

## *Postmodernism in Intercultural Rhetoric: Problematizing the Deconstruction of an Academic Discipline*

Deron WALKER  
*California Baptist University, USA*

*This paper addresses a glaring problem in intercultural rhetorical studies. Many well-intentioned postmodernist scholars have attempted to protect international students from potentially harmful, deterministic stereotypes formed about their rhetorical styles and cultures. However, critics' overzealous deconstructions of benign generalizations in intercultural rhetoric have had a chilling effect on the field in terms of pedagogy and scholarship. A substantial body of research indicates the need for intercultural-oriented rhetorical instruction in ESL/EFL composition classrooms that could better prepare East-Asian students to write academic essays in English. This paper will argue that excesses in deconstructionist criticism have profoundly inhibited the development of this field of study.*

Postmodernism may be defined as a philosophical reaction against the generalizations of knowledge in modernism, especially the meta-narrative (Foucault, 1983; Lyotard, 1984). Thus, postmodernists have been skeptical of traditional paradigms of knowledge and claims of objectivity found in the empirical scientific method and types of ethnographic narratives on culture that have informed contrastive rhetoric research (Atkinson, 2004; Connor, 2004). In this article, it will be argued that postmodernism has had both positive and negative influences on the field of study traditionally known as contrastive rhetoric, also more recently called intercultural rhetoric. Postmodernism at its best enables us to recognize the limits of generalizations, speak humbly about fallible human constructs