Integrated reading and writing tests: assessing the academic writing construct

Christopher Smith

University of Sheffield

ELTC

Overview

- **Academic writing**
- **Reading-to-write tests**
- **The new reading-to-write test**
- **The ratings scale**
- **Discussion**

The Domain: Academic Writing

Academic writing

Must be 'text-responsible'

(Leki and Carson, 1997)

Academic writing

- **Relies on sources, not anecdotes.**

(Moore and Morton 2005)

Academic writing

- **Relies on sources, not anecdotes.**
- **Citations and references**

(Moore and Morton 2005)

Academic writing

- **Relies on sources, not anecdotes.**
- **Citations and references**
- **Summarisation and description**

(Moore and Morton 2005)

Academic writing

- **Informational**
- **Impersonal / abstract**
- **Non-narrative**
- **Not generally persuasive**
- **Not situation dependent**

(Nesi and Gardner 2012)

Academic writing

- **Knowledge demonstration**
- **Logical reasoning**
- **Knowledge translation**
- **Developing arguments**
- **Critical evaluation**

(Nesi and Gardner 2012)
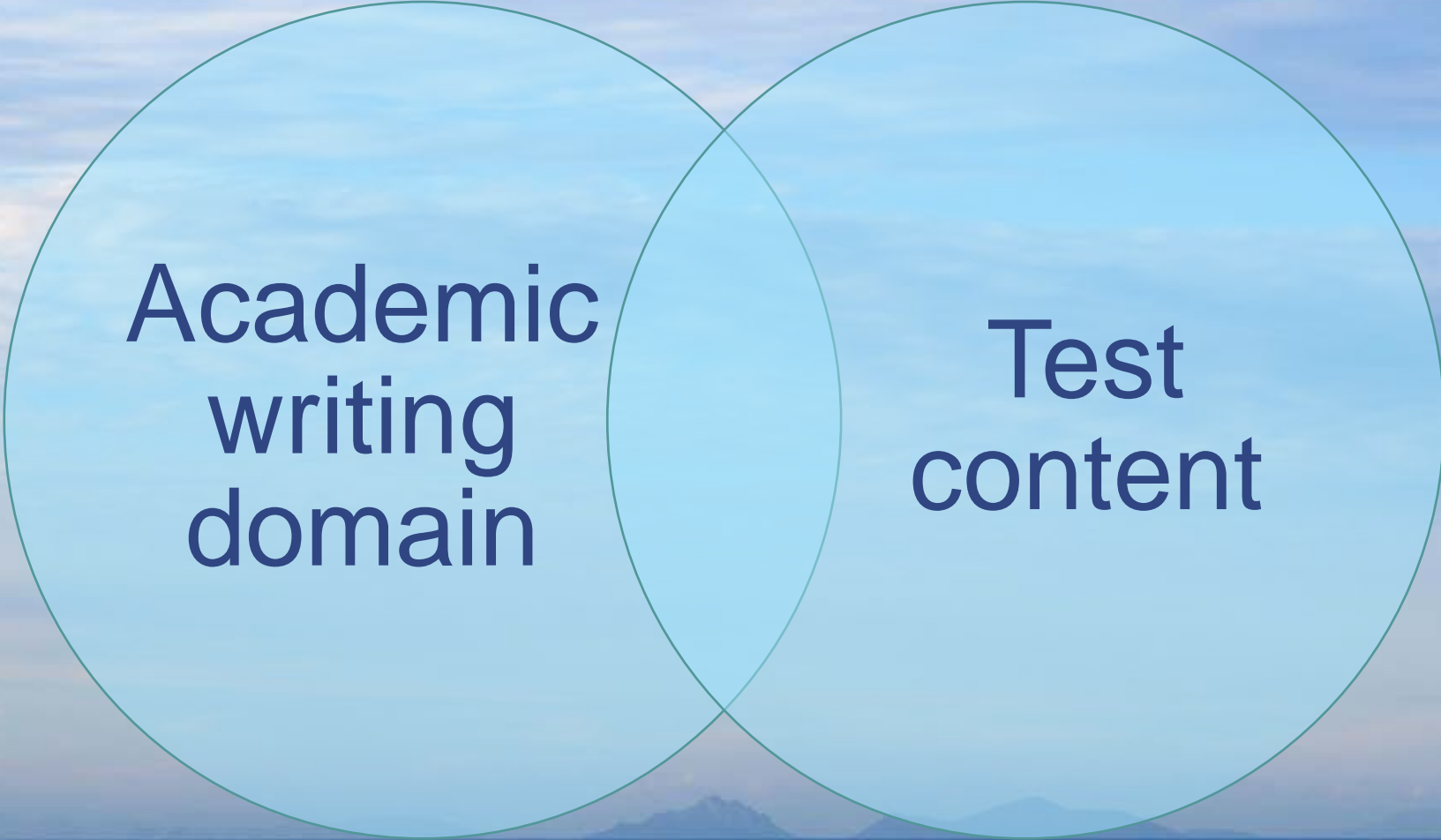
Testing academic writing

Why is this important?

Testing academic writing

Why is this important?

- **Validity of score interpretation and use**

Testing academic writing

Academic writing domain

Test content

Testing academic writing

Why is this important?

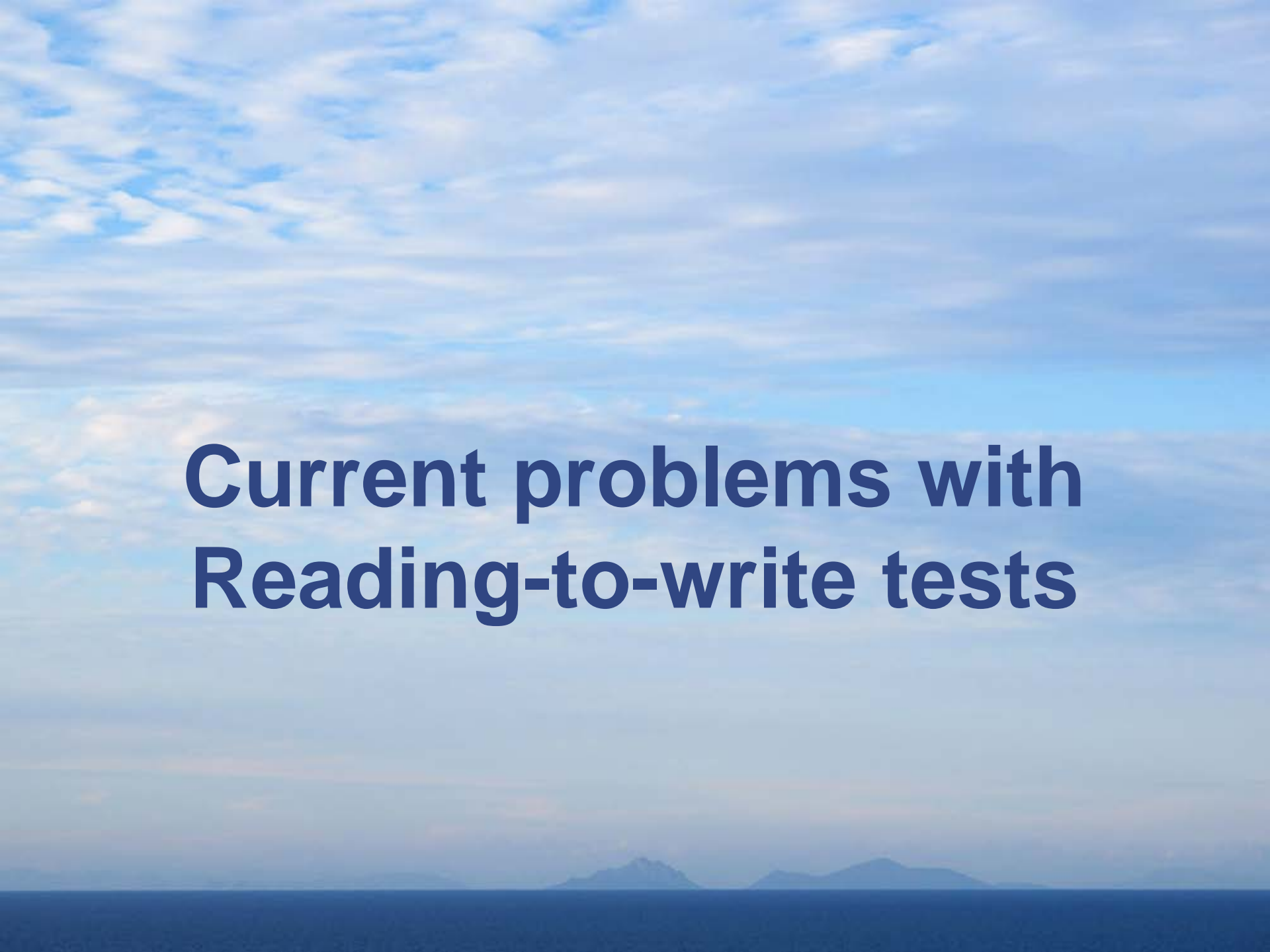- **Validity of score interpretation and use**
- **Positive washback**

Testing academic writing

Why have an exam?

Testing academic writing

Why have an exam?

Why design a new test?

Current problems with Reading-to-write tests

Integrated Tasks Overview

1. Mining texts
2. Synthesising ideas
3. Language transformation
4. Organisational structure
5. Connecting ideas

(Knoch and Sitajalabhorn, 2013)

Integrated Tasks Overview

1. **Mining texts**
2. **Synthesising ideas**
3. **Language transformation**
4. **Organisational structure**
5. **Connecting ideas**
6. *Criticality – commenting on texts*

Reading-to-write test task 1

1. Summary of a text
2. Opinion essay on the topic of the text

(Asención Delaney, 2008; Wu, 2013)

Reading-to-write test task 1

- **Summary task**
  - **No critical evaluation**

Reading-to-write test task 1

- **Summary task**
  - **No critical evaluation**
- **Opinion essay**
  - **Not text-responsible**

Reading-to-write test task 1

- **Summary task**
  - **No critical evaluation**
- **Opinion essay**
  - **Not text-responsible**
- **Both tasks on the same topic**
  - **Risk of topic bias**

Reading-to-write test task 2

- **Read 2-3 texts,**
- **Write essay on position**
- **Elicits discourse synthesis**

(Gebril & Plakans, 2009, 2013; Plakans & Gebril, 2012; Plakans, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Wolfersberger, 2013)

Reading-to-write test task 2

Some people believe that global warming is damaging our planet. Others believe that global warming is not a serious problem.

Which point of view do you agree with? Why?

Give reasons and support your writing with examples.

(Gebril & Plakans, 2009)

Reading-to-write test task 2

- **Test-wiseness strategy**

Reading-to-write test task 2

- **Test-wiseness strategy**
- **Undermines content validity**

Reading-to-write test task 2

- **Logical reasoning**
- **Evidence → position**

Reading-to-write test task 2

- **Logical reasoning**
- **Evidence → position**
- **Position → find evidence in support**

Reading-to-write test task 2

- **Logical reasoning**
- **Evidence → position**
- **Position → find evidence in support**
- **Confirmation bias**

Reading-to-write test task 2

Fundamental problem:

Asks for personal response to topic

Reading-to-write test task 3

- **TOEFL iBT**
- **Integrated task**
  - **Reading then listening**
  - **Then write about differences**
- **Independent task**
  - **Opinion essay on different topic**

Reading-to-write test task 3

Summarize the main points made in the lecture, being sure to explain how they oppose specific points made in the reading passage.

ETS Website; http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL/pdf/SampleQuestions.pdf;

date accessed: 31/01/2014

Reading-to-write test task 3

- **Multiple tasks better than one**

  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)

Reading-to-write test task 3

- **Multiple tasks better than one**

  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)

- **Integrated task: no personal response**

Reading-to-write test task 3

- **Multiple tasks better than one**
  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)
- **Integrated task: no personal response**
- **Independent task: different topic**

Reading-to-write test task 3

- **Multiple tasks better than one**

  (Weir, 2005; Weigle, 2002)

- **Integrated task: no personal response**

- **Independent task: different topic**

- **Lack of critical evaluation**

The New Reading-to-Write Test

The New Reading-to-Write Test

- **Two texts**
  - **Simplified language**
  - **Opposing viewpoints**

The New Reading-to-Write Test

What are the differences between the arguments in the two texts?

Which do you think is stronger, and why?

The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Summary – Yes
2. Paraphrase – Yes

The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Summary – Yes
2. Paraphrase – Yes
3. Referencing – Sometimes
4. Critical thinking – Usually

The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Mining texts – Yes
2. Synthesising ideas – Yes
3. Language transformation – Yes
4. Organisational structure – Yes

The New Reading-to-Write Test

1. Mining texts – Yes
2. Synthesising ideas – Yes
3. Language transformation – Yes
4. Organisational structure – Yes
5. Connecting ideas – Not so much
6. Criticality – Not always

The New Reading-to-Write Test

- **(Introduction)**
- **Summary 1**
- **Summary 2**
- **Judgement**

The New Reading-to-Write Test

- **What are the differences between the arguments in the two texts?**

The New Reading-to-Write Test

- **What are the differences between the arguments in the two texts?**

- **Summarise the arguments in the two texts.**

The New Reading-to-Write Test

- **Which do you think is stronger, and why?**

The New Reading-to-Write Test

- **Which do you think is stronger, and why?**

- **Using evidence from the texts, show which argument is better and why.**

The marking criteria

The marking criteria

1. Used exact words from CEFR

   "Can do" changed to "has done"

The marking criteria

1. **Used exact words from CEFR**

   "Can do" changed to "has done"

2. **4 criteria; 8 levels;**

   Criteria not analytic

   Too many levels

The marking criteria

1. Used exact words from CEFR

   "Can do" changed to "has done"

2. 4 criteria; 8 levels;

   Criteria not analytic

   Too many levels

3. 8 criteria; 4 levels

   Yet to be trialled

Discussion

- **The new test**
- **The marking criteria**

Thank you

References

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