

Rhetorical Perception of Korean University Students: Is Linear Better?

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Over forty years ago, Kaplan (1966) initiated the field of contrastive rhetoric with his seminal work, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education." After analyzing 600 essays, Kaplan identified general rhetorical patterns used in academic writing for five different culture groups. Kaplan further concluded that Asian writers, whom he labeled "Oriental," tended to write academic essays in an "indirect" pattern whereas English rhetoric followed a direct pattern that he called "linear." While Kaplan's categorizations shed a certain amount of light on cross-cultural rhetorical differences, many questions raised by Kaplan's work remained very controversial but largely unanswered. This paper attempts to answer, from the perspective of 303 Handong Global University students in South Korea, some of these questions. This paper discusses student rhetorical perceptions of their writing, thought processes while writing, beliefs concerning how other Korean students compose and think about writing, and what style of rhetoric Korean university students consider ideal in Korean and English.

Introduction

While Kaplan's term *Oriental* has been considered clumsy and over-generalized, subsequent research in ESL/EFL writing has supported the finding that East-Asian writers in China (Chu, Swaffar, & Charnay, 2002; Matalene, 1985; Shen, 1989; Xing, Wang, & Spencer, 2008), Japan (Hinds, 1983, 1987, 1990; Yoshimura, 2002), and Korea (Eggington, 1987; Walker, 2006, 2008; Yang, 2004) do frequently write academic essays in rhetorical patterns that western audiences find excessively *indirect*. However, scholars in intercultural rhetorical research still ponder