

## Effects of Culture on L2 Writing: A Case Study of Korean University Students\*

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Drawing on the cultural background of the East (i.e., Korea) and the West (i.e., U.S.), I aimed to investigate the influence of L1 culture on L2 writing by focusing on the usage of “I” and the logical structure in the participants’ English writings. Ten Korean university students learning English as a foreign language (L2) participated in this study. The data was collected through questionnaire, interviews, process logs, and the participants’ English writings (They wrote four English essays and one personal narrative). The number of the essays that did not use “I” at all was 13. Five participants did not use “I” at all in at least one of their essays. Nine participants wrote “Chun” (deviation form) in their English writing. All participants employed the combination of English (e.g., U.S.) rhetoric and Korean rhetoric: The rhetorical structure of introduction-body-conclusion (English rhetoric) was mixed with ki-sung-chun-kyul (Korean rhetoric). A new converged mode of writing appeared when there was a fusion between a collectivist culture-based writing and an individualistic culture-based writing, which I coined as “Convergent rhetoric.” The convergence of Korean rhetoric and English rhetoric yielded diverse writing styles, yet a general pattern was graphically represented.

**Keywords:** culture, L2 writing, Korean university students, contrastive rhetoric, convergent rhetoric

### 1 Introduction

A culture is a system of meaning historically passed down and systemized in general, and through this, we understand the world and communicate knowledge (Ting-Toomey & Dorijee, 2018). There is a much more straightforward relationship between language and culture than it is thought by many (Hofstede, 2015; Lu, Nisbett, & Morris, 2020).

Bloch (1998) stated that language was a constituent of culture; under specific conditions, nonlinguistic knowledge could be revealed through

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explicit discourse (Hofstede, 2015). Fernald and Morikawa (1993) compared the speech of mothers to their children in the East and the West. They showed that the Eastern mothers often talked in a way that induced their children to reply using verb forms by asking questions such as “Would you cook rice for me?” Meanwhile, the Western mothers frequently induced their children to use noun forms by asking questions such as “What is this?” This difference in usage reflected cultural differences (i.e., individualism and collectivism). Whereas verbs were used to stress the relationship between beings, nouns were used to emphasize the specificity of the individual entity (Kim, 2008).

This study questioned the effect of L1 culture on L2 writing. Kaplan (1966) was a pioneer in this area, and about 55 years ago, he had the idea (and proved) that different language had different rhetoric. As an extension of his study, I tried to further specify the influence of L1 culture on L2 writing. I tried to find a lynchpin between cultural root/concept of an individual and his/her writing style. Moreover, I tried to shed light on the convergence of cultures, which was reflected in convergent rhetoric that was found in this study.

To investigate how Korean students’ English writing was affected by their culture, I posed the following research question: How do cultural differences (between collectivism and individualism) influence Korean students’ L2 writing?

## **2 Literature Review**

Kaplan’s (1966) seminal article “Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education” introduced the term “contrastive rhetoric,” which phased in numerous discussions and debates regarding its legitimacy.

According to Kaplan (1966), rhetoric was “a mode of thinking or a mode of finding all available means for the achievement of a designated end” (p. 11). He argued that the reason L2 students’ compositions seemed irrelevant to the topic from the perspective of a native English speaker was the usage of different rhetoric of L2 students, which resulted from their different thinking patterns.

Kaplan (1966) defined “contrastive rhetoric” as each language having its own rhetorical aspects based on its own culture and language. He stated that each language had its unique structural patterns/order of paragraphs used in composition, and as such, learning a language included learning the logical sequence of that language. To support his assertion, he analyzed hundreds of essays of students from various cultural backgrounds. While rhetorical differences among individuals existed, rhetoric of a certain language was relevant to the culture in which that language was used.

As a result of his research on numerous student compositions, Kaplan (1966) introduced his famous graphic exhibition representing the different paragraph orders of the writings of students from diverse cultures: English

essays were developed in a linear fashion, Semitic language essays utilized parallel coordinate clauses (Connor, 2002), Romance languages and Russian composition patterns showed linearity at the beginning and the end but had digressions in the middle, and Oriental languages reflected indirectness by having a spiral form.

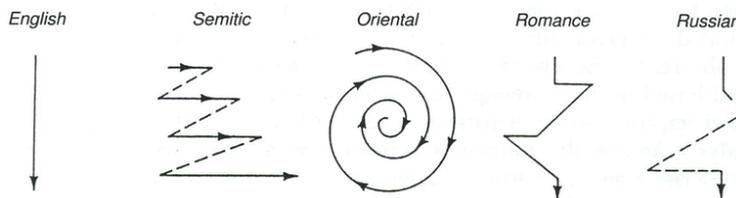


Figure 1. Adopted from Kaplan (Kaplan, 1966, p. 11).

However, Kaplan (1966) was criticized for being too naive and strong in his claim, as well as for trying to oversimplify the structural patterns of differing languages/cultures. Also, he showed a bit of an egocentric perspective by stating, “The rhetorical structures of English paragraphs may be found in any good composition text. The patterns of paragraphs in other languages are not so well established, or perhaps only not so well known to speakers of English” (p. 21).

Kaplan (1980) later admitted that he was a bit strong and naive in his formal statement that “Each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself, and that part of the learning of a particular language is the mastering of its logical system” (p. 14). However, he continued to advocate the basic ideas he suggested earlier. While admitting that there could be multiple ways to arrange paragraphs in different languages, he claimed that there was a clear preference in each language for the usage of certain structural patterns, at least regarding expository compositions.

Despite the fact that contrastive rhetoric had some setbacks, such as the lack of research and weak theoretical base, Kaplan and Grabe (1996) kept defending its legitimacy. They insisted that first, rhetorical differences among languages did exist, and second, foreign student writers needed to know those differences to become writers on a native level.

The first critic of Kaplan’s article, which instigated the idea of contrastive rhetoric, was Hinds (1983). He believed that studying writers’ L1 should be a prerequisite for investigating the impact of culture on their L2 writing. He emphasized the effects of audience and developmental issues, stating that these factors could attribute to the different rhetorical patterns observed between L1 and L2 writings. He stated that simply analyzing the English product of L2 writers would not guarantee the claim that there was a

negative L1 transfer to their L2 writing. Also, he criticized not only oversimplification and overgeneralization in Kaplan's diagrams that categorized the rhetorical patterns of differing cultures, but also Kaplan's ethnocentricity, which was shown through his graphic depiction of the English rhetoric as a straight line.

Four years later, however, Hinds (1987) concluded that Japanese was a reader-responsible language, whereas English was a writer-responsible one, thus supporting Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric theory. He stated that Japanese tended to focus on a situation, while English had a proclivity to focus on a person. In other words, while it was enough for Japanese speakers to mention an event without mentioning the person (subject or object), English speakers mentioned both the situation and the person involved in the event. For example, English counterparts of the following Japanese sentences "Sakebigoe ga shita zo (A shouting voice occurred)" and "Yama ga mieru (The mountain can be seen)" would be "I just heard someone shout" and "I can see the mountain." Therefore, while the speaker was responsible for mutual understanding in English, the listener was expected to comprehend the essence of the dialogue without given information in Japanese.

Hinds (1987) argued that contrastive rhetoric was intertwined with the responsibility of the reader and the writer. Thus, he suggested that in order for Japanese ESL writers to be successful in their composition classes, they should be aware of the criteria for good writing in the United States: Which included the extent to which the writer was responsible for the reader's comprehension. Labeling Japanese as a reader-responsible language, however, was criticized by McCagg (1996). He noted that Japanese readers did not need extra work to understand the columns used in Hinds's article because they already shared the cultural background. Thus, McCagg (1996) claimed that the rhetorical style of writing was subject to convention and genre of writing.

Connor (1997, 1998, 2002) suggested some pedagogical implications for teachers of multicultural writing classrooms. She argued that the idea of contrastive rhetoric was changing from the traditional concept of focusing on linguistic aspects, such as analyzing structural patterns, to considering cognitive and sociocultural issues like factors that affect the rhetorical patterns in writing. Leki (1997), however, remained pessimistic about Connor's (1997) assertion. She argued that despite the numerous debates which ensued since Kaplan's (1966) seminal article had been published, contrastive rhetoric had made little progress.

Kaplan (1966) proposed contrastive rhetoric based on his observation that ESL writings showed different structural/organizational patterns compared with the English writings of native English speakers (i.e., the norm); he also wanted to utilize contrastive rhetoric to help students using different rhetorical patterns in their L2 writing. Research on such rhetorical differences had developed and evolved into a new field of inquiry in areas such as text linguistics and discourse analysis. These inquiries, however, did not yield

practical recommendations, as a gap existed between the demands of the scholars of language analysis and those of language users (e.g., teachers and students in classroom settings) (Kaplan, 1980; Leki, 1991).

For example, based on contrastive rhetoric, paragraph patterns were taught as one of the specific features of English compositions (Matsuda, 1997). In this approach, students “copy paragraphs, analyze the form of model paragraphs, and imitate model passages. They put scrambled sentences into paragraph order, they identify general and specific statements, they choose or invent an appropriate topic sentence, they insert or delete sentences” (Raimes, 1983, p. 8). However, this approach became the target of criticism because it regarded the effect of students’ background too deterministically.

In his book “Contrastive Rhetoric: Orientalism and the Chinese Second Language Writer,” Cahill (2009) aimed at three kinds of audience. The first audience was students in the United States who had come mainly from China, Korea, Japan, or Vietnam. They were used to an Eastern writing style which was represented by *ki-sho-ten-ketsu*. The second audience was teachers of the students who were struggling with their English writing in ESL classes or American universities. The third audience was proponents and opponents of contrastive rhetoric and advocates of comparative rhetoric.

Unlike contrastive rhetoric, comparative rhetoric stressed the similarities of the writings of students from different cultures. Cahill (2009) claimed that the main problem with contrastive rhetoric was the stereotype that all languages contrasted rhetorically. Instead of contrastive rhetoric, he rooted for comparative rhetoric: He argued that two languages could rhetorically resemble each other. To support his opinion, he compared the writing style of Chinese and Japanese students to that of American students.

Before Cahill (2009) compared the writing style of Chinese and Japanese students with that of American students, it was known that Japanese writing consisted of four elements, known as *ki-sho-ten-ketsu*. The author’s opinion/conclusion appeared at the end, *ketsu*. Its equivalent form in Chinese writing was *chi-cheng-juan-he* or *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*: Mohan and Lo (1985) found this not to be set in a fixed fashion but, rather, was used in a diverse way, including both inductive and deductive styles.

He explicated the concept of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (*ki-sho-ten-ketsu*), emphasizing *zhuan* (*ten*). *Zhuan* (*ten*) has been regarded as an essential feature in Eastern writing, involving a turning point that digresses from the previous context. Cahill (2009), however, provided a different point of view: He claimed that the Eastern style of writing “*ki-sho-ten-ketsu*” and the Western style of writing “introduction–development–conclusion” could be very similar, if “*zhuan*” (*ten*) had not existed.

Cahill (2009) also offered multifaceted interpretations of “*zhuan*.” In addition to the traditional concept of “*zhuan*,” which was referring to a digression, he demystified the concept of it by showing that there were many other ways of interpreting “*zhuan*” (e.g., relocation of emphasis). He thus

argued that to define “zhuan” correctly, one should include “historical and ideological dimensions of the problem in their scope” (p. 160).

Cahill (2009) pinpointed the setbacks of contrastive rhetoric and proposed comparative rhetoric as an alternative. He used comparative rhetoric to complement contrastive rhetoric by avoiding preexisting biases and emphasizing the similarities between L1 writing and L2 writing. He provided evidence of comparative rhetoric that exhibited rhetorical similarities among different languages. His finding was in line with the research mentioned earlier (Leki, 1997; Silva, 1993) that demonstrated similarities between L1 writing and L2 writing. He further suggested directions for teachers of ESL composition classes.

Cahill (2009)’s work is valuable in three aspects. First, instead of simply comparing the essays of the Eastern students with those of the Western students, he capitalized on his experience in China by writing an ethnographic background, which enabled readers to have a deeper understanding of the origin of Chinese rhetorical writing. Second, he delved into the cultural roots of the East and the West to relate them to the writing patterns of different countries. Third, the most significant part of his work lied in advancing forward by introducing comparative rhetoric, instead of merely criticizing the flaws of contrastive rhetoric (Lee, 2017).

Although there have been many pros and cons regarding Kaplan’s (1966) contrastive rhetoric, it is still being studied and supported by numerous scholars. Thus, it would not be an overstatement to argue that contrastive rhetoric holds certain legitimate and reasonable logical grounds.

To further investigate the impact of culture on L2 writing, I aimed to answer the following research question in this study: How do cultural differences (between collectivism and individualism) influence Korean students’ L2 writing?

### **3 Research Method**

#### **3.1 Context of study**

It is believed by many Koreans that English proficiency (especially English writing skills) would advantage jobseekers; thus, the importance of English writing is stressed in Korea.

#### **3.2 Participants**

Participants for this study were 10 Korean college students from S University (n = 5) and K University (n = 5). Both universities had top-notch international study programs (e.g., English writing) in which students used English to speak

and write. As a consequence, participants had had diverse educational and cultural experience (e.g., using English in class).

After posting a recruitment notice, I selected ten applicants for this study. To ensure the participants' English proficiency, I selected participants from the department of liberal arts/social sciences, where English was more emphasized compared with other departments.

The following table provides information regarding the participants. Names are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Background Information of Participants

	Name	Major	Gender	University	Grade	Study abroad experience
K University	Soo	Philosophy	Male	KU	Senior	None
	Chan	International studies	Female	KU	Senior	1 year
	Ji	Cultural contents	Female	KU	Senior	None
	Lee Hye	Management International studies	Female Female	KU KU	Senior Senior	1 year None
S University	Choi Yoon	Sociology Cultural contents	Female Female	SU SU	Senior Senior	1.5 year 1 year
	Mang	Political science	Female	SU	Senior	None
	Kim	English literature	Female	SU	Senior	2 years
	Han	History	Male	SU	Senior	None

### 3.3 Method of study

All participants answered questionnaire, did an interview, wrote five essays, and wrote process logs before and after each writing. They filled out consent forms before the study. All participants came to the writing place and wrote English essays on a weekly/biweekly basis. They spent two to three hours per writing, on average. The data collection process is explained in detail in the following:

#### 3.3.1 Questionnaire

Before the writing sessions began, participants introduced themselves and answered the questionnaire. Information about the participants' previous experience concerning L1& L2 writing, self-evaluated writing ability in L2,

English education they had previously received, eligibility for this study, future careers, educational background interests in L2 writing, strategies for writing essays in L1 & L2, and their evaluation criteria for good L2 writing was gathered through the questionnaire.

### **3.3.2 Interview**

Following Seidman (2006)'s method for gathering data, I separated the interviews into domains to focus on different topics. Each Participants did at least five interviews before or after their writing. I conducted the interview on a one-on-one basis in the beginning, but with the passage of time, I frequently did group interview with 2–3 people. While individual interview was useful for collecting in-depth information of a certain participant, group discussions in group interview session fostered participants to see interview questions from different angles. To gain more profound data from the participants, I helped them have fresh discussion with new discussants in each group interview session.

### **3.3.3 Process log**

To understand the participants' internal process as they engage in writing, participants were told to write a process log: Process log is a form where a writer writes down one's internal process as he writes. Process log was often utilized by the researcher who had the purpose of delving into the impact of culture on participants' L2 writing/L2 writing strategy.

### **3.3.4 L2 Writing**

Participants wrote one narrative writing and four expository writings. Each participant was told to write 500 words or more. Narrative writing was written in the first week in order for the researcher to understand the general L2 writing proficiency of the participants.

The topics of L2 writings are shown below. The topics were given to the participants in the order of from the least difficult one to the most difficult one, so as to help them write in L2 more effectively. Diagrams are used to represent their L2 rhetoric.

#### **Narrative writing**

1. Describe a time when you thought something was an adversity but later it turned out to be a good fortune. When was it and how?
2. If you had a time machine, which time period would you like to go back to and why?

#### **Argumentative expository writing:**

1. Is artificial intelligence harmful or beneficial to humans?
2. Discuss your thoughts regarding English as an official language in Korea.
3. What should the future path of Korean Wave be?

4. Between individualism and collectivism, which one do you think is more desirable? Why?

#### 4 Results

##### 4.1 Omission of “I”

In Choi’s writings, one noticeable thing was found: She did not use “I” at all throughout her entire essays, except for narrative writing (Narrative writing was an exception since the topic was writing about the author). She thought that in order for the writers to use sentences that start with “I insist~,” they should have certain degree of authority in their field. From her point of view, however, she did not have enough authority or confidence which promoted her to write sentences starting from “I.” Choi said that she felt a bit embarrassed when she used “I” to opine, because she thought she was not good enough to use “I.” Choi mentioned that she only used “I” when she insisted on something that she strongly believed in. Choi said even though she learned in college that phrases such as “the author” or “the speaker” could substitute “I,” she was too shy to use that either.

*Choi: I don't like placing too much emphasis on myself because I don't take myself as an expert in the matter. When I got into college, I learned that there were some good substitutes, such as the author or the speaker, but I was too shy to use them either. (Process log 4)*

Han was not comfortable using “I,” since he, too, thought that it displayed a bit of authority. He tried to avoid the phrases such as “my opinion,” “I insist,” or “I think,” since he thought his assertion in his writing was only a mere hypothesis/opinion of a college student without authority.

Ji and Soo were also very reserved in using “I” in their essays (e.g., Soo used “I” once in all of his writings). Ji stated that she did not feel comfortable using “I” because she was an introvert person who was educated her whole life to follow collectivistic values, which often resulted in the suppression of expressing one’s opinion freely for the sake of the group harmony. Soo said that he hardly used “I,” because he did not want to look special and was not certain of his opinion.

In sum, the number of the essays without the usage of “I” was 13; five participants wrote at least one essay without using “I.” The reason some participants were not comfortable using “I” and did not use “I” was that using “I” implied expressing one’s opinion in a strong fashion with authority.

## 4.2 Logical structure

The purpose of this section is to examine the impact of participants' L1 culture on the logical structure of their L2 writing. My hypothesis was that participants would show mixed rhetoric of U.S. rhetoric and Korean rhetoric in their L2 writing. Among the several logical patterns that appeared in participants' L2 writings, I will introduce some patterns that appeared most frequently.

Ji's first writing, "Is artificial intelligence harmful or beneficial to humans?" showed the traditional Korean writing style of *ki* (introduction)-*sung* (development)- *chun* (deviation)-*kyul* (conclusion) (Appendix 1). In the first paragraph, Ji introduced the topic, and then she talked about the good and bad effects that artificial intelligence could bring to human race. From the perspective of English readers, her introduction might look a bit vague, because Ji did not clearly mention her opinion regarding the impact of artificial intelligence on human race. This paragraph ended with a sentence that looked like the start of *chun* (deviation). From the perspective of Korean readers who are used to high-context communication and traditional Korean writing style of *ki*(introduction)-*sung* (development)-*chun* (deviation)-*kyul* (conclusion), the last sentence implied the author's opinion about the topic.

Next two paragraphs (second and third paragraphs) supported Ji's assertion which focused on the harmful effects of artificial intelligence to human race. Ji used a number of examples to support her opinion. In the first sentence of the fourth paragraph, however, she mentioned the plausibility of the opposing claim (i.e., italicized and underlined). Then, from the next sentence to the end of that paragraph, Ji countered the opposing opinion, thus gaining stronger supporting ground for her original assertion.

In the last paragraph, Ji reached the conclusion which may sound a bit ambiguous from the perspective of English readers: Ji wrote "A.I. may be able to bring as much damage as convenience to humanity." Considering her previous claim that artificial intelligence would do more harms than good to human race, this sentence seemed not to be in line with her logical flow. This is one example of high-context communication, which is the characteristic of a collectivistic culture: In high context communication, readers (or listeners) should learn to understand what the writer (or speaker) is really trying to say (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018).

Also, in the conclusion part, instead of summarizing her argument which was stated in the previous paragraphs, Ji tried to further her opinion in a way that could preserve harmony between two opposing opinions, which could be interpreted as a reflection of the collectivistic culture. Ji's traditional Korean writing style could be graphically represented as following. *Ki* (introduction) is the first circular line and *chun* (deviation) is the second circular line.



Figure 2. Ji's rhetorical pattern

Soo's second writing, "Discuss your thoughts regarding English as an official language in Korea" showed combination between English and Korean writing styles (Appendix 2).

Soo's introduction was very terse, yet it clearly delivered his opinion regarding the issue. The second paragraph, however, was dedicated to mentioning the opposing party's assertion (i.e., italicized and underlined). Then, in the paragraph after that, Soo refuted the opposing party's claim (i.e., italicized and underlined). These two paragraphs are the "chun" (deviation) part: It seemed to digress from the topic, but it actually strengthened the topic by introducing the opposing opinion and then nullifying it by counter arguing it.

After "chun," Soo backed up his opinion in the following three paragraphs using examples, data, and statistics. In the conclusion part, Soo employed the English writing style: Soo summed up what he had mentioned in his previous paragraphs (except for "chun") and clarified his opinion in regards of the topic, as he did in the introduction section. Soo's rhetorical pattern could be graphically represented as following:



Figure 3. Soo's rhetorical pattern

Han's first writing, "Is artificial intelligence harmful or beneficial to humans?" showed converged rhetorical structure of American and Korean writings in a bit complex, yet interesting way (Appendix 3).

Apart from some awkward English expressions, his introduction was succinct and simple: It clearly conveyed the author's opinion (pros and cons) regarding artificial intelligence, which was the trait of English writing. From the body part, however, it became a bit more complex. Each body part was written under the traditional Korean writing style *ki-sung-chun-kyul*. In body 1, the topic was introduced and developed until the 5<sup>th</sup> sentence, but "chun" (i.e., deviation) began from the 6<sup>th</sup> sentence (i.e., italicized and underlined): Han mentioned the benefits of machine until the 5<sup>th</sup> sentence, but he started to state some limitations machines have from the 6<sup>th</sup> sentence.

In body 2, Han introduced the topic (AlphaGo) and wrote its superior ability by mentioning the go match of AlphaGo with Sedol Lee. In the 5<sup>th</sup> sentence (i.e., italicized and underlined), however, he stated certain limits of AlphaGo by claiming that it could not think freely as humans do. In his 7<sup>th</sup> sentence which starts with "But," he again advocated the AlphaGo by suggesting ways that could complement the setbacks AlphaGo has. From the perspective of *ki-sung-chun-kyul*, 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> sentences would be *ki* and *sung* (introduction and elevation), 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> sentences would be *chun*(deviation), and the last 7<sup>th</sup> sentence would be *kyul* (conclusion).

In body 3, Han used science movies as an example to show the usefulness of AlphaGo and machines. In his 8<sup>th</sup> sentence (i.e., italicized and underlined), however, he emphasized that movie was just a fiction and not a reality: He deviated from his preceding pro-science logical flow. But from the following sentence which starts with "but," Han again showed the bright side of AlphaGo and concluded the paragraph.

In the conclusion part, Han summarized his opinion he had mentioned in the body parts and finished his writing. This section's writing style was linear to the writing style of conclusion in an English composition

Consequently, Han exhibited a mixed writing style, by utilizing English writing style in the introduction and conclusion part and employing traditional Korean writing style of *ki* (introduction)-*sung* (development)-*chun* (deviation)-*kyul* (conclusion) in each of the body parts. Han's rhetorical pattern could be graphically represented as following:



Figure 4. Han's rhetorical pattern

In English writing, generally, the logical flow is linear without any digressions. Lee's fourth writing, "Between individualism and collectivism, which one do you think is more desirable? Why?" was most similar to English writing regarding rhetorical patterns (Appendix 4).

In the first paragraph, Lee mentioned her opinion in a bit indirect way. Even though she was an advocate of individualism, before she revealed her opinion, she stated: "I am not going to say that I am against or for a specific ideology because both have pros and cons. Therefore, it would be judgmental if I say one is superior to another" (i.e., italicized and underlined). This is also a glimpse of high context communication of Eastern culture, where people do not directly express themselves to preserve harmony among the group members.

Other than the introduction part, her writing was terse and succinct; there was no digression in her logic. Unlike most of the participants, she did not have "chun" in any of her writings. She maintained her linear logical flow throughout her writing and concluded her paper by summarizing her argument, as good English writers do. Lee's rhetorical pattern could be graphically represented as following:



Figure 5. Lee's rhetorical pattern

In sum, the number of the essays without the usage of “I” was 13. Half of the participants (five) did not use “I” at all in at least one of their essays. Nine out of ten participants wrote “Chun” (deviation) in their L2 writing. All participants used the combination of English (i.e., U.S.) rhetoric and Korean rhetoric: The rhetorical structure of introduction-body-conclusion (English rhetoric) was mixed with Ki-Sung-Chen-Kyul (Korean rhetoric). I coined a term “Convergent rhetoric” to describe this.

## 5 Findings and Discussion

According to Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010), in individualistic cultures, people are independent of each other, discover their special characteristics, and express their opinion freely. In collectivistic cultures, however, the relationship between individuals is emphasized: An independent ego is not clearly differentiated from an interdependent ego. Thus, while children in a collectivistic culture learn how to think within the frame of “we,” children in an individualistic culture learn how to think on the basis of “I.”

For example, even though it might be grammatically incorrect, Koreans say our mother, our father, our sister, our brother, our school, or our house when referring to my mother, my father, my sister, my brother, my school, or my house, respectively. In contrast, in English, the equivalents of abovementioned Koreans would be my mother, my father, my sister, my brother, my school, or my house. This reflects the mode of utterance in daily life in a collectivistic culture.

In light of this, it would be reasonable to conjecture that the cultural elements related to Korean writing would emphasize concepts such as we, dependent ego, indirect expression, and interpersonal, while the cultural characteristics related to English writing would focus on concepts such as I, independent ego, direct expression, and intrapersonal. I consider these

concepts comprise the cultural elements of Korean and English writing, respectively.

### 5.1 Omission of “I”

In a collectivistic culture, an individual is not important enough to stand out. The survival and prosperity of the group comes first, and the individuals' priority serves for the prosperity of the group (Nisbett, 2004). Thus, while people in an individualistic society are normally encouraged to express themselves, people in a collectivistic society are expected to talk in a harmonious way or not to express themselves to maintain group harmony (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

In the same vein, while individualism prefers “I” to “we” and “individual rights” to “group rights,” collectivism prioritizes “we” over “I.” Individualism stresses self-efficacy and personal autonomy, whereas collectivism has an inclination toward harmony, collaboration, and good relationship. (Nisbett, 2004; Ting-Toomey & Dorijee, 2018). Based upon this, I conjectured that while writers in an individualistic culture would express their ideas on a strong note, writers in a collectivistic culture would assert rather indirectly, in comparison.

When asked what cultural differences they encountered when learning English, the participants said the usage of “I.” For example, Yoon stated the confusion she experienced when using “I.” Yoon’s interview below represents how writers in a collectivistic culture think.

*Yoon : “When I started to learn English, I was taught to use the word “I.” There were a lot more sentences that started with “I” than those that started with “we.” It felt like the word “I” was one of the most important words of all. At that time, I realized that English-speaking world highly values delivering one’s own ideas, and I thought I had seen a glimpse of the individualistic culture.”*  
*(Interview 2)*

Choi did not use “I” at all throughout her writings (but for narrative writing), and three students (Han, Ji, and Soo) seldom used “I” in their writings. This kind of cognition is commonly expressed in Korean writing: The expressions related to “I” are avoided frequently. The subject of the action, which in many cases is “I,” is often omitted from sentences as well, and the reader has to guess the omitted subject of the action in the context. I think the tendency of shying away from stating one’s arguments confidently, which is oftentimes shown by avoiding the expressions related to “I” or omitting the subject of the action, is a phenomenon that is intertwined with the collectivistic culture.

## 5.2 Logical structure

An interlocutor can understand other person's language at face value in a low-context communication. On the other hand, in a high-context communication, it is necessary for speakers to refer to the context/background information, in addition to the actual conversation itself, to comprehend what the other party is really saying (Collings, 2007; Kinginger, 2009; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). In other words, while low-context communication is represented by the direct expression of the speaker's opinion (character of an individualistic society), high-context communication is characterized by the usage of circumlocution or indirect sentences that sometimes do not have the subject (character of a collectivistic society).

The fundamental characteristics of the structure "introduction–elevation (development)–transition–conclusion" are as following: First, when an issue is raised in the beginning, the background knowledge is also provided to some degree. Second, the middle section covers the counterargument (and the main argument). Third, rather than simply summarizing the previously stated opinion by the writer, the conclusion tends to be comprehensive by considering the counterarguments as well (Eggington, 1987).

I deem that this kind of writing is highly related to high-context communication, where people should oftentimes put an effort to comprehend what the writer (or speaker) is really trying to say. In high-context communication, people tend to not express their opinion directly, because it could damage the harmony of the group (Nisbett, 2004; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Ting-Toomey & Dorijee, 2018). Instead, they employ circumlocution, which is related to the traditional Korean writing style of ki (introduction)-sung (development)-chun (deviation)-kyul (conclusion).

Considering the abovementioned characteristics of traditional Korean writing style of ki(introduction)-sung (development)-chun (deviation)-kyul (conclusion) which was presented in Ji's writing, I believe Kaplan's (1966) original claim about this writing style is a bit rigid, as Kaplan himself mentioned later. Instead of his original diagram (left), I suggest Kaplan's diagram for traditional Korean writing style should be drawn as below (right):

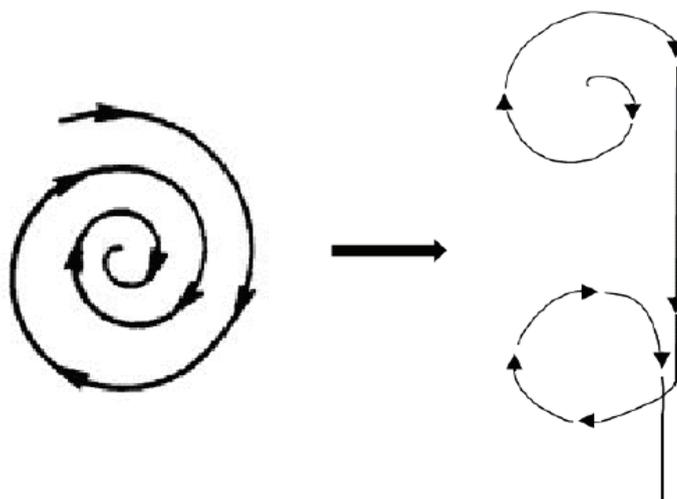


Figure 6. Rhetoric of traditional Korean writing style

In Korean writings, not only the author's opinion but also the background knowledge is presented in the introduction part: For this reason, the beginning section tends to be longer and unclear compared with that of English writings. Plus, there is "chun" in Korean writing (Eggington, 1987). On the other hand, in English writings, the introduction is terse and succinct, and the author's opinion is revealed in a straightforward way throughout the writing, in general. (Casanave, 2004; Hyland 2003).

In this study, chun was used as a reflection of high-context expressions (e.g., circumlocution), which was intertwined with the key cultural concept in collectivism (i.e., harmony). Chun was also useful in two regards: First, by introducing the opposing perspective (chun) and countering it, writers could reinforce their original argument. Second, as writers showed not only one-sided opinion but also opposing perspective by the usage of chun, readers could have a more balanced and broad perspective.

All participants used the combination of English (i.e., U.S.) rhetoric and Korean rhetoric: The rhetorical structure of introduction-body-conclusion (English rhetoric) was mixed with Ki-Sung-Chen-Kyul (Korean rhetoric). Some participants practiced only Korean rhetoric in their early L2 writing, but after one or two writings, they employed combined rhetoric. A new converged mode of writing appeared when there was a fusion between a collectivist culture-based writing and an individualistic culture-based writing. I coined a term "Convergent rhetoric" to describe this. The types of convergent rhetoric found in participants' L2 writings could be graphically represented as following:

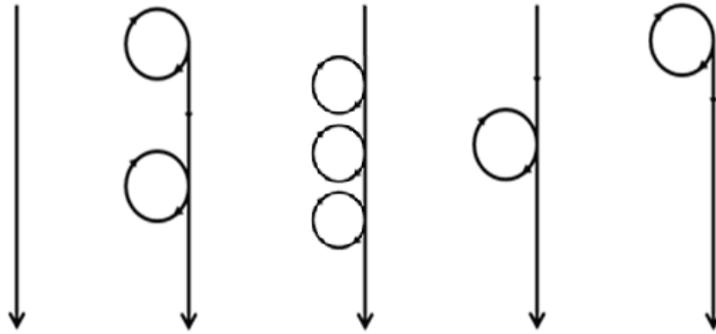


Figure 7. English rhetoric Korean rhetoric Convergent rhetoric Convergent rhetoric  
rhetoric Convergent rhetoric

The convergence of these two writing styles represented itself differently, depending on the theme of the essays. When the theme was complex and overarching, the beginning was longer; when the theme was lighter and simpler, the beginning was shorter. If the theme had been debated over a long period of time, writers allotted *chun* bigger portion of their writing. If not, *chun* was written less in comparison.

On the basis of the types of convergent rhetoric found in participants' L2 writings, I propose that convergent rhetoric could be graphically represented, in general, as following:

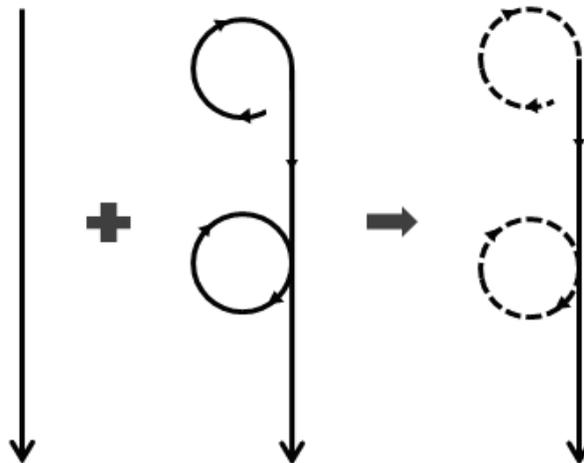


Figure 8. Convergent rhetoric (dotted line means this pattern may/may not appear)

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the previous discussions, it would not be absurd to state that the difference between Korean and U.S. writing styles and standards was enrooted in cultural differences. In other words, background cultures of the L2 writers affected the rhetorical differences in their L2 writing. Drawing from this, one thing I found in this study which could be pedagogically applied to classrooms was the impact of background culture of L2 learners on their L2 writings.

In English writing classes, teachers should consider L2 learners' cultural influence on their English writing to understand them better (Song & Seong, 2010). There are no less developed children because all children develop differently (Ageyev, 2003), and L2 teachers should be well aware of this and consider the diverse cultures of their students in class.

Teaching the culture of the target language in the classroom would deepen the L2 students' understanding of it as well. Moreover, knowing that one of the goals of studying cultures is to prove that we are the same would help L2 teachers better teach L2 students from diverse cultural background.

I have two recommendations for the future research regarding this study. First, if L2 writing and culture could be linked, why not L2 writing process and culture? Lee (2018, 2020) stated that each student's L2 writing strategy varied from that of others depending on the sociohistorical background of each individual. Future study regarding the impact of culture of L2 learners (i.e., Western students from individualistic culture and Eastern students from collectivist culture) on their L2 writing process would be both intriguing and pedagogically meaningful.

Second, nowadays, using digital medias to express oneself is gaining more importance by students in classroom settings; digital videos are used as literary tools. Students can write poems and essays using digital video in various ways that reflect the multi-faceted gamut of using digital video as a literary tool (Bruce, 2010, 2015; Bruce et. al, 2013; Bruce & Chiu, 2015). Examining the impact of students' culture on their digital video-based writing would be another intriguing study, with much pedagogical implication.

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## Appendix 1

### Ji: Is artificial intelligence harmful or beneficial to humans?

Since the intriguing artificial intelligence 'Alphago' has appeared to the world, Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has become one of the most popular topics about the future of society. According to experts and the media, it is highly likely for A.I to substitute our lives in diverse ways, eventually improving our quality of life. However, there is also a possibility that A.I has several negative impacts to humanity.

Firstly, A.I is able to further decrease humanity's individual thinking ability. When it comes to the Industrial Revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, machines had substituted human muscle. Thanks to machines, it seemed that people finally became free from the obligation of working. People thought that machines should increase productivity, which would develop the economy and provide wealth for both nations and individuals. However, child labor became a real problem following the Industrial Revolution, causing a decrease of human dignity. The intensity and downsides of labor were actually increased, as dystopian movies and literature, such as Charly Chaplin's <Modern Times> and Aldous Huxley's <Brave New World> have shown. In this way, the Industrial Revolution had some problems. Artificial Intelligence may bring huge negative influences as well when it is substituted for humanity's brain.

Secondly, due to the commercialization of A.I. as a daily tool, the paradigm of our current industry will change; producing a huge amount of unemployed populations. To illustrate this point, if A.I. would become specialized for calculating and barcoding in retail markets, 30 cashiers would be replaced by 1 administrator who manages 30 A.I. machines. In the end, only 1-2 cashiers will be able to continue their jobs, and the rest of the 29 employees will lose their job. According to research about which jobs are in danger of automation, easy routine jobs like cleaners, ushers, drivers, cooks, etc. were ranked first to be replaced, with many employees being fired.

*It may seem plausible to say that there are various bright aspects that A.I will bring to the development of human lives. Nevertheless, it takes time and effort to get used to those huge changes. Especially as there is a huge possibility that some particular social or economic class will be destroyed by losing their jobs, it might be risky to accept the new A.I. technology without enough supportive social apparatuses.*

Therefore we can conclude that A.I. may be able to bring as much damage as convenience to humanity. Before worshipping the good aspects of A.I., we therefore have the obligation to know for sure that some people will not become the victims of automation. No matter how machine goes further away developing itself, there is a limitation that machine can't access

## Appendix 2

**Soo: Discuss your thoughts regarding English as an official language in Korea.**

Is it valid that using English as an official language? I think if Korean government decide to convert English as a second official language, it would be efficient in many points.

*Some might say that using English as an official language would lead to vandalize the originality of Korean culture.* They argued that language express and create the identity of own culture and tradition. Thus, if Korean accept it as official language, there will be violation like Japanese Colonial Era. In this period, Japanese had been designated as the first language in Korea and a lot of Korean language had been damaged and erased by the government. Fighters for independence of Korea taught children not to forget Korean language and its own culture and spirits. Moreover, a decent number of the poets and authors had written and presented Korean-written works. If there were not such attempts, Korean in contemporary period stand a chance of using Japanese as official language.

*However, these arguments couldn't be appropriate reasons for objecting the acceptance of English as an official language.* Since the situations and circumstances at that time quite differ from nowadays. Korea is the independent nation now. That means that there are no compulsion or extortion of culture and no subjugation of identity of Korea. If we assign English as a common language, the ways are voluntary and liberal that nobody are force to speak English solely. No one would be unable to use Korean language and English used just more influential. If the reasons for opposing the designating English as an official language are merely concerning about the transmission of traditional culture, the government and institutions have only to make an endeavor to preserve it.

Why English means significantly in Korea? Owing to the specific features of economic structure that exportation and importation account for 96 percent among GDP of South Korea. It explains that importance of global trade and education of English. In the world trade market, English has become a lingua franca in many ways since the working languages of major and leading trade enterprises are English. It means that it's crucial that using English as main language for economic growth. Therefore, appointing English as an

official language fortifies the abilities to access and communicate well with foreign partners.

In addition, the tourist industry would tend to vim and vigor in case appointing English as an official language. Singapore and Hong Kong, the nations which used English as an official language have been crowded due to tourism. A bit of stores, offices and tourist attractions are convenient for foreign travelers. For the reason that using English as national language, almost people who even lived in the rural area could communicate with them.

Surprisingly, students in formal Korean educational curriculum, they have been taught for about 9 years. From 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, roughly they learn 'English' three days to four days a week. The sum total of class hour is estimated at 637 hours. Despite of the immersion, most of Korean students have felt difficult to use English fluently. This shows that no matter how Korean take lessons, there are few efficiencies unless some sorts of alternation are enforced. Imposition of using English as an official language might be powerful key to foster practicality and effectiveness. Learning a kind of subjects with both Korean and English will provide high pitched and lofty effects to access and obtain the information. The academic and scientific contents have been written out and drawn up by English nearly.

Consequently, If Korean government decide to assign English as the lingua franca, there are so many advantages to the Economy, tourism industries and education.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Han: Is artificial intelligence harmful or beneficial to humans?**

**Introduction:** Appearance of AlphaGo means that technique could follow human's ability. AlphaGo is not only mechanic but also artificial intelligence. So it is the upgrade version of simple machinery. With artificial intelligence like Alphago, human beings could have more advantage in their life.

**Body 1:** In medical part, machinery went into surgery process already. And the 'surgery machine' have succeed in the medical part. The conclusion of machinery in the surgery process was that machine could follow or surpass human's ability. Machinery could be superior to human beings in the point of detail and non-emotional. Machinery's succeed in medical part means maximization of machine and technique's strength. **However it also exposed some limit that machine and technique could not think freely like human beings.** Machine can do only it can do. It does not have freely will. It can do in their fields only.

**Body 2:** Though appearance of AlphaGo means development of machinery, technique and artificial intelligence(AI). AlphaGo appeared to people in the contest of 'Baduk' with Lee Sea Dol. It can practically uses varies circumstantial judgements. With using variety of circumstantial judgements, AlphaGo could win the 'Baduk' game with Lee Sea Dol in four times. AlphaGo

is different from human beings in the point of thinking freely. **AlphaGo's circumstance judgement looks like freely thinking but it is not.** It cannot think freely and restrict in the artificially judgement yet with having much data than human beings. **But if data could be more increasing and technique could be more advancing, it could maximize mechanic's advantages and complement its shortage.**

**Body 3:** Many science fiction movies have been predicted variety of artificial intelligences. In the movie, artificial intelligences supporting human's work. For example, in the 'Interstellar' artificial intelligence helping human's acts. They do not need food, water or other things which human needs essentially. They can acts while human do not acts or cannot acts. Also they are stronger in such situation like non-oxygen or hard gravity circumstances. With artificial intelligence's help, human could find their new plant successfully. **Today's technology cannot be compared with movie's things. But because artificial intelligence is technical part, it can be more advancing and can be realized.** Especially, artificial intelligence which is realized in the movie means that kinds of technique have much more possibility than illusions or other fabulous fictions.

**Conclusion:** Machinery and technique replaced human being's life already like surgery machine in the medical parts. Also machinery and technique gradually developing like AlphaGo's appearance. They complement their own shortages and maximizing their advantages. So it could be look like AlphaGo thinks freely. Although artificial technique more advanced than the past, science fiction movies create more advancing artificial intelligence items. I think it predict the human's future. And in some day, the artificial intelligence could be realized and being advantage to the human beings like the science fiction movies.

#### **Appendix 4**

**Lee: Between individualism and collectivism, which one do you think is more desirable? Why?**

Various people are living in this world, and they have their own cultures. Sometimes they are divided into two big ideologies. We call them individualism and collectivism. **I am not going to say that I am against or for a specific ideology because both have pros and cons. Therefore, it would be judgmental if I say one is superior to another.** However, individualism seems to make more sense than collectivism to me. Also, I want it to be clear that individualism is different with egoism.

Firstly, people can draw a line between private and official matters under individualism culture. For example, Korea is a representative country where the collectivism pervades everyday life. In Korea, the line between private and official matters is unclear and vague. Working people in Korea are suffering from too-often dining after work. If miss the dining or other gatherings, they

will be regarded as an unsociable person. Furthermore, sometimes people who are not very participative in gatherings don't get attention from their superiors, which leads to less opportunity to promote. For this reason, it is not difficult to observe regionalism, school relations, and kinship under the collectivism culture. However, for example, in U.S, one of the individualism cultural countries, people don't suffer from anything related to work after they leave the office. They concentrate on their own family and do whatever they want. It doesn't matter if they go to their boss's wedding ceremony or not. It hardly affects to their promotion or work.

Secondly, people can feel freer to behave in individualism than in collectivism. The biggest characteristic of collectivism is "doing together". Because people do stuffs and work together, they need to make good relationship with each other. Therefore, people in collectivism cultural areas actually care about what others think and tend to meddlesome in other's affairs. On the other hand, people in individualism cultural areas don't care much about what others think or do, but only care about themselves. When I was back in U.S., I used to live in Hollywood. Some districts of there are packed with the homeless and they stunk so much. One day, I asked to my English teacher about this problem. I told him that why such U.S government does nothing for the homeless, and he answered "because citizens don't get any actual damage from them, there is no need to deal with the problem." I was surprised to hear his answer because they don't care so much about the homeless unless the homeless actually injure or hurt them. This might sound inhumane or cold-hearted, but I thought this makes sense. On second thought, under the collectivism society, everyone has some extent of responsibility for everything. They share the cause and the results. However, under individualism society, people are only responsible for their issues. This seems more reasonable for me.

To sum up, individualism seems more reasonable than collectivism for this following reasons. First, people can draw a clearer line between public and private matters. Second, there is no need to care about what others think and to take responsibility for others' matters.

## **Appendix 5**

**Questionnaire** (Modified and changed from Nelson & Kim, 2001).

1. How long have you been studying English?
2. When did you first begin to study English via public education?
3. Have you ever lived in foreign countries?
4. How good do you think your English is in your department?
5. What was the score of the last English test(s) (e.g., TWE, TOEIC, OPIC, TOEFL...) you took?

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6. On a 1 to 3 scale (High, medium, and low), please grade your English skills in 4 areas (speaking, reading, listening, and writing). What area of English do you think you are best at? Why? What area of English do you think you are most poor at? Why?
7. Among the four areas of English (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, and writing), what aspect of English do you like the most? Why?
8. Among the four areas of English (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, and writing), what aspect of English do you like the least? Why?
9. What do you like the most about English?
10. What do you like the least about English?
11. What do you like the most about Korean?
12. What do you like the least about Korean?
13. What do you think the main difference between Korean and English is?
14. In learning English, how much relation do you think there are among speaking, reading, listening, and writing?
15. What was most difficult for you when learning English?
16. How did learning English change you as a person? How did it change your life?

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