

How to write a literature review

July 15

Day 2: 10:10-12:00

Day 2 (July 15)

Objectives/Contents	Time
反思日志分享	8:30-8:50
大班交流	8:50-9:50
To identify the best pattern and summarize key information (Ling Shi)	10:10-12:00
To use academic voice (Ling Shi & Luxin)	14:00-15:30
Summary (Luxin)	15:50-16:20
问答与交流	16:20-16:40
撰写反思日记	16:40-17:00
闭幕式	17:00-17:30

Identifying the patterns

Patterns	
Types of tests	Standardized tests vs. classroom writing tests
perceptions	Raters' vs. test takers' perceptions
Participating students	Graduate vs. undergraduate participants
Method	Qualitative, quantitative or both
Effects	Effects vs. no effects of prompts/topics
Factors	general language proficiency, choice of topic, subject areas/departments, familiar or unfamiliar materials

Patterns	Studies
Types of tests	Standardized: Placement tests: Classroom:
perceptions	Students: Raters:
Participating students	Graduates: Undergraduates or ESL: Both graduates and undergraduates:
Method	Qualitative: Quantitative: Mixed:
Effects	Has topical effects: Has no topical effects:
Factor /focus	Language proficiency level: Choice of topic: Subject knowledge: Familiar or unfamiliar materials:

Add studies from a book, thesis, and book chapter

Studies	Themes/Findings/Questions
Ruth & Murthy (1988) <u>Book</u>	A comprehensive literature review of the impact of prompt characteristics on test takers' writing responses Only very few studies have directly investigated the effects of topical knowledge on ESL writing
Lee (2004) <u>PhD</u>	Compared students' writing performance responding to a field-specific and a general topic in an ESL placement test. The prompt effect was not parallel across the 4 subgroups.
Spaan (1993) <u>Book chapter</u>	Explored prompt type effects in the impromptu essay examination of the Michigan English Language Battery (MELAB), a standardized English proficiency test for non-native English speakers. The holistic ratings showed no differences for the two tasks.
Fox, 2003 7/16/2013	Whether students' performance is influenced by whether they like the topic / version of the CAEL test. Test takers who wrote both versions performed similarly on the two tests.

Pattern	Studies
Types of tests	<p>Standardized: CAEL (Fox 2003; Jennings et al., 1999); TWE and LPI (He & Shi, 2008); MELAB (Spaan, 1993)</p> <p>Placement tests: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Lee, 2004</p> <p>Classroom: Tedick, 1990; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982</p>
Perceptions	<p>Students: He & Shi, 2008; Jennings et al., 1999; Fox, 2003</p> <p>Raters: Fox, 2003</p>
Participating students	<p>Graduates: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Tedick, 1990</p> <p>Undergraduates or ESL: He & Shi, 2008; Jennings et al., 1999; Lee, 2004; Spaan, 1993; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982</p> <p>Both graduates and undergraduates: Fox, 2003</p>
Method	<p>Qualitative: He & Shi, 2008</p> <p>Quantitative: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982; Tedick, 1990; Spaan, 1993; Lee, 2004</p> <p>Mixed: Fox 2003; Jennings et al., 1999</p>
Effects	<p>Effects: Tedick, 1990; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982; Fox, 2003</p> <p>No effects: Spaan, 1993; Lee & Anderson, 2007; Lee, 2004; Jennings et al, 1993</p>
Factors	<p>Language proficiency level: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Tedick, 1990; Spaan, 1993</p> <p>Choice of topic: Jennings et al., 1999</p> <p>Subject knowledge: Lee, 2004; Tedick, 1990; Lee & Anderson, 2007</p> <p>Familiar or unfamiliar materials: Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982</p>

Organization

- **How would you organize the review (study by study) based on the analyses?**
- **Which pattern/theme will be the best to organize the 8 studies?**

Pattern	Studies
<u>Types of tests</u>	<p>Standardized: CAEL (Fox 2003; Jennings et al., 1999); TWE and LPI (He & Shi, 2008); MELAB (Spaan, 1993)</p> <p>Placement tests: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Lee, 2004</p> <p>Classroom: Tedick, 1990; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982</p>
Perceptions	<p>Students: He & Shi, 2008; Jennings et al., 1999; Fox, 2003</p> <p>Raters: Fox, 2003</p>
<u>Participating students</u>	<p>Graduates: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Tedick, 1990</p> <p>Undergraduates or ESL: He & Shi, 2008; Jennings et al., 1999; Lee, 2004; Spaan, 1993; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982</p> <p>Both graduates and undergraduates: Fox, 2003</p>
<u>Method</u>	<p>Qualitative: He & Shi, 2008</p> <p>Quantitative: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982; Tedick, 1990; Spaan, 1993; Lee, 2004</p> <p>Mixed: Fox 2003; Jennings et al., 1999</p>
Effects	<p>Effects: Tedick, 1990; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982; Fox, 2003</p> <p>No effects: Spaan, 1993; Lee & Anderson, 2007; Lee, 2004; Jennings et al, 1993</p>
Factors	<p>Language proficiency level: Lee & Anderson, 2007; Tedick, 1990; Spaan, 1993</p> <p>Choice of topic: Jennings et al., 1999</p> <p>Subject knowledge: Lee, 2004; Tedick, 1990; Lee & Anderson, 2007</p> <p>Familiar or unfamiliar materials: Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982</p>

Organization chosen: Types of tests

Classroom writing

Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982)

Tedick (1990)



Placement test

Lee & Anderson (2007)

Lee (2004)



Standardized test

Spaan (1993)

Fox, 2003

Jennings et al., (1999)

He & Shi (2008)

<p>1. Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli (1982)</p>	<p>Compared the effects of culturally familiar and unfamiliar materials on the writing of students from intermediate level ESL classes. Pre-writing exercises was helpful to “familiarize students with ... the target culture” (p. 377). (classroom)</p>
<p>2. Tedick (1990)</p>	<p>Compared ESL students’ written impromptu essay writing on <u>a general and a field-related topic</u>. <u>A positive effect</u> of topical knowledge. (Classroom)</p>
<p>3. Lee & Anderson (2007)</p>	<p>Explored topic generality of a writing placement test by rotating <u>three subject-specific topics</u> integrated with listening and reading sources. General language competency might have played a more significant role than topical knowledge.</p>
<p>4. Lee, 2004</p>	<p>Compared students’ writing responding <u>to a field-specific and a general topic</u> in an ESL placement test. <u>The prompt effect was not parallel across the subgroups</u>.</p>
<p>5. Spaan (1993)</p>	<p>Explored prompt type effects of a standardized test for non-native English speakers. The holistic ratings showed <u>no differences</u> for the two tasks.</p>
<p>6. Fox, 2003; 7. Jennings et al., (1999)</p>	<p>Explored topic effect in the CAEL Assessment. <u>Test-takers’ and raters’ perceptions</u> of the propositional content had an impact on the ratings (Fox, 2003). Students who had a choice of the topic scored higher but the <u>differences were not significant</u> (Jennings et al, 1999)</p>
<p>8. He & Shi, 2008 7/16/2013</p>	<p>Compared <u>ESL students’ perceptions</u> and experiences of two standardized English writing tests. Participants complained about such culturally biased essay prompts or topics.</p>

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&
Anders
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(2007)

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<p>5. Spaan (1993)</p>	<p>Explored prompt type effects of a standardized test for non-native English speakers. The holistic ratings showed <u>no differences</u> for the two tasks.</p>
<p>6. Fox, 2003; 7. Jennings et al., (1999)</p>	<p>Explored topic effect in the CAEL Assessment. <u>Test-takers' and raters' perceptions</u> of the propositional content had an impact on the ratings (Fox, 2003). Students who had a choice of the topic scored higher but the <u>differences were not significant</u> (Jennings et al, 1999)</p>
<p>8. He & Shi, 2008</p>	<p>Compared <u>ESL students' perceptions</u> and experiences of two standardized English writing tests. Participants complained about such culturally biased essay prompts or topics.</p>

Of the limited studies, Winfield and Barnes-Felfeli (1982) compared the effects of culturally familiar and unfamiliar materials on the writing of students from intermediate level ESL classes. Half of the participants were Spanish-speaking, and the other half were from other countries with various first language backgrounds. Prior to writing, all participants read two thematic paragraphs, one concerned a Spanish book of which the Spanish students had greater previous knowledge, and the other concerned a Japanese book of which all students had little or no knowledge. The reading materials were then taken away as students wrote down what they had read. The Spanish speakers were found to write about the familiar Spanish book with more fluency and less grammar errors compared with their writing about the unfamiliar Japanese book. In contrast, the non-Spanish speaking students showed no such differences. The study suggested that pre-writing exercises would be helpful to “familiarize students with the concepts, vocabulary, values, customs, and other aspects of the target culture” (p. 377).

Since topics for academic writing tests are often derived from certain disciplinary areas, research on the effects of topic knowledge has focused on subject matter knowledge. For example, **Tedick (1990)** compared students’ written impromptu essay writing on a general and a field-related topic. The study involved graduate students enrolled in composition courses at different levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) in a university ESL program. The study illustrates that students of all proficiency levels produced significantly better writing on the field-specific topic. Compared to the general topic, the field-specific topic was also better in discriminating groups with different writing proficiencies. **Together with Winfield and Barnes-Felfeli (1982), Tedick suggested a positive effect of topical knowledge on the writing performances of ESL university students.**

Like Tedick (1990), Lee and Anderson (2007) also assumed that ESL graduate students processed topical knowledge based on their majors. They explored topic generality of a writing placement test by rotating three subject-specific topics integrated with listening and reading sources. Comparisons of the performance of students taking the test in a period of six years revealed that subject-specific topics, **in contrast to the results found in Tedick**, did not favor test-takers with the matching departmental affiliations. Based on the observation that the probability of getting the lowest score for the placement test decreased across all the topics as writers’ proficiency levels increased, the researchers suggested that general language competency might have played a more significant role than topical knowledge in the integrated writing test involving reading and listening tasks.

Also investigating the effect of field-specific topics, Lee (2004) compared students’ writing performance responding to a field-specific and a general topic in an ESL placement test. The field-specific writing test was integrated with listening and reading prompts made up of four disciplinary areas (Business, Humanities, Technology, and Life Science). Results suggested that the prompt effect was not parallel across the four subgroups. Only students in the business and life science subgroups performed significantly better on the field-specific test. The other two groups showed no significant difference on the two different types of topics. The study suggested that apart from topical knowledge, the level of difficulty of writing sources (the reading and listening tasks) was also an important factor influencing students’ performance.

Compared with the above studies that used writing tasks designed by researchers themselves, four other studies examined the effects of topical knowledge required by prompts used in standardized writing tests. One study was conducted by **Spaan (1993)** who explored prompt type effects in the impromptu essay examination of the Michigan English Language Battery (MELAB), a standardized English proficiency test for non-native English speakers. Participating ESL students across three language proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) wrote essays on two prompts which required different types of content knowledge and rhetorical modes. The holistic ratings, **similar to the negative prompt effects found in Lee and Anderson (2007)**, showed no differences for the two tasks. However, textual analysis of student writing revealed relations between the holistic score and length, lexis, and rhetorical features. The study suggested that prompt developers should take particular care to make the subject content accessible for the sake of test validity.

Two studies explored topic effect in the CAEL Assessment (Fox, 2003; Jennings, Fox, Graves & Shohamy, 1999). As an integrated test, CAEL requires that test-takers use the information from readings and a lecture to write a response to the propositional statement presented at the beginning of the test. Investigating whether there was a bias caused by how test takers and raters perceived the propositional or topical statement in two versions of the test, Fox (2003) found that the differences in the test-takers’ and raters’ perceptions of the propositional content (whether it suggested an effective argument or a correct answer) did have an impact on the raters’ perception of the test performance. **Compared with Fox, Jennings et al. (1999)** investigated whether test-takers of CAEL given a choice of five essay topics performed differently than those not given a choice. It was assumed that the topic choice made by the test-takers would reflect their prior knowledge and interest in the topic. Results showed that students who had a choice did score higher than those who had no choice but the differences were not significant. Textual analyses of the writing samples suggested that students might not consider it appropriate to include prior knowledge or extra information beyond what was presented in the test. It was the context provided by the test materials, as the researchers claimed, that had “reduce[d] the impact of prior knowledge to the point of insignificance” (p. 448). Concerned about the possibility of a topic effect, many test-takers expressed the desire to choose a topic in the follow-up questionnaire survey.

Like Jennings et al. (1999) and Fox (2003) who focused on the perception of test-takers, He and Shi (2008) compared ESL students’ perceptions and experiences of two standardized English writing tests: the Test of Written English (TWE) in TOEFL and the essay task in the LPI. In western Canada, the TWE is used as a university entrance test for international students who speak English as a second or foreign language, whereas the LPI is required, in many post-secondary institutions, for these students to register for the compulsory first-year English courses. As international students, all participants in the study passed the TWE but many took the LPI repeatedly before passing it. All participants complained about such culturally biased essay prompts or topics in the LPI as “Road rage in Vancouver,” “Pride of being a Canadian citizen” and “Divorce rate in North America.” These complaints raised questions about the validity of the test. The researchers called for further investigations to address issues of fairness and equity in L2 writing assessment. Such a call for further research leads to the present study.

To summarize the key information

- Please read the literature review (see handout) to identify strategies of the authors as they summarize studies one by one.**

- **Of the limited studies, Winfield and Barnes-Felfeli (1982) compared the effects of culturally familiar and unfamiliar materials on the writing of students from intermediate level ESL classes. ...**
- **Since topics for academic writing tests are often derived from certain disciplinary areas, research on the effects of topic knowledge has focused on subject matter knowledge. For example, Tedick (1990) compared students' written impromptu essay writing on a general and a field-related topic. ... Together with Winfield and Barnes-Felfeli (1982), Tedick suggested a positive effect of topical knowledge on the writing performances of ESL university students.**

- **Like Tedick (1990), Lee and Anderson (2007)** also assumed that ESL graduate students processed **topical knowledge based on their majors. They ... in contrast to the results found in Tedick, did not favor test-takers with the matching departmental affiliations. ...**

- **Also investigating the effect of field-specific topics, Lee (2004) compared students' writing performance responding to a field-specific and a general topic in an ESL placement test. ...**

- Compared with the above studies that used writing tasks designed by researchers themselves, four other studies examined the effects of topical knowledge required by prompts used in **standardized writing tests**. One study was conducted by Spaan (1993) who explored prompt type effects in the impromptu essay examination of **the Michigan English Language Battery (MELAB)**, a standardized English proficiency test for non-native English speakers. ...The holistic ratings, similar to the negative prompt effects found in Lee and Anderson (2007), **showed no differences for the two tasks.** ...

- **Two studies explored topic effect in the CAEL Assessment (Fox, 2003; Jennings, Fox, Graves & Shohamy, 1999). ... Compared with Fox (2003), Jennings et al. (1999) investigated whether test-takers of CAEL given a choice of five essay topics performed differently than those not given a choice. ...**

- Like Jennings et al. (1999) and Fox (2003) who focused on the perception of test-takers, He and Shi (2008) compared ESL students' perceptions and experiences of **two standardized English writing tests**: the Test of Written English (TWE) in TOEFL and the essay task in the LPI...

Information selected

Abstract of Tedick (1990)	Used in the lit review
<p>The matter of creating topics that will elicit writers' optimal performance is fundamental to writing assessment. However, topic variables (i.e., <u>wording, mode of discourse, rhetorical specification, and subject matter</u>) have only recently begun to be investigated, and a clear understanding of the relationship to these variables to writing performance has yet to be achieved. One topic variable-subject matter- was the focus of the present study. The extent to which ESL graduate students' writing performance was affected by their knowledge of the subject matter of the assessment topic was investigated. A total of 105 students representing three ESL course levels participated in the study. All subjects responded to two topics--one general, and one pertaining to the subjects' fields of study. <u>The essays were scored on the basis of holistic measures, length, and T-unit and error-free T-unit indices.</u> The highly significant results obtained in the statistical analyses indicated that, in general, writing performance on the field-specific topic was superior. Similarly, the field-specific topic was found to be superior to the general topic in terms of its ability to discriminate among groups having different levels of writing proficiency.</p>	<p>Tedick (1990) compared students' written impromptu essay writing on a general and a field-related topic. The study involved graduate students enrolled in composition courses at different levels (<u>beginning, intermediate, and advanced</u>) in a university ESL program. The study illustrates that students of all proficiency levels produced significantly better writing on the field-specific topic. Compared to the general topic, the field-specific topic was also better in discriminating groups with different writing proficiencies. Tedick suggested a positive effect of topical knowledge on the writing performances of ESL university</p>

Information available

topic variables (i.e., wording, mode of discourse, rhetorical specification, and subject matter)

The essays were scored on the basis of holistic measures, length, and T-unit and error-free T-unit indices.

Information selected

Tedick (1990) compared students' written impromptu essay writing on **a general and a field-related topic.**

The study illustrates that students of all proficiency levels produced significantly **better writing on the field-specific topic.**

Leading to the present study

- **Read the paragraph “the present study” and comment on how the authors select key information to justify their present research.**

The present study

While previous research confirms the importance of topical or prior knowledge in ESL relevant studies on this issue are scant and findings are inconclusive. Some have suggested **a significant topic effect** (Tedick, 1990; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982), whereas others have found that the effect was either negligible (Jennings et al., 1999; Spaan, 1993), mixed (Lee, 2004), or non-existent (Lee & Anderson, 2007). In addition, further research is needed to verify whether students' proficiency levels have an effect (Lee & Anderson, 2007; Spaan, 1993; Tedick, 1990) on their written responses to different prompts. Furthermore, **since only a handful of researchers have examined writing tasks or prompts used in standardized English proficiency tests, what needs to be experimentally ascertained is what kind of knowledge underpins an ESL student's performance on a writing task in a standardized test, especially in impromptu essay writing, when reading or listening sources are not provided.**

1. Topic effect?

- While previous research confirms the importance of topical or prior knowledge in ESL relevant studies on this issue are scant and findings are inconclusive. Some have suggested **a significant topic effect** (Tedick, 1990; Winfield & Barnes-Felfeli, 1982), whereas others have found that the effect was either negligible (Jennings et al., 1999; Spaan, 1993), mixed (Lee, 2004), or non-existent (Lee & Anderson, 2007).

2. Proficiency levels?

- In addition, further research is needed to verify whether students' proficiency levels **have an effect** (Lee & Anderson, 2007; Spaan, 1993; Tedick, 1990) on their written responses to different prompts.

3. Standardized tests?

- Furthermore, since only a handful of researchers have examined writing tasks or prompts used in standardized English proficiency tests, what needs to be experimentally ascertained is what kind of knowledge underpins an ESL student's performance on a writing task in a standardized test, especially in impromptu essay writing, when reading or listening sources are not provided.

Research questions

1. Do ESL students across different proficiency levels perform differently in terms of overall and component scores when responding to a prompt requiring general knowledge and specific knowledge respectively?
2. Do the two prompts have different effects on specific textual features in ESL students' writing in terms of content (quality of ideas, position taking, idea development, and idea wrap-up), organization (coherence and cohesion), and language (length, accuracy, and academic words)?
3. How do participants perceive their writing performances for the prompts requiring general and specific knowledge respectively?

Your literature review?

- **Questions?**