Article

Features of Rhetorical Organization in L2 Argumentative Essays by Chinese EFL Students at the Tertiary Level

Qi Fang*
Shenzhen University, China

Lu Yu
Zhuiyi Technology Ltd. Company, China

Jiang Cheng
Shenzhen University, China

Abstract
The current study employed The KEYHOLE Model (Baker, 1984) to analyze features of rhetorical organizations of 88 English argumentative essays written by Chinese university EFL students. The results indicated that 92% of sampled students employed deductive rhetorical organizations to compose their arguments, over 50% essays did not exhibit rhetorical coherence between supporting details and the thesis statement, and 34.1% sampled essays showed a discursive relationship between claims in the thesis statement and supporting details in body paragraphs. The 30 essays which did present supporting details to respond to the claim in the thesis statement, but only 10 essays indicated a high degree of rhetorical coherence between the thesis statement and its body paragraphs. The remaining 20 essays displayed a low degree of rhetorical coherence between the thesis statement and its body paragraphs. The majority of sample essays tended to use deductive rhetorical organizations but failed to achieve effectiveness in arguments. The instruction should be further focused on writing the thesis statement in the aspect of well-written rhetorical coherence. The findings suggest that L2 writing syllabi should design graded tasks on raising the Chinese students' rhetorical awareness and skills for better intercultural communication.

Keywords
Contrastive rhetoric, L2 argumentative essay, rhetorical organizations, thesis statement

*Corresponding Author.
Address: English Deptment, School of Foreign Languages, Shenzhen University, Nanshan District, Shenzhen, 518060, China
E-mail: georgeqi@szu.edu.cn

1 Introduction

After the seminal work on Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) by Kaplan (1966), this area of study has been expanded into a number of disciplines across L2 writing research which includes text linguistics, classroom-based studies of L2 writing as a cultural and educational activity, CR theories and intercultural communications in business (Qi & Zhang, 2015), and exerted significant implications and insights for teaching and learning ESL writing (Leki, 1991). Earlier, Kaplan and Grabe (1989) asserted that "CR is the study of L1 rhetorical influence on the organization of L2 writing, on audience consideration. CR seeks to identify L1 influences on rhetorical coherence, on perceived audience awareness, and on rhetorical context features" (p.266). Furthermore, in Connor's (1996a) *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural Aspect of Second Language Writing*, CR is defined as "an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in essays encountered by second language writers and, by referring them to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them and sheds light on pedagogical implications on L2 teaching and learning" (p.5).

In the emerging period of CR, several influential scholars have made contributions to the expansion of this field. Matalene (1985) partially confirmed Kaplan's (1966) early theory whilst she only ascribed the indirectness in Chinese discourse to propensities of Chinese. For example, Chinese prefer to appeal to history, to tradition, and to authority, but not to logical reasoning in their essays. The emphasis on the role of memorization in literacy is another influential factor that affects the rhetorical style of Chinese discourse in L2 writing. On the other hand, Mohan and Lo (1985) challenged Kaplan's (1966) early hypothesis by examining several classical texts and modern works in Chinese. However, no evidence shows that there exists a culture-specific organization of text. Both Chinese and English works show a direct way of expression. Instead, Mohan and Lo (1985) suggested the obstacles to students' writing may lie in developmental factors, including L2 learner's native literacy and their prior educational experience, which are culture-universal. From then on, CR research began to flourish across L2 writing. Not only did the early assumptions about the rhetorical patterns of different cultures develop, but so did the underlying causes of the different rhetorical traditions and methodologies.

2 Developments of CR Studies between L1 and L2 Writing

A paradigm shift of CR emerged in the 1990s because of both internal and external forces. Internal criticisms claimed that discourse-level features and the process of writing should be taken into consideration in CR research. The previous linguistic-exclusive analysis cannot account for all the data found in a number of studies. For instance, Ramies (1991) clearly demonstrated the supportive role of students' L1 to their L2 writing, while Leki (1991) asserted that different cultures hold different expectations for writing, and these differences can influence the production of discourse. Therefore, it is important to instruct EFL learners with cultural differences. On the other hand, two external factors, the changing focal point in L1 composition research and new progress in the area of text linguistics and discourse analysis, also urged the emergence of the new framework. According to L1 composition studies, writing involves a series of cognitive processes that can generate, organize, and translate ideas into texts. Writing in a specific culture cannot be seen as a product of static writing norms; instead, it is an interaction of multiple facets, including the writer, the readers, the context, genres. In addition, text linguistics and discourse analysis allow contrastive rhetoricians to consider whole texts as dynamic entities (Connor, 1996b).

With the advent of the 21st century, the Theory of Post-structuralism, and the Theory of Post-colonialism were introduced to the field of CR research (Kubota & Lehner, 2004). Post-structuralism and Post-colonialism drastically changed the way those in the CR field understood L1 and L2 writing across the different rhetorical traditions. The traditional preference for Western

rhetoric features is criticized as cultural centralism. Since CR chiefly deals with cultural differences, any rhetoric features should be located at a specific culture that shapes them. As Li (2014) argued that an indirect rhetorical organization could work more efficiently in certain situations than a direct one in a particular context. Thus, the CR studies have to accept and respect the diversity of rhetorical patterns in different social and cultural contexts. Based on the criticisms on cultural centralism and ethnocentric bias, CR researchers proposed a more inclusive paradigm to examine the writing context, readers' expectations, communicative purposes in L2 culture, and the role of the L1 writing as well when conducting a CR study.

Ostler (2002) posits that the rhetorical and organizational preferences of writing are culturally embedded, and that EFL/ESL learners may carry over these preferred rhetorical patterns from their native languages into their L2 writing. Thus, different cultures may orient their rhetoric preferences in discourses in different ways based on the empirical studies conducted. Furthermore, the different discourses reflect their own writing conventions in vocabulary choices, reasoning patterns, patterns of voice, and rhetorical organization in L2 writing (Kaplan & Grabe, 1989).

Later, Liu's (2007) comparative study examined placement of the thesis statement in English and Chinese argumentative essays and found rhetorical differences between Chinese and English in their L2 argumentative writings. To the best knowledge of researchers, Liu's (2007) research and other CR studies did not look further into the coherence between a thesis and its body paragraphs.

Arguably, Asian writers prefer to gain merit by literary style, whereas American writers prefer "logical argument" (Li, 1996). Earlier, In Good Writing in Cross-culture Context, Li (1996) pointed out the different evaluation standards for "good writing" between American and Chinese teachers from her personal experience in both educational contexts. This overt difference between Chinese and English triggered more focused research on Chinese or English rhetorical patterns in the field of CR worldwide.

However, the criticism from proponents of process approaches maintains that CR examines the product only, detaching it from and ignoring both the CR context from which the L2 writers emerge while the processes these writers may have gone through to produce a text. In other words, writing for EFL/ESL students dwells in the cultural and social contexts. Therefore, they reflect the cultures of their educational system reproducing culturally preferred discourse with particular features. Mohan and Lo (1985), Kirkpatrick (1995, 1997), Connor (1996a, 1996b, 2004, 2005) and Hamp-Lyons & Zhang (2001) insisted that CR research should incorporate the previously learned schemata with conventions of the EFL/ESL students. Furthermore, CR researchers (Kobayashi, 1984) and Kubota (1997) suggested that CR should consider the learners' age and level of English proficiency as well as L2 rhetorical knowledge and the current instructional context of EFL/ESL students.

3 Baker's (1984) Framework of Thesis Statement in English Argumentative Essay

In the current study, of the standard paragraph and essay structure in English (Figure 1) has been employed as a benchmark to gauge the types of discourse organizations across CR studies (Liu & Stapleton, 2014) since it is widely accepted as the standard way of presenting argumentation and exposition. Additionally, the diagram is precise in the presentation of text organization, and it is easy to follow and understand by both the researchers and readers.

Based on the standard paragraph and essay structure in Baker's (1984) framework, an argumentative essay presents the writers' viewpoints on a certain issue, and normally contains an introductory paragraph to outline the thesis statement; a couple of body paragraphs each with a topic sentence to develop and support the theme; a concluding paragraph to summarize the writer's standpoints and provides tentative

solutions and predictions (Sullivan, 1989; Richards, 1992). In this sense, the thesis statement and topic sentences should respond to each other in the argumentative writing to shape the persuasiveness of its rhetorical coherence on the overall discourse level and paragraph level, respectively.

Baker (1984) argued that the topic sentence communicates the general point of a paragraph as the opening sentence and outlines the scope of a paragraph, whereas a thesis statement frames the writer's standpoint on the entire essay. The thesis statement is developed and supported in subsequent parts (Anker, 1998; Connor, 2004). The beginning, middle, and end paragraphs sandwich several focal points corresponding to their rhetorical functions.
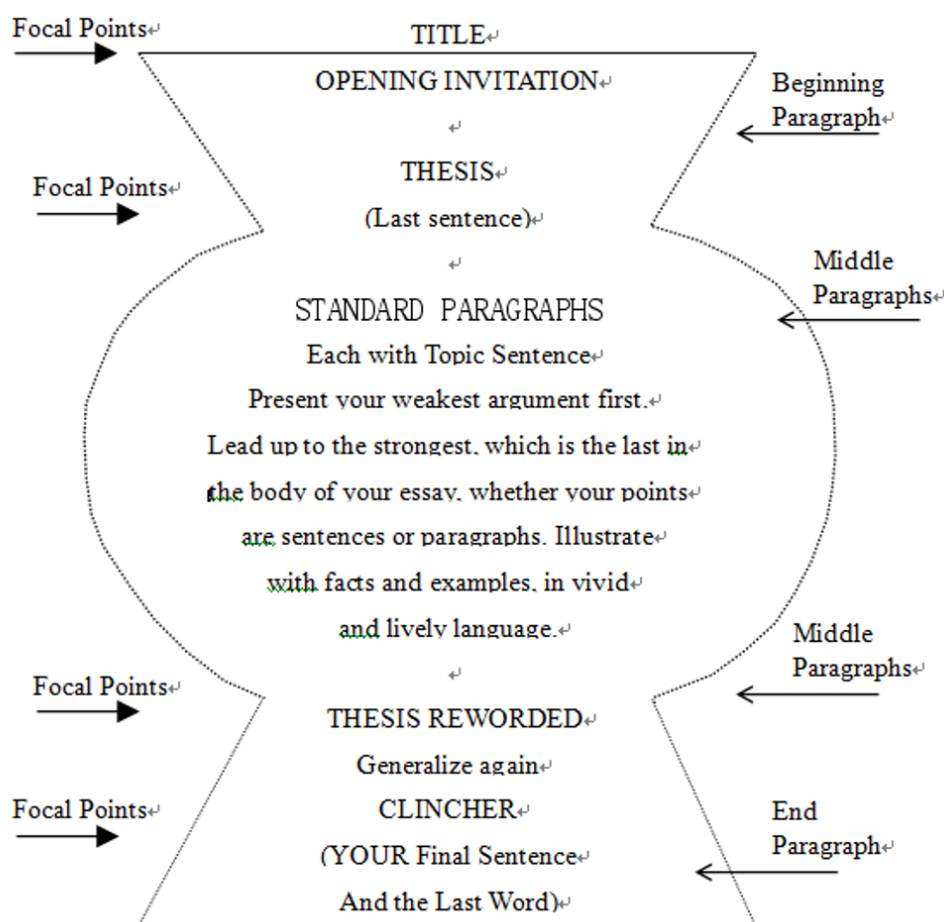

Figure 1. The KEYHOLE Diagram (Baker, 1984)

Baker's (1984) framework presents the standard paragraph and rhetorical structures in English argumentative/expository writing as a keyhole diagram. The diagram shows that in the English standard essay structure, the beginning paragraph should look like a funnel, working from broad generalization to thesis. The middle paragraphs are almost like little essays with their own beginnings and endings. Finally, the last paragraph should work as an inverted funnel, broadening, and embellishing the thesis (Chen, 2008). The diagram described a clear picture of essay structure in English, which would be used as the essential analyzing framework for the current study.

Baker's Keyhole Diagram outlines an English expository essay should consist of 4 or 5 paragraphs, which includes an introduction paragraph with a thesis statement, two or three body paragraphs providing details and examples to support the thesis, and finally, a concluding paragraph presented to restate the thesis, summarize the details and generalize the topic.

The thesis statement is viewed as the soul of writing, which is presented at the ending of the beginning paragraph. Usually, the last sentence of the paragraph plays such a significant role. Before the

thesis statement, a brief topic introduction is always presented to provide the reader with some necessary context for grabbing the reader's interest and informing the reader about the purpose of the essay.

The body paragraphs usually refer to the second, third, and fourth paragraphs, which are used to provide reasonable and efficient evidence to support the theme of the essay. For making each point connected naturally and coherently, it is necessary to use transition words or sentences. The last paragraph should summarize and settle the previous points conclusively and always be followed by one or two sentences to generalize the essay.

Indeed, the weakest point of Baker's framework does not incorporate with the degree of accepting writing cultures while the use of this framework does not solve the issues that CR indicates across EFL writers. However, it is valid to use as a benchmark to analyze the rhetorical organizations of L1 and L2 writings across CR studies. In the actual analysis, the researchers would also focus on cultural and developmental issues in the sampled essays.

As Connor (2011) argued that CR enables us to expand on our identification and understanding of the preferred rhetorical organizations of L2 writing. This applies in compared genres across languages and varieties, as well as providing social, cultural, and historical explanations for such preferences and highlighting instances where different varieties of English have been used.

4 Research Questions

This paper focuses on analyzing rhetorical organizations between the introductory paragraph and body paragraphs, identifying rhetorical patterns in writing the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph, and how the sampled writers compose their controlling ideas in body paragraphs to respond to thesis statements in their L2 argumentative essays. In doing this, the features of rhetorical organizations are unfolded and analyzed in aspects of the thesis statement, its placement, and rhetorical coherence with body paragraphs.

Based on the empirical CR studies conducted, the current study raises three interrelated research questions:

1. What are the features of the placement of the thesis statement in their L2 argumentative essays by Chinese EFL students?

2. What patterns do the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph display?

3. How do the sampled Chinese EFL students write up their controlling ideas in body paragraphs to respond to thesis statements in their L2 argumentative essays?

5 Methodology

5.1 Research context

The researchers chose Chinese EFL learners majoring in business in the Academic Writing course with a syllabus designed by Native-English teachers at a Shenzhen-based Hong Kong University in China. There was one English teacher with 20 students in each class. The teacher employed a process writing approach and the teacher focused on instructing the students with the five-paragraph rhetorical Toulmin Model (1986). The practice clearly emphasized how to write the thesis statement, topic sentence, and supporting details for rhetorical coherence. The sampled students were required to follow the models to write their essays in practice. The teacher also shared well-written sampled writings across groups with comments and feedback on their writings.

5.2 Participants

The 88 participants were in their first semester of sophomore year. Their college entrance examination scores ranked in the top 1% to 3% in their respective provinces. With regard to their English proficiency, the majority of the participants achieved a band of 6.0-7.0 in the IELTS. They were required to take up a one-year EAP for integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing for their prospective academic work.

5.3 Data collection

Two writing prompts were framed as open-ended issues based on common sense perspective of the current society, and the sampled students were required to write at least 400 words in length.

1. Will Chinese replace English as a global language? State your position and explain your reasons (hereafter referred to as Topic 1).

2. Is it fair that celebrities earn much more money than ordinary individuals, such as: scientists, doctors, firefighters or teachers? Explain. (hereafter referred to as Topic 2).

The time for completing the writing task was set within 60 minutes as Silva (1993) suggested the L2 writing researchers should set the writing time to 30-60 minutes. The Ethics Committee at the university sets rigorous regulations concerning privacy-issues for any of the subjects and for restricting access to the students' compositions. Thus, it induced constraints for researchers to collect at most 200 essays. Only 88 essays were collected.

5.4 Data analysis

5.4.1 Identification of thesis statement

The thesis statement is identified as one sentence that contains the writer's standpoint on a certain topic and is referred to as "the writers' standpoint when the writers are demonstrating or proving" in respect of the argument (Silverman, Hughes, & Wienbroer, 2004). The topic would be developed in the body paragraphs. The directness in presenting controlling ideas is coherently developed under the topic sentence governed by the thesis statement.

5.4.2 Identification of discourse patterns

With reference to Baker's (1984) KEYHOLE framework, the placement of a thesis statement is labeled as shown in Table 1. In the current study, the placement is analyzed based on the initial occurrence of the thesis statement in each essay.

Table 1.
Placement of Thesis Statement

Placement	Label
A thesis statement is presented in the introductory paragraph.	TI
A thesis statement is presented in places other than the first and second in one of the body paragraphs.	TM
A thesis statement is presented in the concluding paragraph.	TC

As for rhetorical persuasiveness, if an essay starts with a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph, it is considered to be a deductive argument. If the thesis statement is presented in one of the body paragraphs or in the concluding paragraph, it is regarded as an inductive argument. Furthermore, if a thesis statement is presented in places other than the introductory or conclusive paragraphs, the deductive or inductive arguments are examined according to the specific situation. Consequently, the features of persuasiveness and reasoning in arguments in the sampled essays varied in their rhetorical organizations.

5.4.3 Identification of features of thesis statement

In the recent CR studies, Liu (2017) formulated a set of comprehensive criteria to identify features of a thesis statement. She proposed a standard for identifying a thesis statement: 1) syntactic structure: a thesis statement should be a declarative sentence; 2) placement: a thesis statement should be presented in the introductory paragraph; 3) content: a thesis statement should contain a topic claim; 4) explicitness: a thesis statement should inform the reader of the central argument explicitly (Henry & Roseberry, 1977; Sullivan, 1994).

The features of a thesis statement were further classified into four categories, namely: "non-thesis statement," "formal thesis statement," "incomplete thesis statement," and "standard thesis statement."

The "non-thesis statement" in the essay does not express an author's standpoint, but the supporting details are presented in body paragraphs; whereas the "formal thesis statement" in the essay only expresses the standpoint of a writer, but no supporting details are developed or supporting details are not relevant to the corresponding arguments. The "incomplete thesis statement" in the essay displays an author's standpoint while supporting details could be partially developed in the subsequent arguments.

However, the "standard thesis statement" presents a clear claim to the author's standpoint that is adequately demonstrated in body paragraphs. To be more specific, the placement and contents of the thesis statement also work in a way that outlines the clarity and unity that displays the preferred rhetorical organizations of an essay.

5.4.4 Identification of coherence between a thesis statement and its body paragraphs

A thesis statement identifies the author's stance and provides supporting details to frame what the author writes in body paragraphs to help keep the essay organized and on the track of the argument (Kanar, 2011). Thus, a thesis statement exhibits clearly how supporting details are organized in a piece of writing. To echo Li's (2014) assertion about the core of CR studies, it is evident that a close relationship exists between its thesis statement and body paragraphs, indicating a key feature of the rhetorical organization.
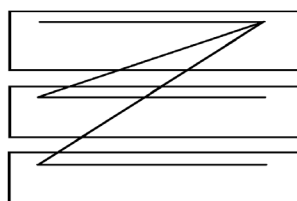

Figure 2. The Thesis Statement and its Rhetorical Relations with Body Paragraphs

Unger (2008) further argues that there are three degrees to which body paragraphs may support their relations with the thesis statements: 1) The body paragraph fails to respond to its claims in the thesis statement; 2) The body paragraph partially responds to its claims in the thesis statement; 3) The body paragraph exactly responds to its claims in the thesis statement. Thus, sampled patterns revealed in body paragraphs indicate the degree of rhetorical coherence of the sampled essay.

The development of claims for the thesis statement in the body paragraphs enables the writer to keep his/her essay on track. The writer provides arguments concerning a contentious point in order to persuade the reader to agree with those particular claims in the argumentative writing (Chandrasegaran, 2008; Liu & Stapleton, 2014; Liu, 2017).

5.5 Sessions for inter-rater reliability

In order to achieve the inter-rater reliability and validity, researchers (rater A) and rater B (a junior lecturer in Applied Linguistics) worked separately to identify the categories of the thesis statement and types and the sub-types of supporting details within the body paragraphs. The inter-rater reliability was the cornerstone that secured the reliability and validity of the current study. A total of 88 essays were collected by taking photos of hard copies by rater A in person, which were then transcribed into word documents. Afterward, they identified the categories of the thesis statement and types and the sub-types of body paragraphs in the 88 sample essays, respectively. The two raters resolved discrepancies through discussion and negotiation until agreement was reached.

6 Results and Discussions

Eighty-eight argumentative essays were analyzed by examining three dimensions of the placement and patterns of the thesis statement, and the extent to which the central ideas in body paragraphs respond to the thesis statement for the rhetorical coherence. The authors present descriptive frequencies of each pattern with qualitative analysis to answer the research questions. Sampled excerpts from the data were incorporated with the interpretation of results.

6.1 Distribution of the placement of thesis statement

Of the 88 argumentative essays analyzed, only 2 argumentative essays did not present a thesis statement. Thus, the two essays were excluded from the analysis of placement. Altogether, 86 argumentative essays were analyzed in regard to the placement of the thesis statement.

Table 2.

Placement of Thesis Statement

	TI	TM	TC
Percentage	90.91%	1.14%	5.68%
Quantity	80	1	5

Table 2 showed that 86 thesis statements were presented initially in the introductory paragraph (TI pattern) representing, taking up 90.91%, and only five thesis statements were presented at the conclusive paragraph (TC pattern), accounting for 5.68%, and a majority of the essays had the thesis statement in the first paragraph (see Table 2).

The TM pattern indicated the inductive rhetorical organization. **Excerpt 1** presented the thesis statement in the 2nd. body paragraph with some inductive features identified.

Excerpt 1

(Topic 1: introductory and 2nd paragraph): China, the biggest developing country in the world, which contains 1.3 billion people. China develops rapidly. But it does not mean that Chinese will replace English as the new global language.

Today, more and more people pay attention to one question – Why the global language is English? We should change it to Chinese! If Chinese replaces English as the new global language, that means I can travel around the world without language barriers. All people in the world say Chinese. That is pretty! *I stand at the opposite side. It is bad when Chinese replaces English as the new global language.* **Chinese is difficult to understand, and China is not powerful enough.**

It is evident that the writer delayed presenting the thesis statement, placing it at the end of the 2nd body paragraph (see underlined). Further, this was similar to the TI pattern, except for the fact that more details were presented to narrow down the focus for the argument before introducing the thesis statement. Therefore, deferred as it was, the writer could put his/her central argument after supporting details in 2nd body paragraph. **Excerpt 1** could be classified as an inductive rhetorical organization, an acceptable reasoning in English argumentative writing.

With regard to the TI pattern, about 90% of the sample essays located the thesis statement in the initial location in the introductory paragraph. Contrary to this, Liu (2017) claimed that only 4.23% Chinese EFL students tended to use a *"kai-men-jian-shan"* rhetorical pattern by placing the thesis statement as the opening sentence of an essay in her study. Furthermore, Liu (2017) attributed the low rate of *"kai-men-jian-shan"* pattern to the students without critical thinking skills despite their advanced English proficiency. This would be a typical case of students from a foreign language university in China. In fact, Chinese students have been exposed to Western rhetoric in a more immersive way, and eventually, they would write in such a way. Furthermore, Chinese students' preference for "*kai-men-jian-shan*" pattern in L1 was likely transferred to their L2 writings (Liu, 2007). It was assumed that sampled subjects in both Liu (2017) and Liu (2007) were constrained with their L2 writing proficiency, and time for completing the tasks.

6.1.1 Rhetorical features of introductory paragraph

Since Table 2 illustrated that 90% of the sample essays presented the thesis statement at the beginning of the introductory paragraph, this suggests that the sampled students were more inclined to use deductive organization to argue their thesis. It is tentatively concluded that the sampled students acquired a good sense of Western rhetoric in their L2 writing. It is worth mentioning that the contemporary inclination for rhetorical organizations in Chinese has altered (Kirkpatrick, 1997; Qi, 2011; Liu, 2017) due to literary exposure to Western rhetoric. Most likely, both deductive and inductive organizations have co-existed in Chinese rhetorical practice and vice versa across ESL/EFL writing in China. Thus, the current findings falsified the overwhelming negative transfer of rhetorical organizations from L1 to L2. CR researchers should be cautious about holding an ethnocentric view of rhetorical organizations, as claimed by Connor (1996a, 1996b, 2004, 2005) and Li (1996, 2014).

The high rates of initial placement of the thesis statement indicated the sampled students had CR awareness of Western rhetorical organizations in L2 writing. Furthermore, the instructions assisted a positive role in shaping students writing up rhetorical organizations at the discourse level. In addition, such features could be attributed to their advanced L2 proficiency level in English, supported by their enhanced intercultural awareness.

6.2 Features of thesis statement

Thesis statements were classified into four categories based on features of the thesis statement.

Table 3.
Categories of Thesis Statement

	Non-TS	Formal TS	Incomplete TS	Standard TS
Quantity	7	51	11	19
Percentage	7.95%	57.95%	12.50%	21.60%

6.2.1 Non-thesis statement

The pattern of Non-thesis statement displayed the lowest proportion, being at 7.95% (7/88). Either essays without the thesis statement or TC pattern failed to frame the argument on the focused points to convince the reader convinced. Subsequently, a total of 7 essays were labeled as Non-thesis statement.

6.2.2 Formal thesis statement

The Formal thesis statement pattern accounted for the highest proportion, 57.95% (51/88). The sampled students clearly displayed their standpoints, but without supporting details being developed in paragraphs. In other words, they were able to write up their thesis statements, rather than to support supporting details. They tended to be unable to develop supporting details to support their thesis statements adequately. In order to provide a panoramic overview of the essay, the thesis statement should contain two rhetorical elements: the writer's standpoints and the supporting details that will be developed for the argument presented in the essay.

In other words, the discursive relationship between the thesis statement and the supporting details in body paragraphs is seen since the writer did not provide any relevant evidence to present supporting details about why he/she took that position corresponding to the topic sentence within the thesis statement as the topic sentence merely serves to respond to a sub-issue framed in the thesis statement.

Excerpt 2

(Topic 2: introductory paragraph)

Celebrities these days all live like princes and princesses. They drive sports car. They wear expensive clothes. They live in houses that are too big for them. Meanwhile, ordinary people earn unexpected low salaries, considering what they have done. *However, **two reasons** can explain why it is fair that celebrities earn much more money than ordinary people.*

Excerpt 3

(Topic 1: introductory paragraph)

Since the development of China is fast beyond people's imagination, the idea that Chinese will replace English as the new global language in the future has been taken into people's consideration. *Personally, I think it is a good opinion -- Chinese instead of English becomes the global language, for the **following two points**.*

The sampled excerpts shared a common feature in a formal discursive relationship between the thesis statement and the entire discourse presented. It was noted that the thesis statement did not govern development of content in the corresponding paragraphs. Thus, the discursive relationship was seen between the thesis statement and its central ideas in body paragraphs. Although, the majority of sampled students tended to be competent in writing deductive organizations, overall the thesis statements lacked effectiveness and profundity. It was tentatively assumed that the logical thinking abilities for sampled students were still in the developmental phase. The focused instructions on writing the thesis statements in relation with the topic sentence and paragraphs should be strengthened so that they could raise

students' CR awareness. To some extent, the current findings contradicted Wu's (2003), Qi's (2011), and Liu's (2017) conclusions.

6.2.3 Incomplete thesis statement

Only 12.5% of the students had an incomplete thesis statement. Each of these papers provided a clear position with two or three supporting details to support their claims. However, some of the body paragraphs digressed significantly from the thesis statement. Therefore, the incomplete thesis statement failed to frame all the details on the topic. Hence, use of the thesis statement to frame corresponding topic sentences and supporting details was only partially developed.

Excerpt 4

(Topic 1: introductory paragraph) Zhang Ziyi, a famous Chinese actress, is paid more than ten thousand yuan every second for advertisements. However, an ordinary middle school teacher, who tries his/her best to work, can only earn about ten thousand yuan every month. *Is that fair? Considering the reasons behind celebrities' high income and what they sacrifice, it is fair for celebrities to earn more than ordinary individuals.*

(Topic 1: 1st. body paragraph) **Firstly, celebrities play important roles in culture development.** They produce cultural works. They create memories. They carry emotions. These are the reasons behind their high income.

(Topic 1: 2nd. body paragraph) **Secondly, celebrities earn more but also pay more. What they sacrifice first is privacy.** Unlike ordinary individuals who can determine what to do themselves, celebrities are shaped by their companies as well as their fans. It is reasonable for them to earn more, because after all they pay more.

6.2.4 Standard thesis statement

Finally, 21.60% of the students had a Standard thesis statement in their essays. Meaning they clearly set the scope of discussion by providing supporting details. The effectiveness and profundity were well developed between the thesis statement and its body paragraphs. It was tentatively concluded that the sampled students acquired an intercultural awareness across CR in the course instruction and L2 writing proficiency to produce a thesis statement that outlined the discourse unity.

The intercultural rhetorical awareness of the sampled students was definably higher than that of the English majors in previous studies (Wu, 2003; Liu, 2017) due to the optimal English context and intercultural exchanges at the university. The effective instruction on L2 writing strategies played a role across the course. They tended to perceive the audience, their role, the key standpoint as a writer, and to write up sound supporting details for the argument in writing.

Excerpt 5

(Topic 1: introductory paragraph)

China made a deep impression on the world in the last 40 years. The rise of China has impacted many fields where the western world was in charge. …*In my opinion, it is a bad thing for research & digital technologies.*

(Topic 1: 1st. body paragraph)

In the field of research, turning Chinese into the global language will lead to chaos… Moreover, many foundations of some new subjects are only used in English. Researchers will have a lot of trouble turning English into Chinese. So does programmers.

(Topic 1: 2nd. body paragraph)

In the field of digital technology, English is a much more efficient language comparing to

Chinese... Computers are much faster processing English than processing Chinese. We may consume more time when updating the computers.

6.3 Coherence between the thesis statement and body paragraphs

The Incomplete TS and Standard TS patterns in sampled essays were excluded based on our classification of the thesis statement, while only 30 essays chosen contained supporting details relevant to complete two paragraphs. Moreover, supporting details in body paragraphs directly contributed to the rhetorical coherence corresponding to the topic sentence and the thesis statement.

6.3.1 Coherence between the thesis statement and each body paragraph

The patterns of coherent relations between the thesis statement and each body paragraph were classified as the follows: 1) The body paragraph failed to respond to the thesis statement; 2) The body paragraph partially responded to the thesis statement; 3) The body paragraph exactly responded to the thesis statement. The three kinds of relationships were classified as "Coherent Pattern," "Partially-coherent Pattern" and "Non-coherent Pattern" respectively.

Table 4.

Three Patterns of Body Paragraph

	Coherent	Coherent - Partial Coherent - Non-Coherent			Non-coherent
		The sub-pattern 1	The sub-pattern 2	The sub-pattern 3	
Types	28	5	15	8	4
Percentage	46.67%	8.33%	25.00%	13.33%	6.67%

Of all the body paragraphs (the 1st and 2nd body paragraphs in 30 essays) analyzed, around 46% body paragraphs were classified as Coherent Pattern, whereas about 53% body paragraphs were classified as one or more of three partially-coherent sub-patterns. The two patterns represented by 'coherent and partially-coherent' were the dominant patterns, despite the various quality of argumentation. In other words, the sampled students tended to write coherent and partial coherent body paragraphs to respond to the thesis statement accordingly. Thus, we conclude that the Non Coherent Pattern was relatively minor and insignificant.

1) coherent pattern of body paragraph

The Coherent Pattern reflected that a high degree of coherence was connected between a body paragraph and its thesis statement. The argument introduced in a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph was adequately demonstrated by examples: data or evidence in one body paragraph. The essay was well developed with logical and substantial evidence.

Excerpt 6

(Topic 1: introductory paragraph)...singers and actors as celebrities earn much more than ordinary individuals mentioned above. Not surprisingly, some may argue whether it is fair or not. *However, celebrities gain their fair rewards because they not only create business value for other industries, but also take responsibility to guide the populace.*

(Topic 1: 2nd. body paragraph)

Second, celebrities also take responsibility to guide the populace. The words and actions of celebrities have a great influence on guiding the populace. When the earthquake happened in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, celebrities donated a great amount of money and other living necessary resources to people who were in need. Therefore, the fans of these celebrities and other people who learned about the news also gave helping hands. Some singers even wrote songs to encourage people suffering from pain and sadness. The effects the celebrities made were to appeal the populace, to attract them to pay attention to social events, and to guide them to take social responsibility. This is what ordinary individuals couldn't manage to do.

The ideas (in bold) in the topic sentence were fully supported by the examples in 2nd body paragraph. The body paragraph exactly responded to the corresponding thesis statement.

2) partially-coherent patterns of body paragraph

The supporting details established a coherent relationship with its thesis statement. However, they tended not to be closely relevant to the corresponding topic sentence. Three sub-patterns in body paragraphs were identified and examined to the extent they partially responded to the topic sentence.

① sub-pattern 1 of partially-coherent pattern

In sub-pattern 1, the body paragraph responded to the claims in its thesis statement by its topic sentence. However, further supporting details did not support the corresponding topic sentence.

Excerpt 7

> (Topic 2: introductory paragraph)…*However, I regard it as a completely fair phenomena. I will prove it by **following two reasons: objective market rule, short career.***
>
> (Topic 2: 2$^{nd.}$ body paragraph): *Observing the celebrities, there is a fact that though they could earn much money; however, their careers did not last too long.* Thus, it's a kind of trade-off. Celebrities spend a short but precious ten years, and gain plenty of money, etc.

The topic sentence in 2nd body paragraph was consistent with the claim "short career" in its thesis statement. In order to support the claim, the essay did not provide solid evidence or specific cases to elaborate it. However, the author merely described an example without presenting supporting details to develop the claim. The short careers of celebrities were not demonstrated properly. A standpoint without sound supporting evidence could hardly convince readers to agree with his/her position. Therefore, the supporting details in the 2nd body paragraph in **Excerpt 7** were not organized in a persuasive manner.

② sub-pattern 2 of partially-coherent pattern

One of the supporting details was not completely presented in a body paragraph or body paragraphs, which contained extra topics not claimed in the thesis statement.

Excerpt 8

> (Topic 2: introductory paragraph)…*And my answer is: Yes, it's fair for*
>
> *them because of their tired and irregular job schedule, the efforts they have paid for years and the wonderful work admired by the audience.*
>
> (Topic 2: 1st body paragraph)… *Firstly, it's frequently for celebrities to have a very tired and irregular job schedule, sometimes they may get hurt during the working time.* For example, …

In **Excerpt 8**, the 1st body paragraph discussed both the irregular schedule and the risks which celebrities might encounter in their working time, while the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph did not present any supporting details about the dangers of being a celebrity. However, the supporting details in paragraphs did provide a new standpoint, which did not respond to the

claims in the thesis statement. The development in the 2nd body paragraph obviously digressed from the topic. The development of supporting details and the scope failed to respond to the thesis statement in a substantial way. Thus, the less focused and relevant content weakened the persuasiveness of this argument.

③ the sub-pattern 3 -- partially-coherent pattern

A partial coherent body paragraph was characterized by its indirect argument. The specific supporting details did not provide a clear standpoint for the argument to be developed in the body paragraphs.

Excerpt 9

> (Topic 1: introductory paragraph)... Some people assert that it is thrilling, while many others argue that this is a negative thing. _Personally, I am in favor of the former view, since it is beneficial for China and Chinese._
>
> (Topic 3: body paragraph1) To begin with, China benefits a lot, provided that Chinese becomes a new global language. By that I mean, the international status of China will improve...
>
> (Topic 1: 2nd. body paragraph) _In the second place, it is more convenient for Chinese people to go abroad..._

In **Excerpt 9**, the writer did not elaborate the specific benefits claimed in the thesis statement. However, the 1st and 2nd body paragraphs further presented the benefits as the "improvement of China's international status" and "convenience for travel" in the sub-arguments. In other words, the supporting details did not focus on the thesis statement in the entire essay. Consequently, the framing function of the thesis statement was not fully realized. The rhetorical coherence between a thesis statement and its body paragraphs was digressive.

To conclude, about 46% of the body paragraphs tended to respond to the claims in the thesis statement. However, 53% of the supporting details in body paragraphs tended to be loosely-connected to in response to the thesis statement. It was assumed that the patterns above were attributed to a transfer of Chinese dialectical rhetorical styles or the sampled students were constrained by developmental factors in L2 proficiency, and lack of sound ideas for the topic. Earlier, Chen & Sanchez (2001), Liu (2007), and Liu & Furneaux (2014) also claimed the similar transferred phenomenon in their studies.

The sampled students bear a good sense of intercultural awareness in their L2 writing, and they tended to write deductively across L2 tasks. However, their actual supporting detail organization was somewhat digressive and weakened readers' expectations in terms of persuasiveness. The results suggested that a gap existed between sampled deductive-argumentative essays and the sampled students' actual competence in writing with consistent rhetorical quality in the way of organized arguments. This mirrors the current reality of the sampled students in aspects of logical thinking, intercultural awareness of L2 writing, and their overall writing skills.

3) non-coherent pattern of body paragraph

The Non-Coherent Pattern referred to those body paragraphs that totally digress from the claims presented in the thesis statement. Thus, rhetorical coherence was barely seen between body paragraphs and the thesis statement. Since only four body paragraphs were classified as representing this pattern, it has not been discussed further.

6.4 Coherence between the thesis statement and its body paragraphs

Distributions of five patterns of body paragraphs in sampled essays illustrated the degree of coherence between the thesis statement and its Body Paragraphs in the chart.
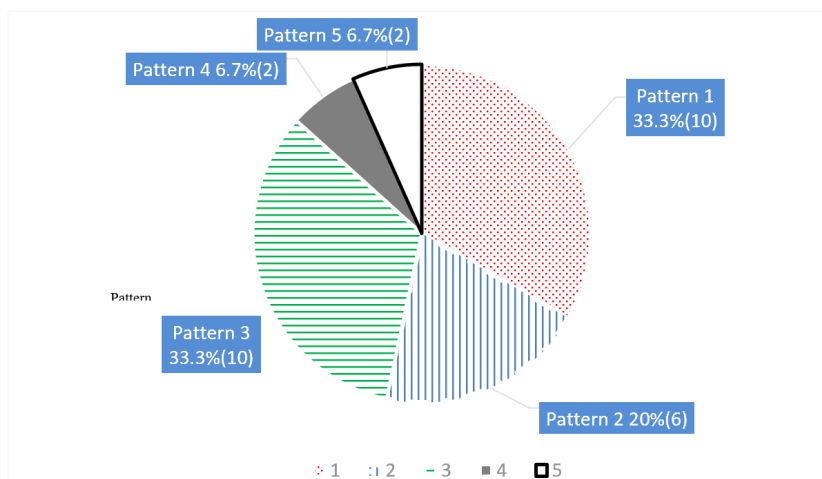
Figure 3. Distributions of Patterns in Body Paragraphs of the Sampled Essays

Pattern 1: the coherent pattern across two body paragraphs; Pattern 2: one coherent paragraph and one partially-coherent paragraph; Pattern 3: two partially-coherent paragraphs; Pattern 4: a coherent paragraph and a non-coherent paragraph; and Pattern 5: one partially-coherent paragraph and a non-coherent paragraph.

Of all the 30 argumentative essays, the distributions of Pattern 1 and Pattern 3 accounted for about 33% (10/30) across body paragraphs, which showed that the rhetorical organizations were characterized between the coherent pattern across two body paragraphs and two only partially-coherent paragraphs. Pattern 1 did present the claims in 1st and 2nd body paragraphs to directly respond to their corresponding thesis statements, indicating a high degree of rhetorical persuasiveness in arguments, whereas Pattern 3 carrying two partially-coherent paragraphs, showing that the claims across 1st and 2nd body paragraphs partially responded to the claims of the thesis statement. The pattern presented a relatively low degree of rhetorical persuasiveness in arguments. Noticeably, Pattern 2 was sandwiched between 1 and 3, with one coherent paragraph and one partially-coherent paragraph, not focusing on developing claims in the line of arguments to respond to the thesis statement on the discourse level. Thus, Pattern 2 tended to be partially digressive in rhetorical coherence across either two paragraphs. Patterns 4 and 5 were insignificant in distribution.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Summary of major findings

The sampled Chinese-EFL learners tended to write Standard thesis statement, Formal thesis statement, the Incomplete thesis statement and Non-thesis statement in the introductory paragraph, and each pattern and sub-pattern of Placement of thesis statement differentiated the quality of arguments, whilst these patterns contributed themselves to the degree of effective, less effective, and discursive in the argument as a writer at the level of discourse. These patterns directly mirrored their L2 writing abilities, intercultural awareness for constructing the arguments on the text level, and individual developmental factors to cope with the writing tasks across sampled L2 writers.

The features of the rhetorical organizations in the sample essays showed that 92.05% sampled Chinese-EFL learners tended to employ deductive rhetorical organizations to write their essays. Of all the argumentative essays, over 50% sampled essays did not exhibit a thesis statement, therefore, carrying a discourse connection with its topic sentences in body paragraphs. 34.1% of the sampled essays

did present the thesis statement; however, the supporting details in body paragraphs appeared to be discursive with its thesis statement. In terms of patterns across two body paragraphs in responding to the thesis statement in the sampled 30 essays, only 33% essays showed a high degree of rhetorical coherence between the thesis statement and two body paragraphs; whereas other patterns exhibited a variety of low degree of rhetorical coherence between the thesis statement and two body paragraphs. Although almost all sampled students did present a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph, the development of body paragraphs classified in five sub-patterns greatly varied in the aspect of quality and persuasiveness.

The high frequency of the sampled essays tended to employ deductive organizations, specific contents did not present supporting details to respond to the thesis statements presented in the introductory paragraph. The dominance of deductive-rhetorical organization and various sub-rhetorical patterns across two body paragraphs indicated that the sampled Chinese students had various levels of writing competence and CR awareness for intercultural communication.

On the level of Coherence between One Body Paragraph and its thesis statement Coherence, there are four patterns, namely Coherent Pattern of Body Paragraph, Partially-coherent Pattern of Body Paragraph, and Non-coherent Pattern of Body Paragraph. The three patterns showed the degrees of the development of arguments in body paragraphs and how writers responded to the thesis statement to achieve the coherence. Particularly, the development of supporting details across patterns 2 and 3 tended not to be adequately developed, or well elaborated in the thesis statements. In the majority of the thesis statements containing claims, pattern 1 showed that the degree of coherence between the thesis statement and two body paragraphs appeared to be well developed, while the other two patterns and sub-patterns did not achieve the coherence with weak argumentative organizations.

The author tentatively concluded that the sampled students tended to be able to write the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. However, they were not able to develop supporting details to substantially respond to claims for the effective arguments, due to deficiencies in their developmental factors and logical thinking. Concerning features of rhetorical organization in L2 argumentative writings by the sampled students, they tended to know the role of the thesis statement, topic sentence, supporting details in the body paragraph, and coherence between the thesis statement and the development of supporting details. However, rhetorical organization and development of argumentative ideas in the sampled writing did not entirely conform the standard English rhetoric and expectation of native English readers. In spite of acquiring sound English proficiency through instructions in the high school and at the university, they actually differentiated themselves in writing performance, intercultural rhetorical awareness, and time-constraints in completing the current writing tasks.

7.2 Pedagogical implications for L2 writing instruction at the tertiary level

Persuasiveness is an indispensable factor in intercultural communications, particularly in the context of globalization. L2 writing is a dynamic and intercultural process, rather than a fixed one. EFL teachers should instruct students to understand and internalize brainstorming, cognitive processes, drafting, peer-conferencing, peer-editing, and intercultural awareness for effective L2 writing (Raimes, 1983; Connor, 2004).

EFL teachers should explicitly instruct students that a thesis statement contains both a writer's standpoint and their controlling ideas. To ensure well-written Rhetorical Coherence in the body paragraphs, more specific teacher's instruction and feedback, and focused tasks related to rhetorical organizations should be carried out throughout the course. In the L2 writing practice in China, more effective instructions should focus on raising rhetorical awareness about intercultural communication through practices, engaging students in brainstorming, noticing, rhetorical coherence on the paragraph level, and providing teacher's feedback on the aspects above.

EFL writing syllabi in China should specifically focus on raising students' intercultural and

rhetorical awareness across L2 writing pedagogy, designing graded tasks, and incorporating process-oriented method in practice. Additionally, Chinese EFL students should be instructed to be aware of the similarities and differences between rhetorical organizations from both Chinese and Western contexts. In globalized academia and professional spheres, EAP/ESP writing students and teachers are confronted not only with the prioritization of certain goals and expectations but also with negotiations between local and global concerns that arise from the globalized communities in which they dwell (Qi and Zhang, 2015). Therefore, CR studies into rhetorical organizations in L2 writing must be revisited and reinforced to advance our CR knowledge, practice, and pedagogical reflections.

References

Anker, S. (1998). *Real Writing.* USA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Baker, S. (1984). *The complete stylist and handbook* (3rd. ed.). New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Chandrasegaran, A. (2008). NNS students' arguments in English: Observations in formal and informal contexts. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17, 237-254.

Chen, C., & Sanchez, C. (2001). Cultural thinking and discourse organizational

patterns influencing writing skills in a Chinese English as a foreign-language (EFL) learner. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *25*(4), 627-652.

Chen, J. (2008). An investigation into the preference for discourse patterns in the

Chinese EFL learning context. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 18*(2), 188-221.

Connor, U. (1996a). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U. (1996b). *Writing in multicultural settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U. (2004). Intercultural rhetoric research: Beyond texts. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes,* 3, 291-304.

Connor, U. (2005). Comment on "Toward critical contrastive rhetoric" by Ryuko Hamp-Lyons, L. & Zhang, B. W. X. (2001). *World Englishes*: *Issues in and from academic writing assessment. Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. (Eds.). by J. Flowerdew and M. Peacock. Cambridge Applied Linguistics. Series editors: Michael Long & Jack Richards. Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U., Ed Nagelhout, E. and Rozycki, W. (2011) *Contrastive rhetoric reaching to intercultural rhetoric*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company

Hamp-Lyons, L. & Zhang, B. W. (2001). World Englishes: Issues in and from academic writing assessment. In J. Flowerdew & M. Peacock(eds). *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Henry, A. & R. L. Roseberry. (1977). An investigation of the functions, strategies

and linguistic features of the introductions and conclusions of essays. *System, 25*, 479-495.

Kanar, C. C. (2011). *The college writer* (5th ed.). Beijing: Beijing University Press.

Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning*, *16*, 1-20.

Kaplan, R. B., & Grabe, W. (1989). Writing a second language: Contrastive rhetoric. In D. Johnson & D. Roen (Eds.), *Richnesss in writing.*(pp. 263-283). New York: Longman.

Kirkpatrick, A. (1995). Chinese rhetoric: Methods of argument. *Multilingua*, 14 (3), 271-295.

Kirkpatrick, A. (1997). Traditional Chinese text structures and their influence in the writing in Chinese and English of contemporary mainland Chinese students. *Journal of second language writing,* 6 (3), 233-244.

Kobayashi, H. (1984). Rhetorical patterns in English and Japanese. *TESOL Quarterly,* 18 (4), 737-738.

Kubota, R. (1997). A re-evaluation of the uniqueness of Japanese written discourse: Implications for Contrastive Rhetoric. *Written communication*, 14 (4), 460-480.

Kubota, R., & Lehner, A. (2004). Toward critical contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*(1), 7-27.

Leki, I. (1991). Twenty-five years of contrastive rhetoric: Text analysis and writing pedagogies. *TESOL Quarterly, 1*, 123-143.

Li X. M. (1996). *Good writing in cross-culture context*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Li X. M. (2014). Are "Cultural differences a mere fiction"?: Reflections and arguments on contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 25*, 104-113.

Liu, F., & Stapleton, P. (2014). Counter-argumentation and the cultivation of critical thinking in argumentative writing: Investigating wash-back from a high-stakes test. *System, 45*, 117-128.

Liu, J. H. (2007). Placement of the thesis statement in English and Chinese Argumentative Essays: A Study of Contrastive Rhetoric. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, 47*, 789-807.

Liu L. (2005) Rhetorical education through writing instruction across cultures: A comparative analysis of select online instructional materials on argumentative writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 14*, 1-18.

Liu, X., & Furneaux, C. (2014). A multidimensional comparison of discourse organization in English and Chinese university students' argumentative writing. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 24*(1), 74-96.

Matalene, C. (1985). Contrastive rhetoric: An American writing teacher in China. *College English, 47*(8), 789-808.

Mohan, B. A., and W. A-Y Lo. (1985). Academic writing and Chinese students: Transfer and developmental factors. *TESOL Quarterly, 19*(3), 515-534.

Ostler, S. E. (2002). Contrastive rhetoric: An expanding paradigm. In Flowerdew, J. (Ed.) *Academic discourse*. Longman. London: Pearson Education.

Raimes, A. (1983). *Techniques in teaching writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Raimes, A. (1991). Out of the words: emerging traditions in the teaching of writing. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*(3), 407-430.

Richards J. (1992). *Longman dictionary of language teaching & applied linguistic*. Longman Group UK Limited.

Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research and its implications. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(4), 657-677.

Silverman, J., Hughes, E., & D. R. Wienbroer. (2004). *Shortcuts for the student writer*. Blacklick, OH: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing.

Sullivan, K. E. (1989). *Paragraph practice*. USA: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Sullivan, A. S. (1994). *The effects of topic choice and prompts on student writing and student attitude about writing*. University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Toulmin, S. (1986).*The uses of argument.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Liu, D. H. (2017). Rhetorical features of the thesis statement of EFL learners. *Journal of Teaching English Writing and Research,* 1, 69-77.

Liu, M. H. (2013). *Reading and writing for argumentative essay*-The English argumentative writing course. Beijing: Tsing University Press.

Qi, F. (2011). The features of rhetorical patterns of the argumentative writing by Chinese EFL students and some pedagogical reflections on teaching EFL writing, *Journal of China Foreign Languages Education*, 4 (4), 11-19.

Qi, F, and Zhang, J. (2015). 40 years' empirical studies into L2 writing organizations from perspectives of contrastive rhetoric, J*ournal of China Foreign Languages,* 6, 48-57.

Unger, C. (2008). *Genre, relevance and global coherence.* Beijing: Beijing World Publishing Corporation.

Wu, Q. (2003). A survey of discourse features of EFL argumentative writings by students of the tertiary level. *Journal of foreign languages*, *11* (2), 35-42.

Qi Fang, Prof. of applied linguistics, Academic interests: Contrastive Rhetoric, L2 learning strategies and AEP/ESP writing. Qi Fang teaches at English Dept., Shenzhen University, PR. China

Lu Yu, research assistant in language corpus, works at Zhuiyi Technology Ltd. Company in Shenzhen.

Jiang Cheng, graduate student at English Dept., Shenzhen University, PR. China.