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روز اظهاریت و آرزایم ایران
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Didicated to my
parents, my
brothers, and my
wife
with love and respect

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**Teacher Training University
Department of Foreign Languages
Tehran, Iran**

**A STUDY OF CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC
BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FARSI AS
DEMONSTRATED THROUGH EFL AND
NON-EFL STUDENTS' ESSAYS WITH
REGARD TO WRITING ABILITY,
ARRANGEMENT,
AND L2 PROFICIENCY**

**A Thesis submitted in Partial Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Teaching English as
a Foreign Language**

**By
*Habib Soleimani***

014538

**Advisor: Dr. M.H. Keshavarz
Reader: Ms. T Saieti**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined 300 writing products of 200 Iranian EFL and non-EFL students in the discourse mode of "*comparison and contrast*" and "*arrangement*" canon of writing, in order to find out how the writing performance in the English and Farsi are related, i.e. is writing ability transferable through languages?

EFL major participants wrote two compositions, one in English and one in Farsi in the "*comparison and contrast*" mode of discourse and "*arrangement*" canon of writing. Non-EFL major participants also wrote a composition in Farsi in the same mode of discourse as the EFL major participants. 200 English and Farsi compositions of EFL participants which were written in the discourse mode of "*comparison and contrast*" and "*arrangement*" canon of writing were assessed by 6 English and 6 Farsi composition raters, once rating the general writing ability of the participants in the "*comparison and contrast*" mode of discourse, and once rating the "*arrangement*" canon of writing. The remaining 100 compositions of non-EFL participants were also assessed by 3 other Farsi raters. Three levels of proficiency were also distinguished among the EFL subjects.

The analysis of data revealed that those EFL participants who were able to write a better composition in their first language, wrote a better

composition in the second language, provided that they have a good command of L2 proficiency, i.e. L2 proficiency was a determining factor for transfer of writing from L1 to L2.

The results also indicated that the arrangement canon of writing exists in Farsi as well as in English and more proficient subjects could write a composition in English, which was more, arranged.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1-1. Overview.

Writing is not a natural activity. All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language, but all people have to be taught how to write a language. This is an important difference between spoken and written forms of language. There are other differences as well. Unlike speech, writing is displaced in time. Indeed this must be one reason why writing evolved since it makes the transmission of message from one place to another possible. A written message can be received, stored, sent, or referred back to at any time. "It is permanent in comparison with the ephemeral here one minute and gone the next character of spoken language-even of the spoken language that is recorded on tape or disc" (White, p.260).

Writing is the skill in which the writer and the reader are physically separated. In spoken language, there is the possibility of receiving feedback from the listener, but in writing at least immediate feedback is not possible.

As one of the four skills, writing has traditionally occupied a place in most English syllabuses. However, arguments are sometimes put forward of not teaching writing to students because it is claimed that a command of spoken language and reading is more important. For many students, this may be true, but today because of the importance of English as an international language, more and more people need to write English for occupational and academic purposes.

Thus, in terms of students' needs, writing may occupy an equal role with the other language skills. This importance of writing skill is carried over to teaching EFL writing. It has been revealed that EFL students find writing a more difficult task compared with other skills, because it requires a threshold level of L2 proficiency, which adds the difficulty of the issue.

1-2. Statement of the problem and the purpose of the study

In recent years, a significant body of research has been carried out within the framework of contrastive writing studies, which is called contrastive rhetoric (CR), i.e. the study of discourse difference across cultures. CR is usually classified as a scholarly field of applied linguistics. According to the proponents of CR, written English is characterized by a concise, subordinated, and linear style, which may be strange to some

ESL/EFL student (Morgan, R,2000). For these students, linguistic and cultural patterns of their mother tongue may transfer into their writing not only at the word and sentence level but also at the discourse level.

CR was introduced by the American applied linguist, Robert Kaplan in 1966 to demonstrate how a person's first language and culture influence his or her writing in a second language or culture(Kaplan, 1966, 1972). According to the proponents of CR, written English is characterized by a concise, subordinated, and linear style, which may be strange to some ESL/EFL student (Morgan,R,2000). For these students, linguistic and cultural patters of their mother tongue may transfer into their writing not only at the word and sentence level but also at the discourse level.

1-3. Justification and significance of the study

The pedagogical value of CR have been pointed out by Leki (1991) and Raims (1991). Kachru (1995) examined the theoretical foundation and methodological approaches of CR.

However, research on L2 writing has not been so outstanding in many places around the world including Iran, although Dehghanpisheh (1971) and Maftoon (1978) carried out a research on contrastive analysis of English and Farsi writing. Of course, this trend was not followed.

Now, the need to have a better understanding of the general issue of L2 writing and specifically the relationship between English and Farsi writing and rhetoric is felt, and because no studies have been done so far to

investigate transfer from Persian to English in the genre of comparison and contrast and the arrangement canon of writing, the present study was undertaken in acknowledgment of this pressing need.

1-4. Research questions and hypothesis

Accordingly, this study is going to answer the following questions:

1. Are those who are proficient in their first language writing in the genre of comparison and contrast also proficient in the foreign language writing?

2. Is there any relationship between English and Persian rhetoric concerning arrangement?

3. Does the level of L2 proficiency (advanced vs. intermediate vs. low-intermediate) of Iranian students play a significant role in L2 manifestation of writing

Based on these questions, the following null hypotheses were proposed.

1. Those who are proficient in L1 writing in the genre of comparison and contrast are not necessarily proficient in L2 writing.

2. There is no significant relationship between English and Persian rhetoric concerning arrangement.

3. The level of L2 proficiency of Iranian EFL students (advanced vs. intermediate vs. low-intermediate) doesn't play a significant role in the L2 manifestation of writing ability.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITRATURE

Contrastive rhetoric holds that people in different cultures organize their ideas differently. Contrastive rhetoric began in 1966 as the result of a self-initiated study of international students' writing in English by Kaplan, who then made the pronouncement 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 mastery of its logical system" (Kaplan,1996).

The notion of contrastive rhetoric was first proposed as a pedagogical solution to the problem of L2 organization, and the subsequent development in research has generated three explanations for the organizational structures of L2 texts , including linguistic, cultural and educational explanations which will be discussed below. However, the contribution of contrastive rhetoric to the teaching of ESL/EFL writing has been limited because of the underlying assumptions that have guided the early pedagogical approaches (Mastuda,1997).

Before going into detail concerning contrastive rhetoric, it is worth mentioning a brief history of rhetoric.

2-1. Rhetoric

The term rhetoric was first born among the Greek inhabitants of Sicily. It is derived from the Greek word of “rhetor” meaning speaker in the assembly and in ancient times, it was concerned with the formal public speaking (cited in Alikhani, 1997, p.12). Rhetoric is a complex, yet at the same time, simple concept to understand. It is complex in that it can mean in many different ways, yet it is simple because it happens to be occurring all around us, yet we sometimes are not conscious of it. To many people, rhetoric is the means of persuasion of through both spoken and written language (Brummett,B,1994). However, rhetoric is much more than that. Rhetoric has a variety of meanings. According to Brummett (1994), “many people understand rhetoric to mean the ways in which words influence people.” (p.4) Brummett however, refines his definition of rhetoric to mean “the ways in which signs influence people”. By signs he means “the countless meaningful items, images, etc that surround us” in our everyday lives (p.4).

Rhetoric has been studied for centuries throughout the world. According to Brummett (1994) “ Western civilization has historically thought that the formal study of rhetoric began in about the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E, in the ancient city-state of Greece and their colonies”(p.35). In Athens during this time period there were no lawyers, no legislators, no public relations or advertising