Objectivity and Credibility in L1 and L2 Academic Writing

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INTRODUCTION

In composition writing in American colleges and universities, students are often expected to present their views objectively, approach a topic from a balanced perspective, and support their views with appropriate information to lend these views credibility. Students are usually instructed that the reader needs to be convinced of the validity of the writer's position and that the onus of persuading the reader is on the writer (Leki, 1995; Smoke, 1992).

Research has demonstrated that in academic settings, the writing of NNSs frequently does not present balanced argumentation, and can be generalization- prone and subjective to a greater extent than that of NS writers (Scarcella, 1984; Scarcella and Lee, 1989). Carlson (1988) indicated that the L2 writing of Chinese students was more vague and less objective than that of NSs with similar education levels and training. She commented that overall, the essays of Chinese L2 writers tend to be scored significantly lower than those of NSs because they contain fewer justification, credibility, persuasion, and reasoning devices. Scarcella (1984) noted that NNS writers, in particular, speakers of Chinese, relied more heavily on historical allusions and direct assertions than did NSs with a similar educational background. In her view, in L2 academic settings, instructors found NNS writers' assertions detracting and even occasionally inappropriate. Similarly, Hvitfeldt (1992), who compared NS and NNS argumentation essays, stated that NNS writing can be highly personalized because in many writing traditions other than Anglo- American, one's "idea of truth is the result of everyday experience" (p. 33). She further indicated that the tendency to give a one-sided presentation rather than a balanced argument can be an outcome of L1 discourse traditions, conventions, and rhetorical value systems.

Over the past two decades, the research into L2 learning and acquisition has established that NNSs frequently transfer their knowledge of L1 rhetorical and discourse paradigms and

conventions to L2 writing. Many experienced ESL teachers of writing and composition have come to expect that essays written by NNSs contain fewer devices and markers of rhetorical objectivity than they may consider necessary. The purpose of this study is to examine and compare the use of objectivity conventions in the compositions of NSs and trained NNSs in light of the current instructional methodologies for L2 composition writing. Specifically, this study examines the use of rhetorical objectivity devices and syntactic and referential markers in NS compositions and in the essays of advanced and training NNSs in order to identify the specific discourse features that make L2 writing appear less objective and balanced than that of NSs.

OBJECTIVITY IN ANGLO-AMERICAN ACADEMIC WRITING AND COMPOSITION

Academic writing as a genre (Swales, 1990) has been analyzed from various perspectives. Swales approaches academic writing as a "sociorhetorical" discourse (p. 24) accepted in a community of writers and readers who function within a framework of communicative goals, conventions, socialization processes, and solidarity moves. Atkinson (1991) points out that "the superordinate notion of 'scientific objectivity,' at least partly conventional in origin" (p. 65), can be reflected in how the author approaches and develops a topic, follows written discourse paradigms, and employs syntactic and referential markers. Atkinson contends that these and many other conventions of the academic discourse community have achieved a level of "normativity" that can be hard for "outsiders" to learn (p. 62). In his analysis of rhetorical and syntactic features associated with objectivity in written discourse, he points out that at the rhetorical level, academic norms prescribe "establish[ing] the territory" (p. 66) by means of introductions and employing the "scientific passive" (p. 65) and appropriate pronouns, e.g. "we and us as alternatives to I and me" (p. 68).

Other researchers have identified additional specific characteristics of "objective" academic written discourse that conforms to the discourse community norms and the expected conventions. Connor and Lauer (1988) note that in academic composition in Anglo-American educational environments, "credibility appeals include the writer's personal experience, knowledge of the subject, and awareness of the audience's values" and rhetorical argumentation needs to be based on "the structure of reality" (p. 146), i.e., examples, illustrations, analogies, and metaphors.

However, what represents rhetorical objectivity devices and markers is not clear-cut. Dialect and cultural variations have been identified even among the rhetorical conventions accepted in English-speaking societies. Connor and Lauer (1988) compared the use of objectivity and credibility devices in the persuasive academic writing of American, British, and New Zealandian students. They found that significantly fewer credibility strategies were used in the writing of American students, compared to those in the compositions of students in England and New Zealand. While the authors attributed some of the differences to the lack of adequate training of American students, they conclude that additional divergencies in the use of objectivity strategies may come from different cross-cultural views on the author's objectivity and credibility.

Smith (1987) indicates that the norms of a discourse community underlie the expectations regarding the effective structure and presentation of information and that "using a common linguistic medium (English) does not mean that discourse strategies are shared" (p. 5).

OBJECTIVITY AND CREDIBILITY IN SOME OTHER RHETORICAL TRADITIONS

Written communicative paradigms represent a convergence of different stylistic, cultural, religious, ethical, and social notions, all of which comprise written discourse notions and frameworks. Kachru (1988, p. 112) asserts that "different language speaking communities have developed different 'conventions'" of writing. Experts on the Chinese rhetorical tradition have observed that according to the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist precepts associated with writing, the writer is presumed to be the champion of the truth that he or she announces to the reader (Oliver, 1971; Matalene, 1985). From this perspective, the writer does not need to prove to be knowledgeable because, by virtue of writing the text, the author is assumed to have authority, credibility, and knowledge. Scollon (1994) comments that in Anglo-American academic writing the rhetoric of objective fact occupies a prominent place, but in the Chinese writing tradition, it is assumed that what is presented as fact is inseparable from who said it. In the communities that embrace Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophical precepts, the Anglo-American need for rhetorical objectivity and persuasion is often perceived to be artificial, cumbersome, and unnecessary (Bloom, 1981; Kincaid, 1987; Scollon, 1994).

Hwang (1987) and Yum (1987) indicated that in the Korean rhetorical tradition, based on Confucian and Buddhist assumptions, factual objectivity and persuasion have little value because the writer is expected to achieve a mutual understanding with the reader and avoid overt persuasion. According to Lee (1987), in the Korean rhetorical paradigm, historical allusions, references to common wisdom, direct personal appeals and advice take the place of objectivity. Tsujimura (1987) also asserts that the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism on the Japanese culture pervades many aspects of Japanese discourse and rhetorical tradition and that Japanese strive to attain "higher perceptions of the truth" derived not from words but "from mind to mind"

(pp. 117-118). Hirokawa (1987) and Hinds (1983) demonstrated that objectivity and proof are rarely expected in Japanese writing, in which ambiguity and vagueness have a considerable rhetorical value. The Indonesian rhetorical tradition is also closely bound to its Confucian and Buddhist historical and cultural origins, in which the notions of harmony and understanding between the reader and the writer represent one of the fundamental values, and factual objectivity is not usually expected (Prentice, 1987).

Strevens (1987) asserts that the need for (Aristotelian) rhetorical objectivity and justification may present a formidable obstacle for L2 learners if they are "absent in the learner's culture" (p. 171). He specifically refers to the Chinese rhetorical paradigm in which persuasion in the Western sense is not necessary and/or expected and indicates that Chinese L2 learners may be faced with a different reality when writing in English where the author's credibility represents the key to objective writing.

OBJECTIVITY AND CREDIBILITY IN L2 WRITING RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY

Strategies for conveying objectivity and credibility, as reflected in Anglo-American academic writing, are emphasized in the teaching of L2 writing. L2 instructional methodologies often incorporate the notions of rhetorical objectivity, proof in persuasion, and supported argumentation (Connor, 1987). Leki (1995) devotes several sections of her textbook to using, gathering, arranging, and presenting "objective pieces of evidence" (p. 106) and establishing the writer's credibility in order to convince the reader. She also states that a writer must persuade the reader of the validity of his or her assertions by providing demonstrations of how a generalization applies to a typical case, analogies to explain ideas, "facts ... that bring objective evidence to prove a point," and "references to recognized authority or experts on the subject" (p.

106). Similarly, Raimes (1992) and Smoke (1992) call for the use of facts, statistics, analogies, balanced arguments, and references to authoritative sources to convince the reader and establish the author's objectivity.

In addition to these rhetorical and discourse features, Carlson (1987) also stipulates that the writer's credibility can be conveyed through the use of such rhetorical strategies as justified claims, generalizations, and qualifications and structural markers, i.e. the passive voice and existential constructions. She also notes that the usage of "vague words" (p. 252) and subjective adjectives tends to diminish the author's credibility in academic writing.

Arnaudet and Barrett (1984) specifically address the issue of the author's objectivity in L2 academic writing. In their text for advanced NNSs, they focus on descriptive and factual information as a means for establishing rhetorical objectivity. They also present and discuss syntactic structures that serve to promote the author's objective and balanced position in argumentation, i.e. the use of passive constructions, citations of relevant sources, hedging devices, and concessive clauses. Swales and Feak (1994), who also assert that NNS writers need to maintain objectivity in their writing, focus on the appropriate use of pronouns, impersonal passive, and hedged claims.

THE STUDY

The devices and markers of objectivity outlined in this study are largely based on those identified in, primarily, L2 composition research and methodologies and, secondarily, the characteristics of the Anglo-American published academic genre. To determine rhetorical and syntactic and referential constructs for inclusion in this study, instructional texts and research on

L1 and L2 writing and composition were surveyed, with the goal of defining the array of features stressed in current ESL composition pedagogy. The examination of these texts resulted in twelve rhetorical and syntactic and referential dimensions commonly addressed and recommended as means for producing relatively objective and credible L2 compositions and rhetorical argumentation. In addition, such inclusive categories as Slot Fillers (non-referential it and existential there) (Jacobs, 1995), Pronouns, and Modal Verbs were further subdivided into additional subclasses, yielding a total of eighteen rhetorical devices and syntactic markers. Each of these devices and markers is mentioned below and discussed in greater detail in conjunction with the results of the study.

Rhetorical Devices

The following rhetorical devices were identified in the texts and tallied for examination: Proverbs and Sayings, Direct Personal Appeals, Contradictions and Juxtapositions, General Rules, Rhetorical Questions, and Analogies.

Syntactic and Referential Markers

In addition to the rhetorical devices, the following syntactic and referential markers were identified and analyzed: Concessives, the Passive Voice, Slot Fillers, Amplifiers and Emphatics, Pronouns, and Modal Verbs.

The Data

The data from the study came from essays written by 30 NSs and 120 NNSs. Among the NNSs, 30 were speakers of Chinese, 30 of Korean, 30 of Japanese, and 30 of Indonesian. Each

of these language groups represents a culture heavily influenced by Confucian, Taoist, and/or

Buddhist philosophy, cultural values, and written discourse traditions (Cushman and Kincaid,

1987; Yum, 1987). The NNSs had achieved a relatively high English language proficiency with

TOEFL scores ranging from 567 to 623 (a mean of 580). All NNSs had been admitted to

graduate and undergraduate university programs and pursued studies towards their degrees. The

NNSs whose writing was analyzed were selected on the basis of their relatively high linguistic

proficiency, as established by TOEFL scores and their length of residence in the U.S. The NNSs

had completed the required composition courses designed especially for NNSs and,

subsequently, all the composition courses required for NSs in an American university. All had

received extensive instruction in ESL and L2 reading and writing for a period of 4 to 20 years,

with a mean of 13.1 years. Their residence in the U.S. typically fell within 1.5 to 3.1 years, with

a mean of 2.1 years. Therefore, it follows that NNSs had had a relatively extensive exposure to

L2 reading and writing in L2 academic environments.

Both NSs and NNSs wrote the essays during one-hour required placement tests written in

response to two prompts (see Appendix for a list of topics). The compositions analyzed in this

study were randomly selected in sets of 15 per prompt (two prompts for NSs and two for NNSs)

from each group of students (NSs, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indonesians) for a total of 30

from each group. The essays were written in response to prompts that were modeled on the Test

of Written English, administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and Michigan Test of

English Language Proficiency Composition prompts, as well as those commonly found in ESL

and L1 writing/composition textbooks. All essays were written in the rhetorical mode of

argument/exposition with the purpose of convincing/informing an unspecified general audience

(Connor and Lauer, 1988; Park, 1988). The objectivity devices and markers employed in the NNS texts were compared to those in essays written by NSs of American English.

Data Analysis

To determine whether NSs and NNSs similarly used objectivity devices and constructions, the number of words in each of the 150 essays was counted, followed by a count of the occurrences of each of the rhetorical markers and syntactic/ referential markers in that essay. For example, NS essay #1 consisted of 250 words and included one occurrence of a concessive, although, and three instances of the slot filler it. To ascertain the percentage of usage of these markers in the essay, a computation was performed for concessives, i.e. $1/250 = .4\%$, and then repeated for the three occurrences of it ($3/250 = 1.2\%$). The computations were performed separately for each of the rhetorical objectivity devices and syntactic markers and for each of 30 NS and NNS essays per group.

Non-parametric statistical comparisons of NS and NNS data based on rank orders were employed because the majority of percentage rates did not show a normal distribution; a large number of essays did not contain all types of objectivity devices and markers. The measure used to establish differences between NS and NNS uses of a particular objectivity device was the Mann-Whitney U Test. The medians, ranges, and results of statistical tests are presented in Table 1. In cases where the reported median is 0, at least half of the sample essays written on the topic did not contain a particular objectivity marker. The ranges are reported to reflect the frequency of use for each objectivity device.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that NS and NNS usage of objectivity markers differed to varying

degrees but was also similar in some respects (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 near here

Rhetorical Devices and Constructs

1. Proverbs/Sayings

Identified by the words proverb or saying, and phrases p*eople/many say*, *I/we heard it*

said, as in There is a proverb in my country..., as the saying goes..., and there is a (common)

saying....   For example, (1) *There is a saying in my country that people are never satisfied*

with what they've got. (2) *People in my country say, "Consider your choices more than once."*

Proverbs and sayings were used in the essays of NNSs significantly more frequently than

in those of NSs, although NSs also occasionally included them. Smoke (1992) instructs that the

writer can cite external sources of support in order to "persuade readers of the credibility or

believability of the piece of writing" (p. 198). However, it is not always clear what represents an

appropriate source of information to lend credence to arguments in student compositions

(Scollon, 1994).

Although the usage of proverbs and sayings does not represent a rhetorical strategy

commonly accepted in Anglo-American composition and academic writing (Leki, 1995), it is

often found in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian texts when authors feel that they need

to strengthen their position by referring to the assumed common knowledge embodied in

proverbs (Scarcella, 1994; Hwang, 1987). Ohta (1991) reports that in Japanese, attributing an

utterance to someone else and employing direct or indirect quotations from an external authority are accepted in discourse so as to avoid the responsibility for the truth-value of the proposition. Scollon (1991, 1994) identifies proverbs and sayings as a ubiquitous rhetorical device of support and objectivity in the English compositions of Chinese students. In Matalene's (1985) view, educated Chinese often cite proverbs, maxims, and pieces of folklore to establish their credibility with the reader and demonstrate their familiarity with classical sources. Sayings extracted from the work of prominent Chinese philosophers and writers often represent unquestioned support for assertion and display respect for the traditional rhetorical practice.

2. Direct Personal Appeals

Distinguished by the generic usage of *you* and imperatives.   For example, (1) *You want to graduate and get a job, so you can have your own life.* (2) *Don't wait until the decision what to major in comes to you. Decide and stick with your answer.*

Significantly more NNSs than NSs employed a device of direct personal appeal. In general, personal appeals and addressing the reader directly, as in the case of imperatives, are found among the strategies to avoid in Anglo-American composition and academic writing (Latulippe, 1992) because they are viewed as devoid of rhetorical objectivity. Swales and Feak (1994) suggest that NNS writers not address the reader directly and that approaching the audience in this way is rarely considered appropriate; instead, the author is expected to make objective facts speak for themselves. On the other hand, Oliver (1971) and Bloom (1981) indicated that direct personal appeals to the text's audience represent a rhetorical strategy common in classical Chinese writing tradition, where communicating with the reader directly has the goal of achieving mutual understanding and solidarity, and objective facts cannot be

established (Scollon, 1994). Wong (1990) further explained that in the Chinese classical

rhetoric, personal appeals are often intended to give force to argumentation and are, therefore,

seen as a mark of the author's conviction. She indicates that the rhetorical approach of appealing

to the reader is derived from ancient Chinese models and exhibits the writer's authoritative stance

and increased credibility.

3. Contradictions (and juxtapositions)

Setting up opposing positions, making a statement and then confuting it, as in *Some*

people believe xxx, and others think yyy, I have some friends who do xxx, but I also have friends

who do yyy.   For example, (1) *In Korea, some think that they are powerless to change the*

government, but others think that the government has to be changed through education. (2)

Some students study hard when their parents are watching them every minute, and others study

because they really want to learn what the teacher is teaching.

Pedagogical composition texts for NNSs often indicate that the writer's argumentation

must be presented as balanced, i.e. the author is expected to discuss both pros and cons of his or

her views (Smoke, 1992; Swales and Feak, 1994). To add balance to their argumentation, NSs

did not use sentence-level contradictions or juxtapositions (such as those exemplified above) but

rather presented brief descriptions of positions and arguments counter to their own. These were

comparatively longer and more detailed than those mentioned by NNSs and usually were a

paragraph or two to three sentences long. Leki (1995, p. 262) encourages students to "set aside

at least one section of your paper to honestly discuss arguments against your position." On the

other hand, Scarcella (1994, p. 266) simply states that "the position about which you can argue ...

must have two sides, one for and one against something," without indicating the appropriate amount of elaboration to accord the opposing point of view.

NNSs commonly employed a sentence or a phrase to acknowledge counter arguments and did not elaborate on their reasons. Bickner and Peyasantiwong (1988) and Bloom (1981) reported, however, that NNS writers often briefly mention the point of view opposing the thrust of their argument and may perceive the elaboration of counter-arguments to be purpose defeating. Oliver (1971) further stated that in the classical Chinese writing tradition the writer's position is expected to be subjective, and accounting for the opposing point of view is not among his or her responsibilities. As the data in Table 1 show, NNSs in all groups used a substantial number of sentence-level contradictions/juxtapositions to make their arguments appear balanced.

4. General Rules (and generalizations)

Statements indicating a wide application of the proposition, marked by the following constructions: i*n (today's/our) /life/history/society/world, in our lives, man/people/ humans/the human, today/these days/nowadays, in America/the U.S., in my country, in our/the human life, we/(Chinese)/(Americans), people in (a certain) country* For example, (1) *The best way for a man to learn about life is to get experience.* (2) I*n today's world, parents build their lives around their children.*

NNSs employed significantly more general rules and generalizations in their essays. ESL instructional texts (Arnaudet and Barrett, 1984; Latulippe, 1992; Raimes, 1992; Smoke, 1992) caution NNSs writers about using generalizations, which must be carefully supported by factual information or authoritative sources. However, Bickner and Peyasantiwong (1988) found that Thai students relied on general rules and large-scope generalizations to maintain a neutral and

impersonal tone in their English essays. According to Ohta, (1991), Scarcella and Lee (1989), and Scollon (1991), in the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist discourse traditions, generalized claims in writing and speech have the goal of projecting the writer's responsibility for the truth and accuracy of a proposition that can apply to most audiences and most events. Maynard (1993) shows that the speaker/writer in Japanese is assumed to be subjective and the need to support a generalization may not apply.

4. Rhetorical Questions and Tags

For example, (1) *Do you know what the most important thing in the world is?, What can people do to help their country?* (2) *Can any person meet this goal?*

The number of direct and tag questions was also significantly greater in NNS than NS essays. In general, direct and tag questions are discouraged in Anglo- American academic writing because they are viewed as excessively personal and subjective (Swales and Feak, 1994; Wong, 1990). Leki (1995) and Raimes (1992) note that questions can be used for invention, and Smoke (1992) discussed the acceptability of direct questions as essay leads if the writer chooses to select a "journalistic approach" (pp. 72). Tadros (1994) reported that in formal discourse, questions mark detachment from the proposition, but their use should be limited because, as Myers (1989, p. 27) notes they can be viewed as "obviously personal." On the other hand, Hwang (1987) and Ohta (1991) stipulate that in Confucian and Taoist discourse, questions are frequently employed to show hesitation and uncertainty of facts that may be compared to the use of hedging in English. Wong (1990) similarly observes that in Chinese, rhetorical questions perform various functions, such as hinting about the purpose of the text to the reader, thereby, replacing the thesis statement without a direct assertion. She further stipulates that in the

classical Chinese rhetorical tradition, questions assume audience participation and involvement and the reader's understanding of the writer's position. Furthermore, Biq (1990) specifies that question words often perform the role of hedges in Chinese discourse and can be employed to demonstrate the writer's authoritative and objective stance.

5. Analogies

Comparisons of the unfamiliar to the familiar in order to explain what is meant, marked by comparatives *as (... as), like, similar (to), the same (as), and compare(-ed/-ing) (to)*.   For example, (1) *Doing the routine tasks everyday is like doing laundry by hand: you spend a lot of time but don't get anything new*. (2) *When you think about it, studying in America is the same as having a job because you do what you can to survive.*

Although analogies are frequently encouraged in L2 composition texts (Leki, 1995; Raimes, 1992) as an explication device, neither NSs nor NNSs included analogies to any great extent in their essays. While Atkinson (1991) finds that analogies are particularly difficult for NNSs to use appropriately, Leki (1995) and Latulippe (1992) recommend them for the purpose of clarification. They also caution NNS writers against false analogies and instruct that the compared issues and objects need to be similar in "important" ways.

II. Syntactic and Referential Markers

6. Concessives (clauses and phrases)

although, though, even though   For example, (1) *Although helping my country is important to me, my first duty is to my parents.* (2) *I studied for another year after I failed on the entrance examinations, even though I didn't think I would make it into the university I wanted to enter.*

Although the syntactic structure in NNS compositions is frequently considered simplistic, it appears that the writing of advanced NNSs contained a significantly higher rate of concessives than did that of NSs. Concessive clauses can be used to introduce background information (Quirk, *et al.*, 1985; Biber, 1988) or present a balanced argument, which accounts for opposing views (see Contradictions above). Jacobs (1995) stated that concessive clauses can be used to contrast ideas and that the information included in the subordinate structures is usually less crucial than that in the independent clause. Leki (1995) suggested a "formula" using although (p. 129) for creating a balanced thesis statement and presenting the writer's position objectively.

7. Passive (+ by-phrase)

For example, (1) *What he studies was decided by his family and mostly, his father.* (2) *All that Asians want is to be treated fairly, equally, and justly.*

NNSs used passive constructions significantly more frequently than did NSs. Carlson (1988) observed that the use of passive in NNS compositions appears to be topic and subject-matter dependent. The passive voice often serves as one of the more typical markers of academic writing and the detached style that is intended to convey objectivity and uninvolvement (Biber, 1988; Chafe, 1985; Myers, 1989). In fact, Atkinson (1991) stipulates that the use of the passive voice is closely associated with conventionalized rhetorical constructs specific to Anglo-American academic writing. In addition, agentless passive can also be employed to front thematic information or remove the agent from the prominent sentence position (Jacobs, 1995). In reaction to this academic convention, however, many NS writing teachers and texts discourage the use of passive voice (Memering and O'Hare, 1983; Winkler and McCuen, 1984; Williams, 1985). On the other hand, Ohta (1991) observed that in Japanese

passive is often used to convey group belonging and solidarity by avoiding pronoun referentials. In Korean writing, passive is also employed to convey the author's respect for the audience (Hwang, 1987).

The complexity of using the passive voice appropriately, however, appears to be great because of its contextual, lexical, and semantic constraints. Master (1991) devoted his study to contexts in which passive verbs are used in academic writing in English and observes that they can function as hedges. Although he provides detailed descriptions of types of academic discourse when the passive voice is more appropriate than active, Owen (1993) shows that the usage of passive in English is lexically constrained and frequently idiomatic and, therefore, not necessarily learned from demonstrations and textbooks. He asserts that many uses of passive can be pragmatic or discoursal and in some cases, unacceptability of passive is subjectively gradient, ranging from non-idiomatic to idiomatic.

8. Slot Fillers

it (non-referential, clause-subject position) and existential *there*   For example, (1) *It is necessary to improve the environment in Taiwan because air pollution is getting worse.* (2) *There are many people in my country who work all day for pennies.*

NNSs used fewer occurrences of non-referential it than did NSs. The usage rate of existential *there* was significantly lower in the compositions of NSs than in those of Koreans and Japanese, but did not differ considerably from those of Chinese and Indonesians. The function of non-referential clause subjects in academic writing in English is discussed in Biber (1988) and Quirk, *et al.*, (1985) who state that *it* has little lexical content. In the view of McCarthy (1994), non-referential *it* can be contextually ambiguous and, thus, project detachment and refer to whole

segments of the preceding text that can be assigned a functional label of *evidence*, as a semantic and rhetorical unit. Hence, the increased evidentiality supports the writer's objective position in academic discourse and lends implicit authority to the text's claim.

Huebler (1983) classifies *it* as a complex syntactic hedging device that removes the main proposition to the secondary clausal position. Myers (1989) comments that in academic writing in English, the filler it (Jacobs, 1995) serves to depersonalize text and create a sense of hedged objectivity, particularly when accompanied by private and perception verbs that mark evidentiality (e.g., *seem/appear*). In Scollon's (1994) view, the usage of *it* marks a convention accepted in academic and "scientific" writing in English. According to Quirk, *et al*. (1985) and Jacobs (1995), the discourse function of *there* can be similar to that of non-referential *it* in that it contributes to the depersonalization of text and increases the overall impression of textual objectivity.

9. Amplifiers/Emphatics

absolutely, a lot, altogether, completely, definitely, entirely, extremely, for sure, fully, greatly, highly, just, more, most, perfectly, real(ly), strongly, thoroughly, totally, very.   For example, (1) *I spent a lot of time and money learning theory and found out that I couldn't do anything. (2) I strongly support the opinion that some people need to mature to decide what to major in and cannot make this decision when they are sixteen or seventeen.*

The essays of NSs contained significantly fewer amplifiers and emphatics than those of Chinese and Koreans, but there was not a significant difference in the quantity of amplifiers and emphatics used by NS and Japanese and Indonesians. Amplifiers and emphatics mark certainty and a high degree of conviction, have the effect of increasing the reliability of propositions and

claims (Biber, 1988) and diminish the writer's objectivity (Quirk, *et al*., 1985). They are often found in student compositions (Smoke, 1992) and tend to make text appear colloquial and less academic. In addition to conveying certainty, amplifiers and emphatics can be used to mark solidarity with the reader and may not be appropriate in propositional contexts (Holmes, 1984). Huebler (1983) and Myers (1989) noted that amplifiers and emphatics are rarely found in written published texts and/or academic genre. ESL composition texts (Smoke, 1992; Raimes, 1992) often advise against their use because they may decrease the author's projected objectivity and credibility.

10. Personal Pronouns (and contractions)

(a) **First Person Singular** (*I, me, my, myself*);

(b) **First Person Plural** (*we, us, our, ourselves*);

(c) **Second Person Singular and Plural** (*you, your, yourself, yourselves*);

(d) **Third Person Singular** (*he, she, him, her, his, her(s)*, referential *it*, and

 Plural (*they, them, their(s), themselves*).

 For example, (1) *The better university I graduate from, the more chance I will get to find a good job, but how can I be accepted in a famous university?* (2) *We often believe that our first opinion is correct.* (3) *Only having experienced achievements and frustrations, you can learn knowledge, and the classes and exams will not be the power to lead you to learn.* (4) *He can set employment criteria in different periods, depending on the company needs, and he will determine whom he hires during the year.* (5) *If students have talent or potential to learn, they can build up their confidence to devote themselves to study.*

The usage of pronouns in NS and NNS writing differed significantly; however, the differences were congruent with the Anglo-American and Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist rhetorical traditions and textual constructs.

(a) First Person Singular

In accordance with the findings of Ohta (1991), Scollon (1991), and Myers (1988), NSs employed noticeably more first person singular pronouns in their compositions. Scollon (1994) and Ohta (1991), observed that the usage of the first person singular pronoun is considered largely unacceptable in the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist writing traditions because it is associated with the individual, rather than collective identity. Maynard (1993) commented that when *I* is used in Japanese it often stands for the group instead of the individual opinion. Furthermore, these authors specify that in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist rhetoric, using *I* to stand for the individual would undesirably increase the individual's responsibility for the truth-value of the proposition and diminish solidarity and group belonging.

Advice on the usage of first person singular in academic writing appears to be divided. Swales and Feak (1994) and Raimes (1992) explicitly stated that NNSs should not use first person singular pronouns in writing because their use diminishes the objective tone in writing. Arnaudet and Barrett (1984) also recommend that the usage of *I* be avoided in order to project objectivity and lend credibility to writing. However, Biber (1988) and other researchers (Chafe, 1985; Poole, 1991) stated the use of *I* is often associated with ego-involvement in text, and Myers (1989) reported that first person singular pronouns can be used to present claims that everyone shares or that the author assumes that everyone can potentially share.

(b) First Person Plural

Similarly, the occurrences of first person plural pronouns we (and its other forms) in the essays of NSs differed significantly from those in the writing of Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and Indonesians. Myers (1989) states that first person plural pronouns can be used to stress solidarity with readers. Conversely, Swales and Feak (1994) advise against it. Atkinson (1991) observes that we and us, as opposed to *I* and *me*, mark formal, yet interactive contexts and attributes the use of this pronoun to conventionalized forms in academic writing in English. In Johnson's (1995) view, the pronoun we, as opposed to they, serves to construct group identification in formal discourse and may be used to create group boundaries.

(c) Second Person Singular and Plural *(you, your, yourself, yourselves)*

All groups of NNSs employed significantly more second person pronouns you, thus, possibly making writing appear more personal than that of NSs and than is common in American compositions. According to Swales and Feak (1994), writers should not address "the reader as 'you' (except, of course, if you are writing a textbook)" (p. 19). Smoke (1992) stated that "[w]e rarely use second person for essay writing" (p. 106). Nonetheless, Hwang (1987), Ohta (1991), and Matalene (1985) stipulated that in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist rhetorical frameworks, the usage of you is employed to elicit the reader's involvement and, thereby, contribute to group solidarity (Hinds, 1976, 1983; Tsujimura, 1987).

(d) Third Person: Singular (and referential *it*) and Plural

The differences in the use of third person singular and referential pronouns it were not significant. However, NNSs used the third person plural they at a significantly higher rate than

NSs did. Biber (1988) defined third person pronouns as markers of inexact reference to persons and objects outside the immediately accessible scope of the writer's view. He further noted that these pronouns are often encountered in narratives and exposition and usually accompanied by past tense. In composition writing, third person pronouns are commonly perceived to impart formality and objectivity to writing (Smoke, 1992). McCarthy (1994) cited several composition studies that recommend the usage of it in essays as *it* helps create and maintain a referential frame in a piece of writing.

Scollon (1993) and Johnson (1995) specified that usage of the third person pronouns serves to identify the boundaries of group belonging and defining those who remain outsiders. The distinction between third person singular pronouns and third person plural extends to the differentiation between the outsider individual or group, thus, determines the degree of the outsider influence. Referential *it* is a syntactically flexible pronoun that can refer to inanimate objects, animate beings, abstract concepts, and clauses. Similar to other third person pronouns, it is relatively inexplicit and rare in published academic genre (Biber, 1988; McCarthy, 1994).

12. Modal Verbs:

(a) Possibility and ability (*can, may, might, could* (and contractions));

(b) Necessity (*ought, should, must, have to, need to* (and contractions));

(c) Predictives (*will, would* (and contractions)).

For example, (1) *We can find and create ourselves, and we don't need to   worry about losing it.* (2) *They have to accept strict training from childhood, if they want to succeed in their chosen field of study*. (3) *If I finish my degree here, I will help my people to have a better future.*

Following the seminal studies by Coates (1983), Hermeren (1978), and Quirk, *et al*., (1985), Biber (1988) divides modals into three functional classes: (1) permission, possibility, and ability; (2) obligation and necessity; and (3) volition and/or prediction. Although the uses of the modals of possibility and necessity in the NNSs' writing was significantly (and expectably) more frequent than that in the NSs' essays (Coates, 1983; Atkinson, 1991; Hinkel, 1995), the occurrences of predictives were not (Tadros, 1994). Possible implications of these findings may be that NNSs employed modal verbs of possibility to hedge their propositions and claims to a greater degree than NSs did. On the other hand, the usage of predictives in NS and NNS essays may reflect the meanings of will and would in spoken and informal discourse, in which the hedges *maybe, probably*, and *possibly* are frequently omitted (Tadros, 1994).

According to Smoke (1992) and Raimes (1992), in composition writing the lines between the meanings of the modals of possibility, necessity, and prediction is often unclear. Swales and Feak (1994) observed that authors need to demonstrate "good judgment" (p. 87) to be credible, and to demonstrate good judgment writers need to use modals appropriately so as to moderate claims and avoid strong predictives and implications of certainty. In Chafe's (1985) view, the modals of possibility and ability can also perform the role of evidentials. Similarly, Maynard (1993) and Hwang (1987) noted that these modals can function as evidentials in Japanese and Korean, respectively. In his extensive study of predictives in English formal prose, Tadros (1993) recommends that both NS and NNS students be trained in using predictives as textual cues to signal topic shifts to the reader.

Modal verb usage in student essays is, however, a complex issue. Coates (1983) commented that modal verb uses and meanings "conform" (p. 27) to the conceptual structure and reality of NSs of English and are heavily dependent on notions of factuality and truth. The use

of modals of obligation and necessity in NNS student essays has been identified as culturally-dependent because they often reflect notions not ordinarily found in NS compositions (Hinkel, 1995). Collins (1991), who investigated the corpora of published texts in American, Australian, and British English, indicated that the meanings of these modals are indeterminate, frequently culturally stereotyped, and convey normative and referential relationships that differ even across the dialects and societal structures in English-speaking communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that although NSs and NNSs used analogies, third person singular pronouns, and predictive modals at similar rates, NNS writing differed from that of NSs in the use the other seventeen devices and markers of rhetorical objectivity. In general, it appears that advanced and trained L2 learners from cultures influenced by Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist precepts employed the rhetorical objectivity devices and markers common to the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist writing traditions rather than those expected in Anglo-American academic compositions. These L2 learners may not interpret the notion of rhetorical objectivity similarly to NSs and may implement the textual constructs that are meant to project it differently in their writing. If this is the case, it seems that despite their relatively high linguistic proficiency and extensive training in L2 composition, the rhetorical devices and syntactic and referential markers associated with the Anglo-American notions objectivity writing remain inaccessible to them. It may be that the composition instruction in ESL and NS classes has accomplished its purpose only to a limited extent.

Conventions of Anglo-American composition require rational (Aristotelian) argumentation, objectivity in the writer's position and views, and factuality in justification and

proof. These concepts and rhetorical frameworks are not commonly accepted in many other writing traditions. Scollon (1994) states that "because ... the academic authorial self is taken to have characteristics of individuality, rationality, and autonomy, it represents an ideological position which is likely to be in conflict with the culturally constructed selves of non-native speaking students of English" (p. 17). Rhetorical objectivity is only one facet of this ideological position (Atkinson, 1991; Strevens, 1987). Presenting students with techniques for conveying an objective position and formulae for writing balanced thesis statements is unlikely to accomplish its stated goal of making L2 learners good writers in English.

The issue of differences and similarities between the English writing of NSs and that of NNSs has been surrounded by controversy. Some researchers found few differences in the rhetorical frameworks and constructs between published scientific articles written in English by NNSs and those written by NSs of English (Mohan and Lo, 1985; Taylor and Chen, 1991). On the other hand, others have found important differences between the English compositions of NNSs and those written of NS students (Bickner and Peyasantiwong, 1988; Scarcella and Lee, 1989).

Although Anglo-American academic writing has been reasonably well-researched, it appears that the characteristics of student compositions are less specific. As Biber (1988) notes, the differences between NNS and poor NS texts have been difficult to identify. In addition, as Biber (1988) and McCarthy (1994) report, different rhetorical paradigms and textual constructs are employed in the Anglo-American composition writing and published academic genres. Biber (1988) indicates that student essays written for required composition classes "are unlike any of the published genres of English" (p. 204). In his view, while many surface forms of Anglo-American academic writing are maintained in essays written for composition courses, their

information content is relatively low, and persuasive form is very high. Among the many outcomes of this disparity, it seems that composition writing does not have well-defined discourse and community norms and that students' performance is often rated according to the institutional, task, socio-cultural, and literacy norms expected and accepted in a particular academic environment. It is possible that the writing of NNS, as well as NS, students could more readily be improved by placing more emphasis on the rationale that underlies them and the contrast between the conventions accepted in different discoursal societies and writing traditions.

Many methodologies for teaching the Anglo-American conventions and norms for writing college composition focus on the pedagogy associated with discrete skills and techniques. Even if a methodology for teaching L2 writing devotes several sections to the explanation of the reader's expectations and the writer's responsibility to explain the ideas to the reader, in L2 composition training, it appears that the writer also needs to be convinced (Hinkel, 1994). The teaching of Anglo-American rhetorical conventions and notions and their main precepts, such as objectivity, factuality, and textual support, in contrast to the conventions accepted in different writing traditions, may need to be the starting point for L2 composition instruction, eventually leading to instruction in the discrete skills and techniques for writing.

Table 1

Rhetorical Devices and Markers of Objectivity in

NS and NNS Essays (Median %)

Devices/Markers		NSs	CH	KR	JP	IN
I. Rhetorical Devices						
Proverbs/Sayings		[.00	.14]*	.57]*	.40]*	.27]*
	Range	.17	.93	2.08	2.14	1.93
Direct Personal Appeals		[.00	.39]*	.74]*	.00]*	.43]*
	Range	1.11	1.92	1.91	3.68	2.79
Contradictions		[.00	.78]*	.00]*	.09]*	.46]*
	Range	.00	2.21	3.09	2.14	2.38
General Rules		[.17	3.36]*	1.25]*	.96]*	1.05]*
	Range	3.18	5.95	4.93	3.33	4.55
Rhetorical Questions/Tags		[.00	.38]*	.42]*	.41]*	.44]*
	Range	.63	1.94	2.72	1.94	3.43
Analogies		.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Range	.92	1.11	1.42	.00	.33

Table 1 (continued)

Rhetorical Devices and Markers of Objectivity in

NS and NNS Essays (Median %)

Devices/Markers		NSs	CH	KR	JP	IN
II. Syntactic and Referential Markers						
Concessives		[.40	.84]*	.82]*	.89]*	.75]*
	Range	1.58	4.09	2.72	2.19	2.84
Passive		[.00	.83]*	.81]*	.42]*	.79]*
	Range	1.61	2.75	1.48	1.00	1.56
Slot Fillers						
Nonreferential *it*		[.70	.29]*	.33]*	.00]*	.63]*
	Range	1.82	1.45	2.72	1.65	2.82
There (existential)		[.00	.00	.41]*	.33]*	.00
	Range	.92	1.23	2.22	2.30	.60
Amplifiers/Emphatics		[.40	.82]*	.70]*	.67	.32
	Range	2.50	2.79	2.52	4.29	1.24

Table 1 (continued)

Rhetorical Devices and Markers of Objectivity in

NS and NNS Essays (Median %)

Devices/Markers		NSs	CH	KR	JP	IN
Pronouns						
I (1st p. sg)		[1.29	.54]*	.46]*	.34]*	.46]*
	Range	3.79	8.33	6.28	7.22	6.28
we (1st p. pl)		[.00	.82]*	.56]*	.61]*	.58]*
	Range	2.93	5.77	6.06	5.36	5.68
you (2nd p. sg/pl)		[.00	.57]*	.69]*	.68]*	.49]*
	Range	3.57	3.11	8.92	6.67	6.58
he/she (3rd p. sg, 0-it)		.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Range	1.72	3.30	3.93	4.46	2.29
they (3rd p. pl)		[.00	.71]*	.73]*	.83]*	1.04]*
	Range	3.08	3.52	5.80	4.29	5.08

Appendix

Prompts for NS and NNS Essays

NSs

(1) (1) What is your major? Describe your values and characteristics that caused you   to make this choice.

(2) Describe how you or your chosen career can benefit our country.

NNSs

(1) What job or profession are you preparing for? What are your personal views and qualities that made you choose this field of study?

(2) Discuss how you or your training in your major can contribute to the development of your country. Use detailed reasons and examples.

Note: An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the Ninth International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning, University of Illinois, Urbana- Champaign, Illinois, March, 1995.

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