

Allameh Tabatabaai University

Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages

**On the Effect of Linear & Non-linear Texts
on Students' Comprehension and Recalling**

MA Thesis

By

Mohammad Sadegh Tamri

Advisor: Dr. Marefat

Reader: Dr. Khatib

June, 2007

موسسه تخصصی زبان
کتابخانه

۱۳۸۶ / ۱۲ / ۱۱

۱۰۰۰۰۰۰۰۰۰

۱

فرم گردآوری اطلاعات پایان نامه ها
کتابخانه مرکزی دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی

عنوان :	On the Effect of Linear & Non-linear Texts on Students' Comprehension and Recalling
نویسنده / محقق :	محمد صادق تمری
مترجم :	
استاد راهنما : دکتر فهیمه معرفت / استاد مشاور / استاد داور : دکتر محمد خطیب/دکتر مهناز مصطفایی-دکتر منصور فهیم	
کتابنامه :	واژه نامه :
نوع پایان نامه :	بنیادی <input type="checkbox"/> توسعه ای <input type="checkbox"/> کاربردی <input type="checkbox"/>
مقطع تحصیلی :	کارشناسی ارشد
سال تحصیلی :	1385-1386
محل تحصیل :	تهران
نام دانشگاه :	علامه طباطبائی
دانشکده :	ادبیات و زبانهای خارجی
تعداد صفحات :	80
گروه آموزشی :	آموزش زبان انگلیسی
کلید واژه ها به زبان فارسی :	فرهنگ - پاراگراف های مستقیم و غیر مستقیم
کلید واژه ها به زبان انگلیسی :	culture-linear and non-linear paragraphs

۱۰۰۵۳۴

۱

ALLAMEH TABATABAI UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF LITERATURE AND FOREIGN
LANGUAGES

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BY
MOHAMMAD SADEGH TAMRI

ENTITLED

ON THE EFFECT OF LINEAR & NON-LINEAR
TEXTS ON STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION AND
RECALLING

BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILMENT OF THE
REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
ARTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE IN PERSIAN LITERATURE & FOREIGN
LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT OF ALLAMEH
TABATABAI UNIVERSITY

DR. FAHIMEH MAREFAT.....*F. Marefat*.....

DR. MOHAMMAD KHATIB.....*M. Khatib*.....

DR. MANSOOR FAHIM.....*M. Fahim*.....

DR. MAHNAZ MOSTAFAI.....*Mahnaz Mostafai*.....

June, 2007

چکیده

الف: موضوع و طرح مسأله (اهمیت موضوع و هدف):

In this study, the researcher is going to answer whether Iranian students prefer to use non-linear (indirect) paragraphs or linear ones, in other words, whether understanding non-linear paragraphs is easier for Iranian students rather than linear ones and also if they keep non-linear paragraphs in mind for a longer time than linear ones. So this study will test Kaplan's claim about an oriental language (i.e. Persian). Many researches have been conducted on the issue of linear and non-linear systems of writing around the world. But few studies have been conducted in Persian language so that the researcher believes that this study is an important step toward understanding the nature of Persian writing system.

ب: مبانی نظری شامل مرور مختصری از منابع، چارچوب نظری و پرسشها و فرضیه ها:

The study of contrastive rhetoric has started since the publication of an article by Kaplan (1966) entitled "cultural thought patterns in intercultural education". After reading and analyzing the forms of these student essays, Kaplan suggests that the forms these essays took might reflect the "thought patterns" of the writers' culture. Kaplan (1966) believes that Oriental thought was said to follow a spiral, for example, whereas "English" thought was said to follow a straight line the main research questions are as follow:

1-Is there any significant difference between Iranian students' comprehension of linear and non-linear English and Persian paragraphs in immediate conditions?

2-Is there any significant difference between Iranian students' recalling of linear and non-linear English and Persian paragraphs in delay conditions?

پ. روش تحقیق شامل تعریف مفاهیم، روش تحقیق، جامعه مورد تحقیق، نمونه گیری و روشهای نمونه گیری ابزار اندازه گیری نحوه اجرای آن، شیوه گرد آوری و تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها:

Our research population were 170 students who were studying English language at the Islamic Azad University of Ilam in 1384-85. All classes were defined as clusters. Two classes, including female and male, were randomly selected as our participants. 70 students took part in this research. The participants in two classes received two texts, one received English and Persian linear paragraphs and the other received English and Persian non-linear paragraphs. The participants' comprehension and recalling responses were analyzed by three raters. Responses were scored on a six-point scale.

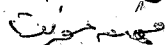
ت یافته های تحقیق:

The researcher has shown that those Iranian students prefer non-linear paragraphs to linear ones in both English and Persian languages. That is, understanding and recalling of non-linear paragraphs, in both English and Persian language, is much easier for Iranian students than linear ones, in other words, Iranian students may have difficulty in comprehension and recalling of linear paragraphs.

ث نتیجه گیری و پیشنهادات:

The results of this study showed that Persian and English are different in their use of linear and non-linear paragraphs. Of course it does not mean that we just teach and accept western linear way of writing; it would be language imperialism and also a new colonialism to advocate the idea that only linear rhetorical patterns are acceptable and must be taught in our education. What here we need is the introduction of both systems of writing.

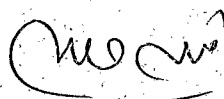
صحت اطلاعات مندرج در این فرم بر اساس محتوای پایان نامه و ضوابط مندرج در فرم را گواهی می نمایم.

نام استاد راهنما: 

سمت علمی: 

نام دانشکده: ادبیات و زبانهای خارجی

رئیس کتابخانه:



To my teachers

Acknowledgement

For the ongoing support, advice and encouragement while the project was being written, I am particularly grateful to Dr. Marefat, my thesis advisor, whose guidance and encouragement helped me shape the project into a more readable and coherent form. My special thanks are also due to Dr. Khatib, my thesis reader. I should express my gratitude to the dear friends, Mr. Moradian and Miss. Pashaii, who helped me find linear and non-linear paragraphs. I also bothered them by having them read and rate the students' reproductions of the paragraphs meticulously.

Abstract

The study of contrastive rhetoric has started since the publication of an article by Kaplan (1966) entitled "cultural thought patterns in intercultural education". After reading and analyzing the forms of these student essays, Kaplan suggests that the forms these essays took might reflect the "thought patterns" of the writers' culture. Kaplan (1966) believes that Oriental thought was said to follow a spiral, for example, whereas "English" thought was said to follow a straight line.

This study intends to investigate the differences between Iranian students' comprehension of linear and non-linear paragraphs in both English and Persian languages, a linear paragraph the approach is direct and the entire sentences support only the main idea in the paragraph, whereas in a non-linear paragraph an indirect approach is used and comes to the point only at the end. Linear paragraph is the characteristic of writings by people with Western culture background while non-linear paragraphs are more common in Eastern cultures. So this research is an attempt to prove that comprehension and recalling of non-linear paragraphs are easier for Iranian students. As a result, the main research questions are as follow:

1-Is there any significant difference between Iranian students' comprehension of linear and non-linear English and Persian paragraphs in immediate conditions?

2-Is there any significant difference between Iranian students' recalling of linear and non-linear English and Persian paragraphs in delay conditions?

By giving four linear and non-linear paragraphs in English and Persian language to 40 Iranian students, the researcher has shown that those Iranian students prefer non-linear paragraphs to linear ones in both English and Persian languages. That is, understanding and recalling of non-linear paragraphs, in both English and Persian language, is much easier for Iranian students than linear ones, in other words, Iranian students may have difficulty in comprehension and recalling of linear paragraphs, leading to the conclusion that Persian and English are different in their use of non-linearity and linearity and, as Kaplan and his followers emphasize, in Eastern cultures indirect approach is used and comes to the point only at the end, while Western ones follow an Anglo-European thought pattern which is direct, linear and to the topic away from any unnecessary digression. These findings lend support to the existence of cross-cultural differences between Persian and English. So this study supports the claims made by previous research (cf. Kaplan, 1966; Kaplan and Ostler, 1982; Regent, 1985; Clyne, 1984; Dantas-Whitney and Grabe, 1989; Carson et al 1990) that writing is a cultural phenomenon. This is indicative of the fact that different cultures have different rhetorical preferences.

List of the Tables

page

Table 3-1 Level of difficulty of the paragraphs.....55

Table 4.1 Persian linear and non-linear comprehension results.....57

Table 4.2: t-observed and t-critical for Persian linear and non-linear paragraphs comprehension results.....58

Table 4.3: Persian linear and non-linear recalling results.....58

Table 4.4: t-observed and t- critical for Persian linear and non-linear paragraphs recalling results59

Table 4.5: English linear and non-linear paragraphs comprehension results.....59

Table 4.6: t-observed and t- critical for English linear and non-linear paragraphs comprehension results.....60

Table 4.7: English linear and non-linear paragraphs recalling results.....60

Table 4.8: t-observed and t- critical for English linear and non-linear paragraphs recalling results.....61

List of the Figures	page
Figure1: a linear paragraph.....	15
Figure2: a non- linear paragraph.....	16
Figure3: Kaplan's cross-cultural thought patterns	23
Figure4: Persian linear paragraph	78
Figure5 : Persian non-linear paragraph	79
Figure6 : English linear paragraph	80
Figure7: English non-linear paragraph	82

Contents

Dedication.....	II
Acknowledgment	III
Abstract.....	IV
List of the tables.....	VI
List of the figures.....	VII

Chapter 1

Introduction.....	3
1.1 Statement of the problem	6
1.2 Research questions.....	8
1.3 Hypotheses.....	8
1.4 Limitation.....	9
1.5 Significant of the study.....	10
1.6 Definition of key terms.....	14

Chapter 2

Review of related literature

2.1 Spoken and written discourse.....	17
2.2 Classical rhetoric.....	19
2.3 Beginning of modern contrastive rhetoric.....	21
2.4 origins of contrastive rhetoric.....	24
2.5 Whorf principle of linguistic relativity.....	25
2.6 An influence of error analysis.....	26
2.7 language as a cultural activity.....	36
2.8 Some criticism.....	41
2.9 New trends in modern rhetoric.....	43
2.10 Genre-specific studies and comparability norms.....	44
2.11 Types of text in writing.....	47
2.12 Critical contrastive rhetoric.....	49

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Method.....	50
3.2 The research questions and null hypotheses	51
3.3 Participants.....	52
3.4 Procedure.....	52
3.4.1 Level of difficulty.....	54
3.5 Instrumentation.....	54

3.5.1 TOEF test.....54
3.5.2 Paragraphs.....54

Chapter 4
Results & Discussion
4.1 Analyzing the results.....55

Chapter 5

Conclusion and educational implications
5.1 Summary.....60
5.2 Suggestions for further research.....67

Reference.....68

1-INTRODUCTION

The study of contrastive rhetoric has started since the publication of an article by Kaplan (1966) entitled "cultural thought patterns in intercultural education". After reading and analyzing the forms of these student essays, Kaplan suggested that the forms these essays took might reflect the "thought patterns" of the writers' cultures ("Oriental" thought was said to follow a spiral, for example, whereas "English" thought was said to follow a straight line). This research was the first major attempt to study how L1 cultures manifest in L2 writing. It was influenced by Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which states the "relationship between language and thought expounded in its most explicit form by American anthropological linguists Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941). Also known as the theory of linguistic relativity, the hypothesis states (in the words of Whorf) that "we dissect the nature along lines laid down by our native languages..." (Crystal, 1992, p. 306). It is said that that the origin of contrastive rhetoric was Kaplan's work on three important intellectual traditions: contrastive analysis, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and emerging field of composition and rhetoric (Connor, 1996).

Later, Kaplan (1987) revised his deterministic hypothesis of cultures effects on language use and offered a weaker version. The revision suggests that all the different rhetorical ways of thinking may be possible in any written language, but that one cultural thought pattern is dominant due to social, cultural and linguistic constrains.

From the beginning of 1970 until the mid-1985 during the period of the dominance of the process approach in teaching composition the rate of contrastive rhetoric research declined. Kaplan further added that rhetoric is a phenomenon tied to the linguistic system of a particular language and that logic-in so far as it is reflected in rhetoric and in grammar-is also tied to the linguistic system through which it is expressed. He called logic the basis of rhetoric saying that it "is evolved out of a culture; [and] it is not universal. [so that] rhetoric is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture"(1972,p.4). However, since the mid-1980, due to the development of text linguistics, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, contrastive rhetoric has revised renewed attention. Another factor which contributes to the new attention to contrastive rhetoric was that cultural diversity program gained prestigious status in the United State. These changes result in paradigm shift in which the study of contrastive rhetoric was broadened to cognitive and socio-cultural variables across cultures (Connor, 1996).

Researchers who do contrastive rhetorical studies are interested in how writers' cultural backgrounds influence how they organize their writing, what they choose to use as evidence in supporting their main ideas, how they express their main ideas, and (usually) how they write in a foreign language (usually English). As a matter of fact, English as Foreign Language (EFL) students who come from different cultural backgrounds often have different kinds of problems than do native speakers of English. Aside from the obvious grammatical and spelling problems, EFL students might have difficulties with

organization, support, claims, etc; these kinds of problems are obvious in any EFL class.

But in Iran, the above mentioned problems, and especially the effect of native culture on second language writing have been ignored in most cases.

Many researches have been conducted on the issue of linear and non-linear systems of writing around the world. But few studies have been conducted in Persian language so that the researcher believes that this study is an important step toward understanding the nature of Persian writing system and its effect on students' comprehension.

1-2-Statement of the problem

Contrastive rhetoric is a kind of text analysis and an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language attempts to explain them(Connor,1996). Since its inception in1966 by Robert Kaplan, contrastive rhetoric has developed as a research approach which has been used to examine discourse and rhetoric. Kubota and Lehner (2004) explain that contrastive rhetoric's first aim was to explore written text but later it expanded its area of activities to cover different genres, disciplines.....

The primary focus of contrastive rhetoric involves differences across cultures. The primary audiences using contrastive rhetoric have been second language writing teachers. Contrastive rhetoric has provided insights into students' problems with adjusting to English rhetoric by supplying information about rhetoric used by other cultures, that is, non-English cultures.

Using the findings from contrastive rhetoric analysis, researchers have suggested ways in which second language writers need to adjust to writing in English. Although these findings, which have largely resulted from the text study, have been used to improve pedagogy, it has also been at risk of creating stereotypes and overgeneralization which are two main pitfalls in front of researchers in this area.

Kaplan (1966) has claimed that oriental languages including Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Persian use an indirect approach and come to the point only at the end. In English, the relationship between the topic sentence and the supporting sentences is said to be linear and direct. The English text is therefore expected to be coherent and bear unity. Baily and Powel (1989) note in this regard that "for paragraph to have unity, it must have oneness. More specially, each idea in the paragraph should be clearly supporting the "one main point" the topic sentence; normally there should not be any ideas that are irrelevant, that are not the point of paragraph "(p.28). As a consequence, in the English conceptual paragraphs, one main idea is to be developed. This idea is generally called *main idea* which is crystallized in the topic sentence.

Learning to read and write, whether in first language or foreign language continues to be a major educational undertaking through the world. At one extreme, learning to write in any language as a first language means acquiring one aspect of minimal literacy: the ability to write something, this ability is comparable to an ability to read which does not extend much beyond distinguishing the letters. At other extreme, it is the ability to produce major creative works of literature or long research studies. (Freedman Pringle, Yalden, 1983,)

In second or foreign context, the difficulties include not only difficulties in first language but also new problems which arise out of different language in different culture of new language." So numerous are the new variable which may be added when learning to write in English as a second language that conceivably it will never be possible to devise a complete taxonomy even for descriptive purposes" (Freedman et al ,1983 p.78) . In this study, the researcher is going to answer whether Iranian students prefer to use non-

linear (indirect) paragraphs or linear ones, in other words, whether understanding non-linear paragraphs is easier for Iranian students rather than linear ones and also if they keep non-linear paragraphs in mind for a longer time than linear ones. So this study will test Kaplan's claim about an oriental language (i.e. Persian).

1-3 -Research questions

This study is going to answer the following questions:

1-Is there any significant difference between students' comprehension of linear and non-linear Persian texts in immediate conditions?

2-Is there any significant difference between students' recalling of linear and non-linear Persian texts in immediate conditions?

3-Is there any significant difference between students' comprehension of linear and non-linear English paragraphs in delay conditions?

4-Is there any significant difference between students' recalling of linear and non-linear English paragraphs in delay conditions?

1-4- Null hypotheses

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

1- There is no significant difference between students' comprehension of linear and non-linear Persian paragraphs in immediate conditions.

2- There is no significant difference between students' recalling of linear and non-linear Persian paragraphs in delay conditions?

3-There is no significant difference between students' comprehension of linear and non-linear English paragraphs in immediate conditions?

4-There is no significant difference between students' recalling of linear and non-linear English paragraphs in delay conditions?

1-5-Limitation

The main difficulty in this research was providing the linear and non-linear paragraphs. Finding both kinds of paragraphs in Persian writings was an easy job: non-linear paragraphs are abundant in Persian language, A Persian linear paragraph can be found in academic texts which have been influenced by English language. But for an English non-linear paragraph the story was different; you can rarely find an English non-linear paragraph. After analyzing many paragraphs, I found few English non-linear paragraphs, one of which was chosen for the research. for minimizing the interfering effect of background knowledge, I tried to use both kinds of the paragraphs from the same book and the same area of knowledge, for Persian paragraphs it was possible to find to find both kinds of the paragraphs in the same book and same area, political science, but for English ones it was not possible for me to find both kinds of paragraphs, linear and non-linear, in the same book or area. That was because of difficulty of finding non-linear paragraphs in English language. Since non-linear paragraphs are rare in English. So that finding both kinds of paragraphs in the same book or area was almost impossible for me.

1-6-Significance of the study

The recent expansion of international business and academic exchange has made second language researchers and teachers realize the need to identify cultural differences in written communication. Contrastive rhetoric developed to answer this question: why do second language writers have difficulty with the system of writing of second language (e.g. English) even when they have a good control of grammar? Contrastive rhetoric has offered many pedagogical tools for dealing with L2 writers, not only suggestions for how to shape a class or a writing assignment, but also an understanding of how and why students may be resistant writers. This resistance may come from struggle with difference between the target rhetoric and the one they control.

Kaplan (2001) suggests that the problems a second-language learner grapple with are not purely linguistic and probably can't be solved by purely linguistic means. He claims that stress on sentence syntax does not prepare the non-native speaker either to write or to read English sentence. Contrastive rhetoric has many implications for teaching: It is argued that explicit knowledge of cultural expectations in the activity of writing would benefit students and teachers of ESL and EFL it helps teachers make students understand that different people have different styles of writing. As a result, no style of writing is better than others and also no culture is better than others. Students should be aware that non-nativeness in L2 writing may be due to factors other than L1 rhetorical conventions.