

Contrastive Rhetorical Analysis of Saudi ESL Writing

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Abstract

Many Saudis studying English suffer because of their inability to write well in English. There are few studies that examine the impact of first language and culture on the ability of Saudis to write in a second language. This study revisits Kaplan's (1966) claims about Arab students' writing that are based on the theory of contrastive rhetoric. It begins with an overview of the development of contrastive rhetoric. It also examines the impact of genre and culture as it is used to analyze the work of Arabic ESL learners. The study then analyzes Saudi participants' (n=4) English language writing through the lens of contrastive rhetoric theory. The author uses ethnographical research methods to analyze samples of English writing and to interview his participants about their experiences as ESL learners. The paper findings indicate there are major grammatical and content problems in Saudi students' English writing. He concludes that thinking in Arabic while writing in English leads Saudi ESL writers to misuse word repetition, parallel construction, and to overuse specific grammatical structures. The paper concludes with suggestions about how to correct flaws in current ESL teaching techniques used with Arabic speaking students including tactics for addressing their lack of English reading and dictionary skills.

Keywords: English as a second language, contrastive rhetoric theory, ethnographic research, Arabic-speaking students

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Introduction

This paper investigates Saudi students' writing using the theory of contrastive rhetoric. Contrastive rhetoric is a theory of second-language acquisition that explains problems in composition that are encountered by second-language learners. Several linguistic scholars (n=) apply contrastive rhetoric theory to writers from a specific cultural context. The goal of this paper is to apply contrastive rhetoric theory to samples of Saudi English writing in order to identify the linguistic and culturally-based challenges of writing in English for Arabic speakers. It investigates Kaplan's (1966) claims about Arabic language speakers specifically it challenges the claim that all Arabic speakers share the same challenges because of their language background regardless to their cultural or linguistic differences. The aim of the paper is to show how Arabic language speakers' writing problems can be different from what Kaplan's claims. Since L1 writing has a significant impact on L2, the author also investigates Saudi students' Arabic writing samples. The discussion section explains Saudi students' common writing problems in English for ESL instructors. It concludes with suggestions for helping Arabic ESL learners overcome their most common grammatical and linguistic difficulties.

Contrastive Rhetoric Analysis

There are many definitions of contrastive rhetoric. Panetta (2000) presented one of the most direct definitions of contrastive rhetoric as follows , "The term used to describe the argument that the linguistic, organizational, and presentational choice that English as a second language (ESL) students-writers make substantively differ from the choices that native language writers make" (p.3).

Almost fifty years ago, the American linguist Kaplan (1966) initiated contrastive rhetoric analysis by positing that every language and culture has a unique system of rhetoric. In the field of second language acquisition, contrastive rhetoric is elaborated into the assumption that the differences between the discourse-level features of learner's first and second language cause difficulties for learners who are attempting to learn a foreign language. Researchers such as Casanave (2004) examined whether there is an inherently negative transfer process that occurs when learners transfer their L1 thoughts into their second language.

In applied linguistics "rhetoric" often refers to discourse-level organizational patterns. In recent decades, there have been an increasing number of studies on contrastive rhetoric. Cornor (1996) mentioned some possible reasons for the increasing interest in contrastive rhetoric, such as the increased understanding of second-language learners' needs to read and write in the target language; the enhanced interdisciplinary approach to studying second language acquisition through educational, rhetorical, and anthropological methods; and new trends in linguistics (p.5). Those who have contributed to contrastive analysis theory consider themselves applied linguists. They use a structuralist approach to linguistics, and their purpose is to improve language teaching.

Contrastive rhetoric analysis is promising since it may help scholars understand the source of language misuse for ESL learners. Contrastive rhetoric analysis is used to study the relationship between language and culture, but there are still many problems that have not been analyzed with this approach. This paper will provide an in depth examination of the contrastive rhetoric literature before applying the theory to the specific challenges of Saudi ESL learners.

Early History

Even though early ESL researchers did not call their work contrastive rhetoric, it was mainly focused on language transfer. Most of the early studies of contrastive rhetoric focused on the influence of L1 language pedagogy in teaching and learning L2. Discussions of contrastive analysis began in the 1940s and 1950s with the work of American linguists. Lado (1957) was influenced by Fries (1945), the bilingual studies of Haugen (1953), and Weinreich (1953). In his early work, Lado developed principles for understanding learners' behavior. This work was the basis of the constrictive hypothesis. Lado stated the logic behind contrastive theory in the preface to *Linguistics Across Culture* (1957):

The plan of the book rests on the assumption that we predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and the culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student. (p.1)

Thanks to Lado's work, scholars view the goal of contrastive analysis as primarily pedagogical in nature. Their goals include increasing efficiency in teaching and testing foreign languages. Fries' arguments about language transfer influenced Lado's research. Specifically, Fries argued in *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945), "The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner" (Fries, 1945, p.9).

The language transfer hypothesis relates the learner's difficulty in learning to the differences between the target language and the native language. These differences were explicitly demonstrated by Lado (1957) in his contrastive hypothesis:

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture –both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives. (p.1)

As we can see, one of the major issues in second-language acquisition is the role of the mother tongue in acquiring the target language (TL). Various studies concerning this issue have been carried out to discover the influence of L1 in the acquisition of a TL, such as the avoidance of certain TL structures or a delay in restructuring an interlanguage role (Gass & Selinker, 1983; Schechter, 1979; Zobl, 1980).

In addition, Fries, in his forward to Lado's *Linguistics across Cultures*, wrote:

Learning a second language... constitutes a very different task from learning the first language. The basic problems arise not out of any essential difficulty in the features of language themselves but primarily out of a special set created by first language habits (Lado, 1957) (p. 1).

According to Fries (1945), learning a second language is completely different from learning a first language, due to the influence of habits from the first language. Although in most cases the transfer of habits from the first language will interfere with learning a second language, some contrastive rhetoric studies have acknowledged that transfer in many cases can be facilitative. When both languages, first and second, possess the same structures, language transfer will be positive, and the process of learning a second language will be facilitated and accelerated. Conversely, the transfer of old habits will be negative when the learner's first and second languages do not possess the same grammatical structures.

According to Lado(1957), it is possible to predict in advance all the areas of difficulty a learner will encounter in learning a second language. This theory, called a strong version of contrastive analysis, says that the grammatical structures that do not exist in the acquired language but that do exist in the learner's first language will hinder them as they learn the new language. Therefore, teaching materials should be based on a description of the learner's first language. Then, this description should be carefully compared to the language that a learner will acquire. This comparison should follow a well-established methodology of structural linguistics. For instance, the grammatical system of the target language should be compared to the morphological system of the learners' native language. Any target language structures that differ from the learner's native language should be given special attention in preparing pedagogical materials. There is another contrastive analysis hypothesis which some linguists call a weak version. It is not based on comparing a learner's L1 and a second language in order to focus on differences that would hinder acquisition of a second language. This version is based on the actual and recurring difficulties exhibited in a learner's performance. Therefore, they start the analysis and comparison process when an actual problem occurs.

Transfer has been examined from different perspectives and it has been observed that first-language influences are not just direct reflexes. Zobel (1980, 1982) sees transfer and developmental influences as two opposing processes. He argues that the effect of the L1 can be manifest (1) in a prolongation or delay in the restructuring of an interlanguage rule or (2) in the number of rules traversed on the path from the acquisition of one form to another.

Another perspective on L1 influence comes from Schachter's (1974) examination of the use of English relative clauses by Persian, Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese students. She found that in a set of 50 compositions from each language group, Chinese and Japanese learners produced far fewer relative clauses than did Persian learners. She hypothesizes that the major syntactic difference between Chinese and Japanese were on the one hand and English on other. Also, this difference does not exist between Persian or Arabic and English in a relative clause. Thus, Japanese and Chinese learners try to avoid this structure according to Schachter.

Recent History of Contrastive Rhetoric

Recent contrastive rhetoric theory is connected to the article "Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education," which was written by Kaplan (1966). Kaplan examines the connection between language and culture by looking to logic and thought patterns. He and other scholars sought to understand the question of why foreign students who had mastered syntactic structures still demonstrated an inability to compose themes, term papers, and directions. Spair-Whorf's hypothesis (1955) inspired Kaplan to investigate further pattern differences among

languages. The Whorfian hypothesis explained that one's native language can become a barrier for learning a second language. Connor (1996) describes Whorf's theory: "The Whorfian hypothesis thus asserts that one's native language influences and controls thought, consequently barring fluent second-language acquisition (p.29)."

Unfortunately, as we see in the above description of previous studies, contrastive rhetoric concentrated on linguistic issues. Most of contrastive studies recognition has been limited on sentence level. There is a relationship between culture and language. Kaplan (1966) has criticized early studies for focusing only on the linguistic level:

Unfortunately, although both the prescriptivists and the descriptivists have recognized the existence of cultural variation as a factor in second-language teaching, the recognition has so far been limited to the level of the sentence – that is, to the level of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. (p.2)

Thus, Kaplan believed that rhetoric varies from one culture to another. Actually, it varies within the culture from time to time. Kaplan's views on logic also demonstrated why logic differs from one culture to another and how it affects our perception and our thought. Kaplan's article the discipline of contrastive rhetoric in applied linguistics. This article is considered to be the first one in this specific field, because most early studies did not go beyond the linguistic level. Kaplan (1966) states:

Logic (in the particular, rather than the logician's sense of the word), which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture (p.2).

Thus, Kaplan was trying to move the direction of the arrow to something else. Kaplan initiated an attention shift among ESL scholars in studying contrastive rhetoric. Kaplan demonstrated that we should go beyond the surface of language when we try to find the elements that affect language production. Also, he was attracting the attention of scholars to the fact that world languages have different language roots. Each language has different patterns and language structures. Kaplan tried to be specific in examining the relationship between language and culture in order to discover more about the cultural differences in logic. Kubota (2004) explained Kaplan's aims:

Among various aspects of cultural differences, rhetorical patterns of written texts have been investigated for more than 30 years since contrastive rhetorical research was initiated by Kaplan (1966). Sharing assumptions with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis on the relationship between language and culture, Kaplan's earlier works explored a link between culturally specific logic or thought patterns and paragraph structures in English essays written by nonnative English-speaking students. (p.8)

Kaplan claimed that foreign students' papers were out of focus because they applied rhetoric and sequences of thought that native speakers did not expect. He investigated the thought patterns of different cultures to reveal the gaps between cultures in writing and thought.

He started by showing how English paragraph development is different from that of other language. There are two major developmental processes in writing paragraphs in English. The deductive method requires the writer to state the ideas before giving examples. On the other hand, the writer who uses the inductive approach has to present examples first, then derive ideas from them. However, other languages have different systems for writing paragraphs.

Since Kaplan was an ESL teacher in Japan for a couple of years, he chose to compare the Japanese language to English to clarify why students who come from these cultures have these problems. He also did that for other cultures. For example, Kaplan states that the Arabic language has a different paragraph and sentence development system. Paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions both negative and positive. Interestingly, this parallelism existed in old English, as Kaplan pointed out, referring to the King James Version of the Old Testament. Then, Kaplan (1966) got to the point that he wanted to prove: “While this extensive parallel construction is linguistically possible in Arabic, the English language lacks the necessary flexibility” (p.9).

According to Kaplan, Arabic-speaking ESL learners would have problems with structuring paragraph ideas. Kaplan explains that in oriental writing, paragraph development tends to revolve around the subject. The subject is never looked at directly. Kaplan also compared the paragraph systems of Romance, Russian, and Semitic languages. In short, each language and each culture has a way of expressing and developing ideas in a paragraph. Thus, ESL learners transfer their L1 thought pattern unconsciously when they start writing in a second language. Connor (2002) summarized Kaplan’s study about cultural thought differences:

Kaplan claims that Anglo-European expository essays are developed linearly whereas essays in Semitic languages use parallel coordinate clauses; those in Oriental languages prefer an indirect approach, coming to the point in the end; and those in Romance languages and in Russian include material that, from a linear point of view, is irrelevant. (p.494)

Kaplan’s findings support his claim that ESL teachers should be aware of their students’ culture and language because they play an important role in students’ production. It seems that Kaplan’s vision depends on the theory that in order to be able to resolve a dilemma, you need to describe it precisely and discover its origin. This explains Kaplan’s method of looking at the influence of other cultures and languages on ESL learners.

According to Kaplan, ESL students need to be made aware of rhetorical writing conventions in English as in other languages. Also, he explained how an ESL writing teacher should deal with the contrastive rhetoric issue. Kaplan (1966) suggests:

In the teaching of paragraph structure to foreign students, whether in terms of reading or in terms of composition, the teacher must be himself aware of these differences, and he must make these differences overtly apparent to his students (p.14).

Teachers need to take into consideration the learners' language background because this would enable teachers to recognize the contradictions between learners' first language and second language in order to help learners to successfully overcome their obstacles.

Unfortunately, Kaplan's theory has been taken too literally. Anyone who reads studies by Kaplan article might assume that all cultures use the categorization described by Kaplan. Any researchers who review Kaplan's claims would know that his perspective is too simple and it can't be the model for current contrastive rhetoric research.

Finally, a new generation of contrastive rhetoric scholars understood the need to make a significant change in contrastive rhetoric research. The traditional contrastive rhetoric framework would not be able to include all data because always you might face constraints in time, data size and regulations. Also, contrastive rhetoricians felt that earlier criticism forced them to go beyond the sentence level and understand the writing process.

There was some new research in cognitive models of writing and translating ideas into text by Flower and Hays (1981). More recently, the nature of writing has been viewed in its social and interactional role. Writing is seen as an interaction within a specific discipline or community.

Contrastive rhetoric is taking new directions in applied linguistics. Connor (1996) describes these new directions as:

...Contrastive text linguistics (comparison of discourse features across languages); the study of writing as a cultural activity (comparing the process of learning to write in different cultures); contrastive studies of classroom dynamics of L2 writing; contrastive rhetoric studies conducted in a variety of genres in a variety of situations in a variety of purposes (e.g. journal articles, school essays, and business reports); and contrastive rhetoric studies dealing with the inclusion of culturally different intellectual traditions and ideologies. (p.19)

New branches of this emerging discipline are developing, and there are many conferences, publications, and new courses on academic writing. These days, most universities in the U.S. are interested in enrolling as many international students as they can, because educators know that learning is negotiating and exchanging knowledge from all cultures. Thus, many ESL scholars have turned to one of the crucial skills that academic students must have in order to be successful in their study. Scholars have become more specific in their work to find out the best way to help second-language writers.

Proponents of the Kaplan hypothesis:

Since the Kaplan hypothesis first appeared, there have been proponents and opponents of this theory. Defenders of contrastive rhetoric theory such as Leki (1991) pointed to the fact that even though writing instructors who teach ESL students might not have a background in the rhetoric of different cultures, contrastive rhetoric helps them understand stereotypes and realize that writing strategies are culturally formed (p.138). Leki explains that the ESL teacher needs to know what is relevant and irrelevant, what's logical or illogical, and what constitutes an

argument in other cultures. Unfortunately, some ESL instructors don't understand that ESL learners don't have a mental problem in digesting a new language process, but they have learned to process in different ways. Purves (1988) describes this issue: "When students, taught to write in one culture, enter another and don't write as do the members of the second culture, they should not be thought stupid or lacking in higher mental process, as some composition teachers have stated" (p.19).

It is true that students simply don't know about the rhetorical structures of the new culture. Kaplan provided important insight for teaching rhetoric to ESL students. Many researchers and ESL teachers emphasized the crucial point that, without Kaplan's hypothesis, they would not be able to consider students' L1 in teaching rhetoric.

Connor (1996-2002) devotes much of her professional life to explaining various aspects of Contrastive Rhetoric (CR). She noticed some of the weaknesses in the early work on CR and tried to correct them. She went further and expanded the field of CR to include different languages, text types, genres, and research methodologies (Casanave, 2004, p.40). She was able to point to linguistic, structural, and topical aspects of different genres because she is interested in text analysis more than philosophical and cognitive issues in CR. Therefore, she did not neglect sociolinguistic, developmental or ideological factors that influence how people write. She stated that the differences in written products by native speakers "result from many factors besides linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive ones, such as schooling and writing instruction" (Connor, 1997, p.202). This is her understanding of the sociolinguistic aspects of rhetoric, though her work did not look deeply to the issues she indicated. Connor argues that CR is still in its infancy and it has great potential and deserves more attention. Matsuda explained that people tend to understand CR as mainly a negative transfer of L1 rhetorical patterns to L2 writing. He clearly stated: "The insights gained by research have not been effectively translated into the practice of teaching organizational structures" (Matsuda, 1997, p.45).

Supporting CR, Leki (1997) responds to those who criticize Kaplan's hypothesis that most of scholars have paid a primary attention on the ideological implication of their work so this explains why there is little advance in this field (p.244).

Opponents of Contrastive Rhetoric:

When we speak about opponents, we should mention the first scholar who criticized Kaplan's hypothesis. Hinds (1982) was the first researcher who pointed out some of the flaws in Kaplan's theory. Hinds stated that although it was essential to examine the rhetoric of writers' first languages in order make statements about culturally influenced rhetoric, investigating essays written in English by foreign students cannot guarantee that a specific problem stems from negative transfer. Hinds also pointed to the fact that Kaplan classified his languages in odd ways and that he wrongly over-generalized the term "oriental" to include four different language families (Hinds, 1982, p.186). Kaplan (1966) himself admits that "in the first blush of discovery, he overstated both the differences and his case (p.9)." Hinds also criticized Kaplan for ethnocentrically representing English prose as a straight line. Kaplan resented English as superior colonial language and other languages have less position than English language.

Some scholars have criticized contrastive rhetoric for its reductionist, deterministic, prescriptive, and essentialist orientation (Leki, 1997; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1997) (Kutbota, 2004, P.10). They have criticized CR because a language within itself it has a complex system and different variables. Zamel (1997) criticized CR for its deterministic and static view of language and culture. Spack (1997) talked about writer identity and proposed viewing students as individuals, not as members of a group. Leki (1997) points out the issue that ignoring similarities leads to making ESL writers' language and culture look strange and dismisses the agency that writers bring to the act of writing.

McCagg (1996) points to the importance of context and the interaction between L2 writers' and L1 readers' knowledge in textual interpretation. The same problem existed with Kaplan's view of Arabic language and cultures. The Arab world has different cultures and language varieties, and it is inaccurate to judge Arabic language speakers as if they come from the same culture. The monolingual and multilingual people within the Arab world exhibit differences in the written production of English. For instance, Moroccan students who can speak French and/or one of the African languages such as Berber would not be like Saudi students who speak only Arabic. As a result, assuming that Arab students have the same way of thinking and writing is incorrect, and this assumption needs to be revised.

Another criticism was made by Ryuko Kubota, who was a native speaker of Japanese. Kubota (1998) reexamined Kaplan's claim about Japanese students' writing. When she reinvestigated Kaplan's Japanese students' writing, she found that there was no strong evidence that culturally unique patterns either existed or were transferred to students' English writing. Kubota (2004) criticized the point of view that emphasized an unequal cultural dichotomy between East and West: "It has also implicitly reinforced an image of superiority of English rhetoric and a deterministic view of second language (particularly English) learners as individuals who inevitably transfer the rhetoric patterns of their L1 in L2 writing" (p.9).

Devaluing and disregarding other languages is one of the criticisms of CR. Moreover, the binary images of rhetoric constructed by CR scholars, such as stating that Arabic is a circular language whereas English is a linear direct language, remind us of the colonial dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. Pennycook (1998) explained that the idea of contrastive rhetoric was created by the political or ideological nature of conventional knowledge.

In addition, many critics argue that, with the varieties of English usage, there is no single system or form of English itself. Y. Karchu argued that contrastive rhetoric focuses mainly on the traditional "inner circle" of rhetorical varieties of English as a point of reference and it fails to validate the "outer rhetorical circle" of English (Kutbota, 2004, p.10).

Arabic and Contrastive Rhetoric

Knowing the system of L1 writing is significant in teaching L2 writing because the relationship between L1 writing and L2 cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, scholars such as Lado (1957), Fries (1945), Haugen (1953), Weinreich (1953), and others have not investigated L1 writing in different cultures to see its impact on L2 writing. As far as we know, Kaplan was the first one who knocked on the door of this field, and who went beyond the surface. He examined rhetoric in different languages to find out more about L1 influence on L2 writing, and one of

these languages is Arabic. Actually, the Arabic language has not been studied by many scholars of linguistics. Kaplan was one of a few scholars who tried to understand the Arabic language in order to explain its impact on the production of L2 writing. Most other studies had been conducted twenty-five years earlier, and Kaplan (1966) claimed that the Arabic language uses a system of parallels in constructing paragraphs and sentences. "In the Arabic language, for example (and this generalization would be more or less true for all Semitic languages), paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions, both positive and negative" (p.6).

Kaplan was not the only one who came up with this claim about Arabic. Ostler (1987) asserted too that Arabic writing is characterized by a series of parallel constructions. Both of them believed that this parallelism came as result of forms of classical Arabic as found in the Koran which was written in the seventeenth century C.E. In English, however, subordination is used more often, and is taught to students through combining sentences. Connor (1996) explained Kaplan's example of Arabic structure:

Using Kaplan's (1972) examples, in English a coordinate sentence, "The boy was here, and he drank the milk," could be changed to a subordinate sentence through semantic subordination, "Milk was drunk by the boy who was here. He drank the milk," or grammatical subordination, "Milk was drunk by the boy who was here." In Arabic, the coordinated form is preferred (p.34)."

Kaplan (1972) and Ostler (1987) claimed that Arabic speakers use many coordinated sentences in their writing. The Arabic language has a rich and complex typology of texts, so Arab rhetoricians differ in constructing texts according to the type of context. I will discuss this point in analyzing participants' papers.

Unfortunately, Kaplan (1972) and Ostler (1987) misunderstand Arabic, at least at the sentence level, because Arabic has a complex sentence structure and at the same time it has a more flexible sentence structure than in English. In a previous research on the difference between Arabic and English sentence structures the researcher states (2013):

The Arabic language has a very sophisticated structure. The difficulty of Arabic does not only come from its structure, but also from its tenses. Tense and structure are interrelated to each other in Arabic because tense changes the order of words in a sentence. This seems awkward to nonnative speakers because most languages have a specific word order in sentences. However, Arabic has a noun sentence and a verbal sentence, and each of them has a specific sentence order. (p.2)

It seems that the Arabic language is not only chunks of coordinating sentences according to this quote and this should definitely lead us to be skeptical toward Kaplan's (1972) and Ostler's (1987) claims about Arabic. It appears to any Arabic speaker or specialist in this field that there are some problems regarding the validity and reliability of Kaplan's (1972) and Ostler's (1987) studies. Arabic sentence structure depends on the tense used in the sentence. Thus, Arabic is not similar to the English or Latin languages where there are specific orders to sentences. It is unscholarly to generalize the idea of parallelism without going deeper in studying the language's structure and context. Krzeszowski (1990) pointed to Fisiak statement on how we

should analyze every language: “One of the fundamental tenets of distributionalism was that every language should be analyzed and described in its own categories insofar as every language employs different and unique grammatical means” (p.112).

Supporting Kaplan’s assumptions, Ostler (1987) compare his ten Saudi Arabian student essays with ten English paragraphs selected at random from books. The results showed that the essays written by Saudi students had more coordinated sentences than the English passages. Despite the fact that coordination exists in Arabic, such a superficial comparison does not necessarily mean we should brand Arabic speakers students with this assumption. Language is not limited to systematic or sentence structure. It goes beyond these aspects of the language to include culture, social context, and identity.

In addition, Kaplan (1972) went further in his claim and argued that not only are sentences coordinated in Arabic, but paragraph development has similar coordination principles as he explained in his article “Language and Learning” (1966): “Paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions, both positive and negative” (p.6). Kaplan assumed that Arabic develops paragraphs through a series of parallel constructions. However, Connor (1996) reported that Sa’adeddin (1989) claims that Arabic has two styles of text development. The first, called the aural style, is characterized by prepetition, a limited and imprecise lexicon, and overuse of generalization. The second is visual, and is characterized by linear development, a varied lexicon, and complex syntax (p.36). Choosing a style in Arabic rhetoric depends on the context of writing, and this was confirmed by Sa’adeddin when he stated that the social function of a text determines the style. This assumption is logical, since paragraph development in many languages depends on the field of writing, as it does in the Arabic language. For example, writing a news article in Arabic would not be like writing an academic paper. From a broader viewpoint, varied types of paragraph development and classification of chapters in books were used many years earlier than in English in Arabic writing systems, though the classification of paragraphs varies according to the context. For instance, there are narration paragraphs, topic paragraphs which are used mostly in science books, and biography paragraphs. However, Arabic-speaking students tend to use parallel construction because Arabic values balance for a good sequence of thoughts. Thompson-Panos (1983) described this reason behind using parallel construction in writing: “This is largely because Arabic sentences emphasize the sequences of events and balance of thought, which favor coordination” (p.620).

This seems to be true, but that does not necessarily mean that this is the only paragraph system in Arabic. In an attempt to explain Arabic discourse, Connor (1996) described how Kaplan introduced two concepts – the discourse bloc and the discourse unit – that are based on text analysis from the theories of rhetoricians Christensen (1963) and Pitkin (1969). Kaplan defined the discourse unit as a language that is understood in a context larger than a sentence. A discourse bloc constitutes those units, which discourse units have, within discourse block which are related to each other by coordination, subordination, or superordination (p.32). Both Kaplan (1972) and Ostler (1987) believed that Arabic-speaking students use more discourse units to support their ideas than do English students. Moreover, Ostler (1987) found that Arabic students begin their writing with a subordinate sentence and end with some formulaic or proverbial statement.

Arabic-speaking students have always been accused of overusing repetition in their writing, and many researchers who studied Arabic-student essays noted this in their studies. Swales and Mustafa (1984) found that Arabic newspaper texts demonstrate that Arabic argumentative texts manifest repetition as an argumentative strategy at all three levels. Ostler (1987) also reported the repetition feature in Arabic-speaking student's essays. Even though many researchers who examined Arabic-speaking writing noted the feature of repetition in students' writing, none of the previous researchers investigated the function of repetition in the Arabic language in order to identify the real reason behind this redundancy. This kind of repetition in Arabic-speaking students' writing seems to be awkward or ambiguous to native speakers of English. To clarify this ambiguity, we need to understand the function of repetition in Arabic. Thompson-Panos (1983) described it: "In both spoken and written Arabic, repetition, increased use of the superlative, and frequent rewording and restatement are devices used to communicate ideas clearly" (p.619).

Arab ESL learners tend to use repetition in their writing because they think this would make their ideas clear. Also, it is common in Arabic to put emphasis on the point you want to make clear and to employ this emphasis, you need to repeat the idea in Arabic but using different terminology. Redundancy is not considered to be a negative aspect in the Arabic writing system, it is in the opposite. It reflects that the person has mastered the language and that he/she can play with the language. Arab learners unconsciously transfer this phenomenon when they write in a second language. We will see how participants write in English and we will investigate the Arabic on writing on second language.

Genre and Contrastive Rhetoric

Knowing genre and its function is crucial in learning and teaching rhetoric. We need to fully understand its importance before we get to its definition. Connor (1996) expressed the importance of genre knowledge for composition teachers: "Composition teaching experts in the United States such as Bizzel (1982a; 1982b; 1982) and Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1988) have shown that students entering academic disciplines need to learn the genres and conventions that members of the disciplinary community employ" (p.77).

Students who don't share the social context need to acquire the conventions and techniques of arguments as well as conversational techniques. To communicate effectively, international students need to know how to apply a correct form to a specific exchange of knowledge. Hyland (2004) stated the importance of genre in second language writing: "While genre theories have evolved in different circumstances and in response to different problems, they have attracted growing interest because the idea of genre can help us to understand the ways individuals use language to engage in particular communicative situations and to employ this knowledge to help students writers create communicatively effective texts" (p.7).

Tardy (2009) also showed how it's useful to consider genre in teaching rhetoric: "in attempting to address the needs of students who are often culturally and/or linguistically marginalized from sociorhetorical practices in educational, academic, workplace setting, many practitioners have turned to genre as 'a way in' to the power structure of the society" (p.7). Genre knowledge is considered to be a gate or a tool that should be taught to second language writers.

Discussing any type of rhetoric would require talking about the genre of that writing. Since this paper is going to examine Saudi learners' argumentation essays, it needs to discuss the argumentation genre of Saudi students. In fact, understanding the needs of international students who don't share educational, cultural, and academic values is necessary to enable them to communicate effectively. Therefore, this paper would start with defining the term "genre" in order to be able to recognize exactly what it is talking about. Many scholars define genre and look to it from different angles. Tardy (2009) gives explicit and direct definition to genre: "When discourses become typified – that is, when the same events are carried out repeatedly through the same practices – they may be referred to as genre" (p.12). This definition of the term represents a gate to or a starting point for understanding the complexity of genre. Many rhetoric researchers have tended to focus on genre research and pedagogy because it concentrates on the analysis of written products that are used to communicate with a specific group that shares purposes, understandings, and ways of using language (Hyland, 2002; John, 2002; Miller, 1984; Swales, 1990; reported by Casanave, p.82). Basically, there are three different types or schools of genre studies. The first one is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) created by Swale (1990). He defined genre as a class of communicative events with a shared set of communicative purposes, as outlined in his book: *Genre Analysis, English for Academic and Academic Settings*. The second type of genre studies was invented by Martin, who was an advocate of the view of systematic functional linguistics. Martin (1984) referred to genre as a stage, goal-oriented, purposeful social activity. These two schools concentrated on the structural elements of the text. The third school, which is considered the most advanced school in genre analysis, focuses on rhetorical actions based on recurrent situations, and it proposes open principles for genre classification based on rhetorical practice rather than based on structure or discourse aim. This is defined by Miller (1994), who focused more on the relations between text and context. Thus, we can say that there are different types of contrastive genre analysis, one focusing on text analysis, another focusing on contextual analysis.

Recently, contrastive analysis researchers have become more interested in genre analysis. Writing conventions help ESL teachers identify the rhetorical choices of ESL students in their culture. Every culture has a specific convention, even if they use the same word. For instance, the convention of "good writing" is culturally defined, so the Chinese convention for good student writing would not be like the American convention. Every field has a certain convention and language that is used to actively communicate. For instance, engineering writing would not be similar to literature writing because the first one focuses more on information and the second focuses on meaning. Tardy (2009) pointed to this fact: "More recent work has studied discourse variation among academic disciplines, finding linguistic differences between disciplines like history and biology (Cornrad, 2000) or, more broadly, the soft sciences and hard sciences" (p.11).

Additionally, textual analysis of professional writing at the rhetorical level helps scholars and writing teachers to identify larger structural and cohesive patterns in different genres (Connor, 1996, 2000; Psteguillo, 1999; Swales, 1990; quoted by Casanave, p.82). We should indicate that the convention of writing an essay or paragraph in non-English-speaking cultures would not be similar to the English or western style because they don't share the same discourse or context. Gee (1999) explained discourse as an "identity kit." Discourses shape and form our perception of the world and these of course include the way we communicate, interact, and

understand. Thus, we need to reexamine the conventions of writing essays in Saudi Arabia to build a claim about thought patterns.

The Study Participants

Gathering the data for a contrastive project needs to be performed carefully because claims about the Saudi culture problem with writing will be made even though the data base is not large. Since the researcher will test the contrastive writing of Saudi students, he must select participants from different majors, ages, and backgrounds in order to get a clear picture of the Saudi contrastive writing problem.

Table 1 (Participants)

Name	Age	Experience writing in English	Education	Major	Region
Othman	23	3 years	High school Undergraduate	Geology	Eastern
Khaled	27	4 months	Bachelor's degree Graduate	Architecture	Western
Turki	30	4 years	High school Undergraduate	Civil engineering	Eastern
Ahmad	34	10 months	Master's degree Graduate (PhD)	Special Education	Capital city

Othman graduated from a Saudi high school in a science track. The system of high schools in Saudi Arabia allows students to choose between two tracks: science, and literature. The first one makes students eligible to enroll as science majors in universities and the second one would enable students to enroll only in theoretical majors. Thus, the science track in Saudi high schools has more intensive courses in science and English compared to the literature track. After Othman graduated from high school, he came to the United States to study for a bachelor's degree. Before he enrolled in the university, he studied in an intensive English program at the University of Arizona. In addition, he took two intensive summer English courses at Armco (a petroleum company) English Institute since his father worked for the Armco Company. Currently, he is a second-year student in the geology department at the University of Arizona.

Khaled grew up in a suburban area. He graduated from a Saudi high school in a science track. He then enrolled in Umm al Qura University in order to study architecture. After he graduated from the university, he came to study at the Center of English as Second Language (CESL) at the University of Arizona. He did not take any summer English courses before he came to the United States. However, he studied in English for his bachelor's degree.

Turki has a different situation because he is in his thirties and is still studying for a bachelor's degree. After Turki graduated from a high school in the literature track, he enrolled in AL-Jubeal Industrial College. He obtained his diploma, then worked in an oil company for eight years. When he got married, his wife was interested in pursuing graduate studies in the United

States. He came with her and was eventually admitted to the University of Arizona to complete his bachelor's degree.

Ahmad obtained the highest educational degree among the participants. He graduated from the science track of a Saudi high school. He then enrolled in King Saud University, majoring in special education. When he graduated from the university, he worked for three years in a high school that teaches students with special needs. He was very interested in this field, so he decided to pursue a master's degree. He worked for one year after he finished his master's degree in a special center for disabilities education in Riyadh. He then went to work at the University of Shqra. A year later, he came to the University of Arizona to study in the CESL program. Ahmad studied special education in Arabic, and when he worked on his master's degree he used to ask a translation office to translate the English articles he used in his thesis. Ahmed can communicate with the deaf by using sign language.

Research Method

Every participant provided the researcher with an argumentative essay that they had written for an academic class, whether for a university class or for an English institute class. The researcher then conducted an interview with every participant to ask them questions regarding their knowledge of rhetoric in their first and second languages. The questions included, but were not limited to:

1. How long you have been writing in English (paragraphs)?
2. How did your teacher teach you to write in English? Which teacher and when?
3. For what purposes do you write in English?
 - a. Academics
 - b. Pleasure
 - c. Work
 - d. Other _____
4. When you write in English do you ever think in Arabic? Why?
5. Are you aware of rhetorical differences between Arabic and English? What are they?
6. How do you go about writing a paper in English?
7. How do you construct your ideas in a paragraph or an essay when you write in English?
8. How much do you think about readers when you write?
9. When do you write your ideas directly? Or when do you prefer an indirect way of delivering the meaning?
10. When do you usually proofread when you write? If you do so, do you do it with each sentence or paragraph?
11. Do you start with an example when you describe your ideas? Or vice versa?
- 12.

Each interview is recorded and notes made later in the notebook. The researcher then compared their answers to their written texts to observe significant issues in their writing.

Findings

Different writing issues found in Saudi writing and this paper is going to present issues that might relate to the CR theory. One of the most obvious issues with second-language learners' writing is grammatical errors. Besides grammatical problems, there are serious syntax and semantic problems, too. This research will highlight these issues with an explanation for the conflict between L1 and L2 in writing. In addition, the thought patterns of Saudi students will be deeply discussed in order to see how participants construct their paragraphs.

Grammatical Major Issues:

Even though many researchers discussed Arab major grammatical issues, a few or none of them described why Saudi students suffered from these grammatical problems even if they get to advanced level. After analyzing to participants' papers, common grammatical issues found in students with their writing.

Table 2 (Grammatical Errors)

Names	Preposition Errors	Omission of subject or verb	Article Errors	Third Person Singular Errors
Othman	3	2	17	1
Kahled	6	7	15	6
Turki	4	0	9	4
Ahmad	9	0	13	2

Starting with prepositions, several prepositional errors in students' writing especially with *in* or *at* are found in students' writing. To clearly demonstrate the problem, we need to take an example from a participant's paper. Kahled used this sentence where he made an error in using prepositions:

-Kahled shared with his father in the battles and wars of unification.

Kahled's confusion occurred because there is a language transfer. Cowan (2008) explains the dilemma of prepositions for ESL learners:

Another source of the difficulty that ESL/EFL students have learning prepositions may be L1 transfer. However, it is not always easy to determine the basis for what appears to be a case of L1 transfer when a student produces an English sentence with the wrong prepositions" (p.163).

If we look at the usage of prepositions in L1, we find that Arabic has only one preposition used for talking about both a closed space and a point. Thus, Saudi students will certainly encounter difficulty in learning and applying the difference between the prepositions *in/at*. This case is similar to what Lado (1957) explained as a strong version of CA. He claimed that the grammatical structures that don't exist in the acquired language but exist in the learner's first language will cause difficulty in learning. According to the level of proficiency, you can observe the variations in preposition errors among students. Of course, the occurrence of the errors would be higher when the student's language proficiency is low, as we see in the cases of Khaled and Ahmed.

Most grammar researchers and instructors agree that the usage of articles is one the most tricky and difficult rules to be mastered by ESL/EFL students. Saudi students, like other Arab learners of English have a problem with applying articles. Even though the concept of the article exists in Arabic, Saudi and Arab learners constantly tend to make errors in using articles. This is one of the article errors that frequently occurred in Saudi students' writing:

-the last cause is forest fires. When the fire get started, you will see widespread smoking. A smoking make pollution.

Another Example:

-People who believe the Muslims stereotypes such as terrorist, criminals, injustices, and bad behaviors, they agreed with seller against the women.

It is clear that the student has not mastered articles in the target language and he repeatedly makes errors. It true that the student's L1 has articles and they have similar functions, too. However, it deserves to point to a very important fact that many ESL teachers should take into consideration when they teach Saudi students: the Arabic language has the concept of articles, but these articles are added to the nouns; so, they are a part of the word. They come as a prefix to a noun and they are not separated from the noun. Because English articles are separated from a noun, the Saudi students would simply become confused. They might wonder why we add the plural *s* to nouns when we can't add articles to them. Cowan (2008) described another difference between languages in implementing articles:

The concepts that these articles express, such as definiteness and indefiniteness, will not be new to students. Nevertheless, the kinds of forms and constructions used for expressing definiteness and indefiniteness vary widely in languages of the world, and this makes learning the English article system challenging and problems with articles persistent. (p.226)

Adding to Cowan's point that students whose mother language is not derived from Latin languages would face more difficulties in processing English articles.

Another grammatical problem that frequently encountered in students' papers is adding an (*s*) for the third personal singular. The author has written a paper in which investigated the differences and similarities between Arabic present tense and English present tense. In that study he stated:

The present tense expresses an action that occurs in the present and in the future. For example, "ydras" meaning "studying" refers to an action that is occurring now and might continue in the future. The Arabic present tense would include all tenses that come under this umbrella, like the simple present, the progressive, the present perfect and so on. (p.3)

This demonstrates how the Arabic simple present differs from English. Not only the form, but also the sentence structure is completely different. For example:

Verb – Subject - Object

Ydras Ahmad Al-kebab.

–Study Ahmad the book.

The Arabic language is more flexible than English because to indicate a present tense in Arabic, you can add either a prefix or a suffix to the verb, while in English you only can add a suffix. Thus, a Saudi could become confused with the rules for the simple present in English. Actually, the occurrence of the third personal singular *s* error is higher with beginning students and this is normal. However, it does not always occur in this way. Turki is considered to be advanced student and he still made this error such this sentence: *this show us that even if some people speak standard English they still in many Americans view not American.*

Most ELL Arab writers struggle to appropriately use copulas. Research participants in this study frequently made this mistake as well. Arab students struggle with auxiliary verbs or the verb “to be,” especially beginners, because Arabic has no auxiliary verbs. Even advanced learners sometimes make such errors “he absent” or “my teacher very angry.” This is an example of omitting copula from one of participants writing: *my country improved when he was the king in the economic.* As a result, teachers must ensure that students recognize the function of auxiliaries and copulae in a sentence.

Major Content Issues

Analyzing participants’ papers led me to try to consider all major issues in order to be able to understand Saudi students’ writing struggles. Grammatical or stylistic or structural issues are not the only ones they face. Actually, careful analysis shows that problems go beyond the surface of their writing. The first-language impact cannot be ignored as we analyze students’ writing problems. Culture also plays important role in their writing. Unfortunately, few studies investigate second language writing by concentrating on the influence of the thought patterns of L1 and their impact on second-language writing. In this section we will show some of the obvious writing content problems of Saudi participants.

Many writing teachers encounter a case where they are puzzled about what a student means. How does this happen? Typically, this occurs when students unconsciously transfer from their L1 while they write in a second language. They do not only transfer structure or grammar. They also transfer their way of thinking and conceptualization. Transferring and thinking are tied to each other because students transfer when they think in their L1 and write in L2. Look at this sentence from Ahmad’ papers:

“Also, they say that when we want to keep our planet clean, we must stop pollution causes. Significantly, planet earth without pollution is also very important.”

A native speaker of English reading the underlined sentence will definitely be confused about what the writer wanted to say. This occurs because the writer of this sentence was thinking in Arabic.

Table 3 (Content Issues)

Names	Transferring	Quantifiers	Thinking in Arabic while writing in English	Repeating ideas
Othman	7	11	No	3
Kahled	8	8	Yes	4
Turki	6	14	Yes	2
Ahmed	6	11	Yes	4

Table 3, shows Ahmad admitted in the interview that he thinks in Arabic when he writes in English. The author also deduced this by analyzing sentence structures in the writing samples which were similar to Arabic sentence structures. The difficulty of Arabic does not only come from its structure, but also from its tenses. Tense and structure are interrelated to each other in Arabic because tense changes the order of words in sentence. This seems awkward to nonnative

speakers because most languages have a specific word order in sentences. However, Arabic has a noun sentence and verbal sentence, and each of them has a specific sentence order. The noun sentence in Arabic starts with nouns. Thus, there is a contrast between the two languages and this confuses teachers when they read Saudi students' writing. Since the Arabic language comes from a different language family, it has completely different structures and writing systems. According to the research interview with Ahmad, he was thinking in Arabic when he wrote this paragraph. Actually, he told me that he suffered from this problem and his writing teacher always circled some sentences and put exclamation marks above them. He explained: "I know it confuses those who don't speak my language and I tried to rewrite sentences to make them more understandable." Thus, Ahmad was writing his Arabic thoughts in English. This is definitely an instance of transferring thought patterns and grammar from the L1 into an L2 writing sample.

Many teachers think that transfer occurs only with beginning students. In fact, even advanced students suffer from the transferring issue. This happens simply because they think in Arabic. Take another look at Table 3, and you will see that all but one of the participants say that they think in Arabic when they write in English. Also, several studies have indicated that even advanced second-language learners still have this problem. Pavlenko (2011) points to this fact:

The enormous literature on transfer or crosslinguistic influence from the L1 indicates that even advanced L2 speakers continue to be influenced by their L1 in a range of domains (for overviews, see Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Kellerman & Sharwood smith, 1986; Odlin, 2003; Ringbom, 2007). A number of studies show that L2 speakers may categorize objects and events differently (e.g. Graham & Belnap, 1986; Malt & Sloman, 2003), and use and comprehend lexical and grammatical categories differently from monolingual native speakers (e.g. Coppieters, 1987; Jarvis, 1998; Kellerman, 1979; Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002). (p146)

The analysis of participants' papers proves the fact that even advanced students do transfer. Pavlenko (2011) also talks about how L2 speakers categorize events and objects differently. We see in the example above how Ahmad missed categorizing objects and events and we will see it in upcoming examples of participants' writing. It is true that the student comprehended lexical and grammatical categories of Arabic language in writing English.

Pavlenko (2011) points to another crucial issue when he talked about selecting different types of information for expression. L2 speakers conceptualize the information in L1 and they write it in L2. Pavlenko (2011) demonstrates this issue:

Further studies suggest that L2 speakers may exhibit different linguistic conceptualization from monolingual native speakers, selecting different types of information for expression (e.g. Carrol et al.200). That is, even though they use 'correct' L2 forms, they express information typical of the L1 rather than L2, giving them a 'discourse accent'. This is reminiscent of Kellerman's notion of 'transfer to nowhere', whereby L2 speakers 'seek the linguistic tools which will permit them to maintain their L1 perspective' based on the assumption that 'the way we talk or write about experience is not something that is subject between language variation' (1995: 141; italics in the original). (p.146)

Our minds are complicated machines. Bilingual speakers sometimes tend to develop their thoughts in L1 and try to write their thoughts in a good grammatical L2 structure. This can be obviously seen in a paper by Othman, one of advanced participants. He started his essay with this sentence: *Let us think of our education as the means of developing our great abilities. Because in each of us there is a private hope and dream, education can be translated into benefit for everyone and great strength of our nation.*

Othman's thesis statement indicated the fact that he conceptualized education in Arabic by selecting different types of information. Even though he claimed that he does not think in Arabic when he writes, this thesis statement proves that he did. This way of starting essays is called an open justification to write an essay about this issue in Arabic. Of course, Othman expressed information typical to L1. Another participant did the same thing, but he had a poor sentence structure. Look at Ahmad's thesis statement: *Nowadays, technology is very significant for our lives. For example, mobile phones consider one of the kind technologies.*

First, Ahmad applied different lexical categories than native speakers by starting with an adverb and giving an example in second sentence of the essay. We can say that Ahmad conceptualized and thought about technology in Arabic when he wrote the thesis statement. Of course, it would not be considered a thesis statement of an essay in English. Because Arabic does not have thesis statements in its writing system, Ahmad simply did not develop a thesis statement beyond the first sentence. He moved directly to the content after one simple topic sentence.

This paper must point out an important fact that Pavlenko indicated when he talked about the way we speak about something: Arabs have a different way of recounting their experiences. This leads me to discuss some common issues that the author noticed in the participants' papers. First of all, there is noticeable content issue in Arab-speakers' writing which is redundancy. As the author indicated before, the repetition issue was mentioned by Kaplan (1966) when he noticed that Arab learners tend to repeat their ideas in writing. Ostler (1987) also reported the repetition feature in Arabic-speaking student's essays. In addition, Thompson-Panos (1983) described the function of repetition in Arabic: "In both spoken and written Arabic, repetition, increased use of the superlative, and frequent rewording and restatement are devices used to communicate ideas clearly" (p.619). Table 3 shows the occurrence of repetition in the writing of the Saudi students in the study. The author also found that the Saudi students make two main types of repetition in their writing: first, they repeat the meaning of the sentence. Let's take this example from one of the participant's papers: *"Nick Collins says, 'Single sex education is that it reduces boys' and girls' opportunities to work together in a supervised, purposeful environment.' That means mixed gender schools can be a way of preparing boys and girls to work together in supervised, purposeful atmosphere."*

Othman repeated the meaning of the sentence to emphasize the importance of the point and to tell the reader to take it into consideration.

The second type of repetition that encountered in participants' papers is repeating words. This seems to be very awkward to native speakers. Ahmad repeated words that have the same meaning in this sentence: *"Also, it is deadly for animals, trees, and people. For example, one*

year ago in Colorado was big forests fires, and the result was destruction, devastation, and pollution. After that, many birds and animals died and harmed.”

Regardless of the grammatical mistakes, we can see how the student unconsciously transferred from Arabic when he repeated words with the same meaning. He used repetition to express the huge impact of a forest fire. This is common in Arabic: to highlight the importance of the topic, you need to exaggerate in order to encourage the reader to continue reading. In both cases, redundancy would have been normal in Arabic, and would have been used as communication strategy in argumentation, as Thompson-Panos (1983) also noted.

In order to understand the role of repetition in Arabic, we need to understand Arabic texts. Arabic texts of course have influenced Saudi students' writing. In order to understand the impact of Arabic texts on students' writing, this paper will present some examples of Arabic texts. Hatim (1997) outlines Arabic text types:

Three particular types of context, each with its own typical linguistic realization, were identified:

- a) Utterances addressed to 'one who denies' (*munkir*) must be made maximally evaluative (through emphasis, etc). The degree of evaluativeness will depend on the degree of denial displayed.
- b) Utterances addressed to 'one who is uncertain' (*mutaraddid*) must somehow be evaluative. Once again, the degree of evaluativeness will depend on the degree of uncertainty displayed.
- c) Utterances addressed to 'one who is open-minded' (*Khaali al-dhihn*) must be minimally evaluative. (48)
- d)

Hatim added: "These texts display varying degrees of evaluativeness or 'managing'. This manifests itself through the use of various forms of emphasis, parallelism, and other linguistic devices of intensification" (p.48).

Understanding Arabic texts explains to us why Saudi students tend to repeat and use parallel construction in writing. Looking to previous and upcoming quotations from participants writing would demonstrate the fact that Saudi students writing can be marked by redundancy. This might explain and clarify the reason behind using parallel construction, especially in the first two types of contexts where denial and uncertainty push the writer to use various forms of emphasis, parallelism, and other linguistic devices of intensification in order to confront the reader.

Kahled, one of the paper participants, admitted that he sometimes repeated ideas and words and he claimed the repetition occurred as a result of the influence of the Muslims Holy Book (Quran) because in order to memorize, you need to repeat. This might be true, since Saudi students are required to read and memorize certain chapters of the Quran at all educational levels. However, we can't claim that Saudi writing redundancy comes solely from memorizing the Quran, because Arabic poetry has plenty of repetition as do other types of literature. We need to understand that ancient nomadic Arabs used to memorize poems and their family history, especially family kinship. Thus, repetition in Arabic existed before Islam.

Some scholars have claimed that Arab learners of English tend to make extensive use of superlatives. Thompson-Panos (1983) indicated this in a passage cited above, and he claimed that overuse of superlatives is a communication strategy. In participants' papers analysis, it found that they did not overuse superlatives in their writing, even though an abundance of superlatives occurs in Arabic. However, students used a large number of quantifiers in their writing. An example from Turki's paper will illustrate:

Everyone in this world wants to live a peaceful life without problems. All people around the world used to solve any problems that face them in their daily live. One of these problems is racism. There are many types of racism and all for them have the same meaning that a specific group of people has privileges and consider themselves more important than other groups. Muslims and Arab at the US facing many kinds of racism every day because 9/11 and they fight to proof the opposite. Some American feel scare when they see any arab or muslim because they thought them terrorist.

Even though the writer used superlatives, the number of superlatives is far lower than the number of quantifiers used in this paragraph. Almost every sentence in this paragraph has a quantifier. Saudi overuse of quantifiers needs a further investigation and it could be a subject for a different study.

Generalization and indirectness can also be seen quite clearly in this paragraph. The Arabic language has a rich terminology. Consequently, writers are able to use words that have multiple meanings and these meanings can represent different perspectives. This allows Arabic speakers to favor indirectness when they write. Saudis also belong to the Arab world, and Arab culture is considered to be a collective culture, unlike individualistic Western cultures. As a result, speakers from Arab culture tend to be more cautious, formal, and tactual speakers when they speak or write. Students sometimes can't express themselves because there are social constraints. They prefer to be indirect in order to avoid disputing or clashing with any social group. Therefore, Saudi students tend to prefer indirectness when they write. Even though all participants insisted that they preferred to write their ideas directly, none of them did so. Turki, for instance, postponed declaring his point until the end of the paragraph. This style of writing is called in Arabic through-argumentation and it comes from L1 writing, as we will see in next paragraph.

Hatim (1997, in his description of Arabic texts, emphasizes the importance of cultural traditions and ways of thinking: "Texts can be seen as carriers of ideological meaning, a factor which makes them particularly vulnerable to changing socio- cultural norms" (p.35). Many rhetoric scholars have tried to understand Arab thought patterns. The author believes the best explanation of Saudi thought patterns comes from Sa'adeddin (1989). Connor (1996) reports that Sa'adeddin (1989) claims that Arabic has two styles of text development. The first, called the aural style, is characterized by prepetition, a limited and imprecise lexicon, and overuse of generalization. Turki's paragraph is a good illustration of this, especially the generalization issue.

Insofar as methods of argumentation are concerned, four out of five participants used a through argumentation in which they make extensive substantiation of their initial thesis in their

papers when they write in English. Hatim (1997) explained that Arabic has two argumentation forms: 1) Through-argumentative text is characterized by extensive approval of an initial thesis. 2) Counter-argumentative text includes a refutation for a cited thesis followed by substantiation and a conclusion. (p.47)

The most popular argumentative approach, the type of argumentation used extensively by Arabic writers, is through-argumentation. Hatim (1997) stated that “in contrast with English, this particular language variety displays a distinct preference for through-argumentation, a text from which either advocates or condones a given stance, glossing over beliefs entertained by the adversary” (p.47). This suggests that Saudi students transfer their method of argumentation from Arabic to English. This supports the claim that Arab speakers tend to be more indirect in their writing.

Other problems came up in this study and they were unrelated to contrastive rhetoric. However, since writing skill is connected to other language skills, the author found himself in a position where he should explain other major problems encountered by Saudi students. All participants complained about the inappropriate teaching methods used by their high school teachers. Saudi students also have insufficient reading skills and do not understand how to use dictionaries well. We will briefly go through these major problems.

Nowadays, many students tend to accuse their teachers when they fail. As teachers we are skeptical of their accusations because many who do so are not necessarily hard workers. However, sometimes students are right especially when they try to compare the teaching methods of their teachers. All of the participants in this study complained about the teaching methods used by their high-school teachers. Unfortunately, all of their high-school English teachers used the grammar-translation method. Some of them explained to me that they mostly memorized grammar rules, and surprisingly few of them had an opportunity to learn how to write in English in high school. It is shocking to learn that these students had not been able to acquire a second language thoroughly. Almost all were taught a similar method of writing English in their high school. Their teacher would select two stories from their curriculum and students would memorize them. Interestingly, they did not know how to pronounce the words. They had only to write the words from memory, and they got a full mark on the exam. This is an indication of the quality of the education that these students received in high school. ESL teachers should be aware that their Saudi students may have undergone this kind of memorization-based education.

When asked about dictionary use during the interviews, just one of the participants seems to know how to use a dictionary correctly, because the rest of participants stated that they just checked the meaning of words without looking at parts of speech, examples, synonyms, and forms. Most of the time, they use an Arabic-English. As a result, they often use inappropriate words because they do not look at these words used in examples. This might be occurring because they have not been taught how to use English dictionaries.

Reading is to writing as fuel is to an engine. You can not effectively write without having a sufficient input. Scholars of second language acquisition have highlighted the importance of reading in the development of writing. Krashen (1983) described the significance of reading for writing:

The competence/performance theory.... implies that instruction in writing should not focus on teaching directly, but should instead encourage the subconscious acquisition of form through reading and give students procedures that will facilitate the discovery of meaning and an efficient writing process. (p.30)

Students can acquire effective writing knowledge if they have sufficient reading input. From interview with Saudi students, they admitted that they don't read unless their teachers require them to do so, except for Ahmed who has a master's degree. Actually, they don't even read in Arabic. They complain about their poor reading skills because nobody teaches them how to read effectively. This indicates another source of the writing proficiency problem with Saudi students. A writing teacher should understand that Saudi students' writing problems are connected to their reading struggles.

Last but not least the researcher noticed that participants tend to use "if" conditions and complex sentences in their writing more than parallel sentences. They still use parallel construction of paragraphs, however. The author would assume that they prefer to use "if" conditions and complex sentences because these two structures are two of the most common sentence structures in Saudi conversation. The Saudi social hierarchy system might encourage using these two structures, especially when a father speaks to his son or a manager to his employees. Of course, this last phenomena need to be examined to explore the relationship between language, culture and the system of education.

Conclusion:

Since Kaplan proposed his hypothesis of contrastive rhetoric, launching a new field in second-language writing, many scholars have tried to investigate intercultural rhetoric and cultural thought patterns. This paper examines Kaplan's theory about Arab students writing. Kaplan (1966) claimed that the Arabic language uses a system of parallels in constructing paragraphs and sentences.

This paper investigates Saudi students' work using contrastive rhetoric. The participants in this study represent different generations and majors. This has allowed me to have a clear picture of Saudi rhetoric in Arabic and English, even though this study has been made on a small scale to date. This paper pointed to major content and grammatical issues in participants' writing with concentrating on thought patterns. Interviews with each participant were conducted to analyze their educational and knowledge background. The paper's findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Repetition and overuse of quantifiers occurred with both advanced and beginning Saudi students as a result of transfer from L1.
2. Saudi students tend to transfer their L1 argumentation style and its indirectness. The types of Arabic persuasive writing cause Saudi students to use repetition when writing in English.
3. Through interviews with participants and analyzing writing samples, the author has concluded that Saudi students suffer from insufficient rhetorical knowledge of L1. This has a negative impact on acquiring L2 writing skills because if a person does not know how to write effectively in L1, he would rarely be able to master writing in L2.

4. Saudi students conceptualize their ideas in Arabic when they write in English. We saw from the examples and the interviews that Saudi students use their L1 way of recounting their experiences. They unconsciously transfer from L1 to L2 when they categorize objects in their L1.
5. Memorization is a common studying strategy among Saudi students. Teaching methods and education policy used in Saudi schools reinforce memorization. Redundancy and memorization have strong ties since students have to repeat in order to memorize and this definitely has a negative influence on the overuse of repetition.
6. Poor reading skills caused poor writing skills. Without sufficient input, there cannot be effective output. Krashen's (1983) competence/performance theory indicated the connection between reading skills and writing skills.
7. Some problems occurred because there is a conflict between L1 rules and those of L2. Articles and prepositions are the most common of the grammatical errors encountered in students' writing. The third personal singular is another common error among Saudi students. Saudi students could not easily acquire these rules because they don't exist in their L1 or they have another form in their L1.
8. From the analysis of participants' papers, the researcher found that Saudi students tend to overuse specific sentence structures such as "if" conditions and complex sentences. This is contrary to Kaplan's (1966) claim that Arab students use parallel construction of sentences extensively. According to this study, the author found Saudi students use if conditions and complex sentences more than parallel sentences. Even though they don't over use parallel construction of sentences, they still use parallel construction of paragraphs.

Future directions:

Through the research, the author of this paper encountered some interesting questions that need further investigation. The following are the most obvious questions that arose: There is a need to examine the causes of the poor reading skills of Saudi students and their relation to writing production.

Teaching methods used to teach English to Saudi students, as well as education policy, have a negative impact on Saudi students' EL writing. This leads to the question, would Saudi students respond better to a teaching method such as the communicative method? If yes, does this come from the fact that Arabic is considered to be an oral language? Thus, speakers might prefer to learn through oral communication.

Saudi students' writing suffered from the absence of a voice. Saudi students encounter difficulties in writing their thoughts, feelings, and opinions because they never have learned to express them by writing in L1. One of the participants explained to me that he gets confused and does not know what to write when his teachers ask him to write his opinion. Actually, there is a need to understand the connection between poor writing and absence of voice.

Analysis of L2 writing using the methods of contrastive rhetoric has shown that sociolinguistic and ideological factors in Arabic impact Saudi writing. None of the recent studies has discussed the Saudi social context and their way of telling stories. In fact, each part of previous issues needs a whole research. The Arab world has different contexts and each context

has its own social, ideological, and culture factors. Thus, there is a need to examine the Saudi cultural context.

The use of memorization in Saudis' learning has a negative impact on second-language writing. This mode of study might cause students to unconsciously plagiarize without having the intention to do so. The skill of memorization enables Saudi students to cut and paste what they read into what they write. Memorization might also disable the creativity of students, especially when they have been used to writing what they memorize. Their minds will be blocked because they have not practiced using their own words.

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