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ABSTRACT

A discussion of approaches to comparative rhetoric looks at diverse approaches and proposes that analysis can be enriched by incorporating the perspective of ethnography of communication. Contributions to the field of comparative rhetoric from second language learning and teaching mainstream rhetoric, and text linguistics are discussed, focusing on differences in definition, scope and focus, and on the major limitations and biases of each. An ethnography of communication perspective is then outlined. It is suggested that a comparative functional emphasis that incorporates rich specification of contextual factors from internal cultural perspectives can significantly enhance validity of interpretation. Practical and theoretical applications of an ethnography of communication approach to comparative rhetoric are discussed. Contains 42 references. (Author/MSE)

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COMPARATIVE RHETORIC: AN INTEGRATION OF PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the diversity of approaches to comparative rhetoric and proposes that analysis can be enriched by incorporating an ethnography of communication perspective. First, contributions to comparative rhetoric from the three fields of second language acquisition and teaching, mainstream rhetoric, and text linguistics are discussed, focusing on differences in definition, scope, and focus as well as on the major limitations and biases of each approach. Next, an ethnography of communication perspective is outlined. It is suggested that a comparative, functional emphasis that incorporates rich specification of contextual factors from internal cultural perspectives can significantly enhance validity of interpretation. Finally, practical and theoretical applications of an ethnography of communication approach to comparative rhetoric are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

One reason contrastive rhetoric has captured the interest of a great variety of scholars is that it invites—even requires—interdisciplinary consideration. As in the parable of the three blind men feeling different parts of an elephant and perceiving very different characteristics, analysts of a text are also likely to make very different discoveries about the text depending on the perspective they take. In this paper we will discuss some of the diversity among approaches to analysis within what may be broadly considered contrastive rhetoric, as well as some of the limitations. We will then focus on the aspects of analysis which we believe may be enriched by an ethnography of communication perspective. One aspect of analysis which the ethnography of communication brings into primary focus is function, considering a text and its production as a socially situated communicative event—considering text as praxis (see Duranti, 1988). Exploring this perspective thus seemed particularly appropriate for a conference on pragmat-
ics. Moreover, including an ethnography of communication perspective on contrastive rheto-

ric is important for establishing the validity of analysis and interpretation of contrasting texts, no matter what other perspectives are taken. And finally, we would like to strengthen the case for applying an ethnography of communication perspective to language learning and teaching.

We have become acutely aware of the interdisciplinary interest in this topic over the past few years through interactions with our own students. The first author has developed and implemented a graduate-level course titled Comparative Rhetoric within the English Department at the University of Arizona. Students who enroll are majors not only in second language acquisition and teaching, but in rhetoric and composition, literature, and folklore, as well. They come to the topic with different bodies of background knowledge, with different expectations and assumptions about what a course on comparative rhetoric should entail, and with different interests and needs for application. The mixture has been stimulating and challenging, both to them and to us, and has contributed to our views of the state of the art of contrastive rhetoric.

DEFINITION, SCOPE, AND FOCUS OF DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES

Before presenting our views on the value of enhancing contrastive rhetoric with perspectives from the ethnography of communication, we will discuss contributions from the fields of (1) second language acquisition and teaching, (2) rhetoric, and (3) text linguistics. Disciplinary differences involve very basic issues of definition, scope, and focus. Most who come from second language acquisition and teaching begin with Robert Kaplan's definition of contrastive rhetoric, as he first outlined it in 1966 and has elaborated it since (e.g., 1988). Kaplan extended the notion of *contrastive* as it had been established in the theory of contrastive analysis developed by Charles Fries, Robert Lado, and others, a theory which was still widely accepted at that time. He made some major transformations in the contrastive analysis model in the process, as indicated in diagrams (1) and (2):

(1) Contrastive Analysis (e.g., Lado, 1957)

NL — TL

Simply stated, *contrastive analysis* called for the comparison of learners' native language (NL) and target language (TL), with the claim that such contrast would predict and explain errors that would be likely to occur in the process of second language learning. Focus was on production of the language forms or structures. The assumption was made that only two languages were involved.

(2) Contrastive Rhetoric (Kaplan, 1966)

(NL) L2 TL

Kaplan's early model of *contrastive rhetoric* involved the application of the procedure of error analysis to rhetorical forms or structures in the learners' production of second language (L2) text, as perceived and interpreted by native speakers of that language. The assumption of contrastive analysis that comparison of the target language and native language would predict learners' errors was transformed into the assumption, illustrated in (2), that learners'

errors would reflect transfer from the native language. Another transformation involved a shift from the almost exclusive focus on oral production in traditional contrastive analysis, to the almost exclusive focus in early contrastive rhetoric on the production of written text. This shift was motivated largely by concerns for improving the academic writing skills of international students who were entering U.S. universities, but also as a reaction against the commonly held view within linguistics that speech is primary and writing is but a secondary representation (Kaplan, 1988, p. 289).

The basic assumption of both contrastive analysis and contrastive rhetoric regarding native language transfer was brought into question by concepts of interlanguage theory, as represented in diagram (3):

(3) Interlanguage Theory (e.g., Nemser, 1971, Selinker, 1972)

NL $[IL_1 \ldots IL_n]$ TL

One basic notion advanced in interlanguage theory was that the learner goes through a series of approximative stages in the process of acquiring the target language, and that errors made during this process often cannot be explained solely by transfer from the native language. Hinds (1983) and others thus criticized Kaplan's model, which based analysis on texts written by non-native English speakers, by suggesting that such IL structures may not reflect the native-language organization at all, but constitute merely a kind of "comparative IL research" (Péry-Woodley, 1990). An important dissertation by Chantanee Indrasuta (1987) at the University of Illinois, under the direction of Alan Purves, involved a triangulated analysis of writing by Thai students in Thai, Thai students in English, and American students in English. She and others indeed proved that inferring native language rhetorical structures from interlanguage production is overly simplistic. Kaplan's more recent work indicates that he would generally agree (e.g., 1988; see also Grabe & Kaplan, 1989), although his original assumption is still reflected in much of the recent work in this field. Interpretation of the sources of interlanguage rhetorical production is also complicated by the fact that many learners are multilingual and multiliterate.

While there are thus problems and disputes with regard to the use and interpretation of the term *contrastive*, definitions and conceptions of *rhetoric* are also radically divergent. A very sharp break is found between approaches in contrastive rhetoric as they have developed over the past 25 years or so in the second language field, and the mainstream traditions of rhetorical analysis as they have developed since the (literally) classical work of Plato and Aristotle. In the field of rhetoric itself, analytical focus has not been on the learner of language, but upon its master; and (in its classical origins, at least) not on the writer, but on the orator. Etymologically, the term *rhetoric* was the adjective form of *rhetor*, or *speaker*. Compare, for example, the definitions listed under (4) (emphasis ours). The first three come from the field of rhetoric, while the final two come from the field of second language acquisition and teaching.

(4)"The Aristotelian text known as the *Rhetoric* is concerned with the *art* of persuasive *oratory*" (Corbett, 1954, p. xiii).

Rhetoric is "that *art* or *talent* by which discourse is adapted to its end"

(Campbell [18th century], as cited in Kinneavy, 1971, p. 216).

Rhetoric is the study of the *orator* and civic leader "who . . . used *artful speech* to make [cultural] values effective in the area of public affairs" (Halloran, 1982:246, as cited in Roland, 1990, p. 36).

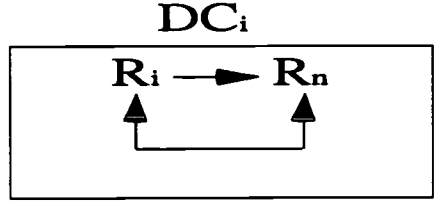
vs.

What does contrastive rhetoric look at? Clearly, the objects of study are *written* texts . . . " (Purves, 1988, p. 17).

Contrastive rhetoric is "the comparison of the *writing* of students and accomplished writers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Conner & Lauer, 1988, p. 138).

Although mainstream rhetorical analysis has contrasted strategies across time and between modes of speech and writing, its scope of analysis is typically the skilled use of language within what is now called the same *discourse community*. This scope is represented by the model in (5):

(5) Rhetorical Analysis (DC_i = discourse community; R_i = individual rhetor; R_n = one or more audience members)



In this model, a discourse community is defined by similar social characteristics and/or academic or professional orientations, as well as by a shared set of rhetorical norms and conventions. The concept extends the older notion of audience to consider broader social and political contexts of communication, analogous in many respects to the concept of *speech community* as it is applied in the ethnography of communication. A discourse community for rhetorical analysis is generally considered to be much more homogeneous than a speech community, however. Among our colleagues within the English Department at Arizona, for instance, those in the Rhetoric program consider themselves to be members of a different discourse community from those in Creative Writing, those in Creative Writing to be members of a different discourse community from those in American Literature, and so forth. For analytic purposes, the construct is perhaps not entirely unlike the notion of the infamous ideal speaker/hearer in linguistics (Chomsky, 1957). Just as an analytical emphasis on the ideal speaker/

hearer diverts attention from important sociolinguistic phenomena, too much emphasis on the homogeneity of discourse communities can mask diversity. Moreover, even for rhetorical analysis completely within the domain of a single language and culture, "The sameness that the concept [of discourse community] suggests often obscures the variety, conflict, and anti-conventionalism that exists in most actual discourse communities" (Rafoth, 1990, p. 140).

In applications of this model to the teaching of composition to native English speakers, the concept of discourse community is used "To point out the highly convention-bound nature of writing and learning to write, and to urge that the business of teaching and learning this conventional activity be made more transparent by considering openly the costs and benefits of conforming to conventions" (Rafoth, 1990, p. 142). We will return to the potential appropriateness or inappropriateness of this notion for second language instruction later in the paper.

Another characteristic of the work of mainstream professional rhetoricians is that considerable attention is given to the effects of particular rhetorical strategies on audience. These effects are represented with arrows in (5). In other words, analysis focuses not only on the production strategies of the speaker or writer, but also on the interpretation and response of the listener or reader (which in turn provides feedback for production), and on the joint construction of contexts and meanings. This model thus differs from most work in contrastive rhetoric not only in considering native speakers of the same language and members of the same social group, but in putting focus on the effect or function of rhetorical strategies along with description of their form or structure. This latter distinction between rhetorical analysis and contrastive rhetoric is neither absolute nor trivial, but of central concern as we consider rhetoric in relation to pragmatics and second language teaching/learning.

Another disciplinary perspective which maps onto the subject matter at issue is that of text linguistics. Both at its inception and after a quarter century of evolution, most who have worked on contrastive rhetoric have considered their task to be largely one of describing linguistic structures beyond the sentential level. The two quotations from Kaplan in (6) emphasize identification with text linguistics, while the quotation from van Dijk, who is well known for his contributions to the model, defines this disciplinary point of view:

(6) "Given the increasing interest in text linguistics, of which contrastive rhetoric is probably a subset . . . " (Kaplan, 1988, p. 275)

"... contrastive rhetoric belongs to the basic tradition of text analysis." (Kaplan, 1988, p. 278)

"Textual dimensions [of analysis] account for the structures of discourse at various levels of description. Contextual dimensions relate these structural descriptions to various properties of the context, such as cognitive processes and representations or sociocultural factors . . . " (van Dijk, 1988, p. 25).

Van Dijk spoke for a tradition in discourse analysis which makes a distinction between text and context, with text linguistics quite naturally claiming text (not context) as its domain. Although text analysis is an important component of discourse analysis in general, locating contrastive rhetoric within this tradition contributes to the contradictory notions of rhetoric that

we find when we look across disciplines. While there is brief mention of factors such as audience considerations and rhetorical context features in Grabe and Kaplan (1989), for instance, these generally have not yet been integrated with analyses of second language text production. On the other hand, they are central to both definition and process of rhetorical analysis. They are also central in current approaches to discourse analysis (e.g., Duranti & Goodwin, 1992).

The product-oriented perspective on rhetoric as represented by Kaplan and van Dijk in (6) contrasts with the perspective of rhetoricians as represented by the quotations in (7):

(7) "Although a product usually results from rhetorical activity—namely, a speech—rhetoric is primarily an art of process" (Corbett, 1954, p. vii).

"The study of the art of rhetoric should begin where the study of grammar leaves off" (Hughes & Duhamel, 1966, p. 3).

" . . . both classical and modern rhetoric deals with the persuasive dimension of language use and, more specifically, with the account of those properties of discourse that can make communication more persuasive. These rhetorical structures of discourse . . . are not themselves linguistic or grammatical" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 28).

Corbett summarizes the classical perspective when he defines rhetoric as "an art of process," and Hughes and Duhamel represent the mainstream principle in modern rhetoric that the "art of rhetoric" is outside the bounds of the study of grammatical form. We have included the quotation from van Dijk in (7) to illustrate that he, too, considers rhetoric distinct from textual linguistic structures in a very significant respect, although he has also stated that "rhetorical structures of discourse . . . are [in part] also based on grammatical structures" (the insertion "in part" is ours). While rhetoricians have disagreed for centuries over whether to limit rhetoric to the study of persuasive language use or to include a broader range of communicative functions, the focus has consistently been on process, and the central concern beyond the bounds of grammar.

One solution to the contradictory concepts represented by the term *rhetoric* in the domains of contrastive rhetoric and mainstream rhetoric might be to reduce both to their common denominator, and to suggest that contrastive rhetoric should merely be renamed *comparative discourse analysis* to better capture its scope and process. While this label would be most appropriate for characterizing the analysis of divergences in second language production of texts from target language norms, as well as for comparing a very broad range of communicative phenomena across languages and cultures, it fails to capture the focus which rhetoric (with its traditional meaning) is intended to convey: the skilled and artful use of language.

The characterizations we have made so far of contrastive rhetoric (as it is currently defined in second language acquisition and teaching) vs. rhetorical analysis (as it is defined in mainstream rhetoric) are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Contrastive Rhetoric	Rhetorical Analysis
Primary Subjects:	
L2 learners	Skilled, artful speakers/writers
Mode:	
Writing	Speech/writing
Task:	
Error analysis	Strategic analysis
Focus:	
Structure/product	Function/process
Text over context	Text in context
Composition of speech/discourse communities:	
Heterogeneous	One homogeneous discourse community
Cross-linguistic	
Perspective of interpretation/response:	
Native speaker of target language	Audience in same discourse community
Theoretical goal:	
Description/explanation of L1 influence on L2	Description/explanation of effect
Pedagogical application:	
Teaching structures in L2	Teaching art in L1

While we can find exceptions on both sides in particular studies, the major limitations of analysis from the perspective of contrastive rhetoric are (1) that it generally neglects pragmatic considerations of "the interaction between communicative codes and the contexts of their use" (Duranti & Schieffelin, 1987, p. i), and (2) that it typically fails to establish the validity of interpregets the grease" in English vs. "The bird that sings loud gets killed" in Chinese.

Moreover, the concept of situational context also goes well beyond the concept of rhetorical context as it is usually applied in rhetorical analysis. Situational context includes much richer specification of participants in a communicative event than does the traditional rhetor/audience notion, for instance, particularly in terms of their role-relationships, and their respective rights and responsibilities. The relationship of rhetor and audience must be viewed as dynamic involvement, and rhetorical strategies considered in terms of their role in shaping and changing that relationship. These issues add additional requirements for adequate analysis. Even when the text under consideration is a printed product which cannot change in physical form, constructivist views stress the audience's changing perception of text and author as part of a dynamic communicative process (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992).

To provide another example of what is involved in specifying and interpreting situational context, students in the Comparative Rhetoric course were asked to analyze advertisements which would be considered particularly effective from different cultural perspectives. In the ethnographic tradition, they looked for patterns of contrast across both verbal and nonverbal modes, and in visual as well as printed media. One salient pragmatic contrast between Ameri-
n and Japanese persuasive strategies which they noted was the American imperative to "buy

this" versus the Japanese strategy of developing pleasant sensory images within a scene which is subsequently associated with the product. Text analysis alone would miss the most important dimension of contrast. Another difference students noted was the explicit comparison of one product with another in American advertisements on television (e.g., Pepsi vs. Coke), and the rejection of this strategy by Japanese. Appropriate analysis of this phenomenon would need to be situated not only in an understanding of historical trends in both countries, but in an understanding of the type of responsibility Japanese versus U.S. television stations accept for the content of advertising which they broadcast, the loyalty which is expected of them by their customers, and how such loyalty is defined. For example, because the same Japanese television station is likely to air commercials for competing products (or at least might wish to be able to accept advertising from the other company in the future), to explicitly criticize one customer in favor of another would be unwise business practice in Japan.

Some other aspects of situational context which are likely to be relevant for comparative rhetorical analysis may be framed by the following questions:

What technology is utilized in different cultures for dissemination or broadcasting of diferent rhetorical genre? We have seen dramatic changes in political speaking styles in the United States, for instance, with the shift from large public gatherings and radio to the medium of television. These changes are clearly illustrated in comparative analyses of strategies used by John Kennedy versus Ronald Reagan. Another change is seen as commercials on television are starting to print more information on the screen, knowing that viewers tend to mute them.

What social roles in each culture require particular rhetorical skills? Within the United States, highly developed (and systematically different) speaking skills are expected of preachers and politicians, but do not constitute an expectation for professors or engineers. Preachers must sound inspirational, and politicians must project sincerity and solidarity according to culture-specific norms of interpretation. Although professors are not required to develop specific speaking skills, they are expected to have mastered the technical writing conventions of academic publication.

How does distribution of differing rhetorical styles and skills relate to the distribution of power in a society? Some styles require special interpretive skills, which preserves limited access to some domains. Philips (1982) claims that this is the case for legal cant, for instance, and Prelli claims that scientists have cultivated language differences to "draw sharp contrasts between themselves and `nonscientists' to enhance their intellectual status and authority vis-a-vis the `out groups,' to secure professional resources and career opportunities, to deny these resources and opportunities to `pseudo-scientists,' and to insulate scientific research from political interference" (1989, p. 52). And for generations, Chinese writers learned established conventions for writing eight-legged essays as a prerequisite for obtaining prestigious positions with the civil service.

A final question will help illustrate the point that situational context must be richly specified. How do rhetorical patterns relate to political thought and activity? Bloch (1974) has argued that political language should be studied as a preliminary to studying politics; that the intentions of speakers may be inferred by the implications of the type of speech they use. His hypothesis is that when a speech event is formalized, there are fewer options for participants; thus, more social control is exerted. In formalizing a situation, the propositional content, the logic, is essentially removed.

The interest we have in the relation of rhetorical strategies to social stratification and political organization in different cultures does not merely reflect relatively recent develop-

ments in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. The Aristotelian conception of rhetoric was also essentially social in nature. Halloran (1982) described the "cultural ideal" in the classical tradition as the orator and civic leader "who understood all the values of this culture and used artful speech to make those values effective in the area of public affairs" (1982, p. 246).

We would now like to return to the issue of validity. A major problem with establishing validity in interpretation is that cultural differences in rhetorical style are likely to be plotted onto dimensions which imply value judgments and privilege the English-speaker's point of view. Most analysts taking a contrastive rhetoric approach would compare the American and Japanese strategies of advertisements on a dimension of "directness-indirectness," with the American strategy described as more "direct." This is almost as ethnocentric as Kaplan's original (1966) characterization of the logical development in an English L1 essay as a "straight line" versus spiral and other configurations in differing rhetorical traditions. The notion that an imperative form in syntax is more direct in pragmatic intent and effect than evocation of satisfying sensory experiences is itself a cultural artifact. From a different cultural point of view, there may be reasons to consider appeals to sensory experiences as more direct than those which require verbal mediation. We must also consider the possibility that U.S. English speakers' notions of directness are not valued in certain cultures or are not viewed as important categories/dimensions of analysis or evaluation within those cultures.

Such a relativistic perspective should also be incorporated into comparative rhetorical analysis. The methodology and terminology of contrastive rhetoric (including the application of error analysis to L2 texts) has given us a deficit model in which it is difficult to be objective. For instance, our Japanese and Chinese students, in order to relate to the existing literature in contrastive rhetoric and to use the language and concepts of that discourse community, adopt and use the negative terms that Americans have used to describe "what's wrong" with their rhetorical styles from the viewpoint of the American audience and analyst: "nonlinear," "circular," "slow to get to the point," "indirect," "lacking cohesive ties," "digressive," etc. To take a somewhat Whorfian view, they are being forced into a colonialist deficit perspective rather than a multiculturalist difference perspective. There is clear need for ethnosemantic study in this field, to determine how different rhetorical structures and strategies are perceived and labeled by their users. In one Comparative Rhetoric class, this approach was applied by asking Japanese students to characterize the usage that Americans dichotomize as "direct" vs. "indirect" from their own cultural perspective. It furthers our goals of cultural relativism in analysis to be aware that the Japanese term which characterizes "direct" American style can best be translated as "rude."

We should be especially aware of the hazards of dichotomized categories applied across languages and cultures. In addition to "direct" vs. "indirect," some commonly used dichotomous terms in contrastive rhetoric are "group-oriented" vs. "individual oriented," "linear" vs. "nonlinear," and "reader responsibility" vs. "writer responsibility." Part of the problem such polarities present is that they imply culturally biased value judgments. An additional problem is that analysts tend to write about these constructs in quantitative rather than qualitative ways. The notion of "reader vs. writer responsibility" provides a good example, since this is a widely accepted dichotomy first posited by Hinds (1987) to characterize differences between Japanese and English. There is a danger of ethnocentric bias or stereotyping and oversimplification in the claim that the reader in Japan makes more inferences than the reader in the United States.

Rather, because all human communication involves inferencing, description should focus on the kinds of inferences that one is expected to make in the two speech communities.

One of the most important contributions of an ethnography of communication perspective is thus not only to situate interpretation of communicative events within the context of their host speech communities, but to require an internal (or native) point of view as a criterion for validity of interpretation. We have represented this perspective on comparative analysis with the model in (8). Just as valid interpretation of rhetorical strategies in SC_x requires an internal point of view, the same holds for SC_y. The arrows in (8) represent these internal points of view.

(8) Ethnography of Communication (SC = speech community)

Questionable interpretations of the reasons for differences in rhetorical strategies abound in the published literature on contrastive rhetoric, primarily because analyses do not adequately provide and account for an internal point of view. For instance, the organization of appeals in Chinese discourse which requires justification of a request prior to its explicit verbal formulation has been interpreted as a non-confrontational style reflecting a desire to maintain harmony/solidarity and to avoid potential interpersonal conflict (see Young, 1982). Native speakers of Chinese, on the other hand, are more likely to attribute the sequencing in appeals to the "logical" need for prior motivation of a request. In both American and Chinese communicative events, the failure of an addressee to accept justifications presents similar potential to create interpersonal disharmony. Although the rhetorical organization is indeed different, the reported inference that a different pattern reflects different cultural values is of very questionable validity if it is made from an external point of view. This is akin to the invalid conclusion reached by many of our students that English speakers in the U.S. are cold, uncaring, or hypocritical when they ask "How are you?" but don't really want to know. Both analysts and language learners need to be able to distinguish between differences which indeed have a reason that can be inferred with cultural knowledge and experience and those which can be attributed solely to social and linguistic convention. When they are cultural outsiders, analysts must be open to all possibilities, and utilize data collection and analytic methods which will compensate for unavoidable biases.

The comparative view we have taken thus far, and the one which is represented in (8), focuses on the speech community as a basic unit for analysis, on the way rhetorical structures and strategies are organized, realized, and situated within that unit, and it takes as its primary analytic task describing and accounting for similarities and differences in patterning within different speech communities. Unlike the definition of discourse community for mainstream rhetorical analysis, there is no expectation from an ethnography of communication perspective

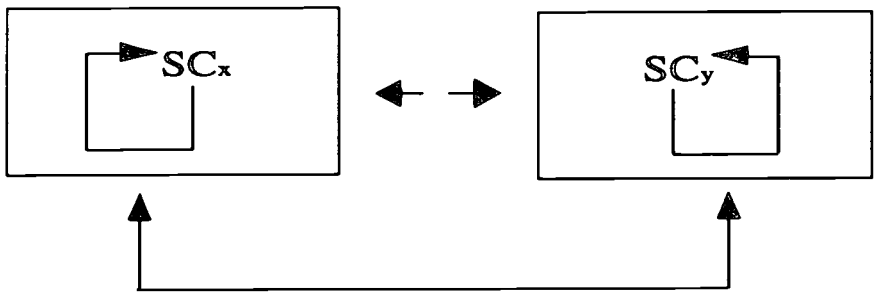
that a speech community will be linguistically homogeneous. While one can focus on a single age range, or a single gender, or a single profession, an integrated ethnographic approach would require relating such subgroups to the social and cultural whole, with its full complement of roles. There is also no expectation that rhetorical skills and arts will be equally distributed in a speech community, but that judgments of what is appreciated as skilled and artful use of language, and of who is perceived to speak or write effectively, are made relative to the whole. As we indicated earlier, such perceptions will be relative to the roles the speaker/writer is accorded in that society, along with other social factors.

Comparative analysis of skilled language use in different speech communities can already claim a solid body of scholarship, ranging from Yamuna Kachru's (e.g., 1988) culturally-situated analysis of writing conventions in Hindi and English, to Johnstone's (1986) analysis of the rhetorical situation and persuasive style of argumentation in Farsi and English, to Tsuda's (1984) analysis of Sales Talk in Japan and the United States. Although some of these works were labelled "contrastive rhetoric," they are notably different from the model proposed by Kaplan (1966) by focusing not on the description/explanation of L1 influence on L2, but on different usage and situational contexts of use in different speech communities, from a bilaterally internal perspective. These analyses satisfy criteria for valid comparative rhetoric.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Finally, the model in (9) represents an extension which must be made to include cross-cultural communication within our domains of analysis.

(9) Cross-Cultural Communication



Participants in an intercultural event must still be viewed from the internal perspective of their respective speech communities, but the dynamic interaction between them requires additional dimensions of analysis. Speakers' or writers' production will be influenced not only by the conventions of their native languages and cultures, but also by the knowledge they have of the addressees' language(s) and culture(s), by their knowledge of the resources of the linguistic code(s) selected, and by the expectations and attitudes they hold and develop in the process of interaction. The external arrows in (9) indicate the same considerations of interac- e construction of meaning and reciprocal negotiations as we find in rhetorical analysis which

is conducted within the same discourse community (as in diagram 5).

In extending an ethnography of communication perspective to cross-cultural communication, we are drawing on the work of John Gumperz (e.g., 1984, 1992) on conversational inferencing. As with contrastive rhetoric, however, most work on conversational inferencing across cultures has involved error analysis and has focused on *mis*communication (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Michaels, 1986). For purposes of comparative rhetoric, we also need to consider and be able to account for skilled, artful, and successful cross-cultural communication. Skilled multilingual rhetors do not necessarily merely adopt the rhetorical structures and strategies used by native speakers of the linguistic code they select, any more than they necessarily merely transfer the structures and strategies of their own native language(s) and culture(s), even if they are fully conscious of the differences. Rather, multilinguals have a wider range of options for accomplishing communicative goals, including a capacity for style shifting and style creation or blending (depending on desired audience effect) which exceeds monolingual competence (Kachru, 1987; Hanks, 1986).

Also, the speaker or writer may use aspects of language as a personal or national identity badge, even when essentially producing the linguistic code of the addressee, or when using an international language which is spoken natively by neither. The work in accommodation theory (e.g., Beebe & Zuengler, 1983; Coupland, Coupland, Giles & Henwood, 1988) is highly relevant to the analysis of these phenomena, since it examines convergence and divergence as rhetorical strategies for establishing and negotiating ideational or interpersonal positions or relationships. Highly creative features must also be accounted for, and here we approach rhetorical processes as art.

APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Finally, we would like to briefly address some of the potential practical and theoretical applications of the perspective that we have presented. For practical applications to second language teaching, we distinguish between the development of receptive and productive competence, emphasizing that goals for each should differ. For second language learning, we suggest that students can expand their rhetorical competence not only through reading and writing, but through engaging in comparative rhetorical analysis.

First, for the development of receptive competence in a second language, an ethnography of communication perspective can be profitably brought into the classroom for the study of second language texts. Teachers employing this perspective would emphasize the necessity of taking situational context into account in interpreting the meaning of texts. Specifically, in studying authentic readings or recordings, teachers can lead students to integrate textual/linguistic analysis with inquiry about related social and cultural phenomena. They can do this by encouraging students to ask many relevant background questions and to investigate contextual issues in a variety of ways. We are not suggesting that either teachers or students develop encyclopedic cultural knowledge, but that both teachers and students might develop an increased sensitivity to the importance of context in interpreting texts and to the range of questions which should be asked. We also believe that the body of authentic written and oral texts

made available to students for study should include non-native as well as native models of skilled and artful use of language.

An ethnography of communication perspective has some important implications for developing productive as well as receptive competence in an additional language. Perhaps most important, some understanding of comparative rhetoric is crucial for teachers in cultivating a difference rather than a deficit mentality toward student writing. Knowledge of the ways in which rhetorical structures and strategies differ across cultures will help teachers better understand the reasons for students' "deviations" from native speaker/writer norms. Understanding why students might make certain choices in constructing texts can lead teachers to develop more tolerant and appreciative attitudes toward "pluralistic rhetorics" (Land and Whitley, 1989) while, at the same time, recognizing and supporting students' real needs and desires to operate effectively within certain discourse communities. Further, when teachers promote their students' receptive competence by using texts that embody skilled and artful use of the second language by proficient non-native speakers, implications for productive goals naturally follow. As Yamuna Kachru and others have pointed out, there is no necessary reason why goals for production in a second language need to be the norms of its native speakers. In fact, there are some instances in which native-like competence can be counterproductive.

On the students' side, many second language rhetorical conventions can be consciously learned, especially when they are wanted and needed for participation in a particular discourse community. Much current theory emphasizes the acquisition of genre knowledge through active participation in a discourse community. Berkenkotter & Huckin (1993), for example, claim that "knowledge of academic discourse . . . grows out of enculturation to the oral and written `forms of talk' of the academy," rather than through explicit teaching (p. 485-486). For some second language learners, however, doing rhetorical analysis is probably the best learning procedure. Such analysis might involve comparative rhetorical analysis across languages and cultures or it might involve analysis comparing structures and strategies in effective texts across discourse communities, situations, audiences, and so on, within a particular culture. Regardless of the specific comparison, sophisticated rhetorical analysis aimed at developing advanced rhetorical competence is just as applicable for L2 students who are approaching skilled and artful use of the second language as it is for native speakers. Here again, the corpus of texts used for analysis should include non-native, as well as native, models. In summary, we believe that the process of comparative rhetoric—comparative rhetoric that incorporates an ethnography of communication perspective—is often more relevant for teaching and learning than are the products of others' analyses.

An ethnography of communication approach to comparative rhetoric should contribute not only to teaching and learning, but to theory building as well. While we believe that error analysis is a very useful procedure in study of the nature of rhetorical phenomena in interlanguage, the influences of native language and culture cannot be identified without direct understanding of the rhetorical structures and strategies of that speech community. Nor can they be interpreted in a valid manner without an internal perspective. To understand those strategies used in cross-cultural communication which cannot be attributed to first language transfer, we require more knowledge of the processes that multilinguals use in interactional negotiations as well. While much research has been conducted in recent years on the strategies used by speakers with limited proficiency (with strategy being defined in a compensatory sense;

e.g., Tarone & Yule, 1989) we know far too little about skilled and artful cross-cultural communication, and about how such skills are acquired. Such knowledge would make a significant contribution to adequate second language theory-building. In our discussion we have alluded to several different theories of language processing and analysis which go beyond textual considerations. An implicit point we hope to make in doing so is that we should not attempt to be theoretical purists in our approach: an integration of perspectives is needed for understanding and explaining such complex phenomena. The contribution of an ethnography of communication perspective for both practical and theoretical goals is toward descriptive adequacy and validity of interpretation.

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