

VIEWING CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC FROM A POST MODERN PERSPECTIVE: FINDING AN IMPLICATION TO THE SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING PEDAGOGY

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Abstract: The hybrid nature of culture that comes up as a result of postmodern world brings about considerable interaction, borrowing, and fusion between cultures and communicative genres. In such situation, there is erosion of national boundaries, greater multilingualism, and fluidity in identity; hence an absolute construct of particular culture is getting blurred. Consequently, the term "native identity" has come to a "blurring spot" in the sense that it will be simply awkward to hold firmly one's native identity when multilingualism has become norm. This hybrid and plural character of identity has gone to be considerable as the basis of contrastive texts analysis. The newest way of looking at the contrastive rhetoric is that differences in pragmatic or rhetorical expectations should not be considered as unproficiency or interference for the bi/multilingual writer, rather rhetorical choices opted by the bi/multilingual writer should be considered as critical/alternate discourse. This article is aimed to look at the pedagogy of shuttling between languages done by multilingual writers as the new orientation in the teaching and learning second language writing.

Key words: contrastive rhetoric, multilingual, monolingual, second language writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent criticism on contrastive rhetoric for its reductionist, deterministic, prescriptive, and essentialist orientation (Leki 1997, Spack 1997, Zamel 1997) has brought about new fashion which leads to the polarization of two views: "traditional rhetoric" and "new rhetoric". The traditional view of rhetoric reduced English rhetoric to normative patterns (Kachru 1995, 1999) that are taken from the expectation of the native speaker, leading to the argument that differences in pragmatic or rhetorical expectations can bring serious barriers to effective written communication. Accordingly, some researchers who hold this view as ideological lenses in their interpretation (e.g. Kaplan 1980, Wahab 1995, Hyland 1996, Kamimura 1996, Sulityaningsih 1997, Ngadiman 1998, Harjanto 2001, Cahyono 2001, Budiharso 2001) assume that rhetorical deviations from such native speaker rhetorical norm are seen as signs of unproficiency or interference. On the contrary, the new rhetoric view argues that such rhetorical deviations from the normative should not be considered as signs of unproficiency or interference for the bi/multilingual writers, but rather as rhetorical choices that could become critical/alternate discourse. The reason behind this argument is the notion of hybrid nature of culture as a consequence of postmodern world (i.e. under the influence of postmodernist, poststructuralist, and post colonial - which are under the umbrella of the post-foundational critical thought), which brings about considerable interaction, borrowing, and fusion between cultures and communicative genres. Bi/multilingualism, according to this view, is the norm which makes identity more complex, fluid, and contradictory. In such situation, there is erosion of national boundaries, causing greater multilingualism, hybrid and fluidity in identity. This hybrid and fluid identity has gone to be considerable as the basis of contrastive texts analysis. Analyzing texts across languages, thus, is not only limited to linguistic framework, but also postmodern social, cultural and institutional contexts. Contrastive rhetoric, in this view, is meant shuttling and negotiating thought between different communities (e.g. Canagarajah 2002, Kubota and Lehner 2004, Jenkins 2003, Canagarajah 2006a, Canagarajah, 2006b, Graddol 2006).

PREVIOUS RESEARCH FINDINGS ON CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC

Studies on rhetoric, especially contrastive rhetoric, have flourished since Kaplan (1980) conducted the research revealing that there are four different thought patterns behind different cultural backgrounds in the world, i.e. Anglo-Saxon, Semitic, Oriental, and Franco-Italian. In that study, Kaplan explains that each of the four models of thought patterns has its own characteristics and followers, e.g. Anglo-Saxon model which is usually used by western people has typical characteristics of being linear; Semitic model used by Arabic people and Persians has the tendency to manifest excessive parallel constructions instead of coordination; Oriental model whose followers are Asian people often uses indirection style; and Franco-Italian model whose followers, including Spanish, is favor of excessive digressions instead of linear flow of thought. Those four different thought developments of expressing ideas can be seen clearly in Figure 1.

First, figure 1 shows that linear development of thought which is the characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon model begins a thesis statement which is then followed by a series of subdivisions of that thesis statement. Each of the subdivision is supported by examples and illustrations. This proceeds to develop the central idea and relate that idea to all other ideas in the whole composition, and to employ that idea in its proper relationship with the other ideas. The final purpose is to prove something, or perhaps to argue about something.

Secondly, the paragraph development of Semitic is characterized by a complex series of parallel construction, both positive and negative. Thirdly, indirection approach, according to Kaplan, marks the Oriental model. In this kind of writing, the development of the paragraph can be 'turning and turning in a widening gyre'. The circles or gyres turn round the subject and show it from a variety of tangential views, but the subject is never looked at directly. The last, Franco-Italian model is characterized by the paragraph with full of digressions. In this model, the writer has much greater freedom to digress and introduce extraneous materials.

In adherence to Kaplan's findings, various studies comparing L1 English texts and ESL Texts written by a group of students from different L1

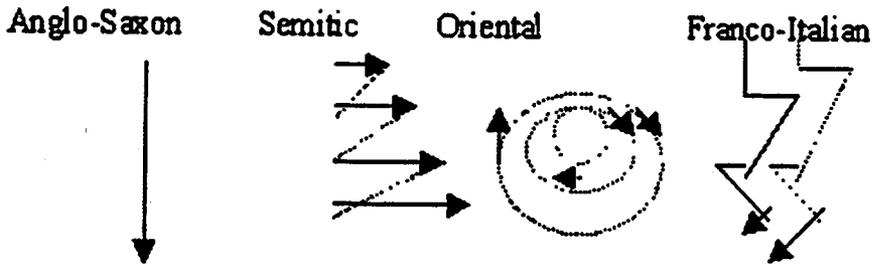


Figure 1:
Rhetorical patterns from different cultural backgrounds

backgrounds have been conducted. Using Indonesian context, in line with Kaplan' study (1980), Wahab (1995) pioneered a preliminary study on the rhetoric of academic writing by Indonesian writers, examining argumentative and expository papers. He showed the findings that the Indonesian rhetoric thought patterns is in the process of change, shifting from circular patterns into linear patterns. As reflected in the paragraphs the Indonesian writers made, some types of paragraphs show the straight linear approach, some exemplify circular or spiral structure, and some other are neither linear nor circular. Emphasis of change is indicated by the use linear structure as a result of technology (e.g. in the utility of computer) that requires a tendency to use direct thought patterns rather than indirect thought ones.

In the development that follows, more Indonesian scholars have made researches on EFL rhetoric using Indonesian contexts. Sulistyaningsih (1997), for example, investigating rhetoric in expository essays of the fourth-year students of Indonesian College majoring in English revealed that of 64 % of the 11 introductory paragraphs written by the subjects have good thesis statements, while the other 36 % contained partial thesis statements. In terms of writing the developmental paragraphs, the subjects produced 32 paragraphs, 88% of which have good topic sentences, and only 78 % of those topic sentences reflect the ideas stated in the thesis statement. Regarding the concluding paragraphs, 82 % of the 11 paragraphs produced by the subjects met the requirements of a good

concluding paragraph. Other studies investigating rhetorical structures of English essays written by Indonesian learners of English are those conducted by Harjanto (1999) and Budiharso (2001). These studies use English writing convention as norms of their analysis. According to Harjanto's findings (1999), the rhetorical structures of essays written by students of the English department of the Graduate School of the State University of Malang reflected the overall features of the academic-writing essays. In these findings it is stated that the rhetorical development of ideas in the essays did not entirely follow the linear staging of the information as expected by the English-speaking readers. Furthermore, Budiharso (2001), in his attempt of investigating the contrastive rhetoric and linguistic features of the Indonesian and English essays written by Indonesian undergraduate students found that EFL undergraduate students devoted similar rhetoric and linguistic features in English and Indonesian essays. The similarity was shared in the linearity and non-linearity of ideas, development of ideas, coherence, and sentence complexity. In addition, Cahyono (2001) examining the effects of English learning development on the EFL students' rhetoric in writing Indonesian persuasive essays found out, among other things, that the EFL students' English learning development was likely to affect their rhetoric in writing Indonesian essays.

The above studies put Anglo-Saxon thought pattern (i.e. the convention of English writing) as a norm of their analysis so that it is implied that deviation from this linear thought are considered as negative interference among bi/multilingual writers. In contrast, I am of the opinion that Indonesian learners of English do not have to substitute Anglo-Saxon thought patterns (i.e. rhetoric of English paragraphs) for Indonesian learners' own style of writing (i.e. oriental thought patterns), but I think it is necessary for Indonesian learners of English to master the rhetoric of English composition under the circumstances that English is a means to an end but it is not an end itself. In this case contrastive rhetoric knowledge provides the learners with a varied repertoire of rhetorical strategies instead of substituting the writing style of their L1 (see Connor, 2005).

POSTMODERN VIEW IN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING AND NEGOTIATION MODEL

The notion of hybrid nature of culture as a consequence of postmodern world (i.e. under the influence of postmodernist, poststructuralist, and post colonial which are under the umbrella of the post-foundational critical thought), brings about considerable interaction, borrowing, and fusion between cultures and communicative genres. Bi/multilingualism, according to this view, is the norm which brings the consequences of the fact that identity becomes more complex, fluid, and contradictory. In this situation, it is problematic to see an absolute construct of particular culture. This, hybrid and plural character of culture has gone to the higher position as the basis of contrastive texts analysis. The label 'native culture' has now come to a blurred space. Contrastive rhetoric, therefore, is about shuttling and negotiation of thought between languages which has been viewed as better sources of creativity among bi/multilingual writers instead of being as a source of problem (see Jenkins 2003, Canagarajah 2006a, Canagarajah 2006b, Graddol 2006, Hyland 2007).

Having been bi/multilinguals for a relatively long period of time, non-native learners of English have the so called 'cultural in-betweenness' (Bhabha, 1994), which enables them to shuttle between two logic of cultures (Canagarajah, 2006a; Canagarajah, 2006b). These in-between thought patterns are constant no matter languages they used to write. Only when they write compositions to certain contexts (i.e. either in different audiences, languages or situations), they might use different ways of expressing something, not because of the changing thought, but rather it is a matter of meta-cognitive competence to realize who the interlocutors are and in what context they are writing. This phenomenon is called 'shuttling' between languages, or 'rhetorical switches'.

Responding to hybrid nature of culture (hence discourse and text), a newly developed model is currently presented to look at how bi/multilingual writers move between texts, the co-called 'Negotiation Model'. In this model, the proponent (Canagarajah 2006a), tends to study bi/multilingual writing not as in a static manner, but more on the movement of the writer between languages; not as the product for descriptions of writing competence, but as the process of composing in multiple languages.

Furthermore, he tends to analyze the text focusing more on the writers' versatility and on changing the context of communication, thus treating the writers as agentive, shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives. The model can be presented IN (in) the following:

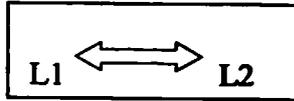


Figure 2:
Negotiation model (Canagarajah, 2006a:590)

Principally, there are four ideas capsulated in this model if it is used in data analysis in contrastive rhetoric research. First, the researcher looks at bi/multilingual writing in a more dynamic manner in the sense that he/she views on movement of the writer between L1 (i.e. mother tongue) and L2 (i.e. foreign/second language). Second, the researcher stands in a point that the writers of the composition are in the process of composing in bi/multilingual languages since they live in multiple languages and cultures. Third, the researcher bases her/his analysis on changing context of communication done by the writers to either L1 or L2 interlocutors. Fourth, the researcher looks at the writers as agentive, shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives.

This new model implies the denial of the argument to look at the bi/multilingual thought as static. Contrastive rhetoric now is seen under four assumptions, as stated by Canagarajah (2005: 51-52), leading to the new direction in studying second language writing, namely: 1) instead of studying bi/multilingual writing in a static manner, it is better to look at the movement of the writer between languages, 2) it is not studying the product for descriptions of writing competence, but the process of composing in multiple languages, 3) instead of treating language or culture as the primary variable, it is better to analyze the text focusing more on the writers' versatility and on changing the context of communication, and 4) it is necessary to treat the writers as agentive who shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives, rather than consider them as passive. The four assumptions put the position of monolingual

orientation to the multilingual orientation in studying second language writing.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

The Negotiation Model proposed by Canagarajah (2006) seems promising in the pedagogical issue of second language writing. Bi/multilingual writing should not be perceived in a static manner, but more on the movement of the writer between languages. This implies that pedagogical possibilities of genre-based teaching (Hyland 2007) in the classroom application become skeptical. Genre-based teaching can only be transferred to the writing classroom application if genre is perceived as something static. It would be not effective to put a flexible entity into the teaching area since change and reshaping toward genre could be repeatedly made by individual users. Dynamic, fluid and blurred character of genre (Freedman and Adam 2000) underlies this argument. Instead of looking at the genre-teaching possibilities in the second language writing classroom, strategies of communication (Canagarajah 2006) should be opted as a new orientation in second language writing class. More practically, this means that, first, strict rules and conventions of writing should not be imposed to students. Rather, they should be led to sharpening their rhetorical negotiation for achieving meanings and functions.

Secondly, since writing is not only the product for descriptions of writing competence, but also the process of composing in multiple languages, the writers' versatility and their attempts to change the context of communication should be accommodated in the second language writing classroom. Thirdly, different thought patterns possessed by bi/multilingual learners should be perceived as their repertoire which led them to shuttle creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives. In this perspective, it is asserted that the writers should be treated as agentive, who would shuttle creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives.

Moving away from the monolingual tradition should be thought of to do justice (justifying ?) the multilingual orientation (see the following table 1).

<i>Monolingual Orientation</i>	<i>Multilingual Orientation</i>
Differences is seen as deficiency/errors	Differences is seen as choice/option
Writer is viewed as passive	Writer is viewed as agentive
Writer is linguistically/culturally conditioned	Writer is rhetorically creative
It focuses on language/culture	It focuses on rhetorical context
It is the repertoire of the language/culture	It is the repertoire of the writer
It is language-uniform discourse/genre	It is language-multiple discourse/genre
Writers come with uniform identities	Writers construct multiple identities

Table 1:
Shifting to academic writing (adapted from Canagarajah 2005)

CONCLUSION

It is advisable that we have to stop thinking that the deviations occurred in the texts of multilingual writers as errors. Options utilized by the multilingual writers to shuttle between different communities, thus constructing texts with different rhetorical organizations, is in fact showing the way agency may be exercised in negotiating discourse. Therefore, it is important to start treating multilingual writers as agentive instead of passive. Finally, it is crucial that comparing the old tradition to the new tradition of academic writing pedagogy be presented as the basic assumptions of the future research analysis.

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