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### Observe and explore: empirical studies about learning in creative writing and the visual arts

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## Chapter 2

# HOW DO SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WRITE POETRY? EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE WRITING PROCESSES AND FINAL PRODUCTS

Do different creative writing processes lead to qualitatively different writing products? In this study we examined how Dutch speaking secondary school students (16-years old, 11th grade) wrote two poems. Students' on line writing processes were recorded by a keystroke logging program: Inputlog. Text production, pausing and several types of revision activities were coded. Each poem was rated holistically for quality by seven judges. Next, we examined the relationship between students' writing processes and the quality of their poems. We found that much text production in the beginning of the writing process and many high level revisions towards the end of the writing process, influenced the final text positively. Pausing and other types of revision were negatively related to the quality of the poem, at least in some of the phases of the writing process.

*Key words:* writing process, creative writing, creativity, secondary education

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Carey and Flower (1989) describe creative tasks as ill-defined problems, which means that these tasks have many possible solutions. Some tasks are more ill-defined than others. In the case of artistic work, the problem itself is often not completely (or not at all) formulated, nor are strategies to solve the problem, or the nature of the solution given (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976). We know very little of how secondary school students solve these types of problems, and even less about the relationship between the creative writing process and the final product. Therefore, we carried out a small scale study of students' creative writing processes and the relation to the quality of the final texts.

In the following sections we will first present a theoretical framework, combining findings from two different domains: creativity research and writing research. Creativity research has provided interesting theories of creative processes with regard to a variety of tasks. In writing research, sophisticated methodologies have

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been developed to study students' (writing) processes. In both domains, the relationship between process and product has been examined.

### *1.1 The Creative Process*

The creative process is traditionally described as consisting of four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. According to Lubart (2001), creativity research has moved away from such a stage-model with a fixed sequence of activities, putting more emphasis on the sub processes engaged in creative work. Various models have been proposed to describe the sub processes of creative work. Finke, Ward and Smith (1992), for instance, proposed a model of creative cognition called 'Geneplore'. In this model, generative and exploratory cognitive processes are emphasized. Generative processes involve the initial creation of an idea, whereas in the exploratory processes the idea is examined and interpreted in different ways. The two sets of processes are combined in cyclical sequences that lead to creative products.

In several empirical studies a relationship was found between particular creative processes and the creativity of the resulting product. Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) examined the problem finding process in art making. They concluded that creativity requires problem finding, because in artistic tasks no clear-cut problem is presented to the solver. As a consequence, the artist first needs to discover his own problem. Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) studied problem finding behaviour in a real life situation; they observed fine art students' still life drawing activities under experimental conditions. They included both students' problem finding behaviour before they started drawing, while composing the still-life arrangement (problem formulation stage), and after they had started drawing (problem solution stage). Problem finding during the problem formulation stage was operationalised as the number of objects manipulated, interaction with the objects while composing the still life arrangement, and uniqueness of chosen objects. Problem finding during the problem solution stage was operationalised as openness of the problem (length of time the problem remained open: not structured in its final form), exploratory behaviour (switching medium, making sketches), and changes made from the still life arrangement to the final product. This was studied by examining the sequence of photographs of the drawings-in-progress (taken every six minutes), observing students at work, and comparing the still life arrangement with the final product. Finally, students were interviewed to study their awareness of their discovery oriented behaviour.

For problem finding behaviour during both stages, a positive correlation with creativity was found. Students who were engaged in an extended problem-formulation process, exploring while drawing, produced work that was evaluated as more creative and original than that of the students who defined the artistic problem soon after drawing commenced. The interviews revealed that students with high problem finding scores interpreted the task in terms of their own problem (giving personal meaning to the still life objects). Besides, they did not have a representation

of the final drawing visualised before starting to draw. The ‘colours and shapes unfolding before their eyes’ changed the meaning of the work (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976, p. 95).

Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) demonstrated the importance of problem finding in the creative process, not only in the initial idea generation stage, but also during the creative process. Besides, they have shown that we can study problem finding behaviour by studying the work in progress (snapshots) and students’ manifest behaviour. However, this study did not deal with students from secondary education. Oostwoud Wijdenes (1983) studied secondary school students working on artistic tasks and concluded that some of them do not engage in problem finding activities at all.

### *1.2 The Writing Process*

Flower and Hayes (1980b) developed an influential model of the writing process. This model describes the writing process as iterative and composed of three main processes: planning, translating and reviewing. A monitor manages, controls and regulates the activation of processes and sub processes.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) presented a developmental model of the writing process. This model consists of two main strategies: knowledge telling and knowledge transformation. The former, a novice model of writing, depends to a large extent on retrieval of content from the Long Term Memory without reorganizing. The latter, an expert model of writing, is a problem solving model that makes readjustments to retrieved content according to rhetorical and pragmatic goals.

Galbraith (1999) proposes a dual process model of writing, consisting of a knowledge transforming component and a knowledge constituting component. The latter component differs from the one mentioned before, because it supposes that writing involves finding out what to say, rather than being a matter of translating preconceived ideas into text. According to this model, text production happens in successive cycles: feedback on an initial utterance adds a new source of input to a network of conceptual features, which alters the pattern of activation of this network and produces a new idea. This succession of ideas leads towards discovery during writing.

These models of the writing process describe the presence of various sub processes within the writing process, their cyclic nature and the developmental aspect involved. Cognitive activities, as described by these models, have been studied in different ways. Think aloud protocol analysis has been used as a way to study these processes directly (Breetvelt, Van den Bergh, & Rijlaarsdam, 1994; Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 1999; Van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam & Breetvelt, 1993). Other researchers have studied writing processes indirectly, for example by analysing the final product or by examining traces of the writing process from computer records of the work in progress. In the case of expository genres, typical patterns of writing behaviour have been identified for different writers, based on computer records of the writing process (Levy & Ransdell, 1996; Van Waes & Schellens, 2003). In these

studies, researchers have focused on pausing behaviour, revision and text production.

### *1.3 Experts and novices*

Much research on writing processes has been carried out within the expert-novice paradigm (focusing on expository texts). Novices differ from experts in their task representation and goal setting (Flower & Hayes, 1980a). For instance, novices tend to depart from task constraints, while experts re-represent the task for themselves. Experts and novices seem to solve different problems.

Revision behaviour also tends to differ between experts and novices, older and younger writers. Taxonomies have been developed to analyse revision behaviour (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Lindgren & Sullivan, 2006; Van Gelderen & Oostdam, 2004). For expository texts, it was found that older or more competent writers revise more and make more revisions to the meaning of the text and on a more global level than younger, less competent writers (Faigley & Witte, 1981).

Carey and Flower (1989) found that expert writers revise more globally (dealing with larger text segments). In their study, they relate this to problem finding. In fact, revision problems can be seen as ill-defined problems, because the writer first has to define a problem (there is no clear-cut problem that needs to be revised), before being able to solve it. Therefore, Carey and Flower found that expert writers define their revision problems more globally. This research shows that we should take the level of revision into account when analysing the revision processes.

Linearity of writing seems to be related to competence as well. Linear writers compose their text in the order of its final presentation (Severinson Eklundh, 1994). In most instances they were found to be the weaker writers (Williamson & Pence, quoted by Severinson Eklundh, 1994).

### *1.4 Relation between process and product in writing*

Van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Breetvelt (1993) and Breetvelt, Van den Bergh and Rijlaarsdam (1994) did not study the differences between writing behaviour of experts and that of novices, but instead examined the writing behaviour of novices and the variability within a group of novices in relation to the quality of their final products. Van den Bergh et al. (1993) found that in essay writing, revision behaviour is related to the quality of the final text. Rereading of the last part of the text written at that moment, evaluating text passages and changing sentences are related to better final texts.

Breetvelt et al. (1994) found that good and weak writers differed, not in the frequency of cognitive activities, but in the stage of the writing process at which they were engaged in a cognitive activity. It was found that revision behaviour only differed significantly between students who were in the last phase of the writing process and only contributed to better texts when performed in the last phase. This research shows us the importance of timing of activities in the writing process.

### 1.5 Research questions

Whereas students' writing processes of expository texts and their relation to the final product are well-documented (Rijlaarsdam et al., 2005), there are few studies on the processes involved in the writing of literary or creative texts. Most research about creativity in writing is about creativity in writing of expository texts (Carey & Flower, 1989; Flower & Hayes, 1980a; Galbraith, 1999). These studies examine idea generation processes and initial task definition (Carey & Flower 1989; Van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 1999). These processes are generally studied by using think aloud protocol analyses. Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976), however, studied problem finding behaviour during the problem solution stage by examining manifest behaviour.

In the present study we examine the manifest poetry writing activities of novices. We assume that differences in poem quality are a result of different processes or a different organization of sub processes, reflected in observable patterns of writing behaviour (Levy & Ransdell, 1996; Van Waes & Schellens, 2003). Furthermore, we assume that different writing activities have a different impact depending on the moment in the writing process when they are employed (Breetvelt et al., 1994).

Our research questions are:

- How do secondary school students compose a poem, in terms of the frequency and organization of their text production, pausing and revision activities while composing?
- Is there a relationship between characteristics of the writing process and the quality of the final product?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Subjects and design

The raw data were collected in a previous study (Janssen, Broekkamp, & Smallegange, 2006) focused on the relationship between literary reading and creative writing abilities. In this study, nineteen students from different schools (pre university level) in Belgium and the Netherlands (16-years old, 11th grade, 13 girls and 6 boys) participated. The students were selected by their teachers and the researchers on the basis of their literary reading abilities; they were either very good or poor readers of literature. Each student completed two poetry writing tasks. The tasks were as follows:

- 1) "Write a poem that contains the following words: music/ bicycle/ shiver/ green/ resembles. Each line should contain one of these five words (each word can only be used once) (available time: 10 minutes)"
- 2) "Write a cinquain, starting with the word 'summer'.  
This is the form of a cinquain:  
Line 1: First word (summer)  
Line 2: Two adjectives about the first word  
Line 3: Three verbs about the first word

Line 4: A sentence about the first word (decide about the length yourself)  
Line 5: Repeating the first word  
(available time: 5 minutes)”

Each student worked individually on a computer, using MS Word. The writing sessions were recorded by Inputlog, the keystroke logging program we will describe below. After the students performed the writing tasks, open attitude interviews were held with each participant about their attitudes towards creative writing in general and about the tasks carried out in particular.

Seven experts rated the poems independently and in random order, in accordance with the consensual assessment technique (Amabile, 1982; see Janssen et al., 2006). In previous research, this technique proved to provide reliable and valid creativity scores. It requires a group of experts who rate the creative products individually and subjectively, based on a personal definition of creativity and without being trained by the researcher. The experts in our study were five teachers of Dutch language and literature and two experts. The raters were instructed to provide a ‘holistic judgment about the students’ *creative* writing performance’ and to assess each poem in relation to the other poems by the other students. They assigned overall creativity scores (rank order) to the poems. The inter-rater reliability was high (Cronbach’s alpha .87 for the five-line poem, and .82 for the cinquain task).

## 2.2 Keystroke logging

Keystroke logging was used for recording and analysing the students’ writing processes. Keystroke logging programs register all the subjects’ physical writing activities on a computer and enable the researcher to reconstruct the complete composing process: the continuous shaping and reshaping of the text. Text production activities, pauses, mouse movements, revisions and the course in time of these activities in the writing process are recorded.

Keystroke logging is an on line (or synchronous) method to collect data. This means that data are collected while the process develops, in real time. It is an indirect way of collecting data; it studies the text production process in order to uncover some of the underlying cognitive processes. In other words, it does not deal directly with the writer’s cognitive, mental operations, but studies the traces of cognitive processes. In contrast to thinking aloud protocol analysis or interview analysis, keystroke logging is a non-reactive and non-intrusive way of obtaining information on writing processes (Leijten & Van Waes, 2005).

In this study we used Inputlog to record the writing sessions, because, in contrast to other keystroke logging programs, this program is word processor independent. Inputlog produces a general logging file (storage of session information), statistical analyses and linear output. In addition, it has a replay function (it replays the writing session).

### 2.3 Coding

The linear output of Inputlog was coded manually per 5-second time interval. In the coding system (presented in Table 1) four main activities were distinguished: text production, pausing, mouse movements and revision. Revisions were further classified in precontextual and contextual revision, based on Lindgren and Sullivan's taxonomy (2006). Precontextual revision takes place at the point of inscription (at the end of on-going text), while contextual revision takes place in a context, followed and preceded by text. Precontextual revision cannot be classified further, because what the writer had in mind is unknown. We do not know if the writer decided to use another word at the beginning of the line or if he/she decided to use a completely different sentence. Contextual revision was classified, based on Lindgren and Sullivan (2006), in micro and macro level revision: character level (letters, punctuation), word level and sentence level (or line in the poem).

Table 1. Coding scheme of writing activities

Writing Activity	Description	Example
1. Text production	Production of new text that is not part of a revision.	
2. Pausing	Only the longer pauses (of 5 seconds and more), visible when splitting up the process in 5-second intervals.	
3. Mouse movements	Mouse movements and other activities on the keyboard that cannot be classified as text production, pausing or revision	
4. Revision		
4.1. Precontextual	Revisions made at the point of inscription (we do not know what the person intended to write, so we cannot classify these further).	everything [Backspace 1][BS 1][BS 1][BS 1][BS 1] the sun is (writer revises at the point of inscription; directly after writing 'everything', he/she erases it and starts writing again).
4.2. Contextual Revision		
4.2.1. Character level	Revision of one (or more) character(s) (punctuation mark or capitalization) which occurs within a word.	<i>summer</i> becomes: <i>Summer</i>
4.2.2. Word level	One or two entire words are de-	

	leted/added/substituted/permutated, without causing another (grammatically necessary) revision (in verb or subject) in the rest of the sentence.	<i>Even music is at play becomes: Even tinkling music is at play</i>
4.2.3. Sentence level	Revision of an entire line in the poem or substitution of one word that causes other revisions in the same line. In both cases we coded one sentence level revision.	<i>He gives a shiver without an end becomes: A shiver before taking the final swimming test or with music that pleases me is replaced by: with music that I please</i>
4.2.4. Other Revision	All contextual revisions we could not classify further.	

Typing errors were not included in the analysis because these errors are not relevant to creative processes; besides, they would bias the frequency of text production activities. We coded the pauses that became visible by coding the 5-second intervals. Empty intervals were coded as pauses. Students' final texts and the replay function of Inputlog were used to trace and classify the revisions. To examine the intra-coder reliability, the data were recoded by the same coder, after several months. The reliability was acceptable (Cohen's kappa = .83). See Table 2 for coded fragment.

Table 2. Example of a coded fragment

Final poem		Legend	
Summer		T = text production	
Sunny, warm		P = pause	
Swimming, tanning, partying		M = movements (mouse and other) in text	
Enjoying with friends on holidays		R-CW = Revision-contextual: word level	
Summer		BS 1=back space, one character	
		UP 1= movement upward, one line	
Interval	Activities	Description	Coding
1	summe	Text production Line 1	T
2	r[ENTER 1]	Text production Line 1	
3	sunny,	Text production Line 2	
4	cost[BS 1] y[ENTER 1]	Text production Typing error Line 2	

5		Pausing	P
6	swimming,	Text production Line 3	T
7	tanning	Text production Line 3	
8	, pa	Text production Line 3	
9	rtyinf[BS 1] g	Text production Line 3 Typing error	
10	[UP 1] [BS 1] [BS 1] [BS 1] [BS 1]	Moving back to Line 2	M
11	[BS 1] [BS 1] [BS 1] [BS 1] warm	Deleting “cosy” Inserting “warm” Contextual, word level revision	R - CW

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#### 2.4 Analysis

To answer the first research question, two kinds of data were collected: inputlog protocols and interview data. To describe the writing process, protocols from Inputlog were coded as described above. The writing process was divided into three equal parts, based on total session time. The frequencies of different writing activities in the three phases of the writing process were computed, and weighted by the session time. A factor analysis was used to reveal patterns of writing behaviour.

Subsequently, the linearity of the writing processes was considered; plots were derived from the coded intervals. These plots show the line (or verse) the student worked on and the interval in the process. We plotted all productive and revision activities, following Severinson Eklundh (1994), excluding punctuation and capitalization revisions. Based on the linearity plots, we made a distinction between linear, intermittent and non-linear writers. Linear writers show a purely linear writing process. Intermittent revisers proceed in a linear fashion, but show one or two non-linear leaps to other lines. Non-linear writers show more than two leaps to other lines. Types of writers were illustrated by quotes from the interviews.

To answer our second research question, whether there is a relation between process and product quality, we conducted a linear regression analysis, with the quality score of the final product as the dependent variable, and the writing activities in each phase as independent variables (see Breetvelt et al., 1994; Van den Bergh et al., 1993). The regression model obtained provided insight in the influence of individual predictors per phase on the poem scores.

### 3. RESULTS

In this section, we will answer the first research question by describing the writing process in both a quantitative and a qualitative way. Next, we will turn to the second

research question, examining the relationship between writing processes and poem scores.

### 3.1 Students' poetry writing processes

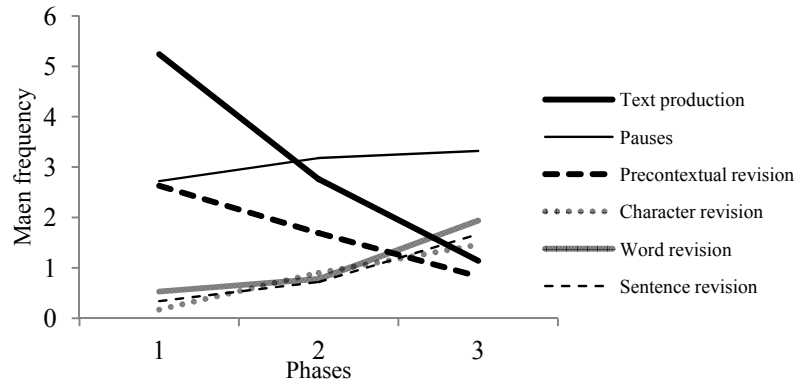
Table 3 shows the mean frequency of students' writing activities during three phases of the writing process. Results represent an average over the two poetry writing tasks. As shown by Table 3, text production is the predominating activity in the first phase of the process. In the second phase, text production, pauses and revision are almost equally frequent, while in the third phase pausing and revision activities dominate. The large standard deviations, especially for revision categories, indicate large individual differences between students in their revision behaviour.

Table 3. Mean frequency of writing activities in the three phases of the writing process

	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Text Production	5.24	2.98	2.76	1.74	1.14	1.27
Pauses	2.72	1.60	3.18	1.86	3.32	1.76
Precontextual revision	2.63	2.77	1.69	1.69	.83	1.04
Character level revision	.17	.37	.90	1.51	1.46	2.15
Word level revision	.53	.78	.78	1.15	1.94	2.17
Sentence level revision	.34	.56	.72	.96	1.67	1.96

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the results, illustrating the mean course of the various writing activities over the writing process. The figure shows that text production and precontextual revision are similarly distributed over the writing process as a whole; both activities decrease over time. Contextual revision, on the other hand, increases towards the end of the writing process, whereas pausing remains more or less constant.

Figure 1. Distribution of writing activities over three phases of the writing process.



To discover patterns of writing behaviour, we performed a factor analysis. Results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 4. The writing activities we distinguished and the phases in which they occurred are listed in column one and two. The patterns of writing behaviour (factors) are presented vertically in the remaining columns. Factor loadings indicate that an activity occurred often for that particular factor. For example, .842 in column three indicates that the production-phase1-factor is also characterised by many precontextual revisions in phase 1. Higher factor loadings reflect a large influence of that particular activity on a factor.

The factor analysis resulted in 6 factors, explaining 80 % of the variance between the students<sup>2</sup>. The different factors show that writing activities are unequally distributed over the three phases. For example, students who produce much text at the beginning of their writing process, in phase one, produce less in phase two. The factor analysis also shows that task only plays a role in one factor (factor five), which explains only 8 % of the variance. Apparently, the particular writing task does not have a major influence on patterns of writing behaviour.

Factor one represents a writing pattern characterised by much text production in phase one. Text production in phase one is accompanied by much precontextual revision in phase one and contextual revision (low level; character and word level) in phase two and three. Factor two represents a pausing pattern. As we have seen, pausing behaviour is a constant activity that is distributed equally over the three phases (see Figure 1). Pausing in phase one is related to pausing in phase two and three. Factor three is characterised by text production in the middle of the writing process. Again, text production is accompanied by precontextual revision in the

<sup>2</sup> In the study by Janssen et al. (2006), students were originally selected on literary reading ability. We examined whether including 'literary reading ability' as a variable would affect the outcomes of our analysis. This was not the case; including literary reading ability in the factor analysis resulted in a seventh factor, which explained only five percent of all the explained variance.

same phase and revision in the following phase (high level; sentence level). Factor four shows a strong focus on character level revision: punctuation, capitalization and small changes within words. Apart from a main influence of task, the task dependent factor shows a main influence of sentence level revision in the second phase of the process. This is not surprising, since the two poetry writing tasks differ in the required number of lines: of the five verses in the cinquain, only one is a complete line (line 4). Therefore, we would expect less sentence level revision in this task. Factor six is characterised by much text production in phase three, again accompanied by many precontextual revisions in the same phase.

Table 4. Results of factor analysis: Patterns within the writing process (factor loadings)

Phase	Writing activity	Production phase 1	Pausing	Production phase 2	Revision Character level	Task dependent factor	Production phase 3
1	Text	.650			.439		
	Pausing		.905				
	Pre	.842					
	CLR				.919		
	WLR	.405	.531				
2	SLR		.531	.490			
	Text			.783			
	Pausing		.556			.557	
	Pre	.490		.757			
	CLR				.883		
3	WLR	.841				.758	
	SLR						.859
	Text						
	Pausing		.640				
	Pre			.455			.748
Task	CLR	.772					
	WLR	.503	.647				
	SLR			.748			
	Task					.785	

*Text = Text production, Pre = Precontextual revision, CLR = Character level revision, WLR = Word level revision, SLR = Sentence level revision*

The students' processes not only differed from each other in the frequency of activities and the orchestration of their activities during writing, they differed in the linearity of their writing process as well. We observed that some students started writing the first line of what would become their final poem, followed by the second, the third et cetera (composing the poem in the order of its final presentation: Severinson Eklundh, 1994), while other students proceeded in a non-linear fashion, starting with a sentence that would, for example, end up as the third line in the final poem. The following example illustrates a non-linear production process of one writer. Each

step in the process is shown to give an impression of how the poem developed. Production stages are presented as pictures of the developing text:

Step 1: text production

It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,	<i>(writes line 4 of final poem)</i>
When you are on your bicycle.	<i>(writes line 5 of final poem)</i>
Floating over grass so green.	<i>(writes line 1 of final poem)</i>
The shiver of your bell, when you make it ring	<i>(writes line 3 of final poem)</i>
The tone, it sounds like music to my ears	<i>(writes line 2 of final poem)</i>

Step 2: substitution of a line

It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,  
 When you are on your bicycle.  
 Cycling through pathways and lanes of green  
 The shiver of your bell, when you make it ring  
 The tone, it sounds like music to my ears

Step 3: substitution of a verb

It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,  
 When you are on your bicycle.  
 Floating through pathways and lanes of green  
 The shiver of your bell, when you make it ring  
 The tone, it sounds like music to my ears

Step 4: changing the order of lines

Floating through pathways and lanes of green  
 The shiver of your bell, when you make it ring  
 The tone, it sounds like music to my ears  
 It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,  
 When you are on your bicycle.

Step 5: rewriting part of a line

Floating through pathways and lanes of green  
 While you feel the shiver of your bell when you make it ring  
 The tone, it sounds like music to my ears  
 It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,  
 When you are on your bicycle.

Step 6: substitution of a noun

Floating through pathways and lanes of green  
 While you feel the shiver of your bell when you make it ring  
 The sound, it sounds like music to my ears  
 It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,  
 When you are on your bicycle.

Step 7: changing the order of lines

Floating through pathways and lanes of green  
 The sound, it sounds like music to my ears  
 While you feel the shiver of your bell when you make it ring  
 It is like everything around you disappears and only you are still there,  
 When you are on your bicycle.

This writer does not proceed in a linear way, but she goes back and forth in her developing text, rewriting sentences, substituting verbs and nouns and changing the order of lines. Figure 2 illustrates the two types of processes (linear and non-linear). The left-hand panel shows the process of a linear writer; the right-hand panel shows the non-linear process from the example above. The five-second time intervals are presented on the horizontal axes, the line numbers in the final text are presented on the vertical axes. The linear process shows a linear plot, while the non-linear process shows a recursive distribution of activities over line numbers and intervals.

Figure 2. A linear (upper panel) and a non-linear (bottom panel) writing process (time interval on x-axis, line number on y-axis).

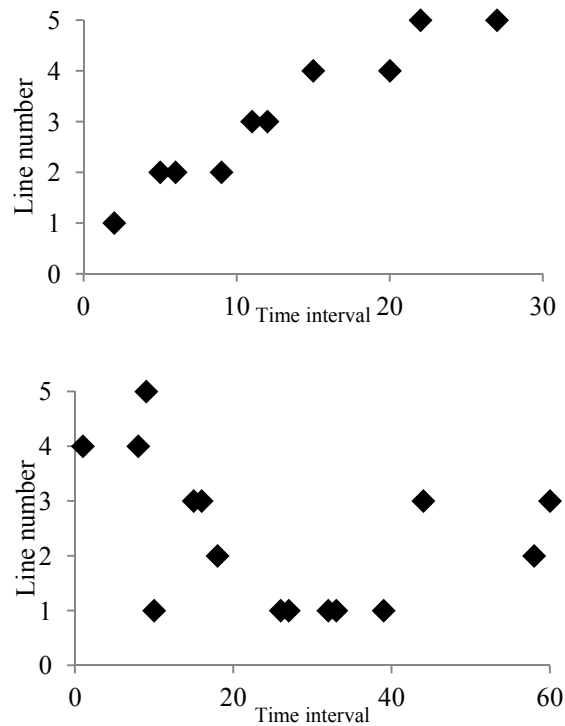


Table 5 presents the number of students who performed the poetry writing tasks in a linear, intermittent and non-linear way. This table shows that there is an effect of task on the linearity of the writing process. The five-line poem task elicited more non-linear behaviour than the cinquain task, which led to more linear and intermittent behaviour. This may be due to the more directional nature (fixed form aspects) of the cinquain task. As shown in table 5, three writers are consistently linear writers (in both tasks), two writers are consistently non-linear and three students are consistently intermittent writers.

*Table 5. Linearity of the writing process (number of students)*

	5-line Poem	Cinquain	Consistent writers in both tasks
Linear	3	4	3
Intermittent	4	13	3
Non-linear	12	2	2

Non-linearity appears to be related to contextual revision; that is, students tended to revise in other lines than the ones they were working on. However, some students produced in a non-linear manner without revising: writing one line, moving to the beginning of that line, and then writing the preceding line. The consistently linear writers produced text in a linear fashion and did not revise. These students were conscious of the fact that they did not revise, as became clear from the interviews: they said they did not think very much about it, but just wrote down whatever occurred to them.

‘(..) I did not think very much about it. I just did something (..), I just thought: word word, word....I don’t really like to do it either.’

‘(..) It was just writing, when a word occurred to me, that should fit, just write it down, because, I am so bad at that, really! Me and poetry, that just doesn’t....Especially with that bicycle, bicycle and shiver and I don’t know what else. Then I was really like: ‘what should I make up?’ Then I just felt like ‘write down whatever comes to you and, ready’. Because, well, I really can’t do that.’

The first fragment shows that the writer is not highly motivated (although, in the same interview, he said that he liked the tasks). In the second fragment, the writer expresses low self-efficacy. Some students provided indications of why they did not revise. One student said he did not know what to write:

‘(..) I don’t know what’s good. I write all kind of things, but I don’t know if that’s the right thing.’

Non-linear writers, on the other hand, tended to revise a lot. They seemed to be very conscious of their revision behaviour:

‘(..) I always think it is easy, but I always correct it a thousand times until a good text emerges.’

‘(..) Sometimes, sometimes an entire story comes out. But what I find difficult, is to write something in one go. That is also a bit of a problem when I don’t get high marks for Dutch writing assignments, because writing at home, I am writing comfortably behind my computer. I let it rest for a few days and I read it again. Then I read it and I think: ‘this is really bad’, so I change it. A good text will finally be written, but I just need more time for that’.

The revising writers seemed to be engaged in another kind of process than the non-revising, linear writers. They expressed more extensive and more profound involvement in the task, than the writers who said they wrote without thinking.

‘(.) Hm.. I found that Japanese poem [the cinquain] quite difficult, because you have to be very good at finding powerful words and words that are expressive. Maybe I needed more time for that, because you have to stick to the number of verbs and adjectives given. And well, the second poem, there were just five lines and each had to include one word, I thought, well, I can just write a poem and try to insert one such word in each line, but I first tried to remember a feeling and then, integrate a word into that and not just focus on the words.’

### *3.2 Relationship between writing process and the quality of the final product*

To examine the relationship between characteristics of the writing process and the quality of the final product, we used regression analyses. The outcome of the regression analysis is presented in Appendix A<sup>3</sup>. The model explains 65% of the variance. All writing activities were found to contribute to the prediction of the quality of the final poem, either in a positive or in a negative direction, depending on the particular phase of the writing process in which the activity took place.

Table 6 shows the direction of the relationship between the occurrence of an activity in a particular phase and the quality of the poem. The phases are presented horizontally. A plus reflects a positive influence of the activity in that particular phase on the final text quality. A minus reflects a negative influence of the activity in that particular phase on the poem quality.

Text production and sentence level revision both have a positive influence on the poem quality: text production more in the beginning and middle of the writing process and sentence level revision more towards the end. Pausing and precontextual revision have a negative effect on text quality in most phases. Character level revision has a positive influence on text quality in the second phase and a negative influence in the first and third phase of the writing process. Word level revision influences text quality positively in the first and second phase and negatively in the third phase.

In conclusion, table 6 shows that revision is an important predictor of text quality. As shown, higher level revisions (word level and sentence level) influence the scores more positively than low level revision (precontextual and character level revisions). In the third phase, only many sentence level revisions seem to predict the text quality positively. In general, the linear writers who did not revise at all, all wrote low quality poems. Apparently, an entirely linear writing strategy without revision is not very effective. However, we cannot conclude that a non-linear strategy is more effective; not all non-linear writers received high scores for their poems.

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<sup>3</sup> Including literary reading ability in this regression analysis does not result in major changes to the model.

*Table 6. Direction of relation between writing activities and quality of final product*

Activity in the writing process	Influence on text quality		
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Text Production	+++	++	
Pausing	---		-
Precontextual revision	--	--	
Character level revision	-	+	-
Word level revision	++	+	-
Sentence level revision		++	+

Positive effect: +=small: .02-.05, ++=moderate: .05-.08, +++=large:>.08  
 Negative effect: -=small: .02-.05, --=moderate: .05-.08, ---=large:>.08

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the writing processes of students in secondary education who performed two poetry writing tasks. We examined differences in the occurrence of various activities (text production, pausing and revision) over time, in different phases of the writing process. We found that the mean frequency of text production decreases over time, while the mean frequency of various types of revision increases. Pausing behaviour, on the other hand, remains stable over the course of the writing process.

We found individual differences in the way students distributed their writing activities over three phases in the writing process. However, the main patterns of writing behaviour were fairly consistent over the tasks. Students differed in the linearity of their production process. Three students wrote in a consistently linear manner; these students did not revise. They seemed to 'just write what occurred to them', without thinking. The non-linear writers revised much. They seemed to be engaged in a very different kind of process, adding new criteria to the task themselves.

Furthermore, a relation was found between the process and the quality of the final poem. Text production in the beginning of the process and sentence level revision in the end were found to have a positive impact on text quality. This means that students who produced much and revised much on a high level, especially towards the end of the process, wrote better poems. Pausing and precontextual revision influenced the text quality negatively in almost all phases. Low level revision (character level and word level revision) influenced the text quality positively in the middle of the writing process, but negatively in the final stage of writing.

The students who wrote their poems in a linear manner, in both tasks, all received low quality scores. The quality of the poems written by the non-linear and intermittent writers varied. Linearity seemed to be task related. As a consequence, it

was difficult to make claims about the relationship between linearity of the process and text quality.

Our findings are in line with those of Faigley and Witte (1981) and Carey and Flower (1989), who found that better writers revise more on a global level. In these short poetry tasks, sentence level revisions can be regarded as global revisions. Van den Bergh et al. (1993) also found that changes of sentences are related to text quality. Our results confirm findings from Breetvelt et al. (1994) as well; the timing of some of the writing activities matters. Our data could not confirm the negative correlation between revision in the first and second phase of the writing process and the quality of the text, as reported by Breetvelt et al. (1994). This may be due to effects of genre and/or text length: Breetvelt et al. examined essay writing (essays of two pages or more), while we studied poetry writing (very short poems of only five lines).

We found that several students wrote in a non-linear manner, whereas Severinson Eklundh (1994) found very few non-linear writers among novices. The non-linearity we found may be connected to the nature of the tasks. Apparently, the writing of short poems stimulates students more to play with language and words, revising and changing the order of the lines than the writing of prose.

Finally, our findings correspond to findings from research in art education. Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976), for instance, found that exploratory behaviour during drawing was related to the quality scores on the final product. Revision behaviour can be considered exploratory behaviour in our tasks. Sentence level revision is very effective in the last phase of the writing process; these students leave their 'problem' open to discovery until late in the writing process. Flower and Hayes' (1980a) statement that strong and weak students solve different problems was confirmed by the interviews: while some students interpreted the problem in their own way, adding their own criteria to the task, others wrote down immediately what occurred to them in response to the task, without further exploration. This is consistent with Oostwoud Wijdenes' (1983) findings that some students in secondary education do not engage in problem finding at all. These were the writers who did not revise and wrote poems that received low scores.

Our study has several limitations. One limitation is that we focused mainly on observable, externalised processes. Mental processes involved in poetry writing and students' changing task representations were not examined. As Inputlog does not capture mental processes and pre-existing ideas, other methods of data collection, such as think aloud protocol analysis, could be added to supplement keystroke logging data.

Caution is needed in generalising the results of this study. We used few tasks, few students participated and participants were not selected at random. Instead, they were selected on the basis of literary reading skills by Janssen et al. (2006). The participants belonged to two extreme groups: weak readers versus good readers of literature. In our analysis, we controlled for literary reading competence. The inclusion of this variable did not alter our findings considerably.

Despite these limitations, we succeeded in uncovering meaningful differences between students' creative writing processes. We contributed to the development of research on writing processes by examining poetry writing -an artistic creative genre that has not received much attention in writing research- and by applying research methods that have not been applied before to artistic-creative tasks.

We believe that a better understanding of students' creative processes may contribute to the development of instruction methods for creative tasks. Our findings give some indications of successful poetry writing processes. This knowledge may be useful in designing process-oriented writing instruction.

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## APPENDIX A

*Linear regression analysis, URC=Unstandardized regression coefficient, SE= standard error*

Activity	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3	
	<i>URC</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>URC</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>URC</i>	<i>SE</i>
Text	.267*	.007	.287*	.006	.035*	.005
Pausing	-.437*	.007	-.069*	.005	-.087*	.004
Pre	-.170*	.009	-.304*	.006	-.109*	.010
CLR	-.886*	.036	.146*	.008	-.106*	.004
WLR	.495*	.009	.137*	.012	-.069*	.004
SLR	.243*	.015	.394*	.010	.166*	.004

*Text = Text production, Pre = Precontextual revision, CLR = Character level revision, WLR = Word level revision, SLR = Sentence level revision*

*\*p<.001*