

The Role of Intercultural Rhetoric in Acceptance or Rejection of Articles Regarding Journal Selection Criteria

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Abstract

International postgraduate students have been found to face numerous difficulties in writing academic discourse. Writing for academic journals is highly competitive. Even if you overcome the first hurdle and generate a valuable idea or piece of research, there is the problem to sum it up in a way that will capture the interest of reviewers. There's no simple formula for getting published - editors' expectations can vary both between and within subject areas. But there are some challenges that will confront all academic writers regardless of their discipline. As writers and audiences become more linguistically and culturally diverse, the ways that English is composed at the linguistic, rhetorical, and discursive levels are changing, resulting in an ongoing search for adequate theoretical frameworks to describe the reality of academic and professional writing practices. In this research, we will discuss why many research projects that have been presented in abstract form are never published as full articles. We also discuss it from intercultural rhetoric and the issues Iranian post-graduate students face while submitting articles.

Keywords: Journal, academic writing, journal writing, research. Culture and language.

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Introduction

Human life is always under changes and developments due to ever-present advances in natural sciences, technology, social sciences, as well as arts and humanities. It is the task of language and chiefly written discourse through which human advancements are announced and disseminated nationally and internationally. English language, which evolved as a lingua franca in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, is now the dominant or official language of over 60 countries (Ariza & Navarro, 2006, p. 752). It is also the dominant voice in almost all varieties of world communications especially on the net, and the major foreign language in some countries including Iran. In the case of English Teaching, Iranian TEFL authorities, in order not to lag behind the worldwide competition of contributing in the development of English knowledge, attempt to measure the scientific productivity of their scholars and university professors by the number of articles they have published in prestigious international and national English/Persian journals, ISI and ISC ones, or the impact factor they have had.

Over the last decades, publication of articles in academic journals has become a worldwide desire for research scholars (Sayfour, 2009). Recently, more value is given to the articles published in internationally-recognized, high standard journals. English and its dominance as the international language of research (Swales, 2004) has played a major role in establishing the language

for research publication purposes in many disciplinary fields (Ghadyani & Tahririan, 2015).

As Hyland states “academic publication now dominates the lives of academics across the globe who must increasingly submit their research for publication in high profile English language journals to move up the career ladder” (2016, p.58). In order to organize a text and to make it more comprehensible for the intended readers, different resources are employed (Gholami & Ilghami, 2016). Second language users must invest more time, effort and money in learning text organization and may experience greater difficulties when writing in English, whereas Native English speakers are steps ahead since they acquire the language naturalistically (Hyland, 2016). Applied linguists are looking for evidence of greater interactivity in academic prose, so that it would be plausible to identify the ways that writers craft an inclusive relationship with their readers across different academic genres (Hyland & Jiang, 2017).

In written genres there might be differences in the rhetorical pattern of the same text written in different languages (Kuhia & Mojood, 2014). For a successful discourse community membership, novice writers need to become aware of intercultural rhetoric in order to find out that different cultures organize their written discourse differently. An issue raised in this regard is whether the articles published in highly prestigious journals are remarkably different from those published in other journals as far as their contents and rhetorical styles are concerned. Iranian TEFL students may be confused with

different criteria that might be needed for acceptance in special journals, therefore this study will analysis factors that acts as basic for article acceptance and rejection in national and international journals and the rhetorical styles of their articles.

Inseparability of Culture and Language

It is commonly accepted that language is a part of culture and that it plays a very important role in it. Some social scientists consider that without language, culture would not be possible. Language simultaneously reflects culture, and is influenced and shaped by it. Brown (1994) as cited in Jiang (2000) describes the two as follows: Language is a part of a culture and culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. He also believes that language is the mirror of culture in the sense that, people can see culture through its language.

Rhetoric and Intercultural Rhetoric

This article is related to intercultural or contrastive rhetoric. It is a rhetorical study in that article organization of Persian and English is investigated at the textual level and the factors involve in accepting or rejecting their articles in special journals. Kennedy (1998) and Sullivan and Porter (1997) see rhetoric as an act of communication, not in its classical definition of style, argument, and persuasion, but as utterances made for a purpose. Kennedy (1998) defines rhetoric as "a

form of mental and emotional energy" (p. 3). According to Kennedy, "rhetoric is a natural phenomenon: the potential for it exists in all life forms that can give signals, it is practiced in limited forms by nonhuman animals" (p. 4). Sullivan and Porter (1997), believe that rhetoric is "defined by its focus on 'situation' and by its concerns about how rhetorical situation guides production" (p. 25). From contrastive part among English articles style and Persian TEFL style, Kaplan believes that writers with different linguistic backgrounds and cultural traditions organize paragraphs differently. This is so because they tend to organize their thoughts and arguments differently. Kaplan's (1966) pioneering studies analyzed the organization of paragraphs in ESL writing essays.

He identified five types of paragraph development for five language groups. He concludes from his numerous analyses of essays written in different languages that Anglo-European Expository essays follow a linear development whereas paragraph development in Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Arabic is based on a series of parallel coordinate clauses. Essays in oriental languages including Persian, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, etc., according to Kaplan, use an indirect approach and finally it comes to the point. In Romance languages and Russian, Kaplan asserts, essays are permitted a degree of digressiveness and extraneous materials that would seem excessive to a writer of English.

Kaplan's (1987) later studies on the cross-cultural rhetoric show that "there are important differences in the way which discourse is

identified in a text and in the way in which discourse topic is developed in terms of exemplification, definition, and so on" (p. 10). In a similar study, Ostler (1987) draws the conclusion that different languages have different preferences for certain kinds of discourse patterns. He notes that English expository prose has essentially linear rhetorical patterns which consists of a clearly defined topic, introduction and body which explicates all but nothing more than the stated topic, paragraphs which chain from one to the next, and a conclusion which tells the reader what has been discussed.

In 2004, Connor proposed a new umbrella term "intercultural rhetoric" to describe the current scope of cultural influences in writing and to connote the direction the field needs to go. He intended this umbrella term to include cross-cultural studies (comparison of the same concept in culture one and culture two) and also the interactive situations in which writers with a variety of linguistic and cultural/social backgrounds negotiate L2 writing in a great variety of situations for varied purposes. In that sense, rhetoric helps examine the accommodation readers, writers, and speakers exhibit in communication.

Contrastive Rhetoric and Intercultural Rhetoric in ESP/EAP

The origins of IR can be traced to Kaplan's (1966) seminal work on contrastive rhetoric (CR), which initiated the systematic analysis of the influence that one's first language (L1) and culture has on the structure of L2 writing. Contrastive rhetoric research, according to

Connor (2008), began nearly 40 years ago with Kaplan's (1966) seminal article on writing by learners of English as a second language. There, he proposed that L2 learners' cultural thinking was reflected in their writings, hence the difference in their texts with the ones written by native speakers of the language. The idea, innovative at the time, was taken up by many teachers and researchers. It had, according to Connor (2008), its inspiration in four major areas: (1) contrastive analysis, (2) Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or the doctrine of cultural relativism, (3) rhetoric and (4) pedagogy. Thus, the international or intercultural rhetoric and rhetoric as persuasion have been the two major constructs guiding contrastive rhetoric inquiries throughout decades. While the first construct has its focus on multilingual writers, the second deals with the persuasion and influencing of the learners.

Connor (1996) defined contrastive rhetoric as "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 L1, attempts to explain them" (p. 5). Although groundbreaking at the time, contrastive rhetoric was based on the assumption that all speech communities have their own distinct cultures that can be compared, and thus was criticized for ignoring different writing patterns within languages and language families, as well as variations in the writing of individuals (Kubota, 1999; Spack, 1997).

Several studies (Petri, 2005; Uysal, 2008; Abasi, 2012) have adopted this dynamic understanding to examine how cultures and

languages intersect within writing classrooms, but Canagarajah (2013a) insisted that IR still fails to capture the full extent of fluidity and hybridity that exists in a cosmopolitan world where interactions are “not fully based on culture” (p. 204). The evolution Intercultural rhetoric in the area of EAP/ESP writing is of vey importance. As Connor (2011) indicated, IR can help to expand our understanding of ELF by identifying preferred writing styles and structures in comparable genres across languages and varieties, as well as providing social, cultural, and historical explanations for such preferences and highlighting instances where different varieties of English have been used successfully.

As the domain of writing in ESP/EAP has expanded from the teaching of essay writing to other genres in academic and professional contexts, genre analysis has provided IR researchers with methods of analysis that supplement the discourse analysis methods used in previous contrastive rhetoric research. The development of genre analysis (Bhatia 1993; Swales 1990) has been beneficial for IR research as it has forced researchers to compare textual and contextual features of the same specific genre across different cultures, whereas previous to genre analysis there was the danger that apples were being compared to oranges.

To better understand how ELF and IR could together inform the teaching of EAP/ESP writing, Lynne Flowerdew (2015) conducted a case study of post-graduate science and engineering students in a grant proposal-writing module. First, she instructed them to use rhetorical

moves analysis (adapted from Connor & Upton, 2004) to identify the global and local expectations of the genre in sample texts and then figure out how to negotiate apparent differences. Next, she had the students check their queries against two large-scale corpora to determine the frequency and collocations of certain words and phrases in academic English. By introducing discussions of ELF and WE into the module, Flowerdew (2015) found that the students became less concerned with adhering to perceived standards and more with the overall quality and communicative effectiveness of their proposals.

Since its introduction, contrastive research has undergone dynamic changes, as reviewed by Kaplan (2005) and Conner (2002; 2004). After the initial focus of the field on the expository essays of L2 learners for the identification of writing problems caused by L1-specific rhetorical strategies, the domain of contrastive studies was expanded to include genre-specific analyses, which came to acquire an important status in the field.

The Role of Intercultural and Contrastive Rhetoric in Writing Articles

Those having experienced the attempt of publishing articles in academic journals might have felt that different editors of the different journals have reacted differently to the same article either from the form or the content viewpoints. Since there are not any unequivocal universal – or at least regional – guidelines being constantly fed by reliable scientific research findings during article evaluation process,

it seems that the editors' decisions are taken partly based on the Editorial Board's regulations, and partly based on their own intuitions and personal knowledge.

As research in contrastive rhetoric has increasingly spread to many parts of the world, in tandem with the internationalization of education, the increasing cohort of Middle East students in Malaysia warrant an investigation. To this end, the growing body of work of Persian-English contrasts by Hatim (1997) and Burkhart (2000) have contributed to contrastive rhetoric theory. Hatim, a keen researcher in translation studies, is highly critical of previous contrastive rhetorical research of Persian, which he describes as being "characterized by a general vagueness of thought which stems from overemphasis on the symbol at the expense of the meaning," or as analyzing "Persian writers as confused, coming to the same point two or three times from different angles, and so on" (p. 161). Hatim's contribution to intercultural rhetoric is highly insightful and valuable as he explains why the differences occur and is sharply critical of researchers who claimed that Persian speakers argue by presentation, that is, by repeating arguments, paraphrasing them, and doubling them. To him the western argumentation is one way of presentation and not *the* only way.

Ansary and Babaii (2005) analyzed English newspaper articles to determine their actual rhetorical patterns of text development. They introduced Run on Headline (RH), Addressing an Issue (AI), Argumentation (A) and articulating a position (AP) as the four

obligatory structural or rhetorical elements of English newspaper articles.

Later in a separate study, Ansary and Babaii (2005) analyzed English newspapers written by Iranian, Pakistani and English writers. The study suggested that statistically, there is no significant difference in terms of rhetorical elements of structure between articles written by (none) native editorial writers in whatever sociocultural or sociopolitical context they are produced or disseminated. Common in all were a Run on Headline (RH), Addressing an Issue (AI), Argumentation (A) and articulating a position (AP), which they had previously identified as the main structural patterns of English newspapers.

Paper Submission and Acceptance Criteria

A vast body of research work is produced globally; however, a significant fraction of it remains unpublished for one reason or the other. A good research publication is essentially a combination of quality research and writing. Negligence in either department can affect the acceptance and Publication of the results as well as its future application.

As Editor-in-Chief of Elsevier, Peter Thrower reveals the top reasons so many articles don't make it to the peer review process: It fails the technical screening: Before they even go to the editor-in-chief, articles are checked for technical elements.

- 1) It does not fall within the Aims and Scope.
- 2) It's incomplete.
- 3) The procedures and/or analysis of the data is seen to be defective.
- 4) The conclusions cannot be justified on the basis of the rest of the paper.
- 5) It's simply a small extension of a different paper, often from the same authors.
- 6) It's incomprehensible.
- 7) It's boring.

In another study Pierson (2004) argued and offer 10 top reasons why an article gets rejected for publication as follow:

- 1) **Wrong Journal:** Journals sometimes receives manuscripts that are inappropriate for the Journal, regardless of their scientific validity or how well they are written, because they deal with something outside its scope of interest.
- 2) **Wrong Format:** Some authors submit manuscripts that are not like what the journal publishes in format, style, or length.
- 3) **Not Following Instructions:** Journals manuscript preparation guide has been assembled to assist authors in meeting the Journal's requirements for each of its categories of publication. This guide is published in every issue, in addition to being posted on the Journal's Web site. These kind of instructions should be followed.

4) **Poor Writing:** Stilted, flowery, or deliberately complicated writing impairs the reader's ability to grasp and appreciate an author's message. Some authors apparently believe that they must impress the reader (and the editor) with their erudition and mastery of multisyllabic words in order for their work to be given the appreciation it deserves. This is a mistaken notion. With scientific writing, as with most other forms of communication, the simplest and most direct statement of the intended message is always best.

5) **Getting Carried Away in the Discussion:** In the discussion section, the author explains what the results of the study mean and all studies are carried out in context.

6) **Suboptimal Reporting of the Results:** This section should be a straightforward documentation of what was found. The results should be presented in a logical, consistent order, and should contain actual data rather than percentages, summary statements, or generalizations.

7) **Inadequate Description of the Methods:** If the discussion section tends to be too long, the methods section is most often not long enough.

8) **Poor Study Design:** The problems listed so far have dealt mainly with proper manuscript preparation and submission, and all of them are potentially fixable. This one, however, tends to be a fatal flaw, at least once a study has been completed. No amount of rewriting, creative data presentation,

or statistical manipulation can make up for the fact that the study used the wrong model or study design, collected data in a manner that would not allow a meaningful examination of the hypothesis, or made too few measurements to permit confident conclusions to be drawn.

9) Failure to Revise and Resubmit after Peer

Review: The peer-review process is not just an insurance policy against dissemination of unethical, erroneous, or potentially dangerous material. It also plays a vital role in ensuring that each published article conveys its message as accurately, unambiguously, and convincingly as possible.

Failure to Write and Submit a Full Paper after Abstract Presentation

Manuscripts submitted for possible publication may be rejected for numerous reasons, most of which are potentially avoidable. A journal will not accept papers that lie outside its subject area or that are submitted in a style or format that does not match anything it publishes. Not following the Journal's posted instructions for manuscript preparation, or omitting some of the required elements, may preclude entry into formal peer review, and in any case will complicate and delay the process. Though poor writing may not result in outright rejection of a manuscript, it may well influence the overall impression of the work on the part of peer reviewers and editors alike.

How the study's design and methods are described, the manner in which the results are presented, and how the study's implications and limitations are addressed in the discussion will be important determinants of acceptance or rejection. Perhaps the most important of all reasons for rejection is poor study design, which may not be reparable. However, two problems that authors can and should overcome are failure to revise and resubmit the manuscript after initial peer review, and—worst of all—never writing the work up as a full manuscript in the first place, after its presentation in abstract form. Fortunately, helpful resources are available to authors for addressing each of those problems. Typically, the editor of a journal relies on referees (or reviewers) to evaluate manuscripts. Most peer-reviewed journals use 2-4 referees per manuscript. Referees assess a manuscript based on three functional areas: originality, technical quality, and presentation. A good research publication (individual paper or journal) delivers impeccable quality in all of the above areas.

Regarding Iranian articles and the reason of their acceptance and rejecting by national and international journals there have been carried out some research. Moradian (2005), in his research investigated 49 Persian and 49 English editorials in terms of the inductive, deductive and quasi-inductive articles writing styles. He showed that Persian and English are empirically different regarding the writing styles. Persian writers prefer deduction and quasi-induction while English writers prefer deduction and induction. English writers rarely use the quasi-induction. This style is welcomed by Persian writers making Persian

different from English. Moreover, Ansary and Babaii's (2004) showed that there were statistically no significant differences between English newspaper editorials written by non-native editorial writers and native ones regardless of their socio-cultural context.

In another study, Bonyadi (2010) examined the schematic structures of Persian and English newspaper articles to explore the discourse conventions employed in the editorials of *The New York Times* and *Tehran Times*. As he noted, "the analysis of the selected editorials in the two papers indicated that the editorial writers not only tended to support their argument by factual information, usually presented through the first and second schematic structures – The Introduction and The Body – but also aimed at providing suitable rhetorical strategies to serve the factual information through the last schematic structure of the editorials" (p. 340).

Conclusion

Being capable of publishing in peer-reviewed journals is commonly seen as an indicator of proper scientific research. It is the duty of a researcher to publish his results for the scientific community.

Research can be seen as a product that must be sold to the target audience in the form of an article. In other words, research results do not exist before they are successfully published. The key people for getting one's article accepted for publication are the editor-in-chief, editor, and reviewers. After publication, a well-written article will attract readers, eventually resulting in a scientific impact defined by

whether other scientists will cite the article. It is beneficial to decide on a target journal during the very early stages of writing an article, rather than first preparing an article and then considering where to send it. Analyze potential journals and choose one. Write your article with your target journal in mind. This is useful because different journals have different perceptions of science as well as differing opinions on how articles ought to be written.

When selecting your target journal, it is beneficial to conduct an analysis of the purpose and mission of the journal, and examine what type of articles they typically publish, paying special attention to the topics, the structure and the research methods. The researchers need to conduct a deeper analysis on about five recent articles in the target journal. Persian and English are different in their use of mono-topicality and multi-topicality in writing an article. There exist cross-cultural differences between Persian and English essay writing. Analyses of Persian paragraphs showed that many of them (almost 20% of the data) contained more than one topic sentence, hence evidence of multi-topicality. On the contrary, English paragraphs were unanimously organized mono-topically. Regarding Iranian journals, Iranian non-ISI Applied Linguistic journals are as valid as their ISI counterparts in using both interactional and intercultural rhetoric styles. These similarities can be mainly attributed to generic variations in academic disciplines.

When individuals write in a language other than their native language, they tend to use their native patterns in the target language.

Kaplan (1966) notes that the coordination and parallel construction is of Arabic writing characteristic. He brings evidence of the existence of these two patterns in Arabic students' ESL writing. Ostler (1987) also shows that while Arabic speaking students seem to have mastered most of the English grammatical forms and idioms, they still produce "foreign-sounding" essays. The results of the present study showed that Persian and English cultures orient their discourse differently. Therefore, the existence of these differences should be emphasized in the English language teaching context to minimize their interfering effects on Persian ESL/EFL students.

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