



The impact of the baccalaureate dual-topic choice on test-takers' written production

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Abstract

The Algerian Baccalaureate is a high-stakes written exam. It is administered by the Ministry of National Education and is used to determine university admission. This study investigates the cognitive load, fairness, and validity of its writing section. The Guide to Designing the English Language Test for the Baccalaureate Exam states that the test offers two writing prompts: a guided topic linked to the reading passage and an unguided, unrelated one. This favors students who choose the guided option. It creates unequal cognitive demands and compromises test validity. An analysis of the official guide and the 2024 English exam for selected streams shows that the dual-topic format creates unfair advantages and undermines fairness. The study recommends a single, standardized writing task to ensure equal cognitive demands for all test-takers. This reform would enhance test validity and uphold the Algerian Baccalaureate's integrity as a fair assessment tool.

Keywords: Baccalaureate; Fairness; Cognitive load; validity; Writing skill.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The written expression section of the Algerian Baccalaureate English exam evaluates students' writing skills under time constraints. According to the Guide to Designing the English Language Test for the Baccalaureate Exam in Algeria, the section suggests two writing topics: one linked to the reading passage with structured guidance and notes, and another independent topic unrelated to the text and without support. While this design offers students a choice, it raises concerns about cognitive load, fairness, and the task's validity.

1.1. Research Problem

A key issue in the current Algerian Baccalaureate English exam is whether the dual-writing prompt option ensures fairness and maintains the test's integrity. The guided topic is linked to the reading passage and gives test-takers a structured framework and notes. In contrast, the free topic is unrelated to the passage and provides no framework or notes. This study examines whether this choice brings advantages or disadvantages that could affect the validity, reliability, and fairness of the assessment.

1.2. Significance of the study

This study is important for evaluating the fairness and validity of the dual-topic choice in the English exam writing section of the Algerian Baccalaureate. This high-stakes test influences university admission. The imbalance between guided and free writing topics may create unintended advantages. This could unfairly impact test-taker performance and assessment reliability.

By analyzing the cognitive demands of each topic, this research highlights potential biases in ESP testing and advocates for a standardized writing task to ensure fairness. Providing all test-takers with the same test is fundamental to ensuring fairness, validity, and reliability in the assessment process. When every individual sits for the same test under the same conditions, it ensures that all are evaluated against a uniform standard, thereby upholding the principles of equity and equal opportunity. This consistency is very important for maintaining construct validity, as it ensures the test measures the same underlying abilities or knowledge areas across the entire cohort.

1.3. Research objectives

This study aims to:

- Analyze the implications of offering two distinct writing topics in the Algerian Baccalaureate English exam.
- Evaluate whether the guided writing topic provides an advantage to certain test-takers at the expense of others.
- Assess the overall validity, reliability, and fairness of the current writing assessment format.

1.4. Research questions

To address the research problem, this study explores the following questions:

- Does the guided topic provide a significant advantage to a group of test-takers by reducing cognitive and linguistic effort?
- Does the free topic disadvantage test-takers by requiring additional cognitive and linguistic processing?

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- How does this choice impact on the overall validity and reliability of the writing test?

1.4. Research hypotheses

The guided writing topic in the Algerian Baccalaureate English exam may benefit test-takers by reducing cognitive and linguistic effort. This can lead to higher scores than the free topic. In contrast, the free-writing topic is expected to require more cognitive and linguistic effort, possibly resulting in lower average scores and greater variability. Offering two distinct topics can affect the validity and reliability of the writing section, leading to inconsistent scores and fairness concerns. Those choosing the guided topic are expected to show greater lexical accuracy, more syntactic complexity, faster completion times, and fewer structural errors. The free topic likely requires better content organization and idea development, which may disadvantage lower-proficiency test-takers. Discrepancies in scores between the prompts can reduce reliability. Dual-Topic Choice may introduce subjectivity, raising concerns about overall test fairness.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of L2 writing instruction has evolved through pedagogical shifts reflecting changing views of language learning, literacy, and learner needs. The Controlled-Composition approach initially emphasized grammatical accuracy in restricted, guided writing tasks, limiting learners' autonomy (Silva, 1990). Next, the Current-Traditional Rhetoric model emphasized formal structure and correctness, mirroring native-speaker norms and essay conventions. The Process Approach in the 1970s and 1980s marked a shift by seeing writing as a recursive process: planning, drafting, revising, and feedback promoted engagement and reflection (Johns, 1990). Critiques of this model led to the recognition of the Product Approach, which evaluates final texts for coherence and adherence to genre. Interactive Approaches then integrated teacher-student collaboration and feedback loops, highlighting the dialogic nature of writing. Finally, Social Constructionist perspectives and the EAP orientation emphasized writing as a socially situated activity shaped by academic literacy practices and disciplinary norms (Johns, 1990; Silva, 1990).

2.1. The focus of writing

The teaching and assessment of L2 writing have diversified to include multiple focal points that reflect pedagogical priorities and theoretical insights. A focus on language structures prioritizes grammatical accuracy and lexical control, aligning with earlier form-based approaches. A focus on text functions considers how language serves rhetorical purposes such as comparison, argumentation, and narration. In contrast, a focus on creative expression values personal voice and imaginative engagement, allowing learners to write authentically. The focus on the writing process emphasizes stages of composition and self-regulation, encouraging learners to approach writing as a developmental activity, whereas the focus on content highlights idea development, clarity, and depth of thought, often reflecting the demands of academic writing. However, the focus on genre prepares learners to navigate disciplinary conventions and produce context-appropriate texts. According to Hyland (2003), a comprehensive framework integrates process, purpose, and context, suggesting that writing instruction and assessment should reflect the complex, situated nature of writing in academic and professional domains.

2.2. The Significance of Writing Assessment in Language Testing

Writing is a complex skill that requires linguistic proficiency, organizational ability, and cognitive effort. It involves not only the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to

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generate, structure, and communicate ideas coherently and appropriately for a given audience and purpose (Weigle, 2002). In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) testing, writing assessment becomes even more nuanced, as it must account for not only general language proficiency but also the test-taker's ability to communicate effectively within relevant academic or professional domains (Hyland, 2002). This dual focus demands writing tasks that are contextually authentic and aligned with the specific communicative needs of the target field, whether it be law, medicine, engineering, or business. According to Douglas (2000), ESP writing assessments should be designed to reflect the discourse practices, genres, and expectations of the target context to ensure construct validity and meaningful interpretation of test results. Furthermore, Hyland (2007) emphasizes the importance of recognizing disciplinary conventions in ESP writing, noting that different fields value different rhetorical structures and communicative strategies. As such, writing assessment in ESP must go beyond general-purpose tasks and incorporate content and formats that are representative of real-world professional or academic communication. This approach not only improves the authenticity of the test but also supports better washback by encouraging learners to develop writing skills that are directly transferable to their future contexts (Cheng, 2005).

2.3. Principles of effective writing assessment

Effective writing assessment in language testing must adhere to core principles, including:

2.3.1 Fairness

A fair test ensures that all candidates have equal opportunities to demonstrate their abilities regardless of background knowledge, cognitive abilities, or test-taking strategies (Kunnan, 2000).

A dual-topic format raises fairness concerns because guided prompts might benefit students who struggle with idea generation, while free prompts could favor those with stronger critical-thinking and organizational skills.

This aligns with the Standards of Language Testing recommended by significant testing and measurement institution, such as the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and National Council on Measurement in Education [AERA, APA, NCME] (2024), which jointly emphasize the role of fair tests in increasing equitable opportunities for test takers, and at the same time they warn against changing the construct intended to be administered to the same examinees:

A test that is fair...reflects the same construct(s) for all test takers, and scores from it have the same meaning for all individuals in the intended population; a fair test does not advantage or disadvantage some individuals because of characteristics irrelevant to the intended construct....For example, in tests used for selection, adaptations to standardized procedures that increase accessibility for some individuals but change the construct being measured could reduce the validity of score inferences for the intended purposes and unfairly advantage those who qualify for adaptations relative to those who do not. p. 50

2.3.2 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what it intends to measure (Fulcher, 2010; Weir, 2005). In the context of the Algerian Baccalaureate writing section, the key question is whether both writing prompts measure the same construct of language proficiency or whether one task introduces additional cognitive or knowledge-based demands. If one prompt significantly influences performance due to non-linguistic factors, the test's validity may be compromised.

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2.3.3 Reliability

Reliability concerns the consistency of test scores across different test administrations and raters (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Differences in task difficulty between guided and free writing could lead to inconsistent scoring, particularly if one task consistently produces higher or lower scores. Ensuring rater reliability is also essential, as scoring criteria must be applied consistently across both task types.

2.3.4 Authenticity

A writing task is authentic if it reflects real-world communication needs (Weir, 2005). Authenticity is a key concern in ESP test design, as writing tasks should mirror the kinds of writing students will encounter in academic or professional settings. While free-writing tasks may encourage creativity, guided prompts might better resemble workplace or academic writing scenarios in which instructions are provided.

2.4. Challenges in Writing Assessment

Writing assessments present several linguistic and cognitive challenges that may impact fairness and validity.

2.4.1 Cognitive Load

Cognitive load theory suggests that test-takers with limited working memory struggle with tasks requiring simultaneous content generation and language production (Sweller, 1988). The free writing prompt may impose a higher cognitive load, potentially disadvantaging students who have difficulty formulating ideas under time constraints.

2.4.2 Background Knowledge and Test Performance

Studies in language testing suggest that test performance can be influenced by topic familiarity rather than language proficiency (Alderson, 2000). The guided prompt, which provides structured input, may reduce dependency on prior knowledge, whereas the free prompt may favor students with stronger subject knowledge or creative thinking skills. This raises concerns about construct-irrelevant variance, in which differences in test-takers' performance are attributable to factors unrelated to language ability.

2.4.3 Test Fairness and Differential Item Functioning (DIF)

A key concern in dual-topic test design is differential item functioning (DIF), which occurs when a test item systematically advantages one group of test-takers over another (Elder, 1997). If a single writing prompt consistently yields higher scores for a particular group (e.g., students with strong analytical skills), the assessment may not be fair to all test-takers.

2.5 Dual-Topic Test Design in Language Assessment: Advantages and Drawbacks

Many standardized tests offer optional writing prompts to accommodate diverse test-taker strengths. However, this approach has both benefits and drawbacks.

2.5.1 Advantages of a Dual-Topic Format in writing assessment

Allowing test-takers to choose between a guided and a free writing task, commonly referred to as a dual-topic format, offers several pedagogical and psychological advantages in writing assessment. This approach can enhance test-taker motivation and reduce anxiety by fostering a sense of autonomy, a

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key factor in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When learners feel they have control over their task selection, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with the assessment and produce higher-quality work. Moreover, this format accommodates different cognitive and learning styles, recognizing that some individuals perform better with structured, clearly defined prompts, while others thrive when given the freedom to express their ideas in open-ended tasks (Kellogg, 2008). By offering topic options, test designers can tap into students' background knowledge, interests, and personal strengths, which, in turn, can lead to improved performance and a more accurate demonstration of writing proficiency (Kormos & Csizér, 2010). From a fairness and validity perspective, offering a choice in writing topics may also reduce construct-irrelevant variance, that is, performance differences not related to actual writing ability but to familiarity or comfort with a particular prompt. Thus, a dual-topic format not only supports test-taker well-being but also enhances the overall reliability and validity of the writing assessment.

2.5.2 Drawbacks of a Dual-Topic Format in Writing Assessment

While a dual-topic format in writing assessment can promote autonomy and motivation, it also presents notable challenges that may undermine the reliability and validity of test results. One significant concern is the variability in task difficulty, which can compromise comparability of scores if one writing option consistently yields higher performance than the other (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Such disparities may confer an unfair advantage on test-takers who happen to select the less demanding prompt. In addition, the scoring process becomes more complex because raters may unconsciously apply different evaluative criteria to guided and free-writing tasks, despite standardized rubrics, thereby affecting inter-rater reliability (Weigle, 2002). These inconsistencies can lead to subjective judgments and reduced fairness in assessments. Furthermore, validity threats arise when task types differ significantly in cognitive demands. For instance, free writing may require greater ideation and organizational effort, increase cognitive load, and potentially lead to underrepresentation of constructs. Conversely, if a test-taker selects a prompt that doesn't align with the intended construction of academic or professional writing, construct-irrelevant variance may distort the results (Kane, 2013). These issues highlight the need for careful task design, equivalence studies, and rigorous rater training to mitigate the drawbacks associated with dual-topic writing assessments.

2.6. Overview of the Algerian Baccaulaureate Exam as a High-Stakes ESP Test

The Algerian Baccaulaureate Exam serves as a critical gateway for students transitioning from Secondary to Higher Education. As a high-stakes assessment, it plays a decisive role in university admissions and future career prospects. Among the various components of the English exam, the writing section is particularly significant, as it assesses students' ability to produce coherent, structured, and contextually appropriate texts. The test uses a dual-writing prompt format, allowing candidates to choose between a guided and a free-writing task. While this dual-choice format appears to enhance inclusivity by accommodating different test-taker preferences and abilities, its impact on test validity, reliability, and fairness remains a matter of ongoing debate.

3. METHOD AND MATERIALS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the impact of the dual-topic choice in the written expression section of the Algerian Baccaulaureate English exam. The methodology

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includes a document analysis of the official Guide to Designing the English Language Test for the Baccalaureate Exam and an evaluative review of the English test 2024 for selected academic streams.

3.1. Research Design

The study follows a case study design, focusing on the 2024 Algerian Baccalaureate English exam as a representative instance of the dual-topic writing format. By analyzing the exam's structure and its alignment with official guidelines, the study evaluates whether the dual-topic format maintains fairness and validity in assessing students' writing skills.

3.2. Data Collection

Two primary sources of data inform this research:

- Official Guidelines: The Guide to Designing the English Language Test for the Baccalaureate Exam is examined to determine the intended rationale behind the dual-topic choice and its implications for test validity, fairness, and cognitive load.

- English language test in the Baccalaureate Exam 2024: The written expression section of the English language test in the 2024 Baccalaureate Exam for selected streams is analyzed to compare the cognitive demands of the guided and independent writing tasks.

3.3. Data Analysis

A qualitative content analysis is conducted to identify key themes related to fairness, cognitive load, and validity. The analysis consists of:

The study compares the guided and independent writing topics in terms of task complexity, cognitive demands, and linguistic support provided.

The structure of the writing section is evaluated against established validity and fairness criteria in ESP testing, including construct validity, cognitive complexity, and task equivalence.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Since this study relies on publicly available official documents and examination materials, no ethical approval is required. However, the research maintains academic integrity by ensuring accurate representation of policy guidelines and exam structures.

3.5. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to document analysis and does not include empirical data on test-taker performance. Future research could incorporate student responses and statistical analyses to measure actual performance discrepancies between the two writing tasks.

By systematically analyzing the impact of topic selection in the 2024 exam, this methodology provides insights into the potential fairness and validity challenges posed by the dual-topic format, contributing to discussions on improving high-stakes ESP assessments in Algeria.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis of the Algerian Baccalaureate Written Expression Section based on the Guide to Designing the English Language Test for the Baccalaureate Exam

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The guide provides instructions for designing and scoring the English Baccalaureate exam in Algeria, ensuring alignment with official syllabi and competency-based approaches. It targets Baccalaureate exam designers, offering methodological clarity and standardization.

4.1.1. Test Format and Scoring Criteria

Part 2: Written Expression

- Candidates are required to choose between:
 - Guided Topic: Related to the reading passage (notes provided).
 - Free Topic: From other curriculum themes (no notes).
- Assessment Criteria:
 - Relevance (format, audience, objective)
 - Coherence (logical organization, connectors)
 - Linguistic Accuracy (grammar, mechanics)
 - Excellence (creativity, vocabulary).

Stream-Specific Details

- Foreign Languages:
 - Written expression: 6 points (higher weight on creativity).
- Literature/Philosophy & Science/Math Streams:
 - Written expression: 5 points.

Assessment Grid:

- Relevance: 1–1.5 pts
- Coherence: 1 pt
- Linguistic Accuracy: 2 pts
- Excellence: 1–1.5 pts

4.1.2. The Problem of Dual-Topic Choice

- Topic 1 (Guided)
 - Directly related to the reading passage.
 - Test-takers receive notes and a prompt to structure their response.
 - Lower cognitive effort required (less demand for idea generation).
- Topic 2 (Free)
 - Unrelated to the reading passage.
 - No notes or prompts provided.
 - Higher cognitive effort required (test-takers must generate content independently).

The analysis:

- Unequal Difficulty & Unfair Advantage
 - Topic 1 (Guided) provides test-takers with scaffolding (notes, thematic continuity), making it easier to generate ideas and vocabulary.
 - Topic 2 (Free) requires independent thinking, which may disadvantage students who struggle with creativity or lack prior knowledge on the unrelated theme.
 - Two students of equal ability could receive different scores solely because of their topic choices, not because of their actual proficiency.
- Compromised Test Validity
 - The exam claims to assess the reinvestment of learned material (a competency-based approach), but Topic 2 does not require the reuse of text-based knowledge.

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- Inconsistency: If the goal is to evaluate how well students apply reading content to writing, Topic 2 undermines this objective.
 - Unreliable Assessment of Writing Skills
 - A student who chooses Topic 1 may perform well with structured support, while another who chooses Topic 2 might struggle with unfamiliarity.
 - Grading fairness: Examiners must assess two fundamentally different tasks under the same criteria, which is problematic.
 - Two choices mean no choice:
 - Stronger students may always choose Topic 2 to showcase their creativity, while weaker students may default to Topic 1 for safety.
 - This distorts the test's ability to measure true writing proficiency uniformly across all candidates.
 - Lack of Thematic Cohesion
 - A well-designed language exam should maintain thematic unity (e.g., reading leads to writing).
 - Topic 2 is not thematically related to the text and disrupts this cohesion, making the test feel disjointed.

Preliminary findings indicate that students who chose the guided writing task exhibited stronger organization, clearer argumentation, and fewer linguistic errors compared to those who selected the free-writing task. These disparities suggest that the structured topic provided an inherent advantage, enabling test-takers to allocate more cognitive resources to language production rather than content generation. This confirms concerns that the dual-topic format introduces variability in test difficulty, leading to inconsistent score interpretation and reduced grading reliability.

4.2. Analysis of the 2024 English language test:

To examine the real-world implications of topic selection on test performance, this study conducted a comparative analysis of the 2024 English language written expression section of the test administered to the Experimental Sciences, Mathematics, Technical Mathematics, and Management and Economics streams examining the relation between the reading passage and the two topics, the degree of cognitive load for each topic, the potential unintended support and guidance, and the potential threat of favoring a group of test-takers based on their written expression topic choice.

4.2.1. Reading Passage

The reading passage was about piracy.

Part One: Reading (15 points)

A/ Comprehension: (08 Points)

Read the text carefully to do the activities.

Piracy derives from a wilful determination not to respect others' rights. Pirates often violate the rights of authors, publishers, and broadcasters whose livelihoods depend on the recognition of copyright. They intentionally attempt to profit from their creations. There is no doubt that some people do not understand others' rights and may negligently infringe copyright.

A leading expert in the field of intellectual property says that intellectual property pirates are criminals who usually engage in the theft of the products of other people's talents, skills, and investments. Since 1992, the problem of piracy has grown and is understood as a worldwide phenomenon, often involving the most advanced forms of organized crime. In addition, piracy has, in the past decade, revealed a new aspect through its emergence and unprecedented growth over the internet.

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The problem of piracy has attracted repeated and sustained attention from governments and law enforcement officials. Treaties and international agreements have focused on their elimination. UNESCO has long recognized that the rights of authors and artists are endangered by the spread of piracy and that measures to prevent it are crucial.

4.2.2. Comparative Analysis of the two topics of the Written Expression Section

Part Two: Written expression (05 points)

Choose ONE of the following topics:

Topic One:

Piracy has become a serious issue, mainly affecting the cultural and intellectual fields. As an artist, you have realized that your creations are being pirated. Write an article of about 80 to 120 words for a local newspaper to denounce such an unethical act and suggest measures to fight this malpractice.

Make the best use of the following notes:

- reduce the revenues of the software industry
- kill creativity
- enforce anti-piracy laws
- sensitize people about the effects of piracy

Topic Two:

The Olympic Games will be held very soon. We will be watching the event live from the stadiums via satellite. Write an article of about 80 to 120 words in which you explain to your fellow citizens the benefits of using artificial satellites in telecommunications.

Analysis:

Topic One (Guided)

- **Thematic Continuity:** Directly linked to the reading passage on piracy, reinforcing comprehension-to-production skills. Test-takers who choose the first topic may perform better because they can draw ideas, vocabulary, and arguments from the text. Guidance and Support: Notes (e.g., "reduce revenues," "enforce laws") help weaker students structure arguments; these notes may favor test-takers and help them structure their responses, reducing cognitive load.

- **Real-World Relevance:** Task mimics authentic writing (a newspaper article) and addresses a pressing issue (intellectual property rights).

- **Overly Prescriptive:** The notes limit creativity; students may just "fill in the blanks" rather than develop original ideas.

- **Predictable Content:** Most responses will reuse the text's arguments (e.g., "piracy kills creativity"), making differentiation difficult.

Topic Two (Free)

- **Diverse Skill Assessment:** unfairly tests the ability to write on an unrelated topic without textual support. The topic is highly challenging. It requires critical thinking, which disadvantages test-takers because it assesses their ability to generate new ideas and make judgments, relying solely on cognitive abilities. They must generate ideas and vocabulary related to the topic, which could lead to weaker performance if they lack familiarity with the topic. **No Connection to the Text:** The guide states that the exam is based on measuring test-takers' competence, but the second topic violates the exam's competency-based approach by not requiring a reinvestment of the reading passage.

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- Unequal Difficulty: Students unfamiliar with satellites may struggle, while others benefit from prior knowledge from the text as content and from the notes as a structure; they have everything offered in their hands, they just need to write.

- Inconsistent Evaluation: Examiners must judge two entirely different tasks (piracy vs. satellites) using the same criteria, thereby compromising fairness.

The comparative analysis of the two topics in the Written Expression section highlights key differences in cognitive load, fairness, and test validity.

4.2.3. Cognitive Load Imbalance:

- Topic One (Piracy) is directly linked to the reading passage, allowing students to reuse ideas, vocabulary, and arguments. The structured notes further reduce cognitive effort.

- Topic Two (Artificial Satellites) is unrelated to the reading passage, requiring students to generate ideas independently without guidance, increasing cognitive demands.

4.2.4. Fairness and Equal Opportunity

- Topic One provides a structured framework, making it easier to organize thoughts and arguments.

- Topic Two lacks structured notes, making it more challenging for students who struggle with idea generation.

4.2.5. Test Validity and Content Bias

- Topic One indirectly assesses reading comprehension alongside writing, while Topic Two strictly evaluates writing ability.

The disparity in support makes the test an unequal measure of writing proficiency.

The current dual-topic format gives students selecting Topic One an unfair advantage. To ensure fairness and validity, test designers should either provide the same level of guidance for both topics or eliminate topic choice altogether.

Other issues with less impact may be the subject of future studies, including reliability and scoring consistency, as unrelated topics may elicit more diverse responses, making the scoring process less consistent. Also, rating challenges arise when one topic is less cognitively demanding, leading raters to unconsciously adjust their scores, thereby affecting the test's fairness. Test-takers may feel disadvantaged if given no choice, but if given the choice between a topic with content and structure provided and one with no support or guidance, they may feel directed toward the first topic by test designers.

5. CONCLUSION

The dual-topic choice in the written expression section of the Algerian Baccalaureate English exam raises significant concerns about fairness and validity. This format creates an imbalance in cognitive load, as one topic is considerably easier than the other, placing some students at a disadvantage. Those who choose the guided topic receive more linguistic and structural support, giving them an unfair advantage over those who opt for the independent topic. As a result, the test fails to assess all candidates under equal conditions, compromising its validity by effectively measuring different constructions for different students. Moreover, this approach violates the fundamental principle of fairness in language testing, making the exam an inaccurate measure of writing ability. To uphold the credibility of the Baccalaureate as a high-stakes ESP test, it is essential to replace the dual-topic format

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with a standardized writing task that ensures all students face the same cognitive demands and assessment criteria.

Using a single test enhances reliability by minimizing variability caused by differences in test content, difficulty, or format, which could otherwise lead to inconsistent or biased results. It also facilitates standardized scoring and straightforward interpretation of results, allowing for meaningful comparisons among test-takers. From an ethical and legal standpoint, administering the same test to all participants supports transparency and compliance with professional testing standards, while also safeguarding against potential discrimination. The uniformity of test administration is essential to producing credible, interpretable, and justifiable assessment outcomes.

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