Bridging the Gap -
The Potential of Contrastive Rhetoric in Teaching L2 Writing

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Abstract

Teachers of L2 classes are well- aware of students' struggle with the rhetorical patterns and they try a number of methods and strategies to acquaint their students with the expectations of native readers in terms of those rhetorical patterns. Contrastive Rhetoric was initially thought of as a mighty way out to this struggle of L2 writers. The insights gained from the studies on Contrastive Rhetoric, however, have remained underutilized or unutilized. This paper weighs the possibility of using contrastive rhetoric in teaching L2 writing and argues that Contrastive Rhetoric can be used in teaching L2 writing.

Introduction – Contrastive Rhetoric

Writing in the target language has always remained a challenge for second language writers. Their incompetence in writing is often attributed to the negative transfer from their first languages (Kaplan, 1972).

Contrastive Rhetoric over the past thirty years has strived to find out the influence of first language and culture on second language writing. Researchers (e.g., Connor 1987; Hinds 1997; Clyne 1987; Kaplan 1966, 1988) have studied differences of rhetorical patterns

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across cultures and have come up with findings that have potential pedagogical implications for teaching second language writing.

However, despite the initial pedagogical aim of contrastive rhetoric, the insights gained by research have not been effectively translated into the practice of teaching organizational structures (Leki 1997; Matsuda 1997). Kaplan (1988) says, "contrastive rhetoric is not a *methodology* for teaching, though some of its findings can be (and indeed have been) applied to the teaching process since its inception" (p.289) .In this paper, on the basis of the findings of text analysis and expert opinion, I will argue that contrastive rhetoric can facilitate L2 writing.

What is Contrastive Rhetoric?

According to Connor (1996), "contrastive rhetoric is an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them" (p.5).

This field of study began with the publication of the article "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-cultural Education" in 1966 by Robert Kaplan. Kaplan's basic assumption was that rhetorical aspects of each language are unique to each language and culture. This assumption implies that second language writers' writing proves inefficient in the eyes of native readers of the target language as the skills acquired from their first language interfere.

The aim of contrastive rhetoric is to help second language writers understand the rhetorical conventions and reader expectations in the target language by examining the differences and similarities of writing in their first and second languages.

Differences in ESL and NES Writing

Research which has been carried out on the differences between the writing of ESL and NES writers show that the ESL writing across cultures differ from NES writing in various aspects. Most of these differences have been analyzed through the use of text analysis, which is the most widely used approach of contrastive rhetoric to compare texts across languages, cultures, and disciplines.

Kaplan (1988) says "despite the fact that it arose from a pedagogical motive, contrastive rhetoric belongs to the tradition of text analysis" (p. 278).

Scholars (e.g., Connor, Casanave and so forth) believe that by comparing and analyzing the texts produced by English as a Second Language (ESL) and Native English Speaking (NES) writers, L2 writing teachers as well as students can gain insights about the

similarities and differences in text patterns in English and other languages. I would like to summarize the findings of some of the most important studies in various aspects of text organization which, I do believe, will help L2 writing teachers as well as students to understand writing across languages and cultures.

(a) General Organizational Patterns

Studies have found that there are differences in general organizational pattern across languages. Norment (cited in Silva, 1997) found distinct linear organizational patterns in native speakers of English, centrifugal patterns in those of Chinese, and linear patterns with tangential breaks in native Spanish writers.

Chinese

Kaplan (cited in Connor, 1996), argues that Chinese as well as other "oriental" writing is indirect. A subject is not discussed directly in Chinese writing but is approached from a variety of indirectly related views. Kaplan (1972) mentions that this "indirectness" is due to the influence of "eight-legged essay", a traditional standard essay form also recognized in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore for expository and persuasive writing.

Arabic

Kaplan and Ostler (cited in Connor, 1996) have claimed that Arabic writing has a series of parallel constructions which often interferes with ESL writing. It has been suggested that this style is influenced by the forms of classical Arabic, as found in the Koran.

In Arabic, coordination is preferred to subordination. In stead of developing paragraphs in the manner of English (a general statement followed by a series of specific examples), Arabic develops paragraph through a series of negative and positive parallel constructions.

Ostler also finds a significantly higher number of coordinated sentences   and more discourse units; often begun with a superordinate, universal statement, and ended with some type of formulaic or proverbial statement.

Japanese

Hinds has conducted an extensive research on Japanese-English contrasts. Hinds (cited in Connor, 1996) found that the Japanese compositions had *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu* or four unit pattern. The introduction of *ten* part is connected but not directly associated to the rest of the text. It leads the English reader to consider Japanese expository prose incoherent.

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Hinds (1990) claimed that writing in Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean follows an organizational pattern which he termed "quasi-inductive" as opposed to the deductive pattern followed by English speaking writers.

Burtoff (cited in Silva, 1997) reports distinct patterns of logical relations in the text of native speakers of English, Arabic and Japanese. Her study shows that NES subjects use specific details and organize information in a text to form a 'theme-rheme' pattern what Kaplan has termed linear pattern. The native Japanese speaking subjects repeat facts or ideas for emphasis, and include only logically related information. They end texts or segments of texts with generalizations, and use adversative relations in clauses.

Some Contrasts

Burtoff finds that her native Arabic-speaking subjects prefer to "explain by example and organizing information in arguments of equal weight" (p.211). They structure organization horizontally rather than vertically.

Eggington (1987) has studied the Korean text and has found that Korean texts are featured by indirectness and nonlinear development.

In the German- English contrast, Clyne (1983) found that the German writers were more digressive and were less likely than the English writers to place topic sentences early in a paragraph or to define terms.

Connor (1996) summarizes the studies of English-Spanish contrastive rhetoric by Santiago, and Santana-Seda. The studies suggest that the native Spanish speaking writers prefer elaborate and ornate language, with perhaps a leaning toward the loose association of clauses.

Cmejrokova (cited in Connor 1996) reports that Czech writing is featured by a large number of nominalizations, overloaded phrases, delayed purpose, baroqueness, associativeness, and multiplicity of standpoints.

In terms of overall text organization of Finnish writers, Mauranen (1993) found that they tended to place their main points towards the end of the text, as opposed to Anglo-Americans. Finns had also a tendency to leave the main point implicit whereas Anglo-Americans seemed to repeat it rather than leave it unsaid.

(b) Argument Structure

Argumentative writing is what the ESL writers feel most uneasy with. Studies show that different argument structures exist between NES and NNES as well as among NES. Quite a few researchers have studied the differences in argument structure in NES and ESL

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writers. Studies by Choi, Connor, Connor and Lauer, Mahmoud, Oi, Ouaouicha, Matalene (cited in Silva, 1997) are summarized below:

In a functional analysis of arguments written by NES and Arabic, Mahmoud reports that the native Arabic speakers did "less stating of conditions, less defining, and less identifying, and less exemplifying but used more warning and phatic communion"(p.212). Arabic speakers do not state and support their positions fully and tend to develop their arguments by restating their positions. The Arabic speakers' texts are also reported to exhibit less paragraphing, less rhetorical connectedness, a looser segmental structure, less variety, and less explicit formal closure.

Oi finds her native-Japanese speaking subjects using more "mixed arguments (arguing both for and against) and argument alterations (between arguing for and arguing against)" (p.212). Their ending is found to be different from the beginning positions. Her Japanese subjects use more hedges and fewer superlatives and they are found to be 'more tentative and less hyperbolic than their NES peers.

In his comparative study between NES and Arabic argumentative writing, Ouaouicha, reports that the native speakers of Arabic provide more data but "fewer claims, warrants, backings, and rebuttals than their NES counterparts" (p.212). He also reports that the Arabic speakers less often fulfill the task, use fewer ethos in their arguments, address the audience less often, and express more pathos.

Choi' in his two studies between Korean and English reports that some elements like claim, justification, and conclusion were missing in some of the Koreans' texts. He finds the Korean text inductive. In the second study, Choi notes differences in argument structure between the two groups—the NES subjects prefer a claim-justification-conclusion pattern; the native Korean speakers, a situation-problem-solution-conclusion pattern.

Connor and Lauer (1988) studied argumentative essays of fifty English speaking students each from England, New Zealand and the United States. No significant difference in the use of the superstructure of arguments was found but there was a significant difference, on other persuasive variables tested (setting-problem- solution-evaluation) among the groups. In the Toulmin analysis of reasoning (claim-data-warrant), the U.S. compositions as one group were significantly lower than the English and New Zealand compositions. Furthermore, the U.S. compositions were significantly lower on use of persuasive appeals.

Matalene (cited in Connor, 1996), observes that Chinese ESL students' writing arguments are often delayed, include narration, and use statements that seem unconnected in the eyes of the Western reader.

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All these studies indicate that argument structures differ across cultures. Even among the NES argument structures differ.

(c) Coherence

It appears from studies that ESL writing lacks coherence as defined by western writing practices. According to Connor (1996), cohesion does not create coherence, instead, to be coherent; texts need to make sense to the reader. Two theories for the definition of coherence have emerged among which the one that emphasizes the interaction between the reader and the text have prevailed. Connor (1996) suggests that the application of coherence theories can improve writing instructions. One particularly promising attempt to describe discourse-based coherence, which is applicable directly to writing instruction, is topical structure analysis.

Williams (cited in Connor, 1996) provides a contrastive analysis of English and Arabic theme-rheme progression in the development in the coherence of texts. According to him, Arabic texts contain exact coreference of the theme in sentence after sentence as well as repetition of lexical items for esthetic or cohesive reasons. Matalene, (cited in Connor, 1996) is of the opinion that Chinese rhetoric lacks argumentative coherence because of its reliance on appeals of history, tradition and authority and its frequent reference to historical and religious texts as well as proverbs. Connor's study on coherence (cited in Silva ,1997) reports that her ESL subjects' texts had less adequate justification of claims and were less likely to link concluding inductive statements to the preceding subtopics of the problem.

(d) Textual Structures

In terms of communication goals, different textual structures have different effect on reader. In other words, different text structures may be more or less effective for different communication goals. Study by Carrell, 1984; Meyer et al, 1980 (cited in Carrell, 1987) on reading comprehension have found that the *descriptive* type of organization was the least effective while text organized with a *comparison, problem/solution,* or *causation* type was more effective in communicating with the reader. Another study by Meyer (cited in Carrell, 1987) shows that when writers use express signaling devices, there is a facilitating effect on reading comprehension.

(e) Audience

Readers' involvement with the text is not the same across languages and cultures. If ESL writers lack clear idea about what their readers expect, their writing in all probability, will fail to communicate. Contrastive rhetoricians (e.g., Leki,1991; Hinds,1987;) strongly believe that different reader expectations are the primary reason for cross-cultural

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differences in writing styles and that students should be made aware of these differences by their teachers.

According to Leki (1991), it is important for ESL teachers to make their students aware of the following: English speaking readers are convinced by facts, statistics, and illustrations in argument; they move from generalizations to specific examples and expect explicit links between main topics and subtopics; and they value originality.

In English, the person primarily responsible for communication is the writer, while in other languages such as Japanese, Korean, the responsibility lies with the reader (Hinds, 1987). ESL writers from a Japanese language background might need to be taught that the should not necessarily assume that there is a "sympathetic reader who believes that a reader's task is to ferret out whatever meaning the author has intended" (Hinds, 1987: 152).

According to Casanave (2004), readers of academic English do not wish to struggle to understand a writer's message, they want to get through the material fast and yet still have their thinking provoked. They prefer clearly introduced and structurally coherent writing. For English readers, organizational unity is important because readers expect, and require, landmarks along the way. Transition statements are important as well. It is the writer's task to provide appropriate transition statements so that the reader can piece together the thread of the writer's logic which binds the composition together. Hinds(1990) says that English readers are familiar with 'strictly' deductive organizational pattern.

ESL students display a tremendous lack of analytical skills in their academic writing. We find an excellent description of the characteristics of a 'good analytical writing' in the eyes of the English reader in Fox (1994).

In her study, Fox finds that a 'good analytical writing' is featured by an array of activities on the part of the writer. It includes setting down a clear, step-by step, transparently logical progression of ideas, examining a variety of ideas and opinion critically and creating an original interpretation that shows, very explicitly and directly, the writer's point of view. It wants the writer to use reference materials to add evidence and authority to his/her own argument, and to weave together material from a variety of sources into a pattern that "make sense" to the reader. The writer should "attribute ideas to individual author with meticulous care" (p. 18). In an analytical writing the writer is expected to speak with a voice of authority and to come to specific "reasoned conclusion" through judgments and recommendations. A writer should write sparsely and directly and should avoid digressions and embellishments. A paragraph or section should begin with a general, analytical statement and be followed by pertinent example.

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A reader comprehends a text on the basis of his background knowledge which has been called schemata. According to Carrell & Eisterhold (1983), a good writing provides sufficient clues in the text for the reader "to effectively utilize a bottom-up processing mode to activate schemata the reader may already possess" (p.)

(f) Criteria of Good Writing

The criteria of good writing in the eyes of evaluators differ across languages. Li (1996) in her study compared the responses of four U.S. and mainland Chinese teachers to six students' essays. The U.S. teachers appreciated logic and a clear opening while their Chinese counterparts appreciated an essay that expressed sentiment, natural scenes, and a moral message. As to writer's responsibility in English, Ramanathan & Kaplan (1996) say that the writer should present relevant information regarding the topic in question in order to communicate effectively.

English readers want to hear the writer's voice. They expect the writer to take a position on the basis of a critical analysis of what the author says. Ramanathan & Kaplan (1996) talk about the implication of audience and voice in L2 writing. According to them, knowing for whom students write will create a clear sense of audience and enable them to present clearer and strongly individualized voices. They identify a number of features of a "good" argumentative writing in relation to audience and voice.

A good essay has a focus and other points are subordinate to this larger focus. A strong argument deals with an issue that divides an audience. A strong argument's persuasive quality depends on how writers "borrow and stitch together bits of "old" texts to create a "new" text" (p.26). A strong argument shows the evidence of critical thinking and "incorporates values".

Writing involves rethinking one's beliefs/ values and this process is a necessary component of developing one's voice. A sound argument weighs audience's needs. An effective argument recognizes counter positions and alternative viewpoints. Ramanathan & Kaplan (1996: 27)

(g) The Role of Voice

Regarding the importance of voice, Shen (1989) says, "rule number one in English composition is: Be yourself." (p.460). While sharing his experiences on adapting to the writing conventions and reader expectations in English, Shen tells us that more than one of his composition instructor told him "Just write what *you* think"(p.461). The importance of voice is more clearly conveyed when Shen says—
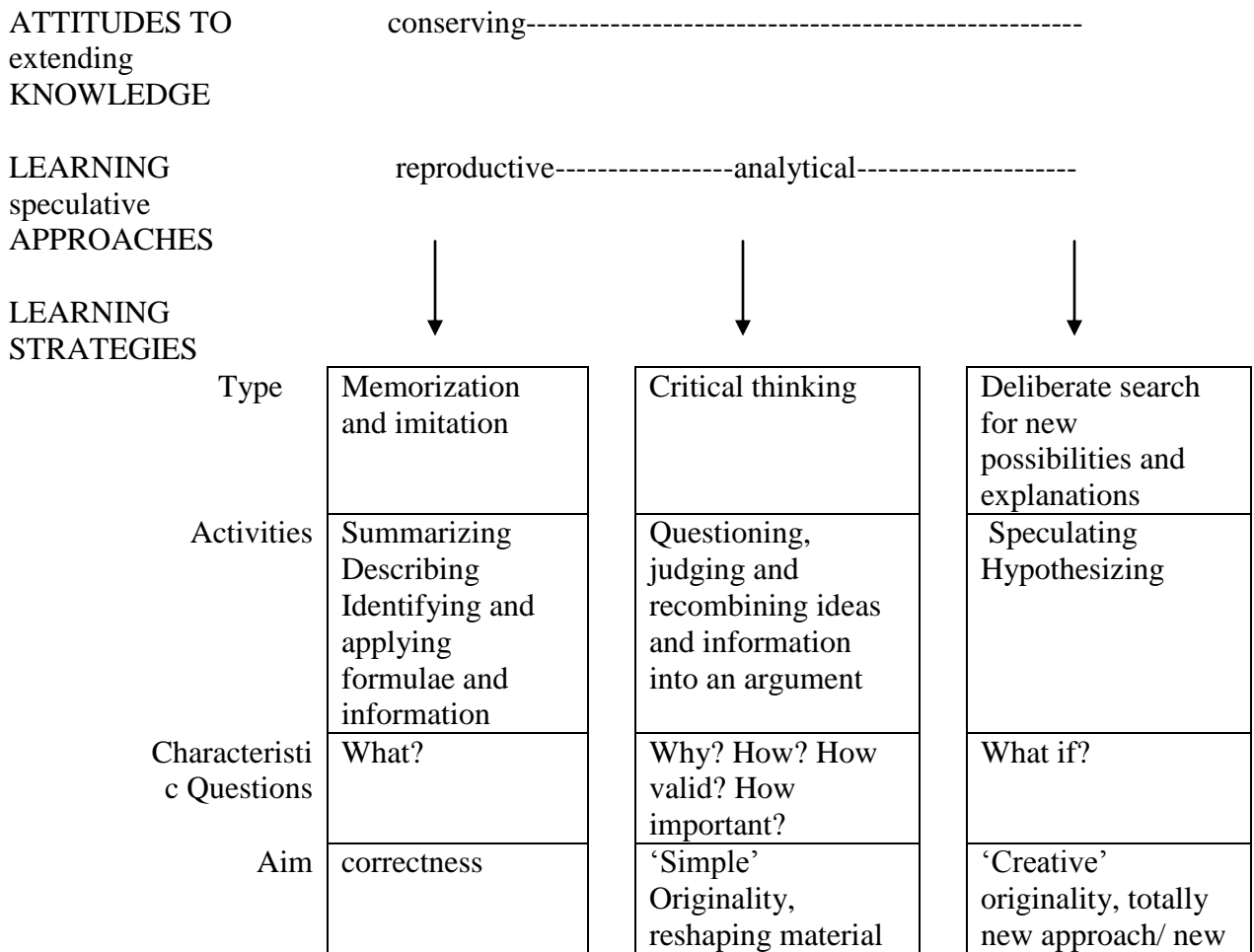
> Now, in America, I had to learn to accept the words "I" and "self" as something glorious (as Whitman did), or at least something not to be

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ashamed or embarrassed about. It was the first and probably the biggest step I took into English composition and critical writing (p.460).

Tic, the subject of John's (1992) study, also corroborates the importance of voice – "I could write about what I wanted to. The teacher liked to hear *my* stories" (p.188)

Cultural Attitude towards Knowledge

Some researchers are of the opinion that Cultural background of the writer strongly influences, if not determines, the organizational structures. The major proponents of this view are Ballard and Clanchy**.** According to Ballard and Clanchy (1991), the attitude towards knowledge differs from culture to culture and it has a profound impact on students' writing. Ballard and Clanchy (1991) talked about a continuum of attitudes to knowledge ranging from "conserving" to "extending knowledge". In the following diagram Ballard and Clanchy (1991) explain this continuum of attitudes and the approaches for learning:

ATTITUDES TO   conserving--
extending
KNOWLEDGE

LEARNING   reproductive-----------------analytical--------------------
speculative
APPROACHES

LEARNING
STRATEGIES

	Type	Memorization and imitation	Critical thinking	Deliberate search for new possibilities and explanations
Activities		Summarizing Describing Identifying and applying formulae and information	Questioning, judging and recombining ideas and information into an argument	Speculating Hypothesizing
Characteristic Questions		What?	Why? How? How valid? How important?	What if?
Aim		correctness	'Simple' Originality, reshaping material	'Creative' originality, totally new approach/ new

| | into a different pattern. | knowledge |

The Reproductive Approach

Some parts of the world, especially Asia, adopt what Ballard and Clanchy claim, the reproductive approach to learning that favors strategies of memorization and imitation.

Critical questioning of either the teacher or text is "strongly discouraged" in those parts of the world (p.23). In the Western part of the world, however, students are required "to analyze, to criticize, to question, to evaluate" (p.23). Apart from this, the Western teachers want their students "to adopt critical stance not merely to the issues, points of view, and evidence raised in the course of lectures and class discussions, but equally to the theories, data and conclusions offered by the foremost scholars in the field" (p.23).

Ballard and Clanchy claim that in the Western academia, students are told that it is not "presumptuous to raise questions about the wisdom of respected scholars— it is "mandatory" (p.23) .They also claim that in "many Asian traditions there is a strong resistance to critical analysis and there is no pressure on students to evaluate or reach conclusions about serious matters of controversy" (p.33).

Overgeneralization

In the East, knowledge is treated as wisdom and there is no scope for questioning or analysis. This attitude to knowledge, according to Ballard and Clanchy (1991), is largely responsible for the differences between Eastern and Western writing.

It appears that Ballard and Clanchy's claim about the oriental attitude towards knowledge is overgeneralized and oversimplified. It is not clear on what basis Ballard and Clanchy made the claim that Asian students are "strongly discouraged" from critical questioning of either the teacher or the text. This kind of generalization is simplistic and reductionist and creates an ethnocentric barrier between people of different cultures and languages. Leki (1997), comments that this kind of explanation for behavioral differences "risks turning ESL students into cardboard characters whose behavior is simply determined by cultural norms and who has no individual differences or subtleties obscured by these behaviors" (p. 239).

Ballard and Clanchy seem to imply that, since Asian students do not criticize publicly in their first culture, they are devoid of the ability to criticize. Leki (1997) suggests that one has only to become closer with these students to find that they "most certainly can and do criticize not only teachers but also institutions and other authorities." (p.239). She refers

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to the Chinese revolution of 1949 and demonstration at Tiananmen Square in 1989 to show that these students have the ability and willingness to criticize.

Ballard and Clanchy's view neglects the agency of the writer in the discourse construction. Matsuda (1997) is critical of this view. Under this view, says Matsuda, "the writer is seen as a "writing machine", as it were, that creates text by reproducing the pattern provided by his or her linguistic, cultural or educational background" (p.51).

Organization of Written Documents

Teaching of organization would be difficult, if not impossible; if Ballard and Clancy's view that the writing is determined wholly by the writer's background, which constitutes his or her linguistic and cultural identity, is accepted. Organization of written discourse is not determined solely by who the writer is.

Writers have their own intention and by claiming that they are limited by their culture, the active role of the writer is overlooked. It also overlooks the diversity within the culture itself.

It has been corroborated by the study of Connor and Lauer (1988), where they found differences in writing styles among the NES writers. Zamel (1997) suggests that, such an attitude tends to lead us to think the ESL students as less capable of thinking or analyzing critically which ultimately limit "our expectations of students, underconceptualize the reading and writing we ask students to do, and reduce instruction to what Fox (1994) herself recognizes is a "caricature" (p.26) of genuine academic work" (p.343). Raimes (1998) asserts that this kind of view stereotypes students of the same linguistic background regardless of the contexts and prior experiences.

More on Western Students' Skills

Ballard and Clanchy claim that Western students are good at critical thinking as they are required to "to criticize" "to question" "to evaluate" in their academic life. However this does not seem to be the fact. Currie (1999) observes that in some undergraduate courses, teachers are not very "enthusiastic" about critical thinking. Currie found that "the emphasis is not on analytic thinking but rather on information retrieval and recognizing the correct answer" (p.342). Ballard and Clanchy's claim indirectly indicates that Asian students are not as good as their Western counterparts in terms of critical thinking. However, study (e.g., Johns, 1992) shows that Asian students are capable of critical thinking. Tic, the subject of Johns' study demonstrates a sophisticated capability of critical analysis.

Ballard and Clanchy blame the reproductive attitude towards knowledge for memorization and imitation. It is possible that memorization and imitation are prevalent

in oriental countries not because of attitude but because of the types of evaluation. Evaluation in many oriental countries is featured by 100%final examination. If evaluation scheme is modified by incorporating in-class presentation, journal writing, temp paper and so forth, the students might get rid of rote memorization and imitation.

How Contrastive Rhetoric Can Be Helpful in L2 Writing

Scholars (e.g., Connor, Grabe, Hinds, Kaplan, Leki, Matsuda, Purves, Silva) maintain that contrastive rhetoric has tremendous utility for L2 writing. According to Kaplan (1988), different composing conventions do exist in different cultures and these conventions need to be taken into account in teaching L2 writing. A student's ability to compose in one language does not mean the student can compose in other language. Difference in reader/writer responsibility across cultures affects assumption about audience and about shared knowledge. Kaplan (1988) acknowledges that contrastive rhetoric is constrained "by the absence of a rigorous paradigm" and by other considerations like the emic /etic problem, the difficulty of comparing text forms and so on. (p.297).

Nevertheless, the realities of teaching can not be put aside until all the problems are solved. Kaplan strongly believes that contrastive rhetoric can "influence" the teaching of L2 writing. Kaplan (2001) asserts that contrastive rhetoric can facilitate writing in English, creative use of the L2, and the ability to express one's ideas in text in the L2.

Implications of Contrastive Rhetoric

Contrastive rhetoric has implication for any population that, for whatever reasons, brings deviant rhetorical practices to texts written in English for English readers. It is conceived as a means of understanding English rhetoric, creating English discourse, and thereby achieving communication with the target audiences. Kaplan (2001) holds that understanding the rhetorical deviations apparent in languages would "bridge the gap between cultural encoding and decoding" (p.4). ESL teachers often attribute the writing difficulties of ESL writers to cognitive inability. Purves, (cited in Panetta, 2001), believes that contrastive rhetoric will enable ESL writing instructors to understand that "differences among rhetorical patterns do not represent differences in cognitive ability, but differences in cognitive style. (p.4)"

Matsuda (1997) says that the need for ESL writers to learn how to organize English written discourse still exists. The findings of contrastive rhetoric research have provided teachers with some insights that can "guide their decisions in developing curriculum and in responding to ESL students' needs" (p.47).

According to Leki (1997), contrastive rhetoric is a liberating concept. She is of the opinion that without contrastive rhetoric "mismatches in L2 student writing and teacher

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expectations impugn the students, ability to write or the teachers' ability to read" (p.234). Leki believes that contrastive rhetoric allows ESL teachers to accept differences between their expectations and L2 students' writing by recognizing that the choices L2 students make in their writing originate in different and legitimate rhetorical histories. In stead of interpreting these differences as errors and looking for what is wrong with L2 students' writing, the teachers can "matter-of-factly" note their different expectations and "get down to the business of exchanging" what they want or need from one another (p.234).

Leki (1997) holds that with contrastive rhetoric, ESL writing instructors can come to see that *their* truth is not *the* truth and that, in reality, truth is a relative concept across cultures and languages. . Contrastive rhetorical analyses have greater potential for EFL writing teachers, particularly if the students have consciously learned contrasting text forms in their native languages. (Leki, 1991).

Apart from improving various aspects of writing, contrastive rhetoric might be of tremendous help in raising the self confidence and self-respect of ESL students. Leki (1991) suggests that contrastive rhetoric helps students get out of the inferiority complex by enabling them to understand that preferences in writing styles are culturally influenced. In the same vein, Purves, cited in Penetta (2001) believes that contrastive rhetoric can boost the confidence of ESL students by conveying the simple fact that they do not know about the rhetorical structures in the new culture , but they have the capability to learn the new convention if given ample opportunity.

Contrastive rhetoric findings support the view that the organizational structure of written discourse is a cultural phenomenon. Leki (1992) writes, for example "cultures evolve writing styles appropriate to their own histories and the needs of their societies" (p.90). The pedagogical application of this view involves the teaching of organizational structures that fit the cultural conventions shared by the audience of the target language. Matsuda (1997).Pointing out and realizing differences between rhetorics might help instructors and students analyze what represents successful communication among cultures.

Contrastive rhetoric helps explain why and how teachers should teach the expectations of the English-speaking audience to ESL writers. Hinds 1987; Ramanathan &Kaplan 1996; stress the need for building awareness of reader expectations across cultures. He claims that English is a writer responsible language whereas Japanese is a reader responsible language. Connor (1996; 1997; 2002) believes that cultural differences need to be explicitly taught in order to acculturate EFL writers to the target discourse community.

With the extensive globalization of business and professional communication, writing in such genres as letters, resumes and job application is becoming a reality for more and more people. Contrastive rhetoric findings might help people communicate more

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effectively across cultures around the globe. Connor (1996) also recommends the use of contrastive rhetoric in teaching of business and technical writing.

Textual Structure Analysis

Findings of textual structure analysis might help ESL students to recognize that there is a hierarchy in the content of texts which can be achieved through the use of outlines and signaling. Carrell (1987) opines that if L2 writing teachers help students with effective outlining, it may enable the students organize the content in a hierarchal structure within which the reader is able to make sense of the entire text.

In terms of communication goals, different textual structures have different effect on reader- they may be more or less effective. The success of a text involves comprehension of the reader. It is important to recognize and utilize text structures that help to achieve this goal better. Findings of text analysis can assist ESL writers in this regard. On the basis of her study, Carrell (1987) asserts that, L2 writers should be taught the various types of structures so that they learn how to structure the texts to offer readers a better comprehension. As she puts it,

> "giving writers explicit instruction in how to structure texts differently according to the goals of a particular communication ought to lead to more effective written communication; i.e., writers ought to be able to achieve their goals" (p53).

Carrol and Eistherhold (1983) have also talked about the organization that might ensure a better reader comprehension in the target language.

Contrastive Rhetoric and Differences in Writing Across Disciplines

Contrastive rhetoric might benefit ESL writers by identifying the differences in writing across disciplines. For example, the sciences and social sciences restrict the use of personal pronouns, active-voice verbs, and stylish prose, while the humanities writers are often allowed or even encouraged. Also, there is a difference in the presentation of information across disciplines as they use different genres and writing conventions.

Ramanathan & Kaplan believe that this insight might "reduce the problems faced by nonnative English speaking students who currently must write in an unfamiliar essay genre for a vaguely defined general audience" (p.30).

Research (e.g., Stotsky, 1983) indicates that good readers are good writers. Being a good reader involves recognizing, interpreting and examining the linguistic and rhetorical features of the text that the writer may have chosen to facilitate the readers' process of

making meaning. Johns (1993) cited in Sengupta 1999) has also called for an awareness of real readers in the in the ESL writing classroom. Contrastive rhetoric might help ESL students raise rhetorical consciousness.

According to Sengupta (1999),such consciousness allows students to see how writers " write for their readers and the kinds of rhetorical and linguistic devices that typically make a text accessible to a reader" (p.293).Contrastive rhetoric can enhance learners' understanding of a "reader-friendly " text and influence their own writing and their "self-perception of writing abilities" (Sengupta,1999:295).

Criticisms of Contrastive Rhetoric

Despite the views of Kaplan and others, there have been studies which challenge the findings from contrastive rhetoric and criticize its value in teaching l2 writing. Some second language writing scholars (e.g., Zamel 1997) criticize contrastive rhetoric for its excessive bias for contrasts or differences in writing styles across cultures and voice doubts about the suitability of the findings of the studies for teaching second language writing. Mohan and Lo (1985) disagree with Kaplan's (1972) thesis of 'negative transfer'. Leki (1991) criticizes Kaplan's (1966) claim about the linearity of English writing; the validity of the selection of texts for comparison, and so forth.

Kaplan's (1972) claim that second language learners writing expository prose in English will show organizational patterns different from those of native speakers because of the fact that the learner is transferring rhetorical organization from the mother tongue and culture has been challenged by Mohan and Lo (1985). On the basis of their findings
Mohan and Lo (1985) argue that "transfer of rhetorical organization is more likely to help than to interfere" and that "negative transfer should be rejected as the sole explanation for student difficulty". They claim that native language plays some positive role which should not be ignored and it should also be studied whether a good at writing skill in the first language has an effect on writing in the second language.

Mohan and Lo in their study articulated that in stead of comparing and contrasting the influence of culture on rhetorical pattern, we should rather take into consideration the background education of the learners. In their study they found a huge difference in their Hong Kong and British Columbia subjects' learning experiences. While organization at the discourse level was stressed in the text books used in British Columbia schools, Hong Kong teachers were more concerned about sentence-level accuracy (e.g. grammatical correctness). Mohan and Lo hold students' lack of exposure to expository and argumentative writing as a cause of trouble in L2 writing. When they compared composition instruction in Vancouver and Hong Kong, they found that Hong Kong teachers emphasized the teaching of grammar, especially verb forms, but teachers in Vancouver were more concerned with teaching units larger than the sentence as well as with explaining and discussing organization and aspects of style.

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Mohan and Lo suggest that if there are differences in the ability of Chinese and Western students in terms of organization of essays, the source of the differences does not lie in a preference for "indirectness" in the   language and culture in Chinese. Rather it lies in the emphasis of the English language instruction. They also suggest that rhetorical abilities take some times to develop and previous education quickens or prolongs this acquisition process. As Mohan and Lo say,

> "ability in rhetorical organization develops late, even among writers who are native speakers, and because this ability is derived especially from formal education, previous educational experiences may facilitate or retard the development of academic writing ability. In other words we should be aware of the late development of composition ability across the board and pay particular attention to students' previous educational experience" (p.528)

Mohan and Lo seems to suggest that ESL writers will be able to acquire the conventions of writing in the target language if they are allowed time. The fact, however, is L2 writers are not able to catch up with the conventions of target discourse even after being in an ESL environment for quite some time. Mohan and Lo are of the opinion that previous education experience facilitated the writing of the Vancouver students as their teachers "were more concerned with teaching units larger than the sentence" Learning units larger than the sentence does not anyway guarantee composing in the target language. For example, a good many students from my home country (Bangladesh) suffer with their writing in western universities despite their having an English medium education background where they received the kind of language instruction what Mohan and Lo believe facilitate writing in the target language.

Leki's Arguments

Leki (1991) questions the very basis of Kaplan's assertion that English writing is linear. She asserts that in stead of looking at actual English writing, Kaplan relied on style manuals from the 1960s. She refers to the research of Braddock (1974) who has asserted that writing of professional native speaker English writers is not necessarily linear. They do not always begin with a topic sentence and move directly to support, and so on.

As to the reason why contrastive rhetoric is not favored by process advocates, Leki says that contrastive rhetoric research examines the product only, it does not take into account the processes the L2 writers go through to produce a text. Thus the findings applied for L2 writing become 'almost by definition' prescriptive.

According to Leki, the findings of modern contrastive rhetoric are "much less immediately importable into the ESL writing classroom than they once seemed." She holds that rhetorical

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cultures are more complex, dynamic, and protean than they were once thought to be. If this aspect of contrastive rhetoric is acknowledged, the prospect of contrastive rhetoric being used in the writing classroom becomes much less likely.

The second issue raised by Leki (1991) as to the applicability of contrastive rhetoric is the validity of rhetorical contexts from which the texts studied are drawn. Because it is not only difficult to select appropriate texts across cultures for comparison but also to ensure similarity in terms of textual types, purposes, readers, places of publication and other specifics of contexts from which their texts are drawn.. Dissimilarity between the two contexts compared will render the findings of contrastive rhetoric inapplicable to ESL classroom.

The other issue Leki (1991) draws attention to is the 'little pedagogical purpose' of contrastive rhetoric. The learners will not be benefited by learning about the particular style of writing in, for example, Japanese magazine articles if students are not writing Japanese magazine articles.

Leki admits that contrastive rhetoric studies have a great deal to offer in teaching writing in EFL contexts. However, the immediate practical uses of the findings of contrastive rhetoric, says Leki, are not clear. She thinks that ESL writing teachers will not be able to put the information that cultures approach writing differently, to good use. The teachers having no training in the specific rhetoric across cultures will eventually end up imposing typical English forms on all non native speakers regardless of their first language.

Leki argues that the findings of contrastive rhetoric may produce instant enlightenment for the students as the students suddenly become conscious of the implicit assumption in the target language but this sudden enlightenment does not guarantee sudden improvement. She refers to the study of Schlumberger and Mangelsdorf (1989). They directly lectured on some of the findings of contrastive rhetoric studies to one group of students, but this attention focused on contrastive rhetoric seemed to have no effect of the students subsequent writing compared with that of a control group. Leki refers to another study conducted by Quick, (1983) with native speakers. Quick found that even a profound cognitive awareness of rhetorical strategies does not necessarily translate into the ability to use that knowledge in actual writing.

Any Insistence on Particular Strategies?

Johns (1992) is concerned about insisting students that they adopt strategies that are characteristic of NES writers. She raises objections to ESL teachers' attempt to "make students into clones of successful native speakers" (p. 197).John suggests that instead of imposing native speaker "rules", the teachers should encourage ESL students "to do what works for them, whether it is theoretically correct at this point in time or not" (p. 197).

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Johns also states that the most important task for ESL teachers is to scaffold diverse students in their pursuits in the Western academia, and encourage their personal development. She stresses the need for ESL teachers to assist them in letting their voices be heard, since it is through them that we can better understand how individuals successfully adapt to new cultures. Johns has rather a lenient view in terms of ESL writing teachers' attempt to improve their students' writing. She thinks that ESL teachers' principal responsibility is to assist their students in recognizing and enhancing their abilities by adopting whatever ways the students think suit them.

Contrastive Rhetoric for Writing

Leki has reservations about the suitability of contrastive rhetoric for being used in L2 writing classes on the ground that rhetorical cultures are "more complex, dynamic, and protean than they were once thought to be" (P.). However, if contrastive rhetoric continues to expose the facets of the complex cultures, L2 writing teachers might be able to identify the similarities and differences in writing in the students' first culture and target culture, and it might help to scaffold the students.

Leki's second concern is that contrastive rhetoric deals only with product. However, since the product arises out of the process, the study of the product is bound to include the process as well. Leki's third reservation is about the validity of the rhetorical contexts. Rhetoricians admit that it is difficult to ensure similarity of rhetorical contexts. By being more careful about the selection of contexts researchers might overcome this limitation.

Leki says that she is not clear about the immediate practical uses of the findings of contrastive rhetoric. However, certain findings, for example, the preferred argument structure in English (i.e. deductive); sharing the responsibility for meaning, referred to as "writer responsible" and "reader responsible" (Hinds, 1987) might have important implication for educational practices. (Silva, 1997).

Leki fears that teachers having no training in the specific rhetoric across cultures will not be able to put the contrastive rhetoric findings to good use. However, if teacher training programs involve the study of the findings from contrastive rhetoric, and if teachers are made explicitly aware of the rhetorical differences across cultures, they may perhaps be able to use the findings of contrastive rhetoric to good use in teaching ESL writing. While they may not have the knowledge to the extent of a native speaker of that language or culture, they will, perhaps, gain some insight to scaffold their students to the target rhetoric.

Leki's claim that the "sudden enlightenment" that students get from contrastive rhetoric does not necessarily result in the improvement of writing is perhaps right. However, it is often the case that, what students learn in lectures needs to be strengthened through practice and implementation of that knowledge. If students are "enlightened" on the

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rhetorical conventions in the target language and at the same time made to practice those conventions in writing, it is quite possible that improvement is likely to follow.

Making Students Clones?

Johns' concern about ESL teachers' attempt to make students into clones of successful native speakers can be mitigated if ESL teachers do not attempt to teach the contrastive research findings in prescriptive way. If teachers just raise the consciousness of the student writers about the preferred conventions of writing in the target language and the expectations of the audience, and encourage them to incorporate those conventions into their writing, students will be benefited.

Implication for Research and Pedagogy

Silva (1997) is of the opinion that findings of the studies in contrastive rhetoric have important pedagogical implication for educational practices, placement, staffing and developing instructional procedures and strategies for ESL writers. The findings suggest that ESL writers requires a different kind of scaffolding and in stead of forcing them into mainstream, NES dominated writing classes, they should be provided with "credit-bearing, requirement fulfilling writing classes designed especially for them" (pp. 217).

The findings justify the notion that ESL writing teachers should be aware of, sympathetic to their students' socio-cultural, rhetorical and linguistic differences. Contrastive rhetoric has shown that ESL writers have different world views and approaches to writing which set their writing wide apart from their NES counterparts. Therefore, it has made it seem unreasonable on the part of the ESL evaluators to expect the same level of competency from their ESL students. As the studies demonstrate a lack of planning and generation of ideas in ESL students', they should be instructed how to include more work on planning and generation of ideas. NES writers do a number of drafts before they come to the finished product whereas ESL students' composing process is not featured by draft (Dennett; Silva, cited in Silva, 1997). ESL teachers can encourage their students to follow this writing procedure.

However, prior to applying the findings of contrastive rhetoric for teaching L2 writing, ESL teachers should take into consideration that the studies in contrastive rhetoric have some common limitations like small samples, inadequate descriptions of subjects or writing conditions, and a lack of reliability estimates or significance tests.(Silva ,1997).

Coherence continues to be difficult concepts for ESL students (Lee, 2002). Studies have found that ESL writing lacks coherence. Contrastive rhetoric findings can be used to teach coherence-creating devices used by writers in texts (Lee 2002).According to Lee, Knowledge of coherence in writing is particularly important for ESL learners since the concept of coherence may be different in L1 writing. Since the readers play an important

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role in the construction of coherence, it was felt important to take into account reader-based factors like purpose, audience, and context. Matsuda also is of the opinion that contrastive rhetoric can contribute to the teaching of ESL writing by exposing the possible sources of the apparent lack of coherence in ESL texts.

Kaplan (1988), however, suggests that teachers be cautious in their implementation of the findings of contrastive rhetoric. They should be sensitive to the cultures of their students and ensure that they do not create anxiety or impose a sense of obligation to adopt the target culture which might be counterproductive. Kaplan (1988) cautions,

> but remember, please, that at this stage you are not merely teaching the student to manipulate language –you are actually teaching him to see the world through English colored glasses. In doing so you are running the very serious risk of being legitimately accused of brainwashing (p.16).

Future Research

There should be more research to validate the findings of the studies conducted till date. Researchers should be more cautious in ensuring the similarity of the comparing contexts. Greater focus should be given in the area of NES and ESL composing process as there may be cross-cultural differences, Leki (1997). According to Silva (1997), there is a need for more and better research comparing ESL and NES writing. Silva wants future researchers to "do a better job of reporting subject variables, especially language proficiency and writing ability, make writing tasks and conditions more realistic, and analyze data more rigorously particularly –in coding reliability estimates and statistical significance testing.

More studies could be conducted to find out whether explicit classroom teaching of the findings of contrastive rhetoric leads to better writing. Researchers should go beyond English text; they should compare the L2 text with NES writing in other disciplines.

According to Leki (1997), the findings of contrastive rhetoric might be more directly useful to ESL writing teachers if "researchers broadened their scope by looking beyond texts written for English classes, by investigating possible contrasts in L2 and NES students' writing across the disciplines" (p.237)

Conclusion

From what has been seen from the above discussion, contrastive rhetoric may be of immense help for teaching L2 writing. It is evident from research that L2 writers transfer a lot of organizational skills from their first language. If L2 writing teachers take into consideration that the organizational patterns are different across languages and cultures,

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it becomes easier on their part to scaffold their students to the discourse pattern in the target language.

More often than not, teachers do not consider the language and cultural background of the students. They have a tendency to attribute the failures of the student writers to incompetence or lack of critical thinking. Teachers have to be aware of the fact that the lacking ESL students are displaying in their writing is due to the influence of the rhetorical patterns in their first culture and language.

The absence of this very awareness often causes teachers to misunderstand their students' writings. If the teachers apply the insights gained from contrastive rhetoric, they might be able to find that the actual problem with their students' writing lies with the misunderstanding of the rhetorical conventions in the target language. If teachers first focus on the rhetorical conventions in the target language, it might quicken the pace of learning of the students to write in the target language.

If students are made explicitly aware of the fact that there are differences in the organizational patterns between their first and second language, it might relieve, as Leki (1991) has pointed out, the students of the inferiority complex they often suffer from. . Indeed, the classroom research has demonstrated that coherence need not be a fuzzy and elusive concept; it can be understood, taught, learnt, and practiced in the classroom.

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