# The International Research Foundation
## for English Language Education

**Title of Project:**
Validating the Writing Part B of GSEEE:
Investigating the Prompt Topic Effect

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**TIRF Research Topic Investigated:**
Language Assessment

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**Project Summary:**
This study intends to validate a writing component of a national large-scale high-stakes test in China. Specifically, it will investigate the prompt-topic effect of this writing task. *Prompt-topic effect* refers to the potential threat to the validity of a test that may result from topical factors (Jennings et al., 1999). Studies have shown that prompt topics can have a substantial effect on test takers' performance (e.g., He & Shi, 2012; Sun, 2016). Although studies on this topic have been conducted with both international large-scale high-stakes English tests and national ones in China, one important nation-wide high-stakes test, the Graduate School Entrance English Examination (GSEEE), has long be ignored. Therefore, this study will make an attempt to investigate the prompt-topic effect of the writing task in the GSEEE on test takers' writing performance to evaluate if the prompt topics are construct-irrelevant factors.

Based on the prompt topics used in the GSEEE in the past decade (2009-2019), Three representative prompt topics from the original GSEEE test papers will be selected as targets in this study. One hundred and twenty potential test takers will be invited to perform the tasks. Three experienced EFL teachers will be recruited as raters. Multi-faceted Rasch measurement will be used to analyze the prompt topic effect on test takers' writing scores, and Coh-Metrix will be used to generate a fine-grained analysis of the textual features of the task responses. It is intended that the study's findings will offer valuable insights to relevant test designers and decision-makers.