

## **A Study into the Writing Performance of Moroccan Advanced EFL Writers from an Intercultural Rhetoric Perspective**

**BRAHIM KHARTITE**

Faculty of Educational Sciences  
Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco

**BADIA ZERHOUNI**

Faculty of Educational Sciences  
Mohammed V University, Rabat, Morocco

### **Abstract**

This study investigated the extent to which results of rhetorical comparisons of persuasive essays by Moroccan students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) would provide empirical evidence for Kaplan's (1966) contrastive rhetoric hypothesis. This is especially regarding the fact that EFL students-writing problems are a byproduct of negative transfer of rhetorical strategies from their first language (L1). This hypothesis was tested by comparing 52 EFL and Arabic L1 persuasive essays by the very same EFL students to identify whether or not the language of composing affected the writing quality of their essays. The study hypothesizes that if Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric claims were accurate, then Moroccan advanced EFL writers would produce essays that tend to be rhetorically less accurate when judged by standard English rhetorical criteria. Prior to their use in the current study, the validity of the analytical measures was established by exploring if the participants' rhetorical performance would predict the overall quality of their essays. While the results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis provided further evidence corroborating the validity of the rhetorical measures used in the study, group mean scores comparisons and a multiple discriminant analysis of the data indicated that there are more similarities than differences in the EFL and AL1 essays of the study participants.

*Keywords:* contrastive rhetoric, EFL writing transfer, persuasive essays, rhetorical patterns

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## Introduction

Research on advanced ESL/EFL writing has witnessed a tremendous shift in focus away from grammatical and syntactical errors to be more concerned with macro aspects of students' written products like rhetorical strategies, organisational patterns and above all the underlying logic of persuasion in general. Obviously, this line of research is not new. It was launched by Robert Kaplan 1966; a considerable number of whose similar studies have been subsequently conducted to compare different languages with the English language. These studies were geared to identify differences and similarities among written products by speakers of discrepant languages hoping to draw pedagogical implications that would improve the quality of instructional practices in ESL writing classes. These implications are hoped to lessen the agonies that EFL and ESL students suffer from when they get their teachers'/supervisors' feedback comments like "clumsy"; "re-write and go straight to the point"; or "the material is all here but it is out of focus"; "I just don't know what you are driving at" etc. Kaplan (1966) is said to be the first applied linguist to have attempted to account for these writing problems by initiating what turns out to be known in the field of ESL writing and composition as contrastive rhetoric (henceforth CR).

## Background of the Study

### 1.1 Assumptions and key issues underlying the Contrastive Rhetoric Hypothesis

The contrastive rhetoric (henceforward CR) hypothesis assumes that both language and writing are cultural phenomena. It is deeply rooted in the twin beliefs that rhetorical patterns are culture bound and that schematic and organisational structures governing writing in one's first language tend to interfere when one sets out to compose in English as a second language. Kaplan and his supporters advanced that ESL writing research needs to be geared toward raising teachers' and students' awareness of the fact that composing in English as a second or foreign language requires knowledge of discourse conventions and inter-sentential rhetorical organizations without which knowledge of grammar and syntactic rules at the intra-sentential level would be useless. Advocates of this hypothesis believed that all along acquisition of their native language, children grow to learn culturally acceptable forms of reasoning and acceptable ways of rhetorical expressions and these tend to persist when they set out to write in a second or foreign language context

### 1.2. Origins and early assumptions of the CR hypothesis

Kaplan 1966 and his followers (Hinds 1987; Ostler 1987) unduly extended the assumptions underlying both the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis ( Sapir; 1929 and Whorf; 1956) and the Negative Transfer Hypothesis by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) theories to the area of ESL writing and composition (Khartite & Zerhouni 2016). Kaplan's renowned diagrams depict five language families unfolding how ESL students' patterns tend to differ from culture to culture and how their ESL writing problems arise when they mistakenly resort to their favorite patterns in their L1 assuming that they might have the same positive effect on their audience in the new context of the second language. In fact, Kaplan (1966) observed that the very same undesirable negative transfer that takes places at the micro linguistic level like vocabulary and grammar takes place as well at the rhetorical and organizational aspect of discourse.

### *1.2.1. Arabic vs. English Rhetoric: Instances of some Unsubstantiated Assumptions*

Ever since Kaplan's 'Doodles Article' on contrastive rhetoric was published, many researchers hastened to provide empirical evidence to corroborate its underlying assumptions. Following are some of the major assumptions that have been made concerning rhetorical similarities and differences between Arabic and English.

To begin with, Kaplan (1966) was the first to cite instances from the Arabic language to substantiate his claims about rhetorical transfer arguing that "when Arabic speakers compose in English, they are not able to write in a logical or linear fashion because such concepts do not exist in Arabic" (p.14). In fact, Kaplan went further to claim that "the Arabic texts have no prepositional structure" and that "the primary focus of writing in Arabic rests on the language of the text" (Kaplan; 1988, p. 289).

Also, Koch (1981) complains that ESL writing by Arab students exhibit signs of "peculiar strangeness" that was, according to her, due "to higher-level, global 'mistakes' in how ideas are put together and how topics are approached" (p. 2). She claimed that whereas the underlying rhetorical structure of Arabic is highly paratactic, that of English is rather paradigmatic. In other words, an Arabic text "proceeds horizontally rather than vertically, wherein a series of ideas of equal weight for a given claim are chained together" (in Saez, F.T. (2001) p. 467).

Finally, Ostler (1988)-a student of Kaplan's- observed that in Arabic, like most oral languages, writers make use of "an excessive number of coordinate sentences and most of them frequently begin with a super-ordinate or universal statement and end with some type of "formulaic" assertion or proverbial statement". She claimed that this applied to the English language when it was still an oral language and when most of its speakers were still illiterate. However, as English gradually became a literate language "its rhetorical patterns evolved from those in which effect was achieved through use of formulaic expressions to those esteeming originality and creative thought, its syntax from one of repetitive parallels and rhythmic balance to preference for deletion and subordination (Ostler 1988, p.171).

Obviously, most of the above assumptions, being drawn from studies that suffered from major methodological flaws, were rejected either as unacceptable sweeping generalizations or simply as overstatements of the effect of the first language on students' ESL writing and composition.

### *1.2.2. Exaggerating the Effect of the students' First Language*

Although some ESL writing researchers (e.g., Connor, 1996; Liebman, 1988, 1992; Ostler1987a) supported Kaplan's contentions about the effect of one's L1 and culture on their rhetorical performance, they rejected the claim that one's L1 dictates their type of rhetorical choices when writing in the target language as an exaggeration. Instead, they acknowledged the effect of a broader cultural influence which put forward that one's cultural background, among several other equally important factors-like writers' past writing experiences (like classroom instruction), writing manuals used to teach writing and the discourse community to which they belongs etc.-can and do influence one's reasoning strategies and rhetorical moves.

Likewise, Mohan & Lo, (1985) acknowledge the viability of both linguistic relativity hypothesis and the negative transfer hypothesis but not as being the only sources of the writing problems of ESL students. Their Developmental Hypothesis (also known as Inter-language theory) for instance assumes that students face problems writing in the target language and especially so at the rhetorical level, not so much as a result interference from their L1 but simply because they have not yet achieved an acceptable level of mastery of the logic/rhetoric underlying writing and composition in the English language- a language system they are still trying to come to terms with.

Other critics cast serious doubt on the claims of the Contrastive Rhetoric hypothesis due to such methodological concerns like the absence of a common ground for comparability among corpora or what (Connor & Moreno 2005) refer to as “Tertium Comparationis”. In this respect, they reasoned sarcastically that “apples should not be compared with oranges nor student’s writing in L2 with expert writing in the target language” (p.4). This implies that a valid comparison would first and foremost consider the rhetorical situation under which texts are written and the learning history/background of the student who wrote them. A rhetorical situation according to Bitzer (1968) is “the context in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse”. Therefore, the writing task/prompt, topic familiarity/interest, subject matter knowledge and finally language proficiency level of the study participants are all instances of situational variables that might affect rhetorical choices that one can resort to when composing in the target language. Put in Liebman’s own (1992) words, it is obvious that “Looked at in isolation ... texts mislead,” which is true given the fact that “they do not tell the whole story about the writer and about how that text came to be.” This amounts to saying that “what seems like a structural problem, a poorly organized text for example, may be caused by something else” (pp.143-144) other than the learners’ L1 interference.

Finally, bias in favour of the target language is yet another major theoretical flaw from which future CR research needs to refrain. From an axiological point of view, critics like Kubota (1997), Johnson (1994), Spack (1997) and Zamel (1997) reject the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis as a culturally-biased and an ethnocentric enterprise particularly when considering the English language thought patterns as the only ones that are linear and by implication logical and rational.

### *1.3. Towards a New Intercultural Rhetoric Paradigm*

The current study believes that for the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis to grow into a well-grounded theoretical paradigm, revisiting the legitimate criticisms leveled at some of its controversial assumptions listed above becomes an obligation. Indeed, as an implication for the present study caution is exercised to avoid all the methodological issues discussed previously. Firstly, there is a need for a shift in focus from adopting a prescriptive to a descriptive and non-judgmental approach that assigns all languages and cultures equal status. Second, writing corpora examined from a contrastive rhetoric perspective must attend to the requirements of an adequate Tertium Comparationis. Finally, a sound CR paradigm entails eliminating stereotyping, and/or marginalizing ESL students’ thought patterns as non-linear or illogical.

## **The Study**

The short review above is hoped to have shown that some of the previous studies on persuasive writing by Arab speakers are predominantly intuitive, not least since they were mostly based on invalid and unreliable research design flaws. In fact, most of the contrastive studies involving

Arabic and English (Kaplan, 1966; Koch, 1983; Reid, 1984) seem to have failed to provide a valid research evidence to even accept the alleged rhetorical differences between the two languages cited previously let alone safely claim that Arabic native speakers' writing problems emanate from interference and/or use L1 rhetorical strategies. Further empirical evidence is therefore required before one can securely attribute the ESL writing problems of native Arabic speakers, if any, to interference from their L1.

### 2.1. a. Research questions

The present study addresses the following two questions:

- a. To what extent will the study participants' scores on the analytic measures accurately predict the overall writing quality of their essays as measured by their holistic scores?
- b. Are there any significant rhetorical differences in the EFL and Arabic L1 writing performance of the same Arab advanced student writers on the same persuasive writing task?

### 2.1. b. Research Hypotheses

- a. The analytic tools measuring the rhetorical performance of EFL advanced writers will accurately predict their overall writing performance on the same persuasive writing task.
- b. Rhetorical scores on the persuasive writing tasks by Moroccan advanced EFL writers will not be significantly different regardless of the language in which they wrote them.

## Methodology

For the purpose of the present study, EFL and Arabic L1 persuasive essays by MA students from Ibn Zohr University- Agadir-Morocco- were elicited in response to the same writing prompt in both English and Arabic. It is not without relevance though to note that these persuasive essays are not rhetorically analysed with the view to identify in which language the study participants write better or worse essays. They are simply compared to examine which rhetorical patterns of English persuasive writing, if any, seem to especially prove problematic for Moroccan Arabic speakers in their EFL essays, and therefore confirm or reject Kaplan's initial contention that the writing problems of native Arabic speakers are a by-product of negative interference or rhetorical transfer from their L1.

### Study Design

Table 1 Study Participants

Native language	Arabic /Tamazight		N
Language of composing	ESL	ArabicL1	26
Argument Superstructure	X	X	
Informal Reasoning	X	X	
Persuasive Appeals	X	X	
Holistic score	X	X	

*Note: Although some participants (8 to be exact) spoke both Amazigh and Arabic as their L1, the researchers assumed that because these students never use the first as a written medium then any potential rhetorical transfer is mostly going to be traced back to Arabic and not Amazigh language.*

In a random sampling design, a group of 26 study participants enrolled in an MA English program responded to the same writing prompt adapted from Connor & Lauer (1990). They composed their essays in both English and Arabic. The task instructed the students to write a 1-2-page essay in which they explain what they consider as a serious problem in their community, try to convince their audience that it is a momentous one, propose a solution for it and do their best to persuade their target audience that their suggested plan of action to solve such a problem is the best and therefore needs to be adopted.

The 52 essays in Arabic and English were elicited bearing in mind the major methodological flaws that plagued early CR research. First, given their age/ cognitive maturity as well as advanced language proficiency level, MA students represent a generally more appropriate population for the study far better than undergraduate students. Writing a persuasive essay is obviously a cognitively challenging enterprise that entails prior instruction and a lot of rigorous practice. Therefore, essays by undergraduate students from lower language backgrounds might not prove to be an adequately representative sample for the current study.

The above measures are also taken to avoid methodological flaws from which earlier CR studies suffered like a) comparing ESL writing to English L1 writing; b) comparing student writing to idealistic/professional writing; c) comparing beginner ESL writing to advanced English L1 writing; d) mistakenly focusing on syntactic and intra-sentential features of texts rather than their rhetorical features. Finally the study resorted to the use of well-defined analytical measures that have been empirically proven to be valid as reliable tools for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic examination of different languages from a CR perspective. Comparing students' ESL writing with that of professional ones, for instance, without taking into consideration the non-native subjects' low proficiency level will surely yield results that are biased in favour of the native English speaker group.

### 2.2.2. *Writing Task*

Based on the above, this study invested every possible effort to ascertain that the writing prompt is culturally bias-free and that all the ensuing writing samples are elicited under generally similar conditions. The study participants were asked to respond to the same persuasive task in both English and Arabic. To reduce the practice effect on their performance, all students were instructed to space out their essays with at least a three-week period. Compensatory measures were also taken to minimize confusing variables because of order effects. Thus, all the study participants were randomly split into two subgroups (A and B). Students in Group A were asked to write on the topic in Arabic L1, while students in Group B wrote in English. Two weeks later, students in Group A wrote in English while those assigned to Group B wrote in Arabic.

### 2.2.3. *Analytic and Holistic Measures of the Study*

The ultimate goal of the current study is to examine Moroccan students' rhetorical problems from an intercultural rhetoric perspective. Therefore, the analysis of the resulting compositions in both languages examined focuses on the participants' rhetorical performance on three major persuasive dimensions; namely, Argument Superstructure, Informal Reasoning, and Persuasive Appeals. Additionally, all the persuasive essays were holistically scored as a measure of overall writing performance against which the three rhetorical scales investigated could be

checked for their validity and reliability to be established prior to their use as common grounds for cross-cultural comparisons. Table 1 summarizes the holistic and analytic measures that were used in the study followed by a detailed description of each measure.

Table 2 *Summary of Analytic and Holistic Measures*

Type of Measure	Measures	Description of the component parts
Analytic Measures	Argument superstructure	<i>(Situation, problem, solution, evaluation)</i>
	Toulmin 's analysis of informal reasoning	<i>(Data, claim, warrants, Added Toulmin)</i>
	Persuasive appeals	<i>(Rational, credibility, affective)</i>
Holistic	Holistic score (0-5)	<i>Overall writing quality</i>

*Note. This is adopted from "Cross-Cultural Variation in Persuasive Student Writing," by U. Connor & J. Lauer, 1988, in A. C. Purves (Ed.), Writing Across Languages and Cultures. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications*

#### 2.2.4. *Argument superstructure*

Two experienced university professors of composition and advanced ESL writing and composition scored all the essays solicited for the study using Connor' & Lauer's (1988) analytical measures; namely, Argument Superstructure (see Table 2). The latter consists of a four-point scale devised to identify the quality of the macro structural aspects of persuasive discourse. According to this theory, the schema of a effective persuasive essay must necessarily be structured in terms of situation, problem, solution and evaluation. Because "The reader approaches argumentative texts as a cognitive process of problem solving, the goal of the writer is to change an audience's initial opposing position to the final position of the writer." (Connor & Lauer 1988, p. 289). An argumentative/persuasive text is thus typically divided into four sequential slots, namely situation, problem, solution, and evaluation. The first slot- the situation slot- "is reserved for background material, that is, facts and views intended for orientation" (Connor 1990, p. 74). The next slot develops the problem; hence the reason why it is labeled the problem slot. Finally, the procedures or action plans suggested to solve the problem are detailed further in the solution slot. Finally, the evaluation slot contains an evaluation of the outcome of the suggested solution(s). The argument superstructure of an essay is quantified by assigning one point for each component.

#### 2.2.5. *Informal Reasoning*

According to Toulmin's new model (1958) - also in Toulmin, Rieke & Janik,1979- of argument analysis, an argument consists of six main components, namely claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal, and qualifier. While the first three constituent parts are fundamentally necessary for practical and persuasive discourse, the last three are optional. Their use depends on the nature and context of the argument. Just as is the case in most studies of its kind, only the first three components are investigated in the current study. Therefore, while the claim describes the main assumptions or premises of the writer, the data represent all the necessary details to support and

back up those claims. Warrants represent links that serve to explicitly show the type of relationship that one obtains between the two first components; namely, claims and data.

### 2.2.6. *Persuasive Appeals*

According to Cooper (1932), messages whose goal is to persuade their targeted audience to discard its point of view and share that of the writer or speaker are known to rely on ration (logos) or logical argumentation. Also, persuaders tend to build on their credibility (ethos) as trustworthy individuals who know what they are writing about while attempting to punctuate their discourse with some instances that appeal to their audience emotions (pathos). Therefore, an effectively combined use of rational, credibility, and affective appeals will in all likelihood play a pivotal role in helping writers or speakers achieve the goal of persuading their intended audience (Connor & Lauer, 1985); to win them onto one's side and hopefully act accordingly.

### 2.2.7. *Overall Writing Quality of the Essays*

The same independent scorers rated all the essays in terms of the overall writing quality of each essay in the study using a 0-5-point holistic scale. Both holistic and analytic scoring procedures were, here again, spaced out to neutralize the practice effect on the raters' objective evaluation of the essays both holistically and rhetorically speaking. Necessary guidelines and criteria of what constitutes a good or a poor essay were discussed so that the scores would attend to how each participant met the task requirement, addressed the topic, and whether they gave an adequate solution to the problem they choose to raise. Raters were also reminded to set aside their agreement or disagreement with the writers' point of view lest it should affect their objective evaluation of the overall writing quality of the essay.

## 2.3. *Results and Data Analysis*

The study hypothesizes that for Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric claims to be accepted as accurate and valid, it is assumed that the writing quality of the essays by Arab EFL writers would not be affected by the language in which they write them. This would all the more be true if their overall writing performance turns out to correlate significantly with their scores on the analytic measures/patterns (see table 2 above).

### 2.3.1. *Responding to the First Research Question*

#### Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 *Mean and standard deviation of all the variables by holistic scores*

Variables	Holistic score (range = 2-4) M= 2. 92 SD = 0.681							
	Holistic score 2 n=14 (26.73%)		Holistic scores 3 n 28 (52.53%)		Holistic score 4 n =10 (21.74%)		Total = n 52 100%	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Background	.857	.363	.928	.262	1.00	.000	.923	.269
Problem	.857	.363	.928	.262	1.00	.000	.923	.269
Solution	.785	.425	.964	.188	.800	.421	.884	.322
Evaluation	.571	.513	.928	.262	.800	.421	.807	.397

Argument-superstructure	4.57	.851	6.28	.854	7.20	1.68	6.00	1.400
Claim	2.42	.513	2.57	.503	2.90	.316	2.59	.495
Data	1.50	.518	2.82	.390	2.80	.421	2.46	.726
Warrant	1.14	.363	1.35	.487	1.10	.316	1.25	.437
Added- toulmine	4.42	1.55	5.89	1.34	6.60	.966	5.63	1.53
Rational-appeals	2.42	.937	2.50	.509	1.00	.000	2.53	.640
Credibility-appeals	1.92	.997	1.53	.576	1.00	.000	1.84	.825
Affective-appeals	2.42	.937	2.42	.634	.800	.421	2.53	.699

Table 3 summarizes the means and standard deviation values for the holistic and analytic variables. All participants' mean scores ranged from two to four, which implies that all study participants attempted their best to respond to the writing task. The fact that none of the essays scored one means that no essay suffered from serious rhetorical errors, which is again natural given the fact that all participants are at an advanced language proficiency level. What is surprising, however, is the fact that the overall mean score of all participants is somewhat below average ( $M= 2.92$   $SD= 0.681$ ). None of the participants scored 5 and only 10 students (21.74%) got a score of 4 points. While only 14 participants (26.73) got a score of 2, the rest of them- 28 participants (52.53%)- scored 3. One way to account for the relatively below average scores is to note that the allotted time for writing the essay was possibly not enough. If this turns out to be the case, it confirms Zamel's (1987) claim that writing persuasive discourse is a cognitively demanding task that requires a lot of preparation, use of high order thinking skills and a good mastery of the language. Another possible way to look at the below average score of all the essays in both languages (AL1 and EFL) is that perhaps participants did not invest the required amount of time and efforts to carry out the task especially that they were not provided with any real-world incentive (like an exam or monetary compensation for taking part in the study) to exhibit their full potential and demonstrate their best writing skills

The reported correlations of all variable in the multiple regression analysis below (table 4) clearly confirm the existence of a strong correlation amongst all the analytical variables and particularly between these variables and the holistic scores. This means that participants who managed to work out a well-informed claim and provided enough data to back it up are more likely to get a better holistic score than those participants who failed to do so. Also, a well-structured essay that addresses the component parts of the arguments superstructure theory (situation, problem, solution and evaluation) seems to appeal to reason and therefore tends to score higher on the rational appeal scale.

Table 4 *Correlations of all variables in the multiple regression analysis*

Holistic scores (criterion variable)	Argument-superstructure	Claim	Data	Warrant	Added-toulmine	Rational- Appeals	Credibility-appeals
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Argument-superstructure	.647**	—						
Claim	.750*	.226	—					
Data	.657**	.617**	.419**	—				
Warrant	.607	.496	.458	.123	—			
Added-Toulmine	.828**	.548**	.627**	.647**	.343*	—		
Rational-appeals	.787	.584*	.728	.430	-.210	.235	—	
Credibility-appeals	.619	.685	.420**	.486	.454	.466	.426	—
Affective-appeals	.693	.460	-.266	.646	-.192	.380	.697*	.359

Note. All correlations are significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 confirms the above finding especially after the data was subjected to a Stepwise Multiple-Regression Analysis. The criterion variable in the regression model was specified as holistic scores while the predictor variables were specified as argument superstructure, added Toulmin's rational appeals, credibility appeals and affective appeals scores. A Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) was used because of its ability to calculate the predictive power of the analytic measures both individually and in combination of two or more variables. The stepwise-MRA of the dependent and independent variables (Table 5) clearly indicated that there was a positive linear relationship between the criterion variable (holistic scores) and the predictor variables (analytic measures).

Table 5 Stepwise Regression Model Summary

Modèle <sup>a</sup>	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.667 <sup>b</sup>	.445	.434	.512	
2	.737 <sup>c</sup>	.543	.524	.470	
3	.824 <sup>d</sup>	.679	.659	.398	
4	.849 <sup>e</sup>	.721	.697	.375	.782

Note:

a. Dependent variable: Holistic scores

b. Predictors: (Constant), Data

c. Predictors: (Constant), Data, Argument Superstructure

d. Predictors: (Constant), Data, Argument Superstructure, Rational Appeals

e. Predictors: (Constant), Data Argument superstructure, Rational appeals, affective appeals.

Table 5 shows that three out of the four independent variables had strong positive linear relationships that ranged from 66.7 % to 84.9% with the dependent variable (holistic scores). Put more precisely, the scores of data, argument superstructure and rational appeals together predicted 82, 9 % of the variance in the holistic scores. The data and super argument variables tuned out to be the two best predictors (73.7%) of the variance in the holistic scores. This means that a student who manages to provide enough data to support their claim in an essay that is well structured in terms of situation, problem, solution and evaluation pattern has a better chance of getting a higher score than a student who fails to do so. The affective appeals increased further the ability of the

regression model and contributed to its predictive power by a low yet significant 3%. The more logical arguments a participant provides-the more appealing the data to the target audience affective or emotional way of thinking- the better the quality of their essays is judged by the raters. Table 5 shows the results of the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis; and table 6 reports the significance results for the different regression models resulting from the regression analysis.

Table 6 *Summary Table for Multiple Regression Models: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>*

Model <sup>a</sup>	Statistic	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.541	1	10.541	40.075	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	13.151	50	.263		
	Total	23.692	51			
2	Regression	12.856	2	6.428	29.066	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	10.836	49	.221		
	Total	23.692	51			
3	Regression	16.087	3	5.362	33.843	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Residual	7.605	48	.158		
	Total	23.692	51			
4	Regression	17.083	4	4.271	30.370	.000 <sup>e</sup>
	Residual	6.609	47	.141		
	Total	23.692	51			

Note:

a. Dependent variable: Holistic scores

b. Predictors: (Constant), Data

c. Predictors: (Constant), Data, Argument Superstructure

d. Predictors: (Constant), Data, Argument Superstructure, Rational Appeals

e. Predictors: (Constant), Data Argument superstructure, Rational appeals, affective appeals.

Put in a nutshell, the use of the Multiple Regression Analysis to calculate the predictive power of the rhetorical variables has made it clear that performance of EFL advanced writers on three measures of rhetorical dimensions, namely, argument-superstructure, rational-appeals, affective-appeal can predict the writers 'overall writing performance with 84%accuracy. Therefore –as a response to the first research question-it is only fair to conclude that three out of the four rhetorical measures under study turned out to be highly valid and reliable measures of writing quality. The researchers can therefore safely use them as a gauge to examine rhetorical variation, if any, in the persuasive AL1 and EFL writing essays by the same Moroccan advanced students.

### 2.3.3. Responding to the Second Research Question

The study hypothesizes that if Kaplan's (1966) contrastive rhetoric claims were accurate, statistical analysis of the participants' rhetorical performance- as measured by the analytical scales reported above as valid and reliable- would indicate that there are no significant differences in the EFL and Arabic L1 writing performance of the same Arab advanced EFL writers.

Table 7 summarizes the means and standard deviation values for the holistic and analytical variables for all participants in the study by data set or language of composing. The Mean scores on the analytical scales were calculated for the study participants group as whole then for each group defined in terms of the language of writing per se. The mean scores in AL1 and EFL essays

by the same Moroccan advanced writers do not seem to be significantly different. This is especially so where argument superstructure (AL1 mean score = 6.19 vs. EFL mean score = 5.80 and rational appeals (AL1 mean score = 3.00 vs. EFL mean score = 2.88) are concerned.

The relatively below average mean of the holistic scores in both EFL (EFL M=2.88; SD=.652) and AL1 essays (AL1 M=2.96; SD=.720) and the relatively below average mean scores of almost all the analytical scales can be interpreted as implying that some rhetorical aspects of English persuasive writing are especially problematic for Arab advanced EFL writers. But it does not follow that this is a result of rhetorical transfer from the students' L1. These results might be understood as implying that students perhaps transfer rhetorical patterns backward from the target language to their L1. Yet it remains to be seen if the same research finding would still be the case when these EFL student's rhetorical performance is compared to that of their English L1 counterparts. In other words, although descriptive statistics of the current study yields results that seem to be in favor of one of the assumptions of the Contrastive Rhetoric hypothesis - it is hoped upon analysis of essays by a comparable group of English native speakers to find out whether or not the latter face similar writing challenges and especially so at the rhetorical level.

Table 7 Means and SD for all Variables by Data Set

Variables	ALI (n= 26)		EFL (n= 26)		Total (N= 52)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
HOLISTICSCORES	2.96	.720	2.88	.652	2.92	.681
BACKGROUND	1.00	.000	.846	.367	.923	.269
PROBLEM	.961	.196	.884	.325	.923	.269
SOLUTION	1.00	.000	.769	.429	.884	.322
EVALUATION	1.00	.000	.615	.496	.807	.397
ARG_SUPERSTRUCTURE	6.19	1.20	5.80	1.575	6.00	1.40
CLAIM	2.38	.496	2.80	.401	2.59	.495
DATA	2.46	.904	2.76	.508	2.46	.726
WARRANT	1.15	.367	1.34	.485	1.25	.437
ADDED_TOULMINE	4.92	1.67	6.34	.977	5.63	1.53
RATIONAL_APPEALS	3.00	.000	2.88	.325	2.94	.235
CREDIBILITY_APPEALS	1.53	.859	2.15	.674	1.84	.825
AFFECTIVE_APPEAL	2.92	.271	2.15	.7844	2.53	.699

To confirm the absence of any significant differences in the rhetorical performance of Moroccan advanced EFL students in both AL1 and EFL essays reported above, a computerized Multiple Discriminant Analysis (MDA) was conducted to identify whether the performance of the participants on measures of Standard English rhetorical criteria would accurately predict their language of writing. The MDA employed a **Wilks' Lambda** stepwise procedure to examine which

of the rhetorical predictors of overall persuasive writing quality - either individually or in combinations of two or more - could accurately discriminate among individual writing samples from the two data sets. While the independent variables in the MDA were scores on the informal reasoning, argument superstructure, and affective appeals scales, the dependent variable was defined in terms of data sets with two categories, namely ESL and AL1 writing samples. Significance criteria of Wilks' Lambda were set so that new independent variables were entered in the model at a significance level of .05 or less and were removed when they ceased to lower the overall Wilks' Lambda F-value of the model by a significance level of .1 or less.

Table 8 *Variables not in the Multiple Discriminant Analysis*

Excluded Variables	Wilk's Lambda	Sig of F to enter
Holistic Scores	.997	.688
Argument Superstructure	.981	.327
Added Toulmin's	.781	.530
Rational Appeals	.939	.477
Credibility Appeals	.858	.346
Affective Appeal	.691	.454

Table 8 reveals that SPSS failed to produce any model of one or more independent variables that could discriminate significantly between the two categories of the dependent variable with a reasonable degree of accuracy. As a matter of fact, none of the six independent variables that were specified in the model qualified to be entered in the MDA model because each of them individually failed to meet the pre-specified .05 significance threshold level for entry in the model.

Thus, failure of the MDA to produce at least a single model that could discriminate among writers in terms of the language of composing (AL1 or EFL) based on their rhetorical performance indicates that there are no significant differences in the EFL and Arabic L1 writing performance of the same Arab advanced EFL writers on measures of Standard English criteria. Again, it is hoped upon recruitment of native speakers to write equivalent essays in English L1 that the comparison and contrast of all the three data sets (AL1, EFL and English L1) will make it possible to find out whether or not there are any significant differences in the rhetorical performance of English L1 and Arab EFL advanced writers.

### Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Results of the present study revealed that EFL and Arabic persuasive essays by the same Moroccan advanced EFL writers seem to suffer from an inadequate use of the rhetorical patterns investigated in the current study; namely, argument superstructure, informal reasoning and persuasive appeals. Put more precisely, the study participants' below average performance as one group is an indication that they face the same rhetorical problems regardless of the language of composing. Although this finding corroborates part of Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric hypothesis especially with regards to the claimed similarities in the writing of persuasive essays by the same study participants in both L1 and EFL, it is still premature to fully confirm or reject Kaplan's contention that this results from the effect of L1 transfer at the rhetorical level. In fact, it is difficult

to conclude whether students' problems are a result of transfer from their L1 to English or the other way around particularly that they seem to face the same challenges writing persuasive essays in both L1 and the target language.

Like the findings in the current study, Kubota (1998) found no significant differences that can safely be attributable to transfer from Japanese to English written texts (P.83). The researcher compared two collections of expository and persuasive essays in Japanese and English written by the same Japanese students. The analysis focused on the placement of the thesis statement, overall organization of the essays and the language use. The results showed clear similarity between the essays examined. In fact "No negative transfer of L1 specific pattern was observed. Instead the kind of negative transfer was mainly that of poor organization. There were many instances of positive transfer" (Kubota, 1998 p. 83). The same research results were underlined by Lui (2005) upon comparing argumentative essays written in Chinese and English by Chinese and American high school students. Lui found out that there were only minor differences between the two language groups and concluded that "contemporary Chinese argumentative writing of foreign language school students is closer to" Anglo-American rhetorical style than previously assumed" (P. 129) .

In the same line of research, Ismail (2010) replicated Connor & Lauer's (1985), and Connor's 1990) study using roughly the same research instruments the current study resorted to with the view to analyzing persuasive essays by a group of 30 Doctoral Arabic speakers writing in both Arabic and English and 30 L1 essays by US Doctoral students. The aim was to identify whether "[the] Arab writers had similar or different writing challenges when they composed in ESL and in their native language " and emphasis was especially put on " whether these writing challenges were unique to the Arab writers or were like those experienced by their native English counterparts (Ismail, 2010 P.238). Having secured the requirements of *a tertium Comparationis* and established the validity of the analytical measures deployed for cross cultural comparisons, Ismail (2010, p. 240.) concluded that "(a) some rhetorical dimensions of persuasive writing are problematic for Arab advanced ESL writers, and (b) these problematic areas of persuasive writing are not unique to Arab advanced ESL students. Rather,"... it turns out that "(c) the same rhetorical dimensions of persuasive writing were equally challenging for advanced native English speakers" as well.

## Conclusion

All in all, although it is beyond the scope of this study to cast doubt on the entire CR hypothesis as it was initially introduced by Kaplan and his supporter, the preliminary research findings reached thus far seem to partly support one of its basic assumptions specially in claiming that there are no significant rhetorical differences in the performance of Moroccan EFL students' persuasive essays regardless of the language in which they wrote them (be they in L1 or EFL). As a concluding note for this small scale study, which involved comparing only the EFL and L1 of Moroccan advanced students, it is only fair to close with the idea that until after the performance of the students in the current study are compared with that of their English L1 native a contrastive rhetoric perspective then Kaplan's contention regarding the role of transfer as the major variable accountable of ESL or EFL writing challenges at the rhetorical level remains unsubstantiated.

### About The Authors

**BRAHIM KHARTITE** is currently a teacher-supervisor and a Ph.D. candidate in “Applied Linguistics and TEFL” research unit at the Doctoral Center of the Faculty of Education, Mohammed V University-Rabat-Morocco. His research interests include teaching reading comprehension, teacher training and the implications of Contrastive rhetoric to EFL writing and composition. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1874-4617

**Dr BADIA ZERHOUNI** is associate professor of Applied Linguistics/TEFL at the Faculty of Education -Mohammed V University- Rabat, Morocco. She teaches and supervises research projects in BA English Studies and MA Applied linguistics/TEFL programs. She is the former director of the Doctoral Center of the Faculty of Education. She currently teaches and supervises research projects in MA Applied Linguistics /ELT programs and supervises doctoral research in different subjects related to AL/ELT.

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