

## Second Language Writing from an Intercultural Rhetoric Perspective

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### Abstract

Composing in a language other than one's first language is a complex process which involves, in addition to familiarity and interest in the writing topic, many sub-skills the student-writer needs to master to communicate accurately, fluently, and appropriately in the written medium of the target language. These sub-skills include knowledge of the target language system (e.g. syntax, morphology, and lexicon), writing mechanics, and the types of rhetorical patterns used to organize the textual content. The latter is one of the major problems that second language learners encounter in their acquisition of writing due to unfamiliarity with these patterns and the impact of first language organisational patterns they tend to transfer to the target language. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it will highlight how the main assumptions of the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis, as advanced by Kaplan (1966) and his supporters emerged to account for the poor rhetorical performance of advanced learners of English as a second language. The main contention at the heart of this hypothesis (recently referred to as intercultural rhetoric by Ulla Connor but in this paper both are used interchangeably) is that the rhetorical patterns governing the development of expository or persuasive writing are not only culture bound but tend to persist in students' writing even at advanced proficiency levels. Second, it will discuss the types of criticism levelled at the hypothesis and the new directions it has known thanks to the contributions of many authors, including Kaplan himself, and how these led to the developments of contrastive rhetoric as a fruitful field of study on second language writing and composition

*Key words:* contrastive rhetoric hypothesis, first language interference, persuasive writing, rhetorical patterns, second language writing and composition

**Cite as:** Khartite, B., & Zerhouni, B. (2016). Second Language Writing from an Intercultural Rhetoric Perspective. *Arab World English Journal*, 7(3).

DOI:<https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no3.7>