

# Changes in the Linguistic Characteristics of the Scripts of Repeaters of a Second-language Writing Test

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This study examined *changes over time* in the linguistic characteristics of texts written in response to a second-language (L2) writing test by candidates who took the test multiple times. The study included 234 scripts written by 78 candidates who belonged to three groups in terms of their initial writing abilities and who each took the writing test three times. Various computer programs were used to analyze the scripts in relation to candidates' grammatical (e.g., syntactic complexity), discourse (e.g., cohesion), sociolinguistic (e.g., register), and strategic (e.g., interactional metadiscourse) choices. The results indicated that scripts with higher writing scores at test occasion 1 tended to have greater linguistic accuracy, syntactic complexity, lexical density, diversity and sophistication, and cohesion, and to include fewer informal features, and more formal features than did scripts with lower writing scores. Additionally, scripts produced at later test occasions tended to be significantly longer, more linguistically accurate, more coherent, and to include more formal features and fewer interactional metadiscourse markers than scripts produced at earlier test occasions. Finally, the rate of change over time for some features varied significantly across candidates and initial L2 writing ability significantly moderated the rate of change in some of these features. The presentation discusses the findings, highlights the value and methodology of examining repeaters' test performance, and points to several areas for further research.