Appendix A: Task Difficulty and Mental Effort Questionnaire

In the following section, we would like you to tell us how you feel about the writing task by simply ticking (√) a number from 1 to 9. We are interested in your real situation and attitudes.

This task required extreme mental effort.

1. This task required no mental effort at all.

During this task, I felt extremely relaxed.

2. During this task I felt extremely nervous.

This task was extremely difficult.

3. This task was extremely easy.

On this task I did extremely well.

4. On this task I did not do well at all.

This task was not interesting at all.

5. This task was extremely interesting.

I want to do many more tasks like this.

6. I do not want to do more tasks like this.

**Great! You have completed the questionnaire.**

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

Appendix B: Writing Tasks

***Task 1 (simple task***[[1]](#footnote-1)***)***

Imagine you can choose two best roommates from the four candidates when the new semester starts (two students in each dormitory). Four properties of candidates: hobbies, personality, studying style and sleeping patterns are listed in the table as follows.

Read the descriptions carefully and make a considered choice of the best roommates. Write an argumentative essay. Please provide at least 3 reasons to make your decision clear and convincing. Please write at least 250 words.

The best roommates you choose: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  NameProperty | Nannan | Beibei | Niuniu | Dongdong |
| Hobbies | Watching movies;Listening to music;Reading books | Listening to music;Blogging;Playing the guitar  | Photography;Playing football;Traveling  | Listening to music;Playing football;Playing computer games |
| Personality | Introvert;Good at listening to others;Not good at communicating | Outgoing;Positive and enthusiastic;Happy to help others;Sometimes, ignoring others’ feelings unconsciously | Like playing with others;Not good at listening to others | Outgoing;Humorous;Weak self-discipline |
| Sleeping pattern  | Early to bed, early to rise | Late to bed, early to rise | Early to bed, late to rise | Late to bed, late to rise |
| Studying style | He/she likes to study in a quiet place on his/her personal.  | He/she likes to read out when he/she is studying. | He/she likes to study with others. | He/she likes to study on his/her personal. |

***Task 2 (complex task)***

Imagine you can choose four best roommates from the six candidates when the new semester starts (two students in each dormitory). Six properties of candidates: hobbies, personality, studying style, sleeping patterns, favorite subjects and individual sanitary habits are listed in the table as follows.

Read the descriptions carefully and make a considered choice of the best roommates. Write an argumentative essay. Please provide at least 3 reasons to make your decision clear and convincing. Please write at least 250 words.

The best roommates you choose: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  NameProperty | Nannan | Beibei | Niuniu | Dongdong | Kangkang | Xuxu |
| Hobbies | Watching movies;Listening to music;Reading books | Listening to music;Blogging;Playing the guitar  | Photography;Playing football;Traveling  | Listening to music;Playing football;Playing computer games | Playing the piano;Listen to music;Watching movies | Playing football; Playing computer games;Playing magic |
| Personality | Introvert;Good at listening to others;Not good at communicating | Outgoing;Positive and enthusiastic;Happy to help others;Sometimes, ignoring others’ feelings unconsciously | Like playing with others;Not good at listening to others | Outgoing;Humorous;Weak self-discipline | Shy;Like to play with others;Weak self-discipline | Like to communicate with others and also good at listening to others;Outgoing, but sometimes kind of noisy |
| Sleeping pattern  | Early to bed, early to rise | Late to bed, early to rise | Early to bed, late to rise | Late to bed, late to rise | Early to bed, late to rise | Late to bed, early to rise |
| Studying style | He/she likes to study in a quiet place on his/her personal.  | He/she likes to read out when he/she is studying. | He/she likes to study with others. | He/she likes to study on his/her personal. | He/she likes to study in a quiet place on his/her personal.  | He/she likes to read out in a low voice, when he/she is studying. |
| Favorite subjects | English, Chinese | Math, Music | Sports, Arts | Computers, Music | Music English | Math, Computer |
| Individual sanitary habits | Tidy, but not good at clean | Good at clean | Neutral  | Good at clean | Not good at clean | Neutral  |

1. The words of “simple task” or “complex task” were not shown in students’ writing prompts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)