

A Search for EFL College Students' Culture-Related Rhetorical Templates of Argumentative Writing

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Huh, Myung-Hye, & Lee, Inhwan. (2019). A search for EFL college students' culture-related rhetorical templates of argumentative writing. *English Teaching*, 74(3), 55-77.

This study investigated EFL college students' culture-related templates of written texts along the possibility of inter-cultural transfer. We designed a case study to explore how certain cultural assumptions contribute to EFL students' rhetorical decisions while writing an argumentative writing. The participants were four EFL college students. Multiple data sources include background questionnaires, argumentative essays, and in-depth retrospective interviews. To analyze rhetorical choices in the participants' writing, we identified choices of argumentation subtypes, and introduction and conclusion components. We also categorized the location of the writer's main claim and thesis statement. The interview data were qualitatively analyzed to see what rhetorical resources participants draw from the cultural/educational contexts, and which factors had influenced the participants' rhetorical strategy. Data analyses indicate that each participant manipulated different rhetorical structures to strengthen the rhetorical impact of their writing. Indeed, the complex constellation of individual participants' cultural resources was at play in their L2 writing. This study contributes to our understanding of the rhetorical templates of L2 texts as constructs that are always in process, and therefore adaptable and negotiable.

Key words: rhetorical templates, cultural resources, small culture, EFL writing

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1. INTRODUCTION

Kaplan's (1966) contrastive rhetoric (CR) posits that different languages may have different patterns of written discourse. Kaplan, in particular, used the notion of national cultural entities to describe rhetorical patterns in texts (Baker, 2013). Any deviation from the Anglo-American rhetorical norms has been conveniently attributed to cultural difference. In CR, linguistic patterns and rhetorical conventions of the first language (L1) may cause interference with students' second language (L2) writing (Connor, 1996). Those who support Kaplan's thesis maintain that CR provides important insights as to how culture-bound thought-patterns are reflected in L2 students' writing.

However, Kaplan has been criticized for his somewhat simplistic generalizations about cultural differences in writing (Atkinson, 2004; Cahill, 2003; Canagarajah, 2013; Chen, 2008; Hirose, 2003; Kubota & Lehner, 2004). Traditionally, CR defined culture in the received mode (Connor, 2004), in which cultures are seen as contained, static, and homogeneous. Therefore, in Casanave's (2004) words, CR ignored "the diversity, change and heteroglossia that are normal in any group of speakers or writers" (p. 39). For that matter, Holliday (1999) proposed a distinction between "large culture" and "small culture."

According to Holliday, small cultures are based on the dynamic processes related to "cohesive behaviors within any social grouping" (p. 247) and are thus non-essentialist. He views "cultures as an interaction among a complexity of small cultures, of which national culture is just one aspect, and through which individuals engage in culturally universal processes but in particular ways by utilizing the specific cultural resources that are available to them" (Baker, 2013, p. 27). Atkinson (2004) also argues for the intertwining of large and small cultures in discourse, which may lead to a richer view of the rhetorical schemata L2 writers have, and a more complex picture of how these views affect L2 writing.

Argumentative writings written in English do, in fact, embrace diverse reasoning patterns (Heilker, 1996). However, prioritizing the rhetorical preferences of the idealized "native speakers" creates a dichotomized, essentialized view of peoples and their language practices (Kubota, 1999, 2001). In such cases, L2 students as non-native speakers are made to believe that the rhetorical preferences of their community must be undesirable, and thus to be avoided in English writing. As a result, L2 students' own rhetorical skill can be overlooked (Zamel, 1997). Likewise, there are few studies that have examined rhetorical savvy that Korean EFL college students bring to academic writing (cf. Kang & Oh, 2011).

As argued by a number of researchers and theorists, we need to view English writing as "a local practice" (Bhatt, 2005; Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 2010) in which

students appropriate resources from various small cultures. To address this issue empirically, this study investigates what particular rhetorical orientations EFL students are consciously or unconsciously proceeding from. In the analyses, we focus on the cultural dimension to English argumentative writing, drawing on the ideas of small cultures (Atkinson, 2004; Holliday, 1999). The overall purpose in this study is to explore EFL college students' culture-related templates of written texts along the possibility of inter-cultural transfer.

2. MAPPING CULTURES WITH RHETORICS

Contrastive rhetoric research started from Kaplan's (1966) study on expository writings of international students from different cultural areas. He found that the paragraph organization written by the students whose native language was not English was different from that of native English speaking students. The assumption of his research was based on Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which said that perception of the world was determined by the structure of a language (Whorf, 1956). Therefore, Kaplan (1966) states,

Logic, which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture (p. 2).

Kaplan also suggested diagrams to visualize the different rhetorical patterns of the different cultures. Triggered by these diagrams, subsequent research has shown that L2 students do indeed bring with them certain predispositions from their native languages and cultures about how to organize writing (Brown & Lee, 2015). While some generalizations apply, it's now clear that not only were Kaplan's diagrams simplistic, but his diagrams were overgeneralized in promoting stereotypes that may or may not hold for individual writers (Casanave, 2004; Connor, 2002). Nevertheless, Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric brought in the concept of culture to second language writing (Matsuda & Atkinson, 2008).

The assumption of CR studies has always been that "cultural patterns inherent in the rhetorics of different languages cause L2 students to write in ways that are not English-like" (Casanave, 2004, p. 30). In CR, the notion of culture was uncritically concerned only with national entities (Atkinson, 2004). Connor (2002) and Atkinson (2004) refer to this characterization of culture and nationality as 'received culture' in which cultures are seen as contained, unproblematic, and homogeneous. They are correctly critical of the resulting failure to address the complexity and heterogeneity of cultures.

Along with the problem of taking a simplistic homogeneous view of cultures, the criticism against deterministic and essentialized orientations to texts and writers has been addressed in L2 writing scholarship. For example, Canagarajah and Jerskey (2009) have critiqued the notions that different languages are informed by rhetorical assumptions that belong to their cultures. In other words, rhetorical patterns cannot be equated in a simplistic and overgeneralized manner with national cultures (Baker, 2013). This does not deny that culture is a relevant category in L2 writing. It must be recognized that it is necessary to take a critical view of the default notion of culture, which refers to prescribed national entities.

Furthermore, most cross-cultural studies on writing have also been criticized especially for their conceptualization and treatment of cultures as national entities which resulted in stereotyping, overgeneralizations, and prejudices about cultures and rhetorical patterns (Leki, 1991, 1997); for disregarding universal similarities between Western (e.g., English) and Eastern texts (e.g., Chinese, Japanese) (Cahill, 2003), and variations within the same linguistic or cultural societies (Comfort, 2001; Corbett, 2001); for focusing mainly on L1 negative transfer (Kubota, 1998), and for encouraging replacement of L1 with L2 writing conventions by idealizing the English discourse norms (Kubota & Lehner, 2005).

In particular, Holliday's (1994, 1999) model of culture considers both large cultures and small cultures. Large cultures have ethnic, national, or international group features as essential components and tend to be normative and prescriptive. Small cultures, on the other hand, "avoid culturist ethnic, national, and international stereotyping" (Holliday, 1999, p. 237). Holliday's (1994, 1999) model can be summarized (adopting Connor's 2008 representation) in Table 1.

TABLE 1

The Distinction Between Large Culture and Small Culture

Large Cultures	Small Cultures
Essentialist, culturalist	Non-essentialist, non-culturist
'Culture' as essential features of ethnic, national, or international group	Relating to cohesive behavior in activities within any social grouping
Small (sub) cultures are contained within and subordinate to large cultures	No necessary subordination to or containment within large cultures
Normative, prescribed	Interpretive, a process

Holliday (1999) further argues that small cultures are "a heuristic means in the process of interpreting group behavior" (p. 240). Atkinson (2004) also states that "the idea behind the notion of small cultures, then, is that when we break our analysis down into complexly interacting small and large cultures, we get a much more complex notion of

the interactions of different cultural forces” (p. 286). For example, the culture of a classroom is shaped by cultures at the wider level (e.g., educational policies of the nation) and the more localized level (e.g., student culture) (for more interacting cultures in an educational setting, see Atkinson, 2004).

According to Holliday (1999), “in many ways, the discourse community is a small culture” (p. 252), and “a specific discourse is one of the products of small culture” (p. 251). Arguably, it is legitimate for us to “use small cultures as the location for research, as an interpretive device” (Holliday, 1999, p. 237) for understanding the rhetorical features of L2 students’ texts. Here, what is more important to note is that, whether they are small cultures or large cultures, culture is viewed as emergent, negotiated, and fluid, in relation to the changing historical and socio-cultural conditions (Maher, 2010). In this sense, “culture is performed and not necessarily predefined” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 206).

Accordingly, we designed a case study to explore how certain cultural assumptions contribute to EFL students’ rhetorical decisions while writing an argumentative writing. Thus, the two research questions were:

1. Which rhetorical structures do EFL students adopt in their English argumentative writing?
2. How do rhetorical schemata or cultural positions affect their L2 rhetorical decisions as EFL students fashion their reasoning styles in their English argumentative writing?

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Participants

The participants were four EFL college students in a Korean university. They were junior students in the first semester of the 2019 academic year. The participants’ majors were English language education, and they took a course entitled *Introduction to Teaching EFL: Theory and Practice*. The first author served as the instructor of the course, which was 16 weeks in length. Three participants were female, 20, 21, and 21 years of age, respectively, and the fourth was male, 23 years of age. They were judged to have a comparable L2 writing ability, as determined by a holistic evaluation of the essay each had written for a midterm exam. According to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012*,¹

¹ See the descriptions for writing in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guideline* published in 2012 by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Alexandria, VA.

they were listed as “Advanced” for their writing proficiency. All names used in our study are pseudonyms. Participants’ demographic information and academic profiles appear in Table 2.

3.2. Data Sources

The data was collected through three data sources. First, a background questionnaire was distributed to students to elicit information about their prior writing experiences for contextualizing the findings. Second, for the mid-term exam, students wrote a timed essay in class in that they were asked to answer the question of whether or not “younger is better” in second language learning. The students were given 30 minutes to write the essays. And third, audio-taped retrospective stimulated recall interviews were conducted to collect data about the reasons behind the rhetorical choices, and to see any links between the patterns in L1 and L2 and the previous writing instruction.

TABLE 2
Participants’ Demographic and Academic Profiles

Student	Jain	Hyun	Mina	Dami
Age	20	23	21	21
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female
Age starting English learning	Church community at the age of 2	English kindergarten at the age of 5	Starting learning English at Grade 3 in public school	Watching English TV programs and reading books at the age of 3
Study-abroad experience	Staying at relative’s house for a couple of months at the age of 8	Attending junior high school at Grade 7 in US	Attending junior high school at Grade 7 and 8 in US	None
Korean writing experience	No explicit writing instruction	Attending a private academy for College Entrance Examination Essay	Korean essay tutoring in primary school Taking lectures on College Entrance Examination Essay	No explicit writing instruction
English writing experience	Writing journals and stories and getting feedback from church community Taking TOEFL essay class at private academy	Taking English Composition class in college	Writing English essays in US Taking TOEFL essay class at private academy	Writing journals, stories without any feedback Taking English Composition class in college

As for the priority of selecting a writing sample, students should address the issues and related evidence when explaining the effects of age and acquisition within a relatively long length. Several students’ writings were selected under such considerations. Then four participants were chosen because of differences in the strategic

manipulation of rhetoric features in their writing. Additionally, these four participants are potentially members of the same group as undergraduates struggling with L2 academic literacy development.

Retrospective stimulated recall interviews were chosen as they were found to be effective and less disruptive to make reports of thinking, revealing not only what happened, but also why it happened (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Thus, we conducted a semi-structured interview with each individual participant on one occasion only. Participants' written drafts (mid-term essay) were readily available for clarification purposes during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Korean, transcribed immediately, and later translated into English. These interviews were designed to explore the issues raised in our research questions.

3.3. Data Analysis

To analyze rhetorical choices in the students' writings, our study placed a special focus on choices of argumentation subtypes, and introduction and conclusion components. In particular, we adopted Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2012) framework. For the first analysis, in order to examine the way the arguments were framed, we investigated three subtypes: *justification*, *recommendation* and *exploration*. The three were defined in Table 3 as follows (adopting Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2012, p. 114).

TABLE 3
Argumentation Subtypes

Justification	To presents a position and support it with clear reasons and evidence, optionally including counterarguments plus refutation to support the position.
Recommendation	To state a position, support it, identify potential problems, and suggest a solution.
Exploration	To identify issues relevant to a topic and explore them from different perspectives to reach a position or put forward a position while explicating the thought process underlying it.

For the second analysis, we focused on introduction and conclusion components. The introduction components are *context*, *focus*, *preview* and *structure*. According to Kobayashi and Rinnert (2012, pp. 116-117), the four introduction components were defined as follows: (1) *Context* consists of background and topic-raising. (2) *Focus* comprises *issue*, and/or *clarification*. (3) *Preview* includes *general preview*, an overview of general content; *specific preview*, introduction of the specific content of points to be discussed; and *perspective preview*, introducing the overarching viewpoint underlying the argument in the entire essay. (4) *Structure* consists of *announcement* of purpose or

organization. The main components of conclusion were as follows: *general summary* (the main content of essay), *specific summary* (specific points previously discussed), and *extension* (extended ideas).

Placing a writer's main idea in a certain location of one's essay is an important rhetorical decision influenced by cultures (Liu, 2005). Therefore, we identified the statement that best presents the writer's main claim in the essays and categorized the location of thesis statement. The location of thesis statement of each student's essay was identified based on Kubota's (1998) classification: *initial* (stated in the first paragraph), *middle* (in the middle part), *final* (in the last paragraph), *collection* (expressed in more than one location), and *obscure* (not clearly presented anywhere).

Finally, the interview data were qualitatively analyzed to see what rhetorical resources students draw from the cultural/educational contexts, and which factors had influenced the students' rhetorical strategy. We basically followed an iterative approach to grouping the articulated reasons into emerging themes to see which factors had influenced the students' rhetorical strategy. The interview data, when triangulated with the written texts, can be highlighted to determine the students' rhetorical strategy and preferences.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Rhetorical Strategies Adopted in Argumentative Writing

The written texts were analyzed to determine the participants' rhetorical strategy and preferences. The differences among four participants were revealed far more clearly in their essays. Table 4 shows the way the participants framed their essays. In this table, we can see that Jain and Hyun organized their essay directly choosing *justification*. On the other hand, Mina and Dami organized their essay more indirectly, and they employed *exploration*.

TABLE 4
Organizational Structures of Students' Argumentative Writing

Name	Argumentation Sub-types	Introduction Component	Conclusion Component	Location of Thesis Statement
Jain	Justification	Focus	General summary	Initial
Hyun	Justification	Focus	General summary	Initial
Mina	Exploration	Context	Extension	Final
Dami	Exploration	Context	Extension	Obscure

Among four participants, Jain displayed the most direct and linear pattern of

organization in her argumentative writing. Jain chose *justification* with her position clearly stated at the beginning, supported with relevant evidence throughout the whole essay, and summarized at the end of the essay. This type of argumentation has been widely acknowledged to be the most preferred rhetorical pattern in Western culture (Li & Liu, 2019; Petrić, 2005).

Jain's preference for direct organization was shown in introduction paragraph. She clearly stated her main claim in thesis statement clarifying the issue she wants to argue. This type of introduction is categorized as *focus*. She got straight to the point from the beginning as shown in Figure 1. Jain's argument type of *justification* with a linear organization with a clear *focus* in introduction and *summary* in conclusion is regarded as a typical example of organizational structure of *English* argumentative writing (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2012).

FIGURE 1
Jain's Text Organization

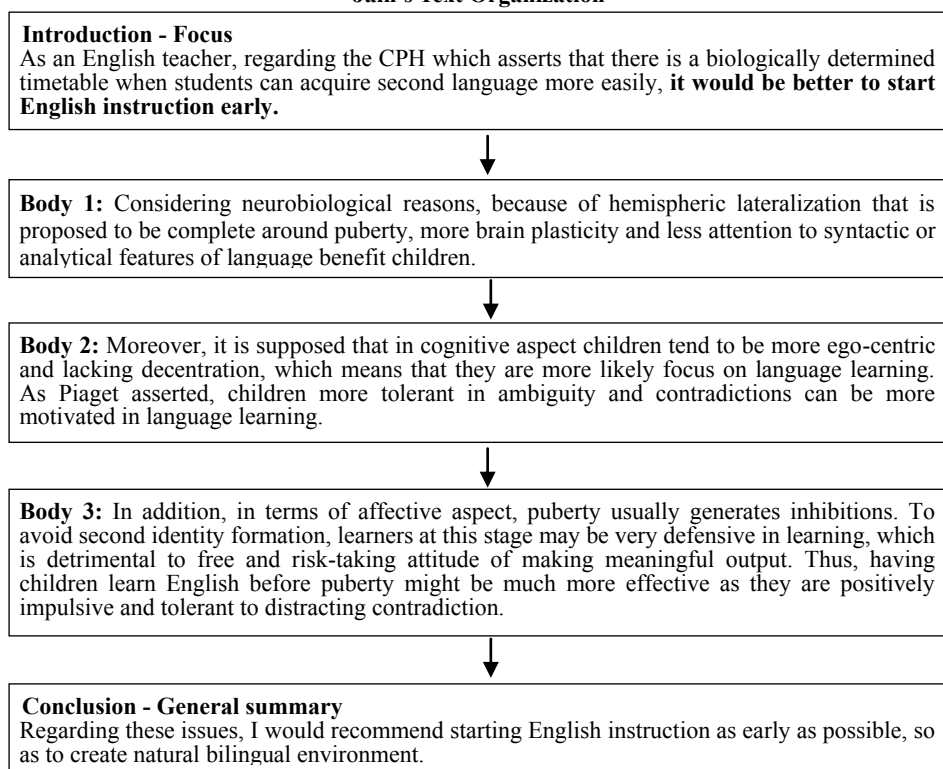


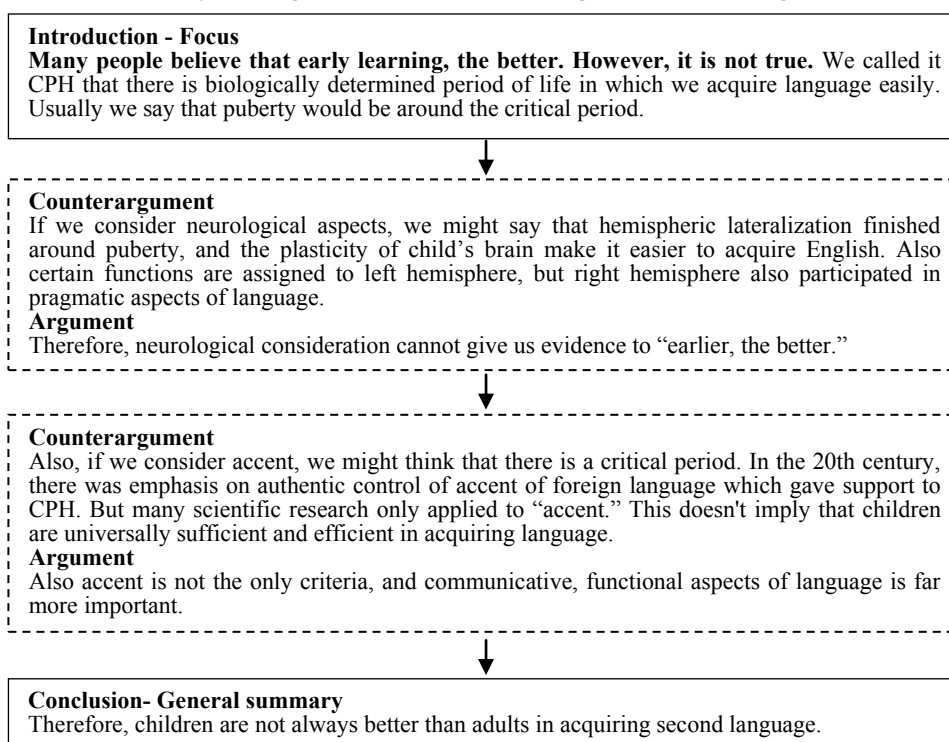
Figure 2 provides a visual representation of linear pattern of Hyun's text organization. Hyun also employed *justification* to present his argument. By starting his essay with a

clear thesis statement focusing on his position, his introduction was identified as *focus*. In the last paragraph, he restated his thesis again based on what he argued in the previous paragraphs (*general summary*).

However, unlike Jain, the way he formulated his main ideas in body paragraphs was quite interesting. Although the movement of the paragraphs is graphically straight to the point, the body paragraphs are in a zigzag formation (paragraphs 2 and 3, Figure 2); he started each body paragraph with counterargument and rebutted it, showing it is mistaken, and closed by stating his own argument.

FIGURE 2

Hyun's Organizational Structure of Argumentative Writing

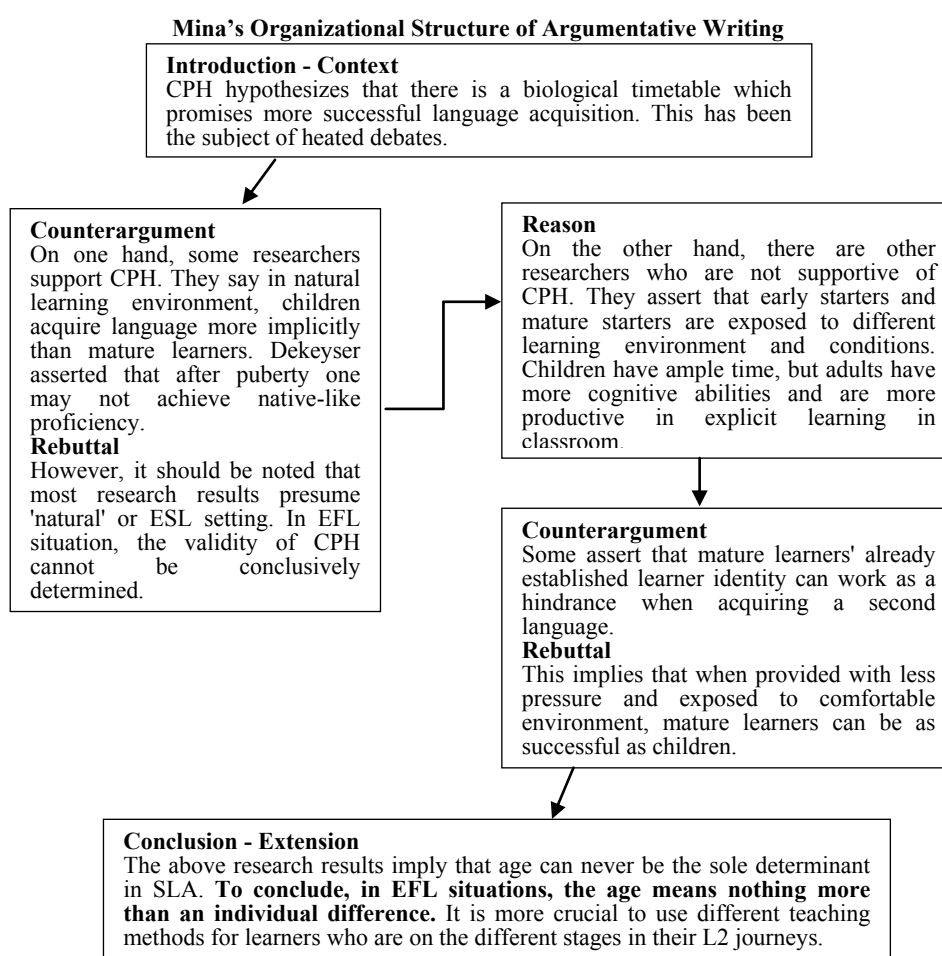


The other two participants, Mina and Dami demonstrated indirect organization in their writing. Beginning her essay, Mina just introduced a controversial issue of debate, but not her thesis statement anywhere in the introduction paragraph. She only included *context*. Such rhetorical framing may reflect Mina's preference of "topic-raising" (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2012, p.116). The first body paragraph started with some researchers' claim supporting CPH for development of nativelike mastery of pronunciation.

In the second paragraph, one of possible counterarguments was presented but

successfully refuted. This type of argument construction fits the category *exploration* with an overall structure explaining different issues relevant to the topic. Mina wrapped up the abovementioned research findings and her true claim was placed at the very end of her essay. This type of conclusion is classified as *extension* “where writers interpret content more deeply, and/or future concerns” (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2012, p. 118). And again, According to Kubota's (1998) classification of location of thesis statement, it is identified as *final*. We can see her manipulation of rhetorical patterns more closely in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3



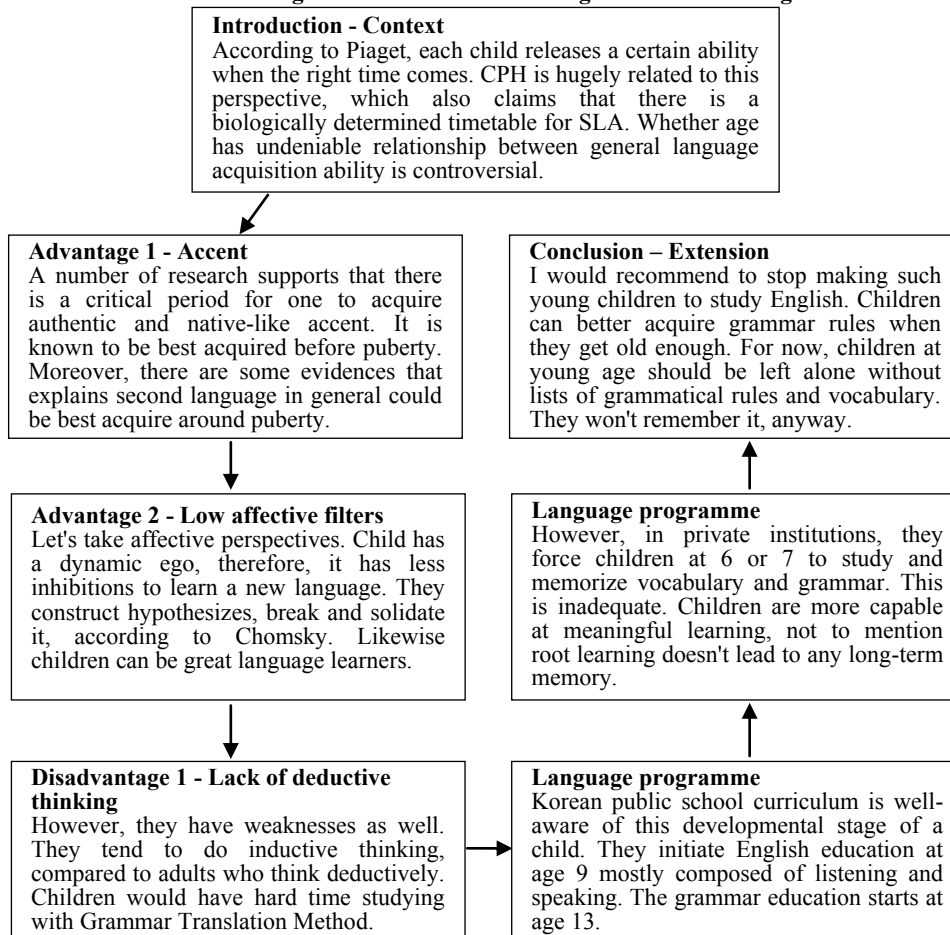
Dami organized her essay quite indirectly employing *exploration* as for the subtype of argument, *context* for the introduction, and *extension* for the conclusion. She introduced a controversial issue in the first part of her essay. Then she explored the topic from different perspectives in the following sections. In time, she presented the research evidence,

regarding certain advantages and disadvantages of an early start for L2 learning. Still, she did not indicate the extent to which she agreed with the claim, *younger is better*.

Then she discussed the language programmes, public school and private academy, regarding the age at which English instructions begin. At that point, she started to criticize for the private academy to force young children to memorize discrete and relatively isolated vocabulary and grammatical rules. She strongly asserted that people of all ages have little use for rote learning. After exploring the topic in different perspectives, she finally stated what she strongly believed in the last paragraph. The movement of the paragraphs can be graphically represented in the following manner. As a matter of fact, Figure 4 reminds us of Kaplan's diagram of an "inward-turning vortex" representing 'Oriental' languages (Atkinson, 2015, p. 419).

FIGURE 4

Dami's Organizational Structure of Argumentative Writing



Considering Figures 1–4 together, certainly, these four participants manipulated different rhetorical structures to strengthen the rhetorical impact of their writing. In that sense, no one can deny the effect of their cultural and literary schemata that are the product of perhaps years of schooling, and L1/L2 literacy instruction.

4.2. Small Cultures for Fashioning One's Reasoning Styles

4.2.1. The case of Jain

Born and raised in an international church community in Seoul, Jain was exposed to English at an early age. As most of members in the community spoke English all the time, she was able to acquire English in a natural environment. Jain was so attracted to English as a child. Her love for everything English at a young age suffice to explain her amazing success in learning the language. As Jain put it, “My church was first established in Boston, and later they opened a branch in Seoul. People were mostly Americans or Korean Americans, so worship services or activities were all in English.”

Then she attended private English academy where she learned to write in English for the first time. In order to improve TOEFL writing score, the five-paragraph essay structure was explicitly instructed by a native-speaker teacher with the template that students were supposed to mold their argument. She found it very useful to follow the template to organize her ideas when writing an argumentative essay, and she attributed her high score in iBT TOEFL writing, 29 out of 30 to such explicit format.

Perhaps the most profound experience that strongly influenced her writing development was her online international homeschooling group. Jain quit Korean middle school in grade 9 and joined online international homeschooling platform called TPS, where she took several writing courses. Writing practices in TPS writing classes are dominated by English-only ideology, despite the multilingual makeup of classes. In fact, Anglo-American writing convention is focused on, with alternative approaches marginalized or ignored. And students are forced to conform to Anglo-American norms.

What is more important to note is that, the linearity and directness of Anglo-American writing convention are maintained by the gate-keeping role in Jain's writing both in English and Korean. Granted, Anglo-American cultural norms playing an explicit role in her L1/L2 argumentative writing:

When I argue or persuade others in writing, I always state my claim first and try to catch the audience and let them follow my ideas. By showing the first, second, and third evidence to support my main claim, I build up my argument stronger. . . No matter what language you use, most of argumentative writing

follows this direct, linear structure. Even in Korean.

4.2.2. The case of Hyun

Hyun lived for a year and half in the U.S. where he attended junior high school for a year, learning English for the first time. Hyun attended junior high school in Atlanta, USA, in grade 7. At first, he started reading children's picture books, but then within a year he found himself reading Harry Potter, Percy Jackson and even non-fiction books as well. He didn't learn to write in English during a year abroad in junior high school in USA. Meanwhile, Hyun matured as a writer as he received invaluable input from classroom experiences and native English-speaking teachers (NESTs). In private academy for preparing for Korean university entrance exam essay, the instructor taught him to write in a certain way:

Write a thesis in the beginning of the essay, but organize the rest of essay more indirectly. The admission officer should find it interesting to read your college entrance essay. If you organize your paragraphs directly, it is of course easier to understand. But in order to make him keep reading your whole essay, you need to draw his attention till the end.

Hyun received training in general English writing in the first and second years of his college studies. In these courses, he practiced rhetorical skills across several modes, including narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. He learned the rhetoric of the English paragraph in Advanced English Composition class in his second year of college. Still, he remembers what a NEST emphasized:

The native English-speaking teacher taught a kind of form of writing and explained it in detail like strong thesis in introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Writing an essay following that structure was an important part of getting a good grade, so I tried to understand it perfectly and followed it exactly in assignments.

Although Hyun demonstrated the rhetoric of the English paragraph, the two body paragraphs are indirect in their structure (see Figure 2). In relation to indirectness, he told us that he took the *audience* into consideration while persuading, and from his accounts it was evident that some of his writing choices were informed by the audience. For example, he used the number of instances of first person plural pronouns (we) for audience concern (e.g., If we consider neurological aspects, we might say that...). For

Hyun, his text is placed in the reader's context (Matsuda, 1997):

For Koreans, if we say something like "That's not true" directly, it may cause some discomfort. So it's better to present evidence to prove what others wrong first and then show what I truly believe at the end. I think this style helps the audience accept my argument more comfortably.

Carried further, his choices inextricably linked his experiences in Korean writing course he took in college. The instructor showed both direct and indirect rhetorical structures of argument and let students employ what they find more appropriate to their writing. So, Hyun negotiates conflicting Korean-English rhetorical structures in a highly fluid way to his advantage. Through the development of such flexible strategies and understanding of the fluid nature of rhetoric, he persuaded readers to respond with more tolerance (Horner, 2011) to his text:

I raised an issue in introduction. It's kind of a hook to catch reader's attention. Then I organized the body under subheadings like a story. It had a natural flow like a story, and the professor said it was interesting. The thesis was placed in introduction, but the rest of the essay was connected smoothly. In conclusion there was a summary of what I had said. It was like an inductive structure.

Hyun exerts more control over the text he is constructing by choosing the most appropriate pattern of written discourse from his ever-evolving 'repertoire of writing knowledge' (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2012) to meet the needs and expectations of the particular readers. Likewise, he follows the Anglo-American academic tradition as one of possible ways to producing a text and explores adaptations. Hyun's writing practice was influenced by his communicative strategies such as accommodation, negotiation, and cultural awareness deriving from his on-going inter-cultural experiences.

4.2.3. The case of Mina

Mina began studying English as a foreign language (EFL) in grade 3. Then she moved to Los Angeles with her family and attended junior high school for two years in Grade 7 and 8. She did not learn English rhetorical conventions but was encouraged to write essays on history or literature freely. By the end of the two full-year study abroad experiences, she came back to Korea and attended private academy for TOEFL writing, where she learned English rhetorical structures explicitly. When asked about the

characteristics of good writing, she answered:

I think it differs markedly from language to language. In English discourse, it is more direct and straight to the point. But in Korean, you know, we get spiral around point. I think it should be written to suit the purpose of writing. If it is argumentative writing, it should be clear and concrete. When I read Korean arguments, it does not usually get to the point right away. It's more like you follow the writer's flow and at the very end, when you come to realize and agree to what s/he really wanted to say, I think that's a great piece of writing.

Mina did not take any English writing courses in college, but instead she took English reading courses where she read many books on economy, psychology, and business. We assume that a well-read person like Mina has more knowledge about the conventions of English writing. However, such extensive reading experiences may not play a more critical role in the development of rhetorical devices used by native-speaker writers. Furthermore, Mina acknowledges that the rhetorical conventions of EFL writers are of equal value to the dominant native writer conventions:

If we, as EFL writers, are able to make the readers follow the flow of thought and convince them with our argument, we don't have to be forced to conform to English rhetorical norms.

It appears that Mina thinks of “successful rhetoric as communicative effectiveness, in other words, as communication that convinces its [readers] and creates a favorable impression” (Mauranen & Hynninen, 2010, p. 1). As Baker (2013) argues, of course, there are differences between the rhetorical conventions (L1/ L2) that EFL writers have to negotiate. However, Mina takes a critical view of rhetorical patterns, one in which she does not “associate difference with deficit” (Baker, 2013, p. 36):

When writing [argument] in a direct and linear structure, you may say, “alright, it is good.” But there is no strong impression. When you follow the flow of the writer throughout the essay and reach the point at the end, you get the resonance in your heart.

4.2.4. The case of Dami

Dami has never studied English abroad, nor attended English private academy for TOEFL preparation like other students in our study. Instead, she learned English with TV

programs and children's picture book and novels. Dami's mother encouraged her to write journals or stories in English. Dami experienced firsthand the acts of reading and writing as meaning-making activities. She was thus socialized into thinking of story as a central pleasure of life.

I read picture books, chapter books and children's novels. Mostly Newberry medal winners. I think I read about 1,200 English books. I really loved reading English books, so I read much more in English than in Korean. I sometimes read newspaper articles in English, too.

Dami took an English composition course, where NESTs imposed on students prescribed structure above all. She felt uncomfortable to follow so-called native speaker norms. She did not find the five-paragraph essay format necessarily the best way to organize her ideas. Besides, she could not handle easily; as she reported: "though frustrated, I had to learn them by heart to get an A. She further puts it: "I feel like my writing might fulfill the purposes of instructor rather than my intent." In the composition classroom, Dami's literature-based reading and writing experiences have clashed in the five-paragraph essay format, with her left struggling to balance the expectations of dominant discourse with her own rhetorical sensibility. Dami puts it:

I have never learned English rhetorical convention until I came to college. For the first time, I learned 5-paragraph essay in English composition class in college. It was taught by a native-speaker instructor. I learned I had to write a thesis in introduction and body paragraphs starting with a clear topic sentence, followed by restatement in conclusion. I felt quite stifled. I really couldn't write like that. . .

As for mid-term exam essay, she employed a rhetorical structure that she finds most comfortable to present her argument as she wants. Presumably, it is because the course instructor was a non-NEST. When asked about *obscure* thesis statement in her essay, she said that it was her intention to hide her thesis statement. It was, after all, her deliberate rhetorical strategies for a grasp of idea. For Dami, "the act of organizing the text is not the same as using prescribed patterns" (Matsuda, 1997, p. 56), but should be seen as the process of meaning making, which involves a whole array of strategies drawn from perhaps years of her engagement involved in reading and writing about L2 literary texts. Dami added a further point of good writing as follows:

Good writing is something that the reader can find something significant after

finishing reading a book. Only after you finish reading the whole book or watch the whole movie, you can understand the true meaning. I hope my readers can find my writing like that. Whether you have thesis or not, if you have a strong message at the end and convince your readers, it is a good argumentative writing.

Taken together, it is evident that the complex constellation of individual participants' cultural resources is at play in L2 writing, such as national cultures (C1/C2), ideological assumptions, memberships in multiple L1 and L2 discourse communities, knowledge of audience expectations, and L1-related rhetorical tradition, as well as the writing practices of individual students. And again, a linguistic ideology based on the NS/NNS dichotomy is certainly there. For example, for Dami, relational dynamics between a NEST and her shape her rhetorical choices. As a consequence, the 5-paragraph essay structure is the dominant model to which Dami must conform in her L2 writing.

5. CONCLUSION

In our study, the notion of small cultures has been drawn on in attempt to understand the complexity of interacting cultures that may result in the production of L2 text. We found that the participants' preferred rhetorical structures varied. Further, they created L2 texts in the way they wanted to organize. They seemed to employ an *individually* effective rhetoric that is necessarily tied to "a purpose, that of communicating genuine thoughts and experiences" (Zamel, 2001, p. 34). However, L1 rhetorical and discourse patterns in their L2 writing was less deterministic than had been previously argued in CR studies. Nevertheless, it is still impossible and perhaps dangerous to ignore culture-related patterns of L1 prose in the students' text.

The participants "treated [rhetorical] norms not as shapers of communications but affordances for meaning-making" (Belcher & Nelson, 2013, p. 5). At times, the organization of their argumentative writing displayed the hybridity and fluidity of different patterns of written discourse, as a way "to exert their rhetorical agency" (McIntosh, Connor, & Gokpinar-Shelton, 2017, p. 13). Here again the small cultures play a role in some respect of the rhetorical configuration of the texts, but the national culture still matters. More importantly, these findings contribute to our understanding of the rhetorical templates of L2 texts as constructs that are always in process, and therefore adaptable and negotiable (Baker, 2013).

Because we "employ small samples of uncertain representativeness" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 77), we can provide only suggestive answers to the questions framed in our study.

Nevertheless, we consider the findings to be important indicators for calling for a more postmodern view of culture that challenges traditional views of the dominant cultural norms in the teaching of L2 writing. With that in mind, we need to think of culture as a verb rather than as a noun (Street, 1993), whereby culture is not a static thing. By extension, for pedagogy, we as L2 writing teachers need to know our students *culturally* as we are trying to know them *individually*, as Atkinson (1999) so cogently noted.

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Received on July 17, 2019
Reviewed on September 1, 2019
Revised version received on September 7, 2019