Green (2005), and the role of genre in IELTS argumentative writing task was investigated by Coffin (2004). Mickan and Slater (2003) studied factors affecting the ability of non-English speaking IELTS candidates to indicate their writing ability on the IELTS academic writing task two, while response validity of the IELTS writing and lexicogrammar influences on the interpretation of prompts was conducted by Mickan, Slater and Gibson (2000). Coley (1999) looked at apparent discrepancy between the actual English proficiency of Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students and English entry requirements as set by universities, but NESB students' performing below their potential after they enter Australian universities despite presenting the required IELTS band scores was inquired by Wicks (1996). Also, Mickan and Motteram (2009) investigated some IELTS test-takers' casual preparation for the examination in Adelaide, South Australia. Most of these studies provide some useful data about IELTS-related issues. However, relatively little is known about what candidates prepare for IELTS (Academic Version) in formal classes.

Hayes and Watt (1998) undertook an investigation into the effects of

different approaches to IELTS preparation. Their study showed that different preparation programs contributed little to the test-takers' overall language development and performance in IELTS. However, the focus of their study was on finding a way to help students obtain a higher IELTS band score in the examination. In another study in order to find the outcomes of IELTS preparation courses Brown (1998) compared two groups of students. One group studied in an EAP preparation course, the other group in an IELTS preparation course. Brown (1998) predicted likely success in IELTS as the result of attending an intense IELTS preparation course. But, he did not see any indication of such students' better preparedness to meet academic requirements satisfactorily.

Wicks (1996) and Coley (1999) have reported that a cause of international students' failure in English-medium universities is their general lack of English proficiency. Wicks (1996), for example, found that students with the required IELTS band scores performed significantly poorer in units requiring language use compared to students who had qualified by having studied a tertiary course in English. As with Australian students the same teaching materials and assessments are used by international students, so "unless English proficiency is a problem" (Wicks, 1996, p. 199), a similar level of expertise is demanded. He suggested a more detailed investigation into OTEFL students' language problems (Wicks, 1996, pp. 199-203). The study conducted by Wicks (1996) was quantitative and limited to statistics and cultural subject matters.

Some studies suggest the significance of prior experiences on test-taking. Mickan et al. (2000) noted the importance of social factors in assessment "as they impact on interpretation of prompts" (pp. 9, 29). Regarding composition of candidate responses Mickan and Slater (2003, pp. 61-62) point out the importance of negotiation of meaning and appropriate interpretation of the prompts and social purposes of the topic. However, identifying aspects of written argumentative literacy development in IELTS academic preparation programs is under-researched. An investigation is needed to focus on IELTS academic preparation practices to examine the classroom discourse. There is

a need to evaluate what it is that IELTS academic test-takers prepare (Mickan & Motteram, 2008). In their recent ethnographic inquiry into IELTS (General Version) classroom instructions, Mickan and Motteram (2008, p. 23) focused on teaching pedagogy. They suggest the need for further study to focus on the IELTS (Academic Version) preparation practices with longer period of investigation to fill this knowledge gap. This study is an effort in this direction.

This study investigates class tasks in terms of argumentative writing as preparation for IELTS. In this inquiry, the candidates' class tasks were analyzed and interpreted. A qualitative approach was selected (Maxwell, 2005; McKay, 2006; Saville-Troike, 2003). The reason for this was the study of classroom literacy practices which involves examining the experiences of human learners (Idding, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This inquiry draws on two approaches to the study of argumentative written literacies acquisition. The literacy socialization perspective involves firstly, determining the range of linguistic resources in a speech community, including reading and writing as its ground rules, and the way they are developed and distributed (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986); and secondly, the concept of literacy from a linguistic point of view which distinguishes between two different influential contexts on texts named socio-cultural context (in general) and context of situation (in specific) (Halliday, 1994). Systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1994) was employed to examine the candidates' use of linguistic resources that construct the experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings. A social practices perspective was also employed. Barton (1994) suggests that "literacy events are the first basic unit of analysis for social practices approach to literacy, and that they are a constituent of literacy practices" (p. 8). Thus, language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) has been used as a frame of reference.

Aims and Objectives

The study investigated IELTS academic class tasks in order to identify and

to analyze literacy practices which generate opportunities for developing written argumentative texts. A further aim of the study was to outline implications of the findings for IELTS.

The specific objectives were:

- To investigate class written argumentative tasks as opportunities provided for experiencing literacy in an IELTS academic preparation course;
- To identify and describe and analyse aspects of written argumentative literacies that IELTS candidates experience;
- To discuss implications of the findings for IELTS.

Based on the aims and objectives the following research questions were developed.

1. What written argumentative tasks in class do candidates engage in as preparation for the IELTS academic examination?
2. What are the attributes of written argumentative texts that candidates develop in a formal preparation course for the IELTS?
3. What are the implications for IELTS?

Context of the Study

The site for the study was Rahrovan Language Teaching Centre (RALTEC) in Tehran. It was accredited by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and Trinity College in the UK. Classes were held in classroom No. 3. It was large enough to house 16 participants with their armchairs organized in a U shape. The classroom was furnished with two large windows and sufficient lighting. Ventilation and air conditioning were appropriate.

METHODS

The study was conducted for 15 weeks in three different phases in 2007. Each phase was 20 sessions of two-hour classes.

Procedure

Candidates with band scores 4, 4.5 or 5 were selected. This range was considered as pre-intermediate to intermediate, which was deemed an appropriate range for this study. Only four participants had an official IELTS band score result paper with band scores 4-5. The rest were invited to sit for an IELTS mock examination at RALTEC Testing Centre. The tests were rated at the testing centre by two experienced accredited raters. The candidates' band scores ranged from 4 to 5. Administration of the mock test also served as a needs analysis.

Sixteen candidates were selected to participate in the study. All were adults - five female and eleven male - and their ages ranged from 24 to 42. Seven of them had attained Bachelor's degrees and the other nine had completed Master's degrees. Their fields of study were computing, electricity, electronics, architecture, aerospace, civil engineering, road and urban development, psychology, husbandry and English. The candidates' English language experience was mainly based on the Iranian standard and official curriculum of schooling and tertiary education system. The candidates' motivation was their need for IELTS certificates as a prerequisite for entry into English-medium universities. The candidates' motivation was their need for IELTS certificates as a prerequisite for entry into English-medium universities.

I explained the purpose and the process of the study to the candidates. I gained their consent. I collected data on their background. The data helped me in understanding their level of knowledge and expectations, so that I could make appropriate decisions about organizing the program.

Triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the current study (Gillham, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Morse & Richards, 2002). Data collection using

multiple sources such as observation of natural settings, video recordings and audio recordings, taking field notes and interviews was carried out in order to provide a realistic picture of the members of the community of practice's actions and interactions (Dysthe, 1996; Iddings, 2005; Willett, 1995).

I audio recorded and video recorded the classroom proceedings once every 3 sessions. I collected their written argumentative tasks for the purpose of data analysis. Documentation covered about one third of the sessions in the 3 phases. In the process of transcription, commentaries were added. Notes of time, day and date, place of observations, specific facts, and details of classroom events in the field notes were made. The data for analysis include the candidates' written texts based on the typical prompts of IELTS academic writing task 2.

Preparation Practices

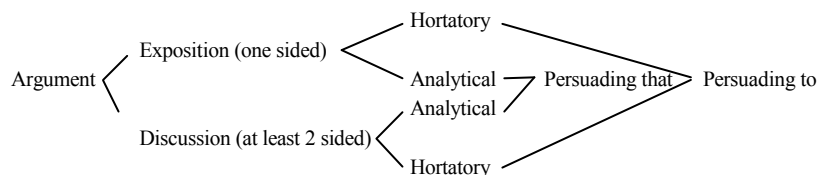
I provided the candidates with relevant learning resources and consciousness raising about the generic structure of an argumentative writing, different argumentative genres, descriptors, and employment of some different strategies, hint and techniques, for example application of Theme/Rheme. The candidates decoded the topics. They produced different sections of argumentative texts (i.e., 'Introduction', 'Main body' and 'Conclusion') and held group discussions for editing and proofreading. In any writing session, normally, one or two texts were selected randomly from among the candidates' texts for analysis and discussion in class.

Systemic Analysis: Genres

IELTS academic writing task 2 is derived from the argumentative genre and mostly resembles the university essay (Coffin, 2004; Green, 2005). In order to identify the students' extent of application of linguistic resources analysis covered: a) the discourse and its probable shift, b) the linguistic resources, and c) the possible shift in the choice of certain linguistic resources.

In this paper, analyze cover only the structure of the texts and their cohesiveness in terms of unity which can demonstrate the extent of successful task achievement and application of Theme/Rheme which can indicate cohesiveness at discourse level.

The texts are of exposition and discussion genres which can represent hortatory or analytical styles (cf. Coffin, 2004). Argumentation genre based on Coffin (2004) in general “is defined in terms of purpose, rather than according to the rules of formal logic” (p. 230). Also, “argumentation is aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader” (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 340). However, in such tasks, having described the preliminary situation, test-takers are normally expected to argue about *what* the situation is (i.e. analytical style), or *how* the situation should be (i.e. hortatory style). In order for the social function or purpose of the writing tasks to be facilitated, I have postulated the following flow chart of argumentation based on Coffin (2004).



The prompt of task 1 says, “To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement”, which is compatible with analytical style (*what* the situation is). The prompt of task 2 says, “The developed world **should** lead by example and not insist that aid to the Third World is...”, which is compatible with hortatory style (*how* the situation **should** be). The topics of the writing tasks selected for analysis are compatible with analytical and hortatory styles.

However, exposition has also been categorized as moral and factual (cf., Martin & Peters, 1985). These have also been organized in at least three subcategories for moral exposition: interpretative, evaluative, and argumentative. Additionally, at least two sub-categorizations - explanatory of explaining what and explanatory of explaining how/why have been recognized for

factual exposition. A combination of one or more of these may form a text. In such cases the writer is expected to argue for or against a point of view and to justify their thesis. Following is an account of the analysis.

RESULTS

I categorized the tasks in terms of application of linguistic resources, for example, Theme/Rheme. I used Atkinson and Heritage (1984) to code the transcriptions. The comparison of a sample of the texts is demonstrated below.

Selecting the Texts: Comparison

I selected three sets of three texts randomly in order to be analyzed more closely. The nine texts were developed by three different candidates in three different phases of the study. Of the three writers, Atusa's (a pseudonym) texts 1, 2 and 3 were selected randomly for analysis and demonstration in this report. The first writing task was in the first day of the research (i.e. 10/03/2007) which was the mock test. The second was at approximately the mid-point of the study, i.e. after 60 hours. Finally, the third one was produced at almost the end of the research project, after 112 hours out of 120 hours of preparation practices. The essays were rated by the same raters, and the gained band scores were: 4.5 (the mock test at the first day), 5.5 (after 60 hours), and 6.5 (after 112 hours), which showed a general improvement in the candidates' writing as a result of experiencing class tasks in the preparation course.

Comparing the Texts: the Structure

The process of ordering information or the conventional logic of staging has also been named "generic coherence" (Eggins, 1994) and "schematic

structure” (Halliday, 1978). The writer needs to use a variety of language resources so that the reader can make sense of the task’s purpose. Thus, an understanding of the schematic structure of different genres (e.g. argumentative essay) is required for developing conventional academic writing. Long recommended as an academic convention (Eggins & Slade, 1997; Martin, 1986), an argumentative essay’s usual generic structure is:

Introduction/Thesis ^ Main body/Argument(s) ^ Conclusion/Reinforcement/Coda

In this structure, thesis comprises orientation or background (not always necessary) and primary position and preview. Main body shapes by some points followed by their relevant arguments, evaluations or elaborations depending on the type of the genre. Conclusion returns to and restates the primary position probably in stronger terms.

I have typed the original texts without correction (Tables 1, 2, and 3). Analysis of the generic structure of an argumentation text (cf., Knapp & Watkins, 1994; Martin, 1986) is as follows.

Analysis of Atusa’s Text 1

The candidates were assigned a class task to develop a written argumentative text to express their agreement or disagreement on ‘the damage that worldwide improvement in the standard of living causes to the environment’ (see Appendices for the details of the task).

The general structure of the argumentative text is shown in the right hand column (Table 1). As indicated, the elements do not comply with the conventional structure appropriately. The writer has taken up a position, without any orientation.

TABLE 1
Atusa's Text 1 (10/03/2007)

| Stage/ Section | Text 1 | General structure |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Introduction | (1) I think these days all of us are far from natural living. (2) you know, for example now we are living in luxuries and comfortable apartmans but we are far from farms or villages and (3) As aresult our childrens can not play with animals. (4) many of us living in the city refer to living in the villages. (5) and we must cope with anxiety of this life style. (6) we have many pollution, for example air, sound, ...and etc. | Primary position. Writer's point of view + support by example Point 1 + Point 2 + Point 3 + Point 4 |
| Main body | (7) we want comfortable and luxeries life style. (8) without thinking about the pollution or psychological disease. (9) In these days we damage our environment. (10) people have been left their house in village and are coming to the city. (11) All of the gardens in the cities are damaged and after one yeas or more we will see there ten floors apartments. (12) In other points we are noticed the cars. (13) Many cars In the streets are the cause of airpollution and sound pollouction In the cities like Tehran. (14) These pollutions are damaged ozone layer in the atmospher. (15) we don't have natural view from our house. (16) as aresult we are tired from living in this prison that we make it. (17) you know, All of us come from natural, therefore we cope with this problems, without think about it. (18) we want to come back the natural. (farms, rivers, see,...) | Argument + additional argument + factual support + support by example New point 1 New argument Argument Point 1 + Point 2 Writer's point of view Statement |
| Conclusion | (Total words: 219) (Lexical words: 83) (Lexical density: 38%) | Restatement of the stance |

Although providing the reader with 'orientation' is not mandatory, in situations where the reader is not informed or the background has not already been rehearsed, writers are expected to provide this information (cf., Eggins, 1994; Martin, 1986). As indicated the relationship between the writer's

stance and the topic is unclear. After expressing her position, the content in the 'opening' of the 'introduction' strays and looks like a mixture of the 'opening' and the 'conclusion'. In the body, furthermore, although some arguments have been provided, they are not backed up by interpretation and evaluation. The unconventional organization of the text can result in a reader having difficulty in trying to understand the writer's point of view.

Analysis of Atusa's Text 2

In this phase the candidates' task was to argue for or against the idea that "The developed world should lead by example and not insist that aid to the Third World is used to develop rural areas".

Analysis of text 2 (Table 2) shows that the 'Introduction' lacks orientation or background.

TABLE 2
Atusa's Text 2 (04/05/2007)

| Stage/ Section | Text 2 | General structure |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Introduction | (1) Today, most of people live in the cities or towns. (2) Infact, people don't remember the advantages of living at the rural. (3) Do you ever think about living at the rural instead of town or city? | Primary position. Writer's point of view Point 1 query |
| Main body | (4) About three-quarters of the people in Developed Countries live in towns, instead of this, in Third world two-thirds of the population live in rural areas. (5) In rural areas, we have many advantages for living human need to be with nature when we are living in this area, we can use from everything in natural form for example foods, weather, transportation. (6) In addition to here we have not any pollution like air, sound and etc. (7) in the rural we don't have any mental disease like anxiety, Depression and etc, because we don't have any stress. (8) At the other hand, in rural areas, we have many disadvantages for living. (9) Here, we don't have any welfare or facilities, for our living for example, when we want to wash up the dishes, don't have warm water here, we don't have any luxuries like Roysls Roys for transporting. (10) In addition to explain the rural areas, we have many advantages and disadvantages for living in the cities. (11) Example for advantages of living in cities are the childre can go to the educated schools. (12) But one of the disadvantages of living here is pollution. | The issue Point 1+ Elaboration 1. Elaboration 2. Point 2 + elaboration 3. Point 1+ Point 2+ elaboration 1+ elaboration 2. Point 1 + Elaboration 1 + elaboration 2. |
| Conclusion | (13) Finally, in my opinion, the living in rural areas is very useful for human, but we must increase the welfare and level of living in rural areas. (14) The Developed countries must explane it to Third worlds people. (Total words: 259) (Lexical words: 106) (Lexical density: 41%) | Reinforcement. Restatement of the primary position |

The writer has shown a primary position, which is in agreement with the topic and signals an analytical style, see the following excerpt.

Today, most of people live in the cities or towns... .

However, the preview, which conventionally forms the following subsection after the primary position has been overlooked. Overall, the writer has indicated an insufficient decoding and understanding of the social purpose of the topic, (see the excerpt above and the task). The writer's claim or primary position is not in line with any part of the rubric which requires discussion of two completely different situations in the 'Developing World' and the 'Third World'. The content of the text signals a comparison between rural lifestyle and urban lifestyle rather than explaining the role of the 'Developed World' in dealing with the issue as experienced in the 'Third World'.

Analysis of Atusa's Text 3

The text (Table 3) has been labeled according to its generic structure. The closing stage or 'Coda' (in terms of genre staging, e.g. Eggins & Slade, 1997) has been added and clearly labeled. The content of the closing stage also signals the characteristics of a conclusion. The writer has employed a variety of lexico-grammar resources in different stages of the text.

TABLE 3
Atusa's Text 3 (15/06/2007)

| Stage/ Section | Text 3 | General structure |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Introduction | (1) Over weight is one of the most important problems in developed countries. (2) Children, especially more than others involve with this problem. (3) In fact, there are several reasons for overweighting children. (4) Some factors are the number of fast foods and other factors are about the parents. (5) They do not pay attention to children's health. | (Implicit primary position) Statement of the main issue + statement of a sub issue + Argument for the issue (choice of a stance) + support by examples + Argument (preview) |
| | (6) In Developed countries, the number of fast food is increasing. (7) Advertisements of fast food daily present in mass media. (8) Variety of them help to existe a tendancy for childrens feeding. (9) In addition to eat, children do not have any movement af eating. (10) So, a lot of them have over weight. | Point 1 Elaboration Point 2/cause Statement of the result/effect (elaboration) Point 1+ |
| Main body | (11) At the other hand, parent's are very busy. (12) They do not have any time for preparing foods at home. (13) They are working most of the time. (14) Simply, They use from fast foods. (15) But, They do not have any knowledge about this type of feeding. (16) They pay attention to advertisement like their children. (17) They do not have any report about disadvantages of fast foods. (18) Over weight is one of these disadvantages. | Rephrasing point 1 + repetition+ Statement of cause and effect Elaboration Statement of the issue Writer's point of view |
| | (19) In my opinion, The function of parents is very important. (20) They have to increase their knowledge about children feedings. (21) They must pay attention to over weighting. (22) So, They can have a schedual for eating food in fast foods. (23) For example, one time at the month. (24) Then, the can exist a situation for sport, and movement. | Elaboration + support by example + Point |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Conclusion | (25) In summary, over weight can be solve with parents' function. (26) They have t increase their knowledge about feeding, and controlling over wight of children's with presenting a program for eating, movement, etc. | Conclusion Restatement of the stance |
| | (27) I wish, The children will have a normal weight at the world countries. | |
| (Total words: 273) (Lexical words: 115) (Lexical density: 42%) | | |

The writer has succeeded in understanding the prompt appropriately. She has made some sense of the instructions to argue 'for' the topic, for example:

“Over weight is one of the most important problems in developed countries. Children, especially more than others involve with this problem. In fact, there are several reasons for overweighting children. Some factors are the number of fast foods and other factors are about the parents. They do not pay attention to children's health.”

A discussion which may lead to an analytical or a hortatory style has been signaled in the first sentence, because the writer has begun by stating a controversial issue, and “In the case of the hortatory and analytical discussion, the starting point is a controversial issue” (Coffin 2004, p. 236). In addition, the main issue and the scope have been indicated. This indicates the writer's appropriate meaning making with the topic.

“In my opinion, The function of parents is very important. They have to increase their knowledge about children feedings. They must pay attention to over weighting. So, They can have a schedual for eating food in fast foods. For example, one time at the month. Then, the can exist a situation for sport, and movement.”

However, the texts, in general, lack an appropriate organization, structure and cohesiveness.

Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness in texts can be monitored by observing such aspects as unity, coherence and cohesion. Analysis of the essays as follows focuses on the embedded lexico-grammatical constituents which illustrate the presence and extent of cohesiveness in terms of unity and application of Theme/Rheme throughout the texts.

Unity: Understanding the Social Purpose of the Topic

Unity refers to the meaningful relationship between the content of a text and the topic (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The extent of unity in a text can be examined by looking at its Register. Register is normally shaped by three situational variables in the context of situation. The variables are called Field, Tenor and Mode (cf. Halliday & Hasan, 1985) in which Field attends to what is happening, Tenor refers to the participants who are involved, and Mode indicates how the interaction is carried out (oral or written). Analysis of the register used in text 1 shows lack of the unity.

A primary analysis of text 1 indicates that the Register mismatches the Field; consequently, it fails to address the social purpose of the topic. For example, the 'Introduction' is shown as follows:

“I think these days all of us are far from natural living. you know, for example now we are living in luxuries and comfortable apartmants but we are far from farms or villages and As a result our childrens can not play with animals. many of us living in the city refer to living in the villages. and we must cope with anxiety of this life style. we have many pollution, for example air, sound, ...and etc.”

In this section the writer talks generally about a change in lifestyle, rather than “damage to the environment”. Based on the conventional organization of essay, the writer is expected to select appropriate wording in order to indicate

the logical link between the subsections of the introduction and an overall link to the topic. However, from the last sentence, “we have many pollution, for example air, sound, ...and etc.” a reader may infer that the writer has meant this as an aspect of damage to the environment, although there is no logical link between the new and the given information. This situation has led to the lack of unity.

In text 2 also unity has not been observed. For example, the following excerpts [from the main body (paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 respectively) and the conclusion] signal a comparison between advantages and disadvantages of living in rural areas versus living in urban areas, which is not in the scope or focus of the topic.

“In rural areas, we have many advantages for living human need to be with nature...”

“At the other hand, in rural areas, we have many disadvantages for living...”

“In addition to explain the rural areas, we have many advantages and disadvantages for living in the cities...”

“Finally, in my opinion, the living in rural areas is very useful for human...”

Unlike the other two in text 3, the writer has used different tools and techniques to maintain the unity of the text. For example, the excerpt below:

“In Developed countries, the number of fast food is increasing. Advertisments of fast food daily present in mass media. Variety of them help to existe a tendancy for childrens feeding. In addition to eat, children do not have any movement of eating. So, a lot of them have over weight.”

As demonstrated, firstly, she has adopted an appropriate stance (“Over

weight is one of the most important problems in developed countries.”), which is congruent with the directive of the prompt (“to what extent do you agree with these views?”). She has then exploited the key constituents of the topic in order to interpret and evaluate them. These indicate an extent of appropriate application of linguistic resources in argumentative texts.

Another way of examining unity is analysis of topic related lexis which may provide insight into the writer’s control of unity. This is important because the writer needs to provide the readers with support, and also explain the way it relates to the topic.

Investigation of the texts 1, 2, and 3 resulted in identification of topic-related lexis as shown in 3 different columns in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4
Topic Related Lexis of the Texts 1, 2, and 3

| Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|--|--|---|
| Damage to the environment | Developed World | Number of overweight children |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution, ...air, sound... • Pollution or psychological disease • Damage our environment • ...gardens in the city are damaged • Cars In the streets are the cause of air pollution and sound pollution • Pollutions are damaged ozone layer in the atmosphere • Don’t have natural view • This problems (reference to damage to the environment) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About three-quarters of the people in Developed Countries • Developed Countries must explain it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overweight (5 times) • This problem • Overweight children • A lot of them (children) have overweight • These (overweight) disadvantage • Overweight can be solve • Controlling overweight of children’s • Children will have a normal weight |
| Improvement living standard | The Third World | Developed countries |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luxuries and comfortable apartments • Anxiety of this life style • Comfortable and luxurious life style • Ten floors apartments • Cars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Third world • To Third worlds people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed countries • In Developed countries • World countries |

• ...tired from living in this prison (prison used as metaphor for improvement in the standard of living)

| Supports/reasons | Living in towns and cities | Fast food outlets |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we have many pollution, for example air, sound... and etc. • The pollution or psychological disease. • Many cars In the streets are the cause of air pollution and sound pollution... • we don't have natural view from our house | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most people live in the cities or towns • Advantage for living in the cities. • Advantages of living in cities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of fast foods • The number of fast food • Advertisements of fast food variety of them • Fast foods • Disadvantages of fast foods • Eating food in fast foods |
| | Living in rural areas | Parents & children's health |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • living at the rural • Think about living at the rural... • Two-thirds of the population live in rural areas (3 times) • in the rural... • ...explain the rural area... • The living in rural areas is very useful • level of living in rural areas • | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Other factors • The parents • they (parents) (11 times) • children's health • children feeding (2 times) • children do not have movement af eating • parent's very busy • their children • the function of parents • knowledge • situation for sport and movement • parent's function • feeding a program for eating, movement |

Analysis of text 1 shows that in the first place the writer has understood the topic's general social purpose. For example, in the column 'Damage to the environment' the relevance is shown either directly (i.e. "damage our environment") or indirectly (i.e. "pollution, air pollution and ...", "damaged ozone layer in the atmosphere"). Also, the column 'Improvement in the standard of living' and the column 'Supports/reasons' contain some topic-

related lexis in their own categories.

Cohesion: Theme/Rheme

The relationship of meaning between the parts of a text constitutes the texture of the text (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 71). Cohesion throughout a text can be monitored by using certain linguistic resources, for example, Theme/Rheme in order to describe the internal consistency of the constituents of texts (cf., Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Application of Theme/Rheme technique in a text enables the reader to communicate with the text and to follow the provided data more easily. 'Theme' also known as given information (though not always the same as theme) according to Halliday (1994) occupies an initial position preceding the process and functions to orient the reader towards what the clause is concerned with. Clause concern could be unmarked or marked. Marked theme in SFL (Halliday, 1994) refers to positioning a circumstance prior to the subject (traditional grammar) as part of the 'theme'. The rest of the clause which provides the reader with some information about the 'Theme' is known as 'Rheme'. 'Rheme' which usually forms the ending part of the clause or sentence is also known as 'new information'. 'New information' signals the focus of the information. The thematical principle is inclusive of subordinate clauses. Positioning a subordinate in the beginning of a sentence is considered by Martin (1992) to function as a marked theme. This knowledge and its application in the development of clauses by writers are meant to result in the observation of cohesiveness across clauses and the text. A text in relation to its social purpose, based on Martin (1993b) is oriented by 'theme', hence it is considered genre-oriented in the context. Theme/Rheme, therefore, is used as a tool to monitor cohesiveness at discourse level (Fries, 1994; Martin, 1993b) in argumentative writing. Given that a significant property of written argumentative texts is a high frequency of cross references, Theme/Rheme is suitable to examine students' extent of control over appropriate thematic selection and progression.

Studies (Belmonte & McCabe-Hidalgo, 1998; Danes, 1974) show that academically accredited writers' preference is to thematize either Discourse Themes or Topical Themes. Thematic progression as proposed by Danes (1974) refers to "the choice and ordering of utterance Themes, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to the hyperthemes of the superior text units (such as paragraph, chapter and etc) to the whole of text, and to the situation" (p. 114). Major patterns of thematic progression have been proposed by Danes (1974), and the first author of the current study has tabulated them as follows in order to assist him in the process of the analysis. The analysis seeks to reveal students' approach to Theme selection and Theme progression. The findings are demonstrated below.

Thematic Progression

The four major patterns of thematic progression (Danes, 1974) are discussed below. Discussion of each pattern is followed by analysis of the texts. The basic principle is that thematic choices should not be unexpected. They should be relevant to the elements indicated in a previous Theme or Rheme.

i) Linear or 'zig-zag' pattern

In linear pattern, an item that is first introduced in the Rheme of a clause becomes the Theme of the subsequent clause. The generic sequence is shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5
The Generic Sequence of Linear Progression

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---------|
| Theme 1 | | Rheme 1 |
| Theme 2 = Rheme 1 | ▲ | Rheme 2 |
| Theme 3 = Rheme 2 | ▲ | Rheme 3 |

The candidate has used this pattern only in one occasion in three

consecutive sentences in the main body of text 1. In fact, out of 18 sentences which form the whole text, only 3 clauses in sentences (12), (13) and (14) follow this pattern (Table 6).

TABLE 6
Application of Linear Progression in Text 1

| Theme | Rheme |
|-------------------------------|---|
| (12) In other point we | are noticed the cars. |
| (13) Many cars In the streets | are the cause of air pollution and sound pollution In the cities like Tehran. |
| (14) These pollutions | are damaged ozone layer in the atmosphere. |

The candidate addresses “cars” as a problem in the Rheme of clause (12). Then, she puts “cars” in the word group “Many cars in the streets” in order to form the Theme of clause (13). In clause (13), the Rheme introduces the reasons for considering cars as a problem in city life, because they are responsible for such pollutions as sound and air pollution. “These pollutions” then becomes the Theme of clause (14).

Unlike text 1, this pattern has not been used in text 2. But, the candidate has used it in 4 occasions out of 27 sentences which form the whole text 3. Table 7 provides the data about clauses (3), (4) and (5) [cf. Table 3, Text 3 for sentences (8), (9), (25) and (26)].

TABLE 7
Application of Linear Progression in Text 3

| Theme | Rheme |
|--------------------|---|
| (3) In fact, there | are several reasons for overweighting children. |
| (4) Some factors | are the number of fast foods and other factors are about parents. |
| (5) They | don't pay attention to children's health. |

In the Rheme of clause (3) “several reasons” are considered responsible for overweighting children. The candidate has used the relevant word group “Some factors” as the Theme of clause (4). The factors have been introduced in the Rheme of clause (4), and then instead of “parents”, the third person

plural pronoun “They” has been used as the Theme of clause (5).

ii) Continuous or constant Theme/Rheme

In this pattern, the same Theme remains the focus of the discourse in a sequence of clauses. However, information is built up in the following Rhemes. The generic pattern is demonstrated in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8
The Generic Sequence of Continuous or Constant Progression

| | | |
|---------|---|---------|
| Theme 1 | | Rheme 1 |
| Theme 2 | ↓ | Rheme 2 |
| Theme 3 | ↓ | Rheme 3 |

The candidate has used constant Theme/Rheme in 2 occasions in text 1 and Table 9 indicates the data about clause (5) and (6), [cf. Table 1, Text 1 for clauses (15) and (16)].

TABLE 9
Application of Constant Progression in Text 1

| Theme | Rheme |
|------------|---|
| (5) and we | ↓ must cope with anxiety of this life style |
| (6) we | ↓ have many pollution for example air, sound...and etc. |

Application of constant Theme/Rheme is observable in 6 occasions in text 2. Table 10 indicates clauses (1) and (2), [cf. Table 2 for clauses (6) (7), (8), and (9)].

TABLE 10
Application of Constant Progression in Text 2

| Theme | Rheme |
|---------------------------|---|
| (1) Today, most of people | live in the cities or towns. |
| (2) In fact, people | ↓ don't remember the advantages of living at the rural. |

This kind of sequences has been used in 14 occasions in text 3 and Table 11 demonstrates the excerpts from clauses (7) and (8). But clauses (9) to (17) and (20) to (22) can be seen in Table 3.

TABLE 11
Application of Constant Progression in Text 3

| Theme | Rheme |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| (7) Advertisements of fast food daily | present in mass media. |
| (8) Variety of them | help to existe a tendancy for children feeding. |

Tables 9, 10 and 11 show that the candidate takes the same Theme or a related word or synonym either a single word or a word group to form the Theme of the following clause. For example, in Table 9 the first person plural pronoun “we” which is the Theme of clause (5) has been used as the Theme of clause (6). But, in Table 11 the Theme of clause (7) “Advertisement of fast food daily” has been changed to the related word group “variety of them” as the Theme of clause (8).

iii) Split Rheme progression

In this kind, the Rheme of the first clause contains more than one bit of new information (NI) which is split up in order to introduce the Themes of subsequent clauses. This kind of progression may also have occasions of embedded constant Theme pattern. Table 12 shows the generic structure.

TABLE 12
The Generic Sequence of Split Rheme Progression

| Theme 1 | Rheme 1 = (NI 1 + NI 2 + NI 3 +) |
|-------------------|--|
| Theme 2 = NI 1 | Rheme 2 |
| Theme 3 = NI 2 | Rheme 3 |
| Theme 4 = Theme 3 | Rheme 4 |
| Theme 5 = NI 3 | Rheme 5 |

Texts 1 and 3 do not demonstrate the use of split Rheme progression. But,

text 2 has used this kind of progression in one occasion in sentences (10), (11) and (12) as indicated in Table 13.

TABLE 13
Application Split Rheme Progression in Text 2

| Theme | Rheme |
|--|--|
| (10) In addition to explain the rural areas, we | have many advantages and disadvantages for living in the cities. |
| (11) Example for advantages of living in cities | are the children can go to the educated schools. |
| (12) But one of the disadvantages of living here | is pollution. |

In the Rheme of clause (10) the candidate points out that there are “many advantages and disadvantages for living in the cities”. She, then, forms the Themes of clauses (11) and (12) with word groups containing the words “advantages” and “disadvantages” and elaborates on them separately in the related Rhemes.

iv) Derived hyperthematic progression

In this kind of thematic progression the particular Themes in the next clauses are derived from a hypertheme, or the same overriding Theme. The hypertheme, I suggest, may be latent in the Theme group or phrase. In this case the Theme/Rheme sequence may be with empty Rheme (cf., Bloor & Bloor, 1992). The generic pattern of this type is shown in Table 14.

TABLE 14
The Generic Sequence of Derived Hyperthematic Progression

| Hyper Theme | Rheme/emptyRheme |
|-------------|------------------|
| Theme 1 | Rheme 1 |
| Theme 2 | Rheme 2 |
| Theme 3 | Rheme 3 |

The candidate has not applied derived hyperthematic progression in texts 1

and 2. But, the introduction section of text 3 begins with a hypertheme – overweight (Table 15).

TABLE 15
Application of derived hyperthematic progression in text 3

| Hyper Theme | Rheme/emptyRheme |
|---|---|
| (1) Overweight | is one of the most important problems in developed countries. |
| (2) Children, especially more than others | involve with this problem. |
| (3) In fact, there | are several reasons for overweighting children. |

The excerpts show that although Theme of clauses (2) and (3) are different, they are related to the hypertheme of “Overweight” which is the Theme of clause (1).

Overall, analysis of the data shows a steady increase in the application of Theme/Rheme from text 1 (16%) to text 2 (20%) and to text 3 (64%), (Table 16).

TABLE 16
Percentage of the Application of Theme/Rheme in the Texts

| progression | Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|---------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Linear | 2 | ---- | 4 |
| Constant | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| Split | ---- | 2 | ---- |
| Hyperthematic | ---- | ---- | 2 |
| Total and % | 4 (16%) | 5 (20%) | 16 (64%) |

However, the upward trend in using Theme/Rheme is not necessarily convincing evidence of students’ ability in producing conventionally appropriate argumentative texts, because this depends on the kind of thematic progression they use in their texts. For example, to mention a few problems, the candidate has over-used constant Theme progression in text 3 (10 occasions) which has resulted in a sharp rise in using Theme/Rheme in

comparison to texts 1 and 2. But, the problem with over-using this kind of progression is that the text may look like a list which does not provide readers with significant data. The problem, however, may be removed provided students use more of 'zig-zag' and/or 'split' Rheme patterns in order to explore the perspectives introduced as new information in Rheme and to create more ideas to discuss.

Another important point to attend to in using Theme/Rheme is incidents of Discoursal and Topical confusion. Unclear selection of Discoursal Themes may lead to readers' confusion in understanding the writer's perspective and argument. For example, text 1 (Table 1) indicates a number of jumps of ideas, because of the lack of clear links between the selected Themes. This may also act as the source of other emerging problems, for example:

- a) It may lead to a large and irrelevant stretch of talk between an item introduced in a Rheme and its subsequent appearance in Thematic position. An instance can be seen in text 1 between clauses (7) to (14) where the candidate introduces "pollution" in clause (8) and later returns to it in clause (14), whereas, conventionally, it should have appeared in clause (9).
- b) It may result in introducing a number of new Themes without elaboration, interpretation and evaluation. This can also be observed in different sections of text 1, for example, between clauses (14) to (18).

Also of importance is the problem of students using Themes without clear reference. For example, students may over-use personal pronouns particularly the first and the second personal pronouns either singular or plural (cf. text 1, Table 1) instead of impersonal participants such as 'people', or introducing them specifically in complex nominal groups.

Analysis of the application of 'Theme' in the 'Introduction' section of the three texts (Table 17) demonstrates that they generally orient the reader to the participants involved except for one occasion in text 2 which orients the reader to time (Today). In texts 1 and 2 the system of Theme by personalization ('I', 'You', and 'We') does not organize the clause to signal

the relationship of its local context to the general context of the text as it is supposed to serve (Halliday, 1994). However, in text 3 the writer has shown a clear relationship by selection of the topic focused on impersonal participants ('Overweight', 'children', and 'some factors').

TABLE 17
Application of 'Theme' in 'Introduction'

| Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|--------------|--------|--------------|
| I | Today | Overweight |
| you | Infact | Children |
| we (3 times) | | in fact |
| many of us | | Some factors |
| and we | | They |

Nevertheless, comparing the application of the 'Theme' across the three texts demonstrates a significant improvement. Analysis of themes in the 'Introduction' section of the three texts reveals a significant change in the organization of information within clauses. Unlike text 1 in which 'Themes' are simple nominal groups (usually single, "I, you, we" and involving the writer), texts 2 and 3 indicate the use of impersonal participants and complex nominal groups as 'Themes'.

"To day" (Text 2)

"Overweight children" (Text 3)

These complex nominal groups (some of them marked) are a common feature of the written mode which requires some preplanning.

Another finding is a shift from personalization to involving other participants as people, environment and phenomena. In the main body (Table 18) this trend is observable as the text furnishes the reader with more information indicating an improvement in the extent of control over the use of language resources.

TABLE 18
Application of 'Theme' in 'Main Body'

| Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| We (4 times) | About three-quarters of the | In Developed countries |
| In these days we | people in Developed countries | Advertisements of fast |
| people | In rural areas | food daily |
| All of the gardens in | In addition to here we | Variety of them |
| the cities | in the rural we | In addition to eat |
| In other points we | At the other hand | So (2 times) |
| Many cars in the | Here | At the other had |
| streets | In addition to explain the rural | They (6 times) |
| These pollutions | areas | Simply |
| You | Example for advantages of | Overweight |
| | living in cities | |

Analysis of the conclusion section (Table 19) of the three texts also shows some development. That is, from no conclusion (Text 1) to development of a conclusion in text 2 with an appropriate structure, and a more extended and more developed conclusion in text 3 where the writer has used Theme/Rheme to angle the orientation towards its social purpose.

TABLE 19
Application of 'Theme' in 'Conclusion'

| Text 1 | Text 2 | Text 3 |
|--------|-------------------------|------------|
| | Finally | In summary |
| | The developed countries | They |
| | | I |

These findings demonstrate development in the employment of Theme/Rheme patterns. They, therefore, suggest that Theme/Rheme has implications for IELTS preparation courses and EFL/ESL classes in order to elevate students' expert knowledge in terms of control over cohesiveness at discourse level. The tool also has implications for IELTS academic writing test rating in order to assess the extent of cohesiveness at discourse level in test-takers' argumentative texts.

DISCUSSION

Written argumentative class tasks created opportunities for experiencing literacies to prepare for the IELTS. For example, the candidates experienced decoding the prompts. They analyzed the prompts and topics to make decisions about the genre and the social purpose of the writing tasks. They also experienced manner of discussing issues and sub issues embedded in contentious topics. Analysis of student writing may have implications for university study.

Analysis indicated awareness of the candidates of some linguistic aspects of argumentative texts. They needed to understand the topics and the contents of the texts in order to put forward their views and share their knowledge and experiences of specific issues. This required analysis of genre of texts in addition to relevant selection of vocabulary and structure. They studied genres such as exposition, discussion, analytical and hortatory. They composed conventionally structured and organized argumentative texts with cohesive ties to create unity. They developed such aspects as Theme/Rheme patterns.

Such class tasks provided the candidates with opportunities: (a) to learn and use the genre and style of some argumentative texts, (b) to learn how to develop ideas for and against contentious issues, (c) to learn how to open, continue (elaborate or interpret and evaluate and support an idea) and thus generate an argument, and (d) to select and acquire appropriate words and phrases. However, at least two important points should be borne in mind in this regard: (a) the literacy events over the course of the program were tailored to meet the requirements of the IELTS academic examination (i.e. an aspect of washback effect), and (b) the academic requirements of English-medium universities are significantly at higher level of discourse and complexity, notwithstanding the fact that academic genres may vary in different academic disciplines. Therefore, the discourse knowledge that OTEFL students bring with them into English-medium universities may not be at an appropriate level for commencing university study as far as IELTS is

concerned. Bayliss and Ingram (2006, p. 1) say:

Although the score a student achieves in an IELTS test is meant to indicate whether he/she has a sufficient level of English proficiency to cope with the linguistic demands of tertiary studies, it does not imply that they will succeed academically or that they will not struggle linguistically.

Consequently, when OTEFL students commence their tertiary education at English-medium universities they encounter two complex and challenging circumstances. The first challenge is their adaptation to and adoption of the new academic culture and its requirements. Thus, such students are likely to encounter difficulties in producing different texts of varied nature in accordance with the academic requirements, with which they may be unfamiliar. Secondly, they struggle with their use of English language in trying to cope with the academic literacy practices as recognized by academic conventions. Technically, this means that candidates' repertoires of literacy practices for obtaining IELTS band scores as a language proficiency prerequisite might seem insufficient, or in need of significant development.

IMPLICATIONS

Different factors can play a role in meeting university study demands where the IELTS may only indicate candidates' level of English proficiency at the time of sitting the test (cf., IELTS Handbook, 2007). For example, in his study on the washback effects on the learner, Green's (2006) findings "would seem to support the contention of the teachers that IELTS preparation might under-represent some of the academic writing skills they believed would be required for university study" (p. 126). Findings of this study support those of Green's. For example, based on the observations, student texts were neither of 'Critical' nature nor were they source-based. Literacy in academic writing is expected to demonstrate the writer's ability to read critically, for example to draw upon the outcomes of the comparison and

contrast of different perspectives in order to elaborate or support an argument (cf., Kern, 2000). Some significant aspects of ‘university writing’ (e.g., ‘Quotation’, ‘Citation’ and ‘Referencing’) were not discussed in the program. Furthermore, university students share a common expectation to develop essays or reports of at least 1000 words or more. Practices towards developing lengthier essays or reports were not discussed. These properties were not observed to be discussed or practiced in the program under the study. For example, the program did not cover the theme of ‘Research report’ because it is not in the scope of preparing the participants for the IELTS writing test. These may depict the candidates’ process of literacy construction. This is an important finding because it could also be an outcome of the washback regarding test design.

Improving the design of the IELTS test in accordance with this typical academic culture could result in the formation of preparation classes that focus on such circumstances. That is, the design of the IELTS test needs change in a way that in addition to increasing English proficiency, candidates might practice adaptation and adoption of the academic culture before they commence their university study. This in turn may influence IELTS instructors to refrain from traditional structural teaching and move from teacher-centered classes towards literacy socialization. This would involve envisaging candidates as researchers, so as to encourage them to develop their knowledge by obtaining information from different resources inside and outside of the classroom in the course of preparation. This may lead to instructors taking preliminary measures in shaping a culture of how to engage in research and independent learning while collaborating in group work. In their group work members could give feedback and comment critically on each other’s productions and viewpoints. This situation would resemble English-medium academic culture, for example in terms of critical thinking, at least at commencement level.

CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated that students' preparation for IELTS in formal classes contributes significantly in obtaining important information about the nature and features of IELTS test formats. The candidates acquired a range of linguistic resources in terms of composing argumentative texts, which have implications for IELTS test and EFL/ESL classes and university study. The study has implications for the design of the IELTS test in order to improve its validity, in particular related to argumentative texts. The study points to approaches which will enable OTEFL students to develop argumentative texts through the study of genres.

This study was limited to one IELTS academic preparation class in Tehran. Additional empirical studies are needed to inquire into what underlies OTEFL students' difficulty and possible failure in doing academic courses in English-medium universities. This study suggests further research into literacy practices in preparation programs for IELTS which can effectively lead candidates to adaptation and adoption of English-medium academic culture. Research in this area could result in identifying specific patterns of literacy which closely relate to expectations and requirements of English-medium academic culture. Such a study would address the question: 'What is the extent of the association between literacy practices provided in IELTS academic preparation courses in terms of the four skills and current academic literacy practices in different disciplines in English-medium universities?' This requires researchers to identify and describe the extent of candidates' preparedness in using English authentically and meaningfully in academic contexts.

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APPENDIX

Prompts of the Academic Writing Tasks in the 3 Phases of the Research

1. Writing tasks 2, Phase 1

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task:

Damage to the environment is an inevitable consequence of worldwide improvements in the standard of living.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give

reasons for your answer.

You should write at least 250 words.

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

Moghaddam's notes (2008): Polarity in stance + analytical (persuading that something IS or IS NOT)

2. Writing tasks 2, Phase 2

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task:

Almost three-quarters of the population of the developed world live in towns and cities, whereas around two-thirds of the developing world live in rural areas.

Task:

Argue for or against the following statement:

The developed world should lead by example and not insist that aid to the Third World is used to develop rural areas.

You should write at least 250 words.

You should use your own ideas and experiences and support your argument with examples.

Moghaddam's notes (2008): Polarity in stance + hortatory (persuading that something SHOULD BE DONE)

3. Writing tasks 2, Phase 3

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task:

Write about the following topic:

The number of overweight children in developed countries is increasing. Some people think this is due to problems such as the growing number of fast food outlets. Others believe that parents are to blame for not looking

after their children's health.

To what extent do you agree with these views?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Moghaddam's notes (2008): Polarity in stance and perspective + analytical (persuading that something IS or IS NOT)