

Effects of Topic Familiarity on Linguistic Aspects in EFL Learners' Writing Performance

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Abstract : The current study aimed to investigate the effects of topic familiarity and language proficiency on linguistic aspects (lexical complexity, syntactic complexity, accuracy, and fluency) in EFL learners' argumentative essays. For the study 64 college students were asked to write an argumentative essay for the two different topics (Driving and Smoking) chosen by the consideration of topic familiarity. The students were divided into two language proficiency groups (high-level and intermediate) according to their English writing proficiency. The findings of the study are as follows: 1) the participants of this study exhibited lower levels of lexical and syntactic complexity as well as accuracy when performing writing tasks with unfamiliar topics; and 2) they demonstrated the use of a wider range of vocabulary, and longer and more complex structures, and produced accurate and lengthier texts compared to their intermediate peers. Discussion and pedagogical implications for instruction of writing classes in EFL contexts were addressed.

Keywords : topic familiarity, complexity, accuracy, fluency

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