How might test-taker gender affect test-score meaning in a test of writing? Using corpus tools to extend a DIF study

Zhi Li, Michelle Chen, & Jayanti Banerjee

Paragon Testing Enterprises, Inc.

Vancouver, Canada

TESTING ENTERPRISES
Paragon

Gender and Language Use

	Direct	Succinct	Personal	Instrumental
Male	• Directives • Refs to Quantity	• Elliptical Sentences	• "I" Reference • Judgmental Adjectives	• Refs to Quantity • Locatives
Female	• Negations • Uncertainty Verbs • Questions • Hedges	• Dependent Clauses • Intensive Adverbs • Mean Length Sentence		• Refs to Emotion
	Indirect	Elaborate	Contextual	Affective

from Mulac et al., (2006)

Paragon
TESTING ENTERPRISES

Study Context

- The Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP) – General Test

    - Purposes and test structure

    - The writing tasks

        - **1. Writing an email** **(27 minutes)**

        - 2. Responding to survey questions (26 minutes)

Study Context

1. In a test, do male and female test takers write differently?

2. If male and female test takers write differently, does this difference result in a bias in the scores achieved?
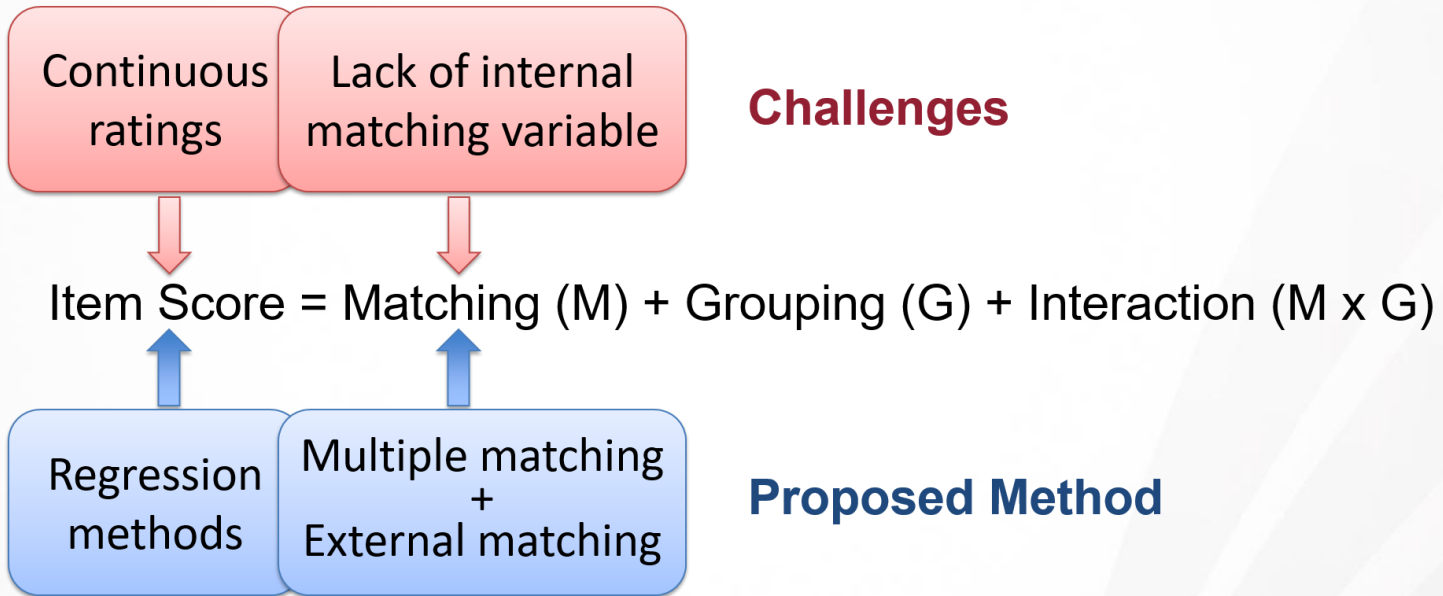
Differential Item Functioning (DIF)

- An item is labeled with "DIF" when:

Test takers with equal ability, but from different groups have an unequal probability of item success.

Differential Item Functioning (DIF)

A DIF analysis strategy needs to address two major issues:

(a) define matching variable; and (b) accommodate the continuous responses.

| Continuous ratings | Lack of internal matching variable | **Challenges** |

Item Score = Matching (M) + Grouping (G) + Interaction (M x G)

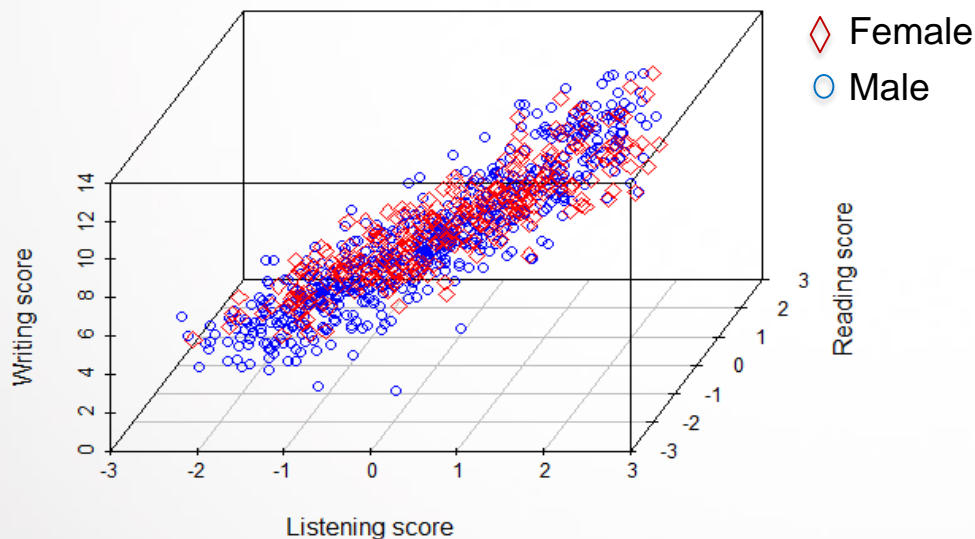| Regression methods | Multiple matching + External matching | **Proposed Method** |

Adopted from Chen, Lam & Zumbo (2016);
See also, Breland & Lee (2007)

Differential Item Functioning (DIF)

Recap of a DIF study on writing prompts

- 81 writing prompts were tested

- 29 (35.8%) of the prompts were flagged

- Small magnitude of the Gender DIF effect: change of the R^2 < 0.02.

◊ Female
○ Male

Results from Chen et al., 2016

Interpretation of DIF Findings

- DIF vs. Bias

Experts review items/prompts
Test takers report cognitive process

Analyzing test takers' writing samples?

Research Questions

- To what extent do the gender groups differ in the linguistic features as elicited by a DIF writing task?

- How do the differences, if they exist, relate to test takers' scores on the writing task?

The CELPIP Writing Construct

- Analytic scoring on four dimensions by multiple raters

  - Coherence/Meaning: organization/clarity/depth of meaning

  - Lexical Range: word choice/natural use of vocabulary/precision and accuracy

  - Readability/Comprehensibility: word form/spelling, grammar, punctuation/format and paragraphing/transitions

  - Task Fulfillment: relevance/completeness/tone/length

- Final reporting levels: 11 levels (M, 3-12)

from CELPIP Study Guide: Reading and Writing

Paragon TESTING ENTERPRISES

The Writing Prompt

- Selected CELPIP writing prompt

  - Write a letter to a restaurant manager to 1) describe your food restrictions;

    2) complain about the unavailability of food options for you; and
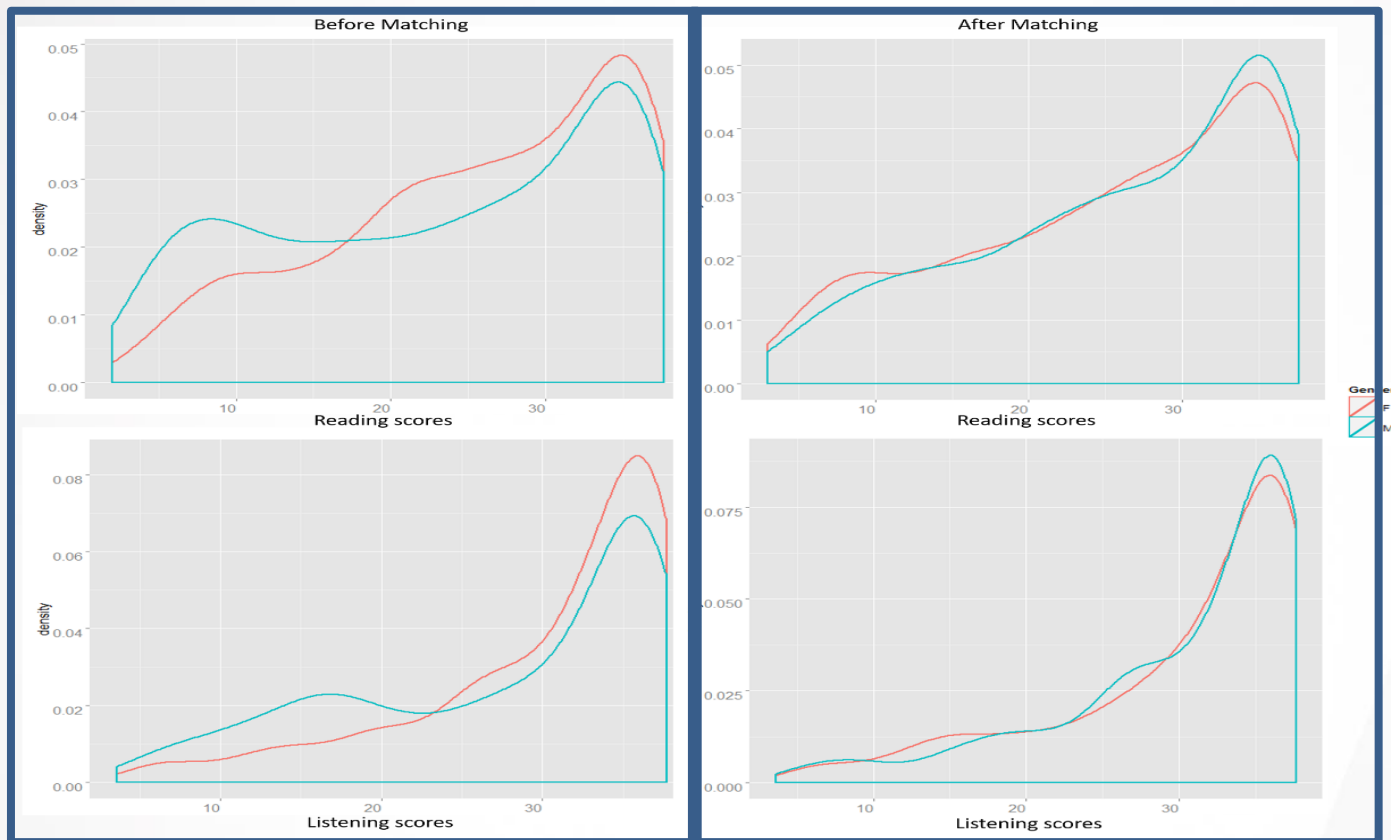
    3) make suggestions to the restaurant.

The Corpus

Table 1. *Summary of the CELPIP corpus of written samples*

Gender	Level 4	Level 5-8	Level 9-12	# of samples	# of words
Male	49	281	83	413	76855
Female	20	306	87	413	79619

Analytical Tools

Tool (category)	Feature groups used	# of features used	Relevance to the scoring dimensions
SEANCE 1.05 (sentiment/ social cognition)	The General Inquirer (GI)-based indices	85	Task Fulfilment
	The NRC Word-Association Emotion Lexicon (EmoLex)-based indices	10	
TAACO (cohesion features)	Adjacent lexical/semantic overlaps at sentence levels	28	Coherence & Meaning; Readability & Comprehensibility
	Rhetorical connectives	23	
	Type-token ratios and repeated words	10	
TAASSC 1.4 (syntactic features)	Clause-based complexity indices	21	Readability & Comprehensibility
	Noun phrase-based complexity indices	33	
	Usage-based syntactic sophistication indices	23	
	Indices from the L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA)	4	
TAALES 1.0 (lexical features)	Frequency of words and n-grams (BNC)	11	Lexical Range
	Range of words and n-grams (BNC)	10	
	MRC psychological properties of words	4	

http://www.kristopherkyle.com/tools.html

Data Preparation & Analysis

- Feature selection
  - Construct-relevance criterion
  - Distribution-based screening
  - Pearson correlations
- Mann-Whitney *U* test (male vs. female)
- Multiple regressions

- Caveats

Results
Sentiment/Social Cognition

Table 3. *Distinctive sentiment and social cognition features*

Sentiment/social cognition Features (dictionary or source)	Mann-Whitney *U* Test (M vs. F)		Correlation with writing proficiency level	
	ES	*p*	*r*	*p*
Positive (EmoLex)	-0.079	.022	-0.084	.016
Negative (EmoLex)	-0.070	.045	0.133	< .001
Know (GI)	-0.069	.048	0.141	< .001
Causal (GI)	-0.071	.040	-0.167	< .001
Self (GI)	-0.080	.022	-0.330	< .001
Strong (GI)	-0.071	.042	0.110	.002
Legal (GI)			-0.088	.011

Paragon TESTING ENTERPRISES

Results
Cohesion Features

Table 4. *Distinctive cohesion features*

Features	Mann-Whitney *U* Test (M vs. F)		Correlation with writing proficiency level	
	ES	p	r	p
Overlap of noun lemmas (binary, 1 sentences)	-0.097	.005	-0.086	.013
Overlap of content word lemmas (binary, 2 sentences)	-0.093	.007	0.340	< .001
Overlap of preposition lemmas (binary, 2 sentences)	-0.095	.007	0.209	< .001
Number of logical connectives	-0.079	.022	-0.242	< .001
Number of coordinating conjunctions	-0.110	.002	-0.129	< .001
Number of connectives for reason and purpose	-0.078	.025	-0.153	< .001
Number of causal connectives	-0.082	.018	-0.255	< .001
Number of repeated content lemmas and pronouns	-0.100	.004	-0.278	< .001
Ratio of pronouns to nouns	-0.140	< .001	-0.307	< .001
Number of subject personal pronouns	-0.092	.008	-0.371	< .001

Results

Syntactic Features

Table 5. *Distinctive syntactic features*

Features	Mann-Whitney *U* Test (M vs. F)		Correlation with writing proficiency level	
	ES	*p*	*r*	*p*
Possessives per direct object	-0.129	< .001	0.143	< .001
Possessives per object of preposition	-0.096	.006	-0.080	.022
Possessives per nominal	-0.163	< .001	0.070	.045
Dependents per nominal subject	-0.094	.007	0.199	< .001
Prepositions per object of preposition	-0.086	.014	0.287	< .001
Complex nominals per clause	-0.129	< .001	0.118	.001
Existential 'there' per clause	-0.092	.008	0.117	.001
Undefined dependents per clause	-0.152	< .001	-0.324	< .001
Subordinating conjunctions per clause	-0.145	< .001	0.097	.005
Faith scores (verb-construction, SD)	-0.110	.002	0.132	< .001
Faith scores (construction-verb, type)	-0.099	.005	-0.126	< .001
Delta P scores (verb-construction, SD)	-0.115	.001	0.112	.001

TESTING ENTERPRISES
Paragon

Results
Lexical Features

Table 6. *Distinctive lexical features*

Features	Mann-Whitney *U* Test (M vs. F)		Correlation with writing proficiency level	
	ES	*p*	*r*	*p*
Word frequency in BNC Written (content words)	-0.070	.044	-0.073	.037
Trigram proportion in BNC Written (all words)	-0.070	.045	0.216	< .001

Results
Summary

Table 7. *Summary of the linguistic features studied for the gender groups*

Category (software)	# of features studied	# of distinctive features	# of features w/ positive correlation
Sentiment and social order features (*SEANCE*)	95	6	3
Cohesion features (*TAACO*)	61	10	2
Syntactic features (*TAASSC*)	81	12	9
Lexical features (*TAALES*)	25	2	1
Total	262	30	15

Adjusted R^2 = .698 (k_{all} = 262); Adjusted R^2 = .460 ($k_{disinctive}$ = 30); Adjusted R^2 = .273 ($k_{positive}$ = 15)

TESTING ENTERPRISES
Paragon

Discussions

- Gender differences in the (timed) writing task
  - Sentiment/social cognition; Cohesion features/Syntactic features/Lexical features
  - Mulac et al., 2006; Leaper & Ayres, 2007
- Implications
  - Impact of gender differences on the equivalence of meanings of scores

Paragon
TESTING ENTERPRISES

Conclusions

- Overall, only a small number of linguistic features in the four aspects were found different between the gender groups with very small effect sizes.

- As a whole, these differences may have negligible impact on the comparability of writing scores.

TESTING ENTERPRISES
Paragon

How might test-taker gender affect test-score meaning in a test of writing?
Using corpus tools to extend a DIF study

Questions & Comments?

research@paragontesting.ca

Selected References

- Argamon, S., Koppel, M., Fine, J., & Shimoni, A. R. (2003). Gender, genre, and writing style in formal written texts. *Text - Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 23(3). 321–346.

- Breland, H., & Lee, Y. (2007). Investigating uniform and non-uniform gender DIF in computer-based ESL writing assessment. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 20(4), 377–403

- Chen, M. Y., Lam, W., & Zumbo, B. D. (2016). *Testing for differential item functioning with no internal matching variable and continuous item ratings*. Poster presented at the Language Testing Research Colloquium. Palermo, Italy.

- Crossley, S. A., Kyle, K., & McNamara, D. S. (2016). Sentiment Analysis and Social Cognition Engine (SEANCE): An automatic tool for sentiment, social cognition, and social-order analysis. *Behavior Research Methods*. doi:10.3758/s13428-016-0743-z

- Crossley, S. A., Kyle, K., & McNamara, D. S. (2015). The tool for the automatic analysis of text cohesion (TAACO): Automatic assessment of local, global, and text cohesion. *Behavior Research Methods*. doi:10.3758/s13428-015-0651-7

- Francis, B., Robson, J., & Read, B. (2001). An analysis of undergraduate writing styles in the context of gender and achievement. *Studies in Higher Education*, 26(3), 313–326.

- Hartley, J., Pennebaker, J., & Fox, C. (2003). Using new technology to assess the academic writing styles of male and female pairs and individuals. *Journal of Technical Writing*, 33(3), 243–261.

- Herring, S. C., & Paolillo, J. C. (2006). Gender and genre variation in weblogs. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10(4), 439–459.

- Jones, S., & Myhill, D. (2007). Discourses of difference? Examining gender differences in linguistic characteristics of writing. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de L'éducation*, 30(2), 456. doi:10.2307/20466646

- Kubota, R. (2003). New approaches to gender, class, and race in second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12(1), 31–47.

- Kyle, K. (2016). *Measuring syntactic development in L2 writing: Fine grained indices of syntactic complexity and usage-based indices of syntactic sophistication*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Georgia State University.

- Kyle, K., & Crossley, S. A. (2015). Automatically assessing lexical sophistication: Indices, tools, findings, and application. *TESOL Quarterly,* 49(4), 757–786.

- Leaper, C., & Ayres, M. (2007). A meta-analytic review of gender variations in adults' language use: Talkativeness, affiliative speech, and assertive speech. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11(4), 328–363.

- Mulac, A., Bradac, J., & Gibbons, P. (2006). Empirical support for the gender-as-culture hypothesis. *Human Communication Research*, 27(1), 121–152. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2001.tb00778.x

- Newman, M. L., Groom, C. J., Handelman, L. D., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2008). Gender differences in language use: An analysis of 14,000 text samples. *Discourse Processes*, 45(3), 211–236.

Paragon TESTING ENTERPRISES

Example texts – Level 4 (Sentiment/ Social Cognition)

Female

I am start diet current with my sister.

Few days ago, my best friend birthday invited , so we went special restaurant near by my house.

There are very clan and nice place and very favourite sea food restaurant.

So we attend new special menu sea food kind ordered but there were no menu option that were suitable for me.

So I made complain for restaurant manager, what kind of diet food do you have? he said just making fried seafood with salad.

I am really disappointed kind of food, so I required seafood made grilled but he can not accepted.

Really , feel bad with my friend and we just take diet drink.

We just few minutes stay away, and I was told to manager as for the service at the restaurant.

In your restaurant place very clan and very nice, but I think your if got more food kind then more came in customers and favourite restaurant.

Male

Dear, manager.

Last week i visit your restaurant and i disappointed because i cannot eat same food i like because your restaurant serve a sea foods and also nuts i cannot eat it. Your restaurant is clean and good but i suggest you serve all different kinds of food example like vegetable fruit and most specially chicken for the children. Next time when i visit again in your restaurant i bring my friends and relatives and also i help you to improve your restaurant to going up soon. I invite also my all coworkers too visit your restaurant because food is very good test.

Example texts – Level 7 (Sentiment/ Social Cognition)

Female

Dear Manager:

I went to your restaurant last week. I have some food allergies, specifically I cannot eat seafood or nuts. If I eat this kind of food I have a severe allergic reaction, and I must go directly to the hospital. I was told by my doctor that if I don't get medical help soon after the event, I could die.

Usually when I go out for dinner, I ask to the waitress if they have some alternative dishes that are nut free. Also I ask for beef or chicken. But when I looked at your menu I didn't find any option. Everything contain seafood or nuts.

You might have your guests happy if you include more variety of ingredients. Also it is important to have a small kitchen separated to avoid food contamination.

I am looking forward to visit your restaurant in the future, and have an option to enjoy your excellent kitchen.

Thank you

XXX

Male

To whom it may concern,

I recently visited your restaurant, on 3/11/16, to celebrate my birthday with a group of friends. I had been excited to try it out as I had heard great things about the quality of food. Unfortunately, looking upon the menu I found that there were no options for someone with allergies to nuts and also seafood.

Usually I would never have this problem in restaurants as there is always at least one dish that caters to my dietary restrictions. I was bitterly disappointed, and resigned to drinking from a bowl of water, like a dog. What a way to spend your 5th birthday.

I would suggest that your company take the necessary measures to include multiple options on a new, redesigned menu. One that doesn't discriminate against people with weak immune systems. Maybe a nice variety of salads.

Yours sincerely,

XXX

Paragon
TESTING ENTERPRISES

Example texts – Level 10 (Sentiment/ Social Cognition)

Female

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my disappointment with a recent dining experience at Villa Italiano. As a long time customer of your restaurant, I feel the need to communicate my displeasure.

As you may recall, I visited your restaurant on the evening of March 15th accompanied by my husband and two close friends. Earlier that day, I had called to enquire about the evening menu. I took pains to call ahead of time because I have recently learned that I am allergic to seafood and nuts, and I wanted to ensure that it would be possible for your staff to accommodate these restrictions. I was assured by your hostess that it would not be a problem and that there would be lots of options available for me.

When we arrived for our 7:30 reservation, one glance at the menu was sufficient to show me that there was nothing I would be able to eat. We were forced to leave the restaurant. This problem could have been avoided if your hostess had been properly informed about the evening menu. I sincerely hope that you will improve your customer service in the future.

XXX

Male

Good day Mr. Smith (New Manager of the Northern Peninsula Restaurant),

I am writing to express my disappointment in the limited menu options at your restaurant and the apparent unwillingness to change. I have severe allergic reactions to seafood (mainly shellfish) and nuts (such as almonds). I was shocked when I went to restaurant last week with my wife, only to realize that there were no food options on the menu which were safe for me to eat. All items either had a seafood or nut ingredient. I informed the waiter and he noted that the chef could do nothing at the time to prepare a meal suitable for me. I left rather disheartened. This week was a repeat of the same issue.

I think you could solve this problem rather easily. For your menu options you could introduce meals with other meats, such as chicken, moose or venison. Another solution, might be to have variations of meals, excluding nuts for example. Lastly, I think that having a chef and staff that are flexible and can adjust meals to suit customers with dietary restrictions would prove useful. I hope you accept this advice.

A disappointed customer,

XXX

Example texts – Level 4 (Cohesion)

Female

I am start diet current with **my** sister.

Few days ago, **my** best friend birthday invited , *so* **we** went special <u>restaurant</u> near by **my** house.

There are very clan and nice place and very favourite sea food <u>restaurant</u>.

So **we** attend new special menu sea food kind ordered *but* there were no menu option that were suitable <u>for</u> **me**.

So **I** made complain <u>for restaurant</u> manager, what kind of diet food do **you** have? **he** said just making fried seafood with salad.

I am really disappointed kind of food, *so* **I** required seafood made grilled *but* **he** can not accepted.

Really , feel bad with **my** friend and **we** just take diet drink.

We just few minutes stay away, *and* **I** was told to manager as for the service at the <u>restaurant</u>.

<u>In</u> **your** <u>restaurant</u> place very clan and very nice, *but* **I** think your if got more food kind then more came <u>in</u> customers and favourite <u>restaurant</u>.

Male

Dear, manager.

Last week **i** visit **your** <u>restaurant</u> and **i** disappointed *because* **i** cannot <u>eat</u> same food **i** like *because* your <u>restaurant</u> serve a sea foods *and* also nuts **i** cannot <u>eat</u> **it**. **Your** <u>restaurant</u> is clean *and* good but **i** suggest **you** serve all different kinds of food example like vegetable fruit *and* most specially chicken for the children. Next time when **i** visit again in **your** <u>restaurant</u> i bring **my** friends *and* relatives *and* also i help you to improve **your** <u>restaurant</u> to going up soon. **I** invite also **my** all coworkers too visit **your** <u>restaurant</u> *because* food is very good test.

Example texts – Level 7 (Cohesion)

Female

Dear Manager:

I went to your restaurant last week. **I** have some <u>food</u> allergies, specifically I cannot <u>eat</u> seafood or nuts. *If* **I** <u>eat</u> this kind of <u>food</u> **I** have a severe allergic reaction, *and* **I** must go directly to the hospital. **I** was told by **my** doctor that *if* **I** don't get medical help soon after the event, **I** could die.

Usually when I go out for dinner, **I** <u>ask</u> to the waitress *if* they have some alternative dishes that are nut free. Also **I** <u>ask</u> for beef or chicken. *But* when **I** looked at **your** menu **I** didn't find any option. Everything contain seafood or nuts.

You might have your guests happy *if* **you** include more variety of ingredients. Also **it** is important to have a small <u>kitchen</u> separated to avoid food contamination.

I am looking forward to visit **your** restaurant in the future, *and* have an option to enjoy **your** excellent <u>kitchen</u>.

Thank **you**

XXX

Male

To whom **it** may concern,

I recently visited your restaurant, on 3/11/16, to celebrate **my** birthday <u>with</u> a group <u>of</u> friends. **I** had been excited to try it out *as* **I** had heard great things about the quality <u>of</u> food. Unfortunately, looking upon the menu **I** found that there were no options for someone <u>with</u> allergies to nuts and also seafood.

Usually **I** would never have this problem in restaurants *as* there is always at least one dish that caters <u>to</u> **my** dietary restrictions. **I** was bitterly disappointed, *and* resigned <u>to</u> drinking from a bowl of water, like a dog. What a way to spend your 5th birthday.

I would suggest that **your** company take the necessary measures to include multiple options on a new, redesigned menu. One that doesn't discriminate against people with weak immune systems. Maybe a nice variety of salads.

Yours sincerely,

XXX

Paragon TESTING ENTERPRISES

Example texts – Level 10 (Cohesion)

Female

To whom **it** may concern,

I am writing to express **my** disappointment with a recent dining experience at Villa Italiano. As a long time customer <u>of</u> **your** <u>restaurant</u>, **I** feel the need to communicate **my** displeasure.

As **you** may recall, **I** visited your <u>restaurant</u> on the <u>evening</u> of March 15th accompanied by **my** husband *and* two close friends. Earlier that day, **I** had <u>called</u> to enquire about the <u>evening</u> menu. **I** took pains to <u>call</u> ahead <u>of</u> time *because* **I** have recently learned that **I** am allergic to seafood *and* nuts, and **I** wanted to ensure that **it** would be possible for **your** staff to accommodate these restrictions. **I** was assured by **your** hostess that **it** would not be a problem and that there would be lots of options available for **me**.

When **we** arrived for our 7:30 reservation, one glance at the <u>menu</u> was sufficient to show **me** that there was nothing **I** would be able to eat. We were forced to leave the restaurant. This problem could have been avoided *if* **your** hostess had been properly informed about the evening <u>menu</u>. **I** sincerely hope that **you** will improve your customer service in the future.

XXX

Male

Good day Mr. Smith (New Manager of the Northern Peninsula Restaurant),

I am writing to express **my** disappointment in the limited <u>menu</u> <u>options</u> at **your** <u>restaurant</u> *and* the apparent unwillingness to change. I have severe allergic reactions to <u>seafood</u> (mainly shellfish) *and* <u>nuts</u> (such as almonds). **I** was shocked when **I** went to <u>restaurant</u> last week with my wife, only to realize that there were no food <u>options</u> on the <u>menu</u> which were safe for me to eat. All items either had a <u>seafood</u> or <u>nut</u> ingredient. **I** informed the waiter *and* he noted that the chef could do nothing at the time to prepare a meal suitable for me. **I** left rather disheartened. This week was a repeat of the same issue.

I think **you** could solve this problem rather easily. <u>For</u> **your** menu options you could introduce <u>meals</u> with other meats, such as chicken, moose or venison. Another solution, might be to have variations of <u>meals</u>, excluding nuts <u>for</u> example. *Lastly*, **I** think that having a chef and staff that are flexible and can adjust meals to suit customers with dietary restrictions would prove useful. **I** hope **you** accept this advice.

A disappointed customer,

XXX

Example texts – Level 4 (Syntactic features)

Female

I am start diet current with **my** sister.

Few days ago, **my** best friend birthday invited , so we went special restaurant near by **my** house.

There are very clan and nice place and very favourite sea food restaurant.

So we attend new special menu sea food kind ordered but *there* were no menu option that were suitable for me.

So I made complain for restaurant manager, what kind of diet food do you have? he said just making fried seafood with salad.

I am really disappointed kind of food, so I required seafood made grilled but he can not accepted.

Really , feel bad with **my** friend and we just take diet drink.

We just few minutes stay away, and I was told to manager as for the service at the restaurant.

In **your** restaurant place very clan and very nice, but I think **your** if got more food kind then more came in customers and favourite restaurant.

Male

Dear, manager.

 Last week i visit **your** restaurant and i disappointed because i cannot eat same food i like because **your** restaurant serve a sea foods and also nuts i cannot eat it. **Your** restaurant is clean and good but i suggest you serve all different kinds of food example like vegetable fruit and most specially chicken for the children. Next time when i visit again in your restaurant i bring **my** friends and relatives and also i help you to improve **your** restaurant to going up soon. I invite also **my** all coworkers too visit **your** restaurant because food is very good test.

TESTING ENTERPRISES
Paragon

Example texts – Level 7 (Syntactic features)

Female

Dear Manager:

I went to **your** restaurant last week. I have some food allergies, specifically I cannot eat seafood or nuts. If I eat this kind of food I have <u>a severe allergic reaction</u>, and I must go directly to the hospital. I was told by **my** doctor that if I don't get medical help soon after the event, I could die.

Usually when I go out for dinner, I ask to the waitress if they have <u>some alternative dishes</u> that are nut free. Also I ask for beef or chicken. But when I looked at **your** menu I didn't find any option. Everything contain seafood or nuts.

You might have **your** guests happy if you include <u>more variety of ingredients</u>. Also it is important to have a small kitchen separated to avoid food contamination.

I am looking forward to visit **your** restaurant in the future, and have an option to enjoy <u>**your** excellent kitchen</u>.

Thank you

XXX

Male

To whom it may concern,

I recently visited **your** restaurant, on 3/11/16, to celebrate **my** birthday with a group of friends. I had been excited to try it out as I had heard great things about <u>the quality of food</u>. Unfortunately, looking upon the menu I found that *there* were no options for <u>someone with allergies to nuts and also seafood</u>.

Usually I would never have this problem in restaurants as *there* is always at least one dish that caters to **my** dietary restrictions. I was bitterly disappointed, and resigned to drinking from a bowl of water, like a dog. What a way to spend **your** 5th birthday.

I would suggest that **your** company take <u>the necessary measures</u> to include multiple options on a new, redesigned menu. One that doesn't discriminate against <u>people with weak immune systems</u>. Maybe a nice variety of salads.

Yours sincerely,

XXX

Example texts – Level 10 (Syntactic features)

Female

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express **my** disappointment with a recent dining experience at Villa Italiano. As a long time customer of **your** restaurant, I feel the need to communicate **my** displeasure.

As you may recall, I visited **your** restaurant on the evening of March 15th accompanied by **my** husband and two close friends. Earlier that day, I had called to enquire about the evening menu. I took pains to call ahead of time because I have recently learned that I am allergic to seafood and nuts, and I wanted to ensure that it would be possible for **your** staff to accommodate these restrictions. I was assured by **your** hostess that it would not be a problem and that *there* would be lots of options available for me.

When we arrived for **our** 7:30 reservation, one glance at the menu was sufficient to show me that *there* was nothing I would be able to eat. We were forced to leave the restaurant. This problem could have been avoided if **your** hostess had been properly informed about the evening menu. I sincerely hope that you will improve **your** customer service in the future.

xxx

Male

Good day Mr. Smith (New Manager of the Northern Peninsula Restaurant),

I am writing to express **my** disappointment in the limited menu options at **your** restaurant and the apparent unwillingness to change. I have severe allergic reactions to seafood (mainly shellfish) and nuts (such as almonds). I was shocked when I went to restaurant last week with **my** wife, only to realize that *there* were no food options on the menu which were safe for me to eat. All items either had a seafood or nut ingredient. I informed the waiter and he noted that the chef could do nothing at the time to prepare a meal suitable for me. I left rather disheartened. This week was a repeat of the same issue.

I think you could solve this problem rather easily. For **your** menu options you could introduce meals with other meats, such as chicken, moose or venison. Another solution, might be to have variations of meals, excluding nuts for example. Lastly, I think that having a chef and staff that are flexible and can adjust meals to suit customers with dietary restrictions would prove useful. I hope you accept this advice.

A disappointed customer,

xxx