



Task representation in German as a foreign language: A systemic functional analysis of Norwegian students' written responses

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this article is to understand in detail how different learners respond to writing tasks and what consequences their individual choices have on language use. The texts were composed by Norwegian upper secondary school students of German as a foreign language (GFL). In total, seven written responses to two writing prompts were described and juxtaposed based on a meaning-orientated perspective, with a focus on the learners' choices along ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions. Even though the learners responded in similar ways to each of the tasks, the findings also showed considerable variation in how particular meaning dimensions were realised by the different writers. The current study speaks to the importance of taking account of learners' task representations in writing tasks and activities in secondary school FL learning.

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1. Introduction

Writing-to-learn and learning-to-write (Manchón, 2011) are commonly stated goals of the lower and upper secondary foreign language (FL) classroom (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001; Lund & Casado Villanueva, 2020). In order to develop writing competence, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the situated nature of FL writing practices (Byrnes et al., 2010; Manchón, 2009). In this regard, it is also important to anticipate how learners will interpret and respond to a task. Here, Flower (1990) used the term 'task representation', defining it as 'an interpretative process that translates the rhetorical situation – as the writer reads it – into the act of composing' (p. 35). Depending on these interpretative processes, the types of compositions that learners produce might deviate significantly from each other. This variation is likely to be particularly prevalent in secondary school non-English FL writing due to the general lack of clarity as to the purposes of FL writing (e.g. Reichelt & Waltner, 2001; Reichelt, 2019). As distinct types of compositions also mean that learners need to employ different language choices, variation also means different linguistic problem-solving activities for the learners. In secondary school non-English FL learning contexts, in which learners often still have a limited linguistic repertoire, it is thus particularly important to obtain a better understanding of how various learners compose textual responses to the same tasks.

Nevertheless, task representation is often taken for granted and little is known about how FL learners, especially those at pre-tertiary level, interpret tasks and what the potential consequences are for their linguistic problem-solving (Byrnes, 2014; Flower, 1990; Manchón, 2014; Norris & Manchón, 2012; Ruiz-Funes, 2001). The current study aims to approach this research gap by proposing the following research questions: (1) What do the responses of Norwegian upper secondary school learners of German as an FL (year 12, 16–17 years of age, fifth year of GFL study) to two tasks within a mock exam context reveal about their task representation? (2) What differences can we observe across the task responses in terms of language choices and what do they reveal about the demands and opportunities for language use?

In line with Zarei et al. (2016) and their work on task representation, the current study is informed by the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (e.g. Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Taking a lexicogrammatical perspective, I describe language choices mainly in terms of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) accounts of meaning-making resources. The data used in this article stem from the German part of a corpus called TRAWL (Tracking Written Learner Language) (Dirdal et al., 2022).

In this study, I compare task representations not only within one task setting but also across two tasks as this has the potential to contribute towards an even deeper understanding of the differences in language choices involved in FL task representations. The findings can also contribute to raising awareness of how different tasks allow for different meaning-making choices. This is impor-

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tant as giving learners a task choice appears to be a rather common practice in non-English FL learning contexts also for raising learner engagement. The latter seems to be central vis-à-vis an often low sense of motivation in this learning context (Reichelt & Waltner, 2001; Reichelt, 2019).

1.1. A focus on the learners' acts of composing

The connection between composing written responses and the expansion and consolidation of FL knowledge has been pointed out by Cumming (1990). He found that learners are active in the process of decision- and meaning-making when they compose a response, concluding that this shows a potential for language learning. Despite existing research on the language-learning potential of writing (e.g. Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2011), there is still a need to further investigate learning affordances of writing processes and task-related concerns (Manchón & Leow, 2020). Specifically, researchers stress the need to know more about what learners do when they respond to a task (e.g. Byrnes, 2020; Manchón, 2014; Norris & Manchón, 2012; Reichelt, 2016; Roca de Larios et al., 2016). Norris and Manchón (2012) also emphasised the role of tasks 'in determining what learners learn and what it is that we are able to observe when they write' (pp. 232–233). They argued that teachers' and learners' choices of writing tasks influence writing and learning in several ways in both learning-to-write and writing-to-learn situations. One way of looking into what learners do is by describing their individual task representation, as manifested in their texts, which is the approach taken in this article.

In the following, I will first present previous research on task representation. Subsequently, I will give an overview of SFL theory, which is frequently applied to research concerning how learners respond to a given rhetorical situation.

1.2. Previous research on task representation

Research on task representation is scarce (Reichelt, 2016; Ruiz-Funes, 2011) and existing research has focused primarily on university FL learners (for an overview, see Zarei et al., 2016), with reading-to-write tasks receiving considerable attention. Works by Flower (1990) and Ruiz-Funes (2001), for example, have shown that learners' compositions might turn out to be considerably different across learners from the same group. Ruiz-Funes' (2001) study is one of the few works focusing on task representation as manifested in learners' texts. In her study, she categorised the learners' compositions along various genre categories and analysed their texts in terms of syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy. One of her conclusions was that little can be said about learners' development or accomplishment by only stating that they, for example, wrote a summary or synthesis; instead, much can be said by describing the learners' writing in terms sentence style and content. Zarei et al. (2016), who also analysed learners' written products, measured the learner responses along the dimensions of language, content, organisation and appropriacy. They concluded that the task representations held by the learners, as well as their orientation towards writing, played a role in their writing success.

Zarei et al. (2016) and Ruiz-Funes (2001) did not only provide insights into what is important to consider in analysing learner texts. They – like Flower (1990) and Wolfersberger (2013) – also pointed to various factors leading to differences across learner compositions regarding the same task. First, learners might interpret the rhetorical situation of a task differently, which also comprises the conventions of academic discourse, the instructor's expectations, the context of the course and the conditions of the assignment (Flower, 1990, pp. 35, 40). Second, learners might make different choices regarding, for example, which position to take

towards a topic or how to present the content (Flower, 1990, p. 40; see also Wolfersberger, 2013). In addition to learners' understanding of the task cues, their needs and desires, there are additional factors influencing their compositions, such as their contextual, textual, rhetorical and linguistic knowledge as well as the motivation that the task prompts in them (Flower, 1990; Ruiz-Funes, 2011). There are studies on genre writing, also in pre-tertiary EFL and GFL writing (e.g. Hamann, 2022; Ørevik, 2019), which suggest that certain tasks elicit rather uniformly patterned compositions and thereby enable or constrain certain language choices. However, considerable differences across learner responses are still likely. In realising a genre as a particular 'staged goal-orientated social process' (Martin, 2009, p. 13), learners might, for example, take different stances towards a genre, interpret the social process differently or have different experiences relating to academic discourse (e.g. Devitt, 2004; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Moore, 2019; Wolfersberger, 2013). Differences in learner compositions are likely even more pronounced in pre-tertiary FL learning contexts in which writing prompts often contain less specific genre cues and in which learner responses are orientated less towards a particular purpose and discourse community (e.g. Ørevik, 2019; Reichelt, 2019). This underlines the importance of research on task representation, as manifested in learners' texts in non-English FL learning contexts.

1.3. Approaching the learners' texts from an SFL perspective

SFL is a framework frequently suggested and applied for analysing how writers respond to a particular task in terms of meaning-making (e.g. Byrnes, 2014; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Troyan, 2016), also with a focus on task representation (see Zarei et al., 2016). According to SFL, every language user always expresses three kinds of meaning simultaneously in speaking or writing (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). The three meaning dimensions, usually called metafunctions, are the ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction concerns the construction of experience; the interpersonal metafunction centres on the enactment of personal and social relationships; and the textual metafunction concerns the organisation of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 30–31). Accordingly, each clause is simultaneously a representation of some content, an exchange and a message (pp. 83–84).

Previous studies of learner texts from a meaning-orientated perspective differ in the ways in which they described and analysed the three dimensions of meaning and the corresponding language choices (see, e.g. Maxim, 2021; Ørevik, 2019; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007; Troyan, 2016; Zarei et al., 2016). In this study, I will focus on all three metafunctions and describe language choices based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) lexicogrammatical resource systems that are assigned to the three metafunctions. The specific analytical approach will be laid out in Section 2.2.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data

The data used in the current study is a subset of the TRAWL corpus (Dirdal et al., 2022). The corpus is still under compilation and comprises texts written by Norwegian secondary school learners of English as a first FL and German, French and Spanish as a second FL. The German material was gathered from years 8 to 13, and approximately half consists of data from mock exams. Data comprising mock exams often contained one subtask in which learners were given a choice of different writing prompts from which to choose one to respond to. This reflected common

Table 1
Overview of the data.

Name	Prompt	Learner code		Word no.
		TRAWL	Adjust.	
NAKR-A	Nach der Wende (1989) haben die Menschen in der DDR ihre Freiheit bekommen. Was bedeutet Freiheit für Sie? [After the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the people in the former German Democratic Republic received freedom. What does freedom mean to you?]	P60661	A-1	182
		P60663	A-2	228
		P60665	A-3	132
		P60666	A-4	240
		P60669	A-5	208
				X = 198
NAKR-B	Ein Freund von Ihnen will Berlin besuchen. Erzählen Sie was er dort machen kann. «Berlin ist eine Reise wert» [A friend of yours wants to visit Berlin. Tell him what he can do in Berlin. "Berlin is worth a journey"]	P60667	B-1	262
		P60670	B-2	244
				X = 253

practice in the Norwegian exam context up to the school year of 2020/21.

From the various data sets of mock exams in the corpus, a set coded as NAKR was selected. The data set stemmed from one GFL classroom in which the learners (age 16–17) were in year 12, that is, their fifth year of learning German. The data set was collected in the winter of 2020/2021 and contained texts and corresponding metadata on the learners' language background and the mock exam sheet. From the NAKR data set, I selected a subset of learner responses to two of the four task choices for analysis. I chose these two prompts, labelled here as NAKR-A and NAKR-B, on two main grounds: First, the prompts appeared typical for the secondary school GFL learning environment in that they seem to centre most prominently on a topic either directly or indirectly associated with classroom content. Second, at least two responses could be found to each prompt. This is important as an imbalance can generally be found across mock exam data sets regarding how many learners picked each of the task choices. The data used for the analysis eventually comprised responses from seven learners – five responses to NAKR-A, and two responses to NAKR-B. Table 1 presents the original writing prompts – together with the English translations – and an overview of the learners who responded to the task. To make the analysis easier to follow, I use an adjusted learner code that is simpler than the original code in the TRAWL corpus. The table also includes the number of words produced by each learner as well as the average number of words.

The prompts also provide cues to genres which the learners might produce. With regard to those genre categorisations established by Ørevik (2019, pp. 105–110) for the upper secondary school EFL classroom, prompt NAKR-A is likely to elicit a form of expository article while the cues of the prompt to NAKR-B are more ambiguous. While the statement "Berlin is worth a visit" points to a persuasive essay, the instruction "tell a friend" provides cues for realising the response in terms of a personal text or a descriptive introductory text.

2.2. Analytical approach

This study seeks to describe meaning-making along ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions by seven learners with respect to two writing prompts. The approach is to enquire into each dimension of meaning through a focus on lexicogrammatical choices, particularly along the systems of transitivity and theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Table 2 provides an overview of those systems and the subsystems considered in the analysis, in part adapted from Schleppegrell and Go (2007). In the following, the approach to each meaning dimension is presented in detail.

Concerning the *ideational* dimension, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe processes, participants and circumstances as the main elements in the transitivity system, which

is central for constructing the sequences of an event or 'going-on' (p. 213). They describe five main types of processes which are relevant to this study. These processes are presented in Table 3, along with the different kinds of participants involved in these processes. Which processes and participants are applied by a writer depend largely on the domain of experience. For example, relational and material processes are found to be central means for construing expository genres (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Ørevik, 2019), i.e. such processes that assign an Attribute or Value to another participant (Carrier/Token) or processes that construe an action someone (Actor) undertakes, while mental processes are, for example, particular to the 'flavour' of casual conversations (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 219). Depending on the function of each part of a text, the 'mixture' of typical process types can nevertheless change in the course of a text (p. 219).

In SFL terminology, participants are labelled differently depending on the process they are involved in, the role they take and the eventual experience they construe. In the current study, no further differentiation is made between Goal or Scope, Carrier or Token, or Attribute or Value. Participants can be formed in many ways, for example, through simple proper or common nouns such as 'Jo' or 'soup', or in linguistically more complex ways. The latter forms may be typical for, for example, Carriers/Tokens and Values in relational clauses in expository writing (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 503). More complex structures are, for example, nominal groups in which a noun is either postmodified through an embedded phrase (see Table 3, example i., marked as []) or an embedded clause (typically in form of a defining relative clause, see example vi., marked as [[]]), or nominal groups in which an embedded clause functions as the head, such as in example iv. (marked as [[]]) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, pp. 490–503). In German, embeddings that are finite clauses must always be introduced by either a pronoun or a binder such as 'dass', while the Finite moves to the final clause position.

Regarding the *interpersonal* dimension, the current study describes how the learners construe a relationship with their readers. To map this dimension, the analysis draws largely on Schleppegrell and Go's (2007) ideational approach. The authors point out that writers draw on verbal and mental processes to establish a relationship between them and the reader. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), mental clauses are central to, for example, expressing evaluations and the author's stance, while verbal processes are decisive in establishing both dialogicity and the author's stance (pp. 245–248, 302–303). Consequently, the analysis focuses on how learners use these process types and realise them. Different to what is sketched in Table 3, both verbal and mental processes can also involve projected clauses. These types of clauses either report what is being said or present someone's ideas (thoughts, beliefs, desires) (pp. 508–515), such as in *I think that*

Table 2
Analytical approach of the current study (adapted from Schleppegrell & Go, 2007).

Ideational: Transitivity	Interpersonal:	Textual: Theme/Rheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main process types, process verbs and participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental and verbal clauses • Circumstances indicating angle • Modal operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme/Rheme • Tense/aspect markings

Table 3
Major process types and their meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 311).

Process	Meaning	Participants	Examples
Material	'doing'	Actor , Goal / Scope	<i>I. Jo made a large bowl [of soup]./ II. The girls played football.</i>
Mental	'sensing'	Senser , (Macro)Phenomenon	<i>III. The little child wanted ice-cream./ IV. He saw [[the cars driving fast]].</i>
Relational	'being'	Carrier / Token , Attribute / Value	<i>V. The tunnel seems large. / VI. Jim is the best friend [[I could ask for]].</i>
Verbal	'saying'	Sayer , Receiver, Verbiage	<i>VII. He told his friend the truth.</i>
Existential	'presentative'	Existent	<i>VIII. There were three old women.</i>

she likes the gift. As suggested in the criteria by Schleppegrell and Go (2007), the analysis also interrogates the use of circumstances that are central to expressing the author's stance and evaluation, which are circumstances of angle. Examples of these elements are 'in my opinion' or 'to me' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 314). In line with Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the current analysis also focuses on the use of modal operators for interpersonal meaning-making. Operators such as 'can' or 'must' are a resource to express authorial stance as they modify, for example, the desirability of a proposal and likelihood of a proposition (p. 144).

The learners' textual representations are mainly described in terms of Theme and Rheme. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the Theme is the first part of the clause preceding the Finite, while the Rheme is the remaining part of the message. By obtaining Theme position, this part of the clause has thematic prominence and is 'the point of departure of the message' (p. 89). Thus, it is vital for locating the clause in its context and orienting the reader (p. 89). The clause can be located through topical (ideational) Themes, interpersonal Themes consisting of, for example, a modal adjunct such as 'maybe', or textual Themes, constituted of conjunctions, conjunctive adjuncts and continuatives (pp. 105–114). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) state that participants realised by a nominal group are the most common type of Theme, even though this is also dependent on the text type. In the current study, the focus is on how the learners realise the introductory sentences in each paragraph in terms of Theme and Rheme and the Subthemes to follow this first sentence.

In the findings section, the analyses of the learner responses are presented along the three dimensions of meaning. The analysis of ideational dimension is presented first, beginning with a presentation of the five responses to NAKR-A and followed by a description of the two responses to NAKR-B. The subsequent analyses of interpersonal and textual meanings are structured the same way.

2.3. Methodological limitations

A main limitation of the study is that it only studies students' written texts. Thus, some important aspects that concern internal decision-making processes and mental models remain unseen. Especially the studies by Zarei et al. (2016), Manchón and Roca de Larios (2011) and Maxim (2021) present valuable insights into how learners focus on the different meaning dimensions and how the learners' problem-solving interrelates with distinct factors in the writing process. However, as the data of the current study stems

from a corpus study, access to contextual information of the writing situation is not available. The anonymised form of the data does not provide the opportunities for interviews with the learners either. While additional information would have been valuable for saying more about the learners' task representations, the nature of corpus data is still distinct as it presents responses and writing tasks retrieved from an authentic classroom situation. While the findings do not allow us to make statements about the learners' general mental modals nor of the classroom context, they can still provide detailed insights into how the learners' writing and linguistic problem-solving is influenced by the teachers' task choices on the one hand and their individual choices on the other. These insights are particularly relevant in the discussion of writing tasks and writing activities in secondary school non-English FL learning classrooms.

3. Findings

This section presents analytical findings on how the GFL writers in the study composed their responses to the writing prompts NAKR-A and NAKR-B, organised according to the tripartite analytical framework. Deviations from the norms are indicated with an *, not including those of an orthographic nature.

3.1. Ideational dimension

The ideational dimension will be described with respect to transitivity (cf. 2.2). First, responses to NAKR-A will be analysed, then NAKR-B, before a summary is given.

3.1.1. NAKR-A

All responses to the NAKR-A prompt comprise statements elaborating on the meaning of freedom. Here, relational processes were decisive, together with material and mental processes. As Table 4 illustrates, learners draw on the three process types to varying degrees.

Many of the relational processes comprised a message that is related to 'Freiheit', taking the form of 'Freiheit' + 'ist (nicht) / bedeutet' + Value / Attribute. Other characteristic relational processes centre on the verbal group 'haben (nicht)', involving different kinds of Carriers. In Table 5, examples of participants in both kind of relational processes are presented.

When looking at Values or Attributes as well as participants and verbal groups in material processes (see Table 6 for examples),

Table 4
Use of process types in each response in % (the total number in brackets).

Learner	relational	material	mental	total
A-1	30 (6)	35 (7)	30 (6)	100 (20)
A-2	43 (15)	26 (9)	20 (7)	100 (35)
A-3	72 (13)	6 (1)	12 (2)	100 (18)
A-4	54 (14)	31 (8)	12 (3)	100 (26)
A-5	68 (23)	9 (3)	24 (8)	100 (34)

Table 5
Examples of participants in relational processes.

		Values / Attributes ('ist'/'bedeuten'/etc.)
A-1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • viel • [[[dass du kannst *mit wo als am liebsten sind]]]
A-2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *einige [[* alle mögen]] • [[*wann ich frei von schule habe]]
A-3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • viele verschiedene *Ding. Die Redefreiheit, Freiheit [[*zu machen Ding]] und ... • [[[, dass ich kann machen *Ding, *das ich wünschen]]] • [[wichtig zu haben]]
A-4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [[[* wenn man kann sprachen , ob was man wolle , Machen was man wolle, ...]]] • sehr wichtig • ein Menschenrecht
A-5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ein großes Wort • [[frei zu sprechen]] • die Möglichkeit [[jeden Tag zur Schule zu gehen]] • Pfannkuchen [mitten *die Woche]
	Carriers	Attributes ('haben (nicht)')
A-1	man	der Freiheit [[*zu bestimmen Über sich selv]]
A-2	alle ich	eine verschiedene Definition von Freiheit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [[*wann ich frei von schule]] • keinen Stress
A-3	ich/wir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • viel Freiheit • viele/ein paar Regeln
A-4	alle Menschen /jeder Mensch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *das Freiheit [[*Sie verdient]]; • recht auf Freiheit
A-5	es (Freiheit) wir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • viele Bedeutungen • mehrere Seiten • Demokratie • Stimmrecht, Redefreiheit und Religionsfreiheit

Table 6
Examples of verbal groups and participants in material processes.

	Verbal groups	Actors	Goals, Scope
A-1	*leben; kann(st) treffen/ machen/ kaufen	man, Du	[[*wer du willst]]; viel *ding [[*du nicht können machen]]; viele neu *Dinger [*als ein Auto, ...]
A-2	möchte chillen; mache; muss leben; regnet; muss/kann tragen; gehe	ich	[[was ich will und nicht was ich muss]]; Regenmantel; einen Spaziergang [*in den Sommer]
A-3	*[...] *missbraucht; kann machen	ich	meine Freiheit; *Ding [[*, das ich wünschen]]
A-4	konnte (nicht) machen; hat bestimmt; hat gesetzt; kann besuchen	man; ich; der Corona Virus; die Regierung	[[*was man können sagen und was war erlaubt ...]]; seine Großeltern; ein gutes Leben
A-5	wohnen; darfst nicht machen; *bestimmt	du; Eltern	Alles

it becomes obvious that the learners focus on different content. For example, the semantic choices of learner A-2 largely centre on daily aspects of their life ('Schule', 'Stress'), those of A-5 on basic aspects within a democracy, of A-4 partly on COVID-19-related measures, and of A-1 on life before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Beyond variation in semantic choices, differences can also be found in the way in which the participants are structured in rela-

tional and material processes. It seems that when Values/Attributes and Goals/Scopes are associated with or constituted through concrete nouns, they are often of simpler structure (e.g. 'zeit mit Freunden', 'ein gutes Leben'). In contrast, more general statements such as '*einige [[*alle mögen]]' or 'viel *ding [[*du nicht können machen]]' often involve rather complex structures, e.g. embedded clauses. The latter structure is also vital when learners associate Values or Goals of 'freedom' with certain activities

Table 7
Examples of verbal groups and participants in material / mental / relational / existential processes.

	Verbal groups	Actors, Sensors	Goals, Scope, (Macro)phenomenons
B-1	besuchen; essen; spielen // sehen/hören	wir; Hertha Berlin	die Berliner Mauer; *die Zoologische Garten; [*die Tiere gefüttert werden]; sehr *gut Essen Fußball; die sehr interessante Deutsche Historie; *[[die Deutsche Fan rufen zu den Fußballspielern]]
B-2	baden, spielen; besuchen; *lerne // sehen/ hören	man; wir	
		Tokens, Carriers	Values, Attributes
B-1	ist; *hatte; *haben	*die Zoologische Garten; sie	sehr spannend; sehr *viel Tiere [, alles von Löwen bis *Reptile]; sehr leckeres Eis
B-2	ist; hat; *heizte (=heißt)	Berlin; Stadium; das; *sie	sehr schön; sehr viele historische *Museum; Hertha Berlin
		Existent	
B-1	*ist (=gibt) (nicht)	[[sehr viele Dinge *zu machen]]; die Berliner Mauer [[*wir müssen besuchen]]	
B-2	*ist (=gibt) (nicht)	eine Fußballmannschaft; viele schöne Restaurants; viele schöne *Hotel [mit Frühstück und anderen *Mahlzeit]	

Table 8
Examples of verbal groups and participants in material / relational processes in elaboration part.

	Verbal groups	Values/Attributes
B-1	*waren geteilt; *kalt (=nannte); war *besitz	Deutschland; die Staaten; die BDR und die DDR
B-2	war unterteilt; ist; waren	Berlin; die Mauer; *die im *Ostern; kommunistisch
		Goals/Scopes
B-1	*habt geschehen; *haben gestorben; *klettern;	viele (...) Menschen; die Berliner Mauer; sehr viele tragische *Geschehnis
B-2	*waren erbaut; *fahren *lebt; *versucht	sie / die (=die Leute); [[*die andere Seite zu kommen]]

or situations. In part, embedded clauses contained even further embeddings (marked as [[[...|...]]) in Table 5 after Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

3.1.2. NAKR-B

In general, the two responses to the NAKR-B prompt are about the things to do and see in Berlin. In both texts, this experience is construed through similar process types, namely material and mental processes, followed by relational and then existential processes. The verbal groups and participants that realise those processes are of similar structure and content (see Table 7 for examples). In material and mental processes, for example, participants playing the role of Actors and Sensors are commonly realised through the pronoun 'wir', while the other participants were commonly realised either through more general nouns such as 'Eis' or 'Fußballspiel', the proper name 'Berlin' or nominal groups belonging to the lexical field of 'Berlin', such as 'Berliner Mauer'.

Both writers often point to the same things to do and see, like a visit to the Berlin Wall, while also elaborating on the wall's historical background. For construing this elaboration, relational, material and, in B-2's response, also existential process types are central. The verbal groups that realise material and relational processes in this part of the learners' responses contrast with those in the rest of the text, as various and less common verbs were used (see Table 8 for examples). Also, participants differ as they contain especially proper names from a political/historical context or abstract nouns (e.g. 'Geschehnis').

3.1.3. Summary

The analysis of the ideational dimension identified relational and material as central process types in the responses to both

NAKR-A and NAKR-B, with the former as most central to NAKR-A and the latter – together with mental and existential processes – as most vital to NAKR-B. Regarding the nature of participants and process verbs, the analysis showed that the responses to NAKR-A comprise participants and material verbal groups that may vary significantly and are often realised through more abstract and less frequent nouns/verbs, in part also construed as complex structures. In the responses to NAKR-B, this is also the case for the choice of participants and material and relational verbal groups in that part of the responses in which the learners added an elaboration on the Berlin Wall to their text.

3.2. Interpersonal dimension

In this section, learners' interpersonal strategies for construing a relationship with their readers will be identified. The analysis centres on the use of mental and verbal processes based on Schleppegrell and Go (2007) (cf. 2.2), supported by other interpersonal resources like modality (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

3.2.1. NAKR-A

Across the responses to the NAKR-A prompt, most writers indicate to the readers that they present their own thoughts and perspectives on 'freedom'. The following four strategies for expressing individual stance on 'freedom' have been identified, which are applied in the learners' responses to a varying degree.

1. Circumstance of projection/angle 'für mich'.
2. Mental clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'fühle mich'+ Attribute (e.g. 'frei', 'eingesperrt').
3. Mental clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'glaube/wünsche' + idea clause.

Table 9
Resources for expressing own stance on 'freedom' across the learners' responses.

	'für mich' (1)	'ich' + 'fühle mich'(2)	'ich' + 'glaube/ wünsche' (3)	Verbal process (4)
A-1	-	-	-	-
A-2	✓	✓	✓	✓
A-3	✓	-	-	✓
A-4	✓	-	✓	-
A-5	✓	✓	✓	-

4. Verbal processes in the form of 'ich' + 'sagen/erzählen/...' + reported clause.

Table 9 illustrates how those strategies are applied in the learners' responses. It becomes clear that all learners except A-1 present ideas from their own perspective by displaying themselves either as a source, Sayer or Sayer. The focus on expressing one's own stance on 'freedom' is further visible in the analysis of the ideational dimension (cf. 3.1), as the learners also indicate their own perspective in relational, material and other kind of mental processes by using the pronoun 'ich' or the possessive article 'meinem'. Yet, the learners also differ in how dominant their own perspective is presented. While, for example, A-2 makes clear throughout the text that the propositions reflect their own view, desires and senses of freedom, A-4 also utters ideas from other people's or society's perspective. As Table 9 also shows, the learners use different language choices to bring in their own voice. Concerning the use of verbal processes, there might be different meanings implied. This shows the contrast between the verbal process used by A-3 to express an opinion (*Ich *will sagen, dass Norwegen ist gut mit Freiheit ...*) and A-2's message addressed to a reader (*In diesen Text soll ich von was Freiheit bedeute für mich erzählen.*).

3.2.2. NAKR-B

The writing prompt assumes that the relationship between the writer and reader is friendship i.e. a close relation. If the writer addressed a friend in a personal way, the expectation is that dialogicity would be established by the writer. This is particularly evident in B-1's response, in which the following four strategies for expressing a close and dialogical relationship with the reader have all been identified:

1. Mental/mental-like clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'weiß/denke/bin sicher' + idea clause expressing that the writer knows the reader's interests and desires well.
2. Mental/mental-like clauses in the form of 'ich' + 'mag/finde es schön' expressing the writer's own emotions and desires.
3. The modal operator 'müssen' indicating to the reader that the proposed sites were a 'must see' for her/him.
4. The modal operator 'können' suggesting to the reader that she/he also has choices regarding the proposals.

Also in B-2's response a relationship is indicated and established, however in a less evident and coherent manner. Regarding the strategies presented above, B-2 only draws on the modal operator 'können'. Both learners also indicate dialogicity by using the pronoun 'wir' in material and other mental processes, however, B-2 does so in a less consistent way. Another difference between the learners' interpersonal meaning-making concerns the way in which both learners communicate to their 'friend' that they were about to elaborate on the historical context of the wall. B-1 uses a question to enquire into the friend's knowledge of the historical context of the wall, thereby suggesting that the friend was interested in a more detailed response. Conversely, B-2 uses a verbal process in the following form: *Ich will erzählen sie ab die Mauer*. While B-1's elaboration seems to be motivated by the friend's interest, B-2's

elaboration appears to be steered primarily by the writer's interests.

3.2.3. Summary

The analysis of the interpersonal task representations of NAKR-A showed that the learners commonly share their own perspective on freedom with the reader, despite the differences in the extent to which alternative perspectives were considered. Decisive to sharing their own perspective is the use of the phrase 'für mich', of mental clauses centring on the verbs 'glauben' and 'wünschen' as well as the integration of the pronoun 'ich' in various process types. Similar resources were found in the analysis of B-1's response to NAKR-B, in addition to the use of the modal operators 'müssen' and 'können'. Regarding NAKR-B, it is apparent that the learners differ considerably in how they establish contact and dialogicity in their responses.

3.3. Textual dimension

The textual dimension will be described with respect to Theme and Rheme (cf. 2.2). The tables that will provide insights into these structures only present the most characteristic Themes. Not included in those tables are most instances of 'und', 'aber' as well as 'ich' in the mental clauses already covered in 3.2.

3.3.1. NAKR-A

All responses to NAKR-A are organised around the participant 'Freiheit'. As Table 10 illustrates, this nominal group occurs in Theme or Rheme position in most first sentences of each paragraph, and to a varying degree also in Themes (and Rhemes) in the sentences in the corresponding paragraph. The responses differ, however, in how they are organised on the paragraph level. On the one hand, some learners focus on various facets and conditions of freedom, while others only present a limited range of aspects, such as A-1. On the other hand, the responses differ in how the learners present in the introductory sentence to each paragraph what each section is going to elaborate on. In this regard, A-2's text is the response with the clearest structure with different definitions of freedom in each introductory sentence, followed by elaborations on this Theme or Rheme in the corresponding paragraph. In contrast to this, A-4's and A-5's responses present a less clearly defined structure with some initial Themes and Rhemes that are not directly connected to the item 'Freiheit'. Some of the paragraphs further present (Sub)Themes that make it more difficult to identify the main emphasis of the section. This is particularly the case if the Subthemes of one paragraph concern different groups of people like '*Keine Leute' and 'Du' in A-1's response or 'ich', 'du', 'wir' and 'Eltern' in A-5's response.

Apart from some instances of textual ('aber') and interpersonal Themes ('ich', 'für mich'), the most common type is topical Themes realised by nominal groups. The responses by A-1 and A-3 also present expressions of a condition or time as a reference point for the text (e.g. '*Mit Kapitalismen', '*Wann es regnet'). These patterns interrelate highly with the aspects and conditions of freedom presented by the learners, and so does in part also the use of tense.

Table 10
Organisation of the responses to NAKR-A in terms of Theme and Rheme.

Part	Theme first sentence	Rheme first sentence	Subthemes
A-1			
1	Freiheit und es *war (=gab)	viel für Menschen Menschen als habe kleine Freiheit in der DDR	*Keine (=viele) Leute / Du (2x) *Wenn man nicht hat Freiheit *So wenn der Berliner Mauer fallen ...
2	Was Freiheit bedeutete für der Leute*, ob DDR	dass du kannst mit *wo als am liebsten sind	*Du (3x) *Mit der DDR weg / *Mit Kapitalismen (=Mit dem beginnenden ...) (2x)
A-2			
1	Freiheit für mich	wann ich frei von schule habe, ...	*Wann ich nicht schule habe Es *ist (=gibt) (2x) Heimarbeit Ich (5x)
2	Zu leben in ein demokratisches ... Land	auch Freiheit für mich	
3	Gutes und sonniges Wetter	auch einen Typ Freiheit ...	*Wann es regnet (2x)
4	In diesem Text	ich *von was Freiheit bedeute ...	*Wie du kannst sehen
5	Freiheit	sehr viel ...	Freiheit In diesem Text
A-3			
1	Ich	nicht eigentlich *denkt auf es	Freiheit (2x) Es gilt In Norwegen
2	*Eine andere Ursache ich habe nicht denkt auf Freiheit	*weil ich zu Hause viel Freiheit habe	Wir Deshalb Freiheit
A-4			
1	Was	Freiheit für Sie	Ja, das Für mich Ostdeutschland – Hier – ... Ein anderes Beispiel ...
2	Der Corona Virus aus China	die ganze Welt gesetzt in 'Lockdown'	Man Zum Beispiel Es ist (2x)
3	Freiheit	sehr wichtig für einen Menschen zu lebe ...	Für viele Menschen ...Für mich Freiheit
4	*Was der Während des Krieges ...	sehr entsetzlich	*Weil *jeden Menschen
A-5			
1	Freiheit	ein großes Wort	Es Was
2	Freiheit	nicht Krieg, weil ...	*Eines (=Einige) Menschen
3	In Norwegen	wir Demokratie	Kindergarten und Schulgang Das (Rheme: Freiheit) Wir (2x) / Ich / Du / Eltern
4	Freiheit	für mich mehrere Seiten	Freiheit (6x)

Two responses in which past tense markings play an additional role in locating text parts in the corresponding time frame are A-1's and A-4's, who refer to the former German Democratic Republic and/or the COVID-19 lockdown.

3.3.2. NAKR-B

The analysis shows that both writers organise their texts in rather similar ways. First, the learners establish 'Berlin' as the main participant of the text. Then they provide arguments for why Berlin is worth a journey. As Table 11 shows, particularly the first paragraph is similarly structured across both responses. The learners centre on the participant 'Berliner Mauer' and elaborate on its historical context. In both cases, this elaboration departs from and arrives again at mentioning the sight 'Wall Museum'. In B-1's response, this transition back to the museum even centres on the

participant 'Beschreibung' which summarises the entire elaboration. This elaboration part is also particular in two other regards. On the one hand, it is the part with most topical Themes realised by nominal groups. On the other hand, it is further marked by past tense and passive voice.

In all other parts where learners mention things to see and do in Berlin, most information is established in Rheme position. Accordingly, the most characteristic types of (Sub)Themes are those presenting expressions of time and place (e.g. **Und wenn wir ist dort*, 'Zuerst', 'Hier'), as well as 'Themes-on-finite' (Steiner & Teich, 2004, p. 176), realised by 'es *ist (=gibt)'. Commonly, also textual Themes can be found that comprise conjunctions or conjunctive adjuncts indicating reason (e.g. 'darum').

Regarding the general paragraph structure, also differences between the two responses are visible. B-2 realises the response

Table 11
Organisation of the responses to NAKR-B in terms of Theme and Rheme.

Part	Theme first sentence(s)	Rheme first sentence	Subthemes
B-1			
1	ich	finde es schön, ...	Zuerst Es sehr viel tragische *Geschehnis Deutschland – Diese Staaten – Die DDR aber (2x)
	Es *ist (=gibt)	sehr viel Dinge zu machen hier	
2	Es *ist (=gibt)	*nicht nur die Berliner Mauer ...	*Aber (=sondern)* Und wenn wir ist dort,
3	Wir	auch die Zoologische Garten besuchen	Darum* Die Zoologische Garten ... - sie *so (=also)
4	Wenn wir das gemacht haben	wir *in den Fernsehturm besuchen auch	Hier man / ich *so (=also)
B-1			
1	Berlin	eine Reise wert,	Man / Es Berlin (3x) / die Mauer (2x) denn / *so (=deshalb) Die im *Ostern / Die Westseite es *war (=gab)
2	Wir	das Museum zusammen gesehen ...	In Berlin (2x) Das (2x) Das Stadium Wenn das Fußballspiel *bist fertig Wir (2x) Es *ist (=gibt)

through only two paragraphs, with the second paragraph centring on various things to see and do in Rheme position. Even though B-1 uses similar participants in Rheme position, the learner elaborates on each of those participants in individual paragraphs, i.e. on 'Fußballspiel' in the second section, 'Zoologischer Garten' in the third and 'Fernsehturm' in the final paragraph.

3.3.3. Summary

The analysis of the textual dimensions in both prompts showed that all learner responses are organised through one paramount participant, namely 'Freiheit' or 'Berlin', and have a similar organisational structure that can be described as following: 'Freiheit'/Berlin – many meanings/many things to do – meaning/thing 1 – ... – meaning/thing X. Nevertheless, it appears that a clearly defined structure in response to NAKR-A is supported by the nominal phrase 'Freiheit' in introductory sentences to paragraphs, while the learners responding to NAKR-B can establish a coherent structure by using various possible points of references to 'Berlin'. While expressions of condition and time are possible Themes in the texts to both prompts, NAKR-A also allows for much more topical Themes. In contrast to this, NAKR-B elicits particularly textual Themes, Themes-on-finite and Themes realised through only simple nominal groups.

4. Discussion

The goal of the current article was to describe what Norwegian GFL learners' responses to two tasks within a mock exam reveal about their task representation and to identify likely differences across the responses in terms of language choices, thereby providing insights into different demands and opportunities for FL language use.

Overall, the findings of the study showed that learners responded to each writing prompt in similar ways. The learners drew

on similar processes, and general organisational schemes in their compositions. Also, the responses to each prompt matched closely with what the cues of the tasks indicated (Ørevik, 2019, pp. 107, 109). Realising their responses to NAKR-A largely as expository articles, the learners, for example, elaborated on a topic from various angles, and dominantly used relational processes and more complex participant structures (see also Hamann, 2022). Both responses to NAKR-B present important features of the persuasive essay, which is the building of an argument and providing support.

Nevertheless, the findings illustrated that the learners' written responses to each prompt also differed. About NAKR-A, these differences concerned especially the realisation of the ideational dimension and consequently also the textual dimension. As the topic 'Freiheit' of the writing prompt allowed for linking various ideas to it, there is much variation in the aspects on which the learners elaborate. In particular, high variation occurred regarding the content and structure of participants. Variation across the responses to NAKR-B was particularly evident in the realisation of the interpersonal dimension. Especially learner B-1 interpreted the prompt as a personal text with a highly dialogic nature. More discrepancy with respect to the ideational dimension could also be assumed if there were also responses by learners who had not chosen to add an elaboration on the historical context of the Berlin Wall to their response. While the number of responses to NAKR-B was considerably small and thus only allowed limited insights into differences in text compositions, the data was yet particularly fruitful in stressing the different choices and demands associated with the interpersonal metafunction. This is considered important as previous research by Manchón and Roca de Larios (2011) and Zarei et al. (2016) suggest that FL learners are less concerned with the interpersonal meaning dimension in the writing process. As evident in the analysis of the current article, text responses can differ significantly when learners are clearly or less clearly directing their text to a friend.

On the whole, the findings raise awareness of the fact that the task, its genre and topic influence meaning-making in various ways (see e.g. Flower, 1990; Hasund & Hasselgård, 2022; Moore, 2019; Wolfersberger, 2013). In particular, the study has presented how individual learners have used ideational, interpersonal and textual resources in different ways, with implications for the learners' linguistic problem-solving process. Some of those resources might have been particularly challenging for GFL learners with a still limited linguistic repertoire, like less frequent participants and verbal groups, Values/Attributes with embeddings, mental/verbal clauses with projected clauses, past tense markings or the Theme/Rheme structure for establishing dialogicity. While these individual choices might, on the one hand, provide the learners with opportunities for presenting and practising language that can be considered particularly sophisticated (see Byrnes, 2014), it might also mean more or less conscious risk-taking for the learners. This was, for example, the case if learners responding to NAKR-A related freedom to various perspectives or general statements, or if an elaboration part was added to the responses to NAKR-B – something that was not explicitly elicited by the task prompt. Consequently, the findings echo Flower's (1990) observation that students – often unconsciously – might make choices that have a higher cost than others.

As individual choices mean risk-taking, especially for pre-tertiary non-English FL learners, the current study suggests that tasks – along with their cues and topic(s) – need to be considered and applied carefully in terms of the potential responses following from them. In connection with that, more awareness needs to be raised on the part of the test makers, teachers and learners towards all higher-level meaning dimensions of a task and the linguistic problem-solving activities associated with them (e.g. Byrnes, 2014; Ruiz-Funes, 2001; Zarei et al., 2016). While this does not mean to discourage learners from risk-taking and selecting tasks they find most engaging, it seems most just if the learners are metacognitively aware of the implications of their choices. This indicates that more research is needed on FL learners' writing in authentic writing situations, as well as in connection with interrogating the learners internal problem-solving processes (see e.g. Maxim, 2021; Zarei et al., 2016). As the findings nonetheless presented considerable contrasts in linguistic choices between the two different writing prompts, it is still questionable if learners should be given task choices in (mock) exam contexts where tasks invite significantly different written responses.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study confirm that FL writing and learning are significantly influenced by the nature of the tasks and the learners' individual task representation. By presenting differences across learners' written responses, the current study also raises awareness of the implications of the FL learners' individual choices on linguistic problem-solving. Even though the findings of the present study are of qualitative nature and remain specific to a particular task situation and learning environment, they can be used in the discussion of several important issues in the FL learning context, such as the nature of writing tasks and activities in the FL classroom. Overall, the study's detailed descriptions of how language resources were used in responses to two different tasks may contribute to an increased understanding of the connection between FL writing and FL learning (Byrnes, 2020; Manchón & Leow, 2020), particularly in terms of how the compositions of both tasks and responses provide the learners with opportunities as well as demands for presenting and practising certain linguistic choices. The present study has also sought to contribute suggestions regarding how language choices for meaning-making can

be approached and described in secondary school non-English FL writing based on SFL theory.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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