

Rhetorical diversity and the implications for teaching academic English

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Contrastive rhetoric has been studied since the 1960s, but its significance in the practice and pedagogy of teaching academic English is now more important than ever due to the expansion of English Medium Instruction. As Kaplan (1966) noted, L2 students' research papers can often seem "out of focus" because they are employing a rhetoric and sequence of thought which "violate the expectations of the native reader" (p. 13). Exploring this cultural impact on university-level student writing in English is the focus of a joint research project between Tsinghua University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Cambridge University supported by the Tsinghua University Initiative Scientific Research Programme. Using corpora of Chinese L1 student writing in English, research conducted by Tsinghua and Hong Kong PolyU shows that linking words or connectives are a rhetorical problem for Chinese L1 students due to a misunderstanding and improper presentation of logico-semantic relations between discourse units.

Keywords: L2 writing; contrastive rhetoric; cohesion; linking words; academic literacy

Introduction

In 1966 Robert B. Kaplan noted that it is a "fallacy of some repute and some duration [...] that because a student can write an adequate essay in his native language, he can necessarily write an adequate essay in a second language" (Kaplan, 1966, p. 13), therewith founding the field which was to become known as *contrastive rhetoric*, the study of how a person's first language and culture may influence their writing in a second language. Whilst Kaplan's diagram of five cultural traditions has been the source of much criticism, the central tenet of his article remains true to this day: namely, that different languages, and by extension, different cultures, both national as well as disciplinary, operate within different rhetorical paradigms. It is this rhetorical transfer, the transfer of first-language influenced argumentative approaches and patterns which is one of the main difficulties that international postgraduate students tend to face when writing in English.

Contrastive rhetoric was notably taken up by the US-based Finnish scholar, Ulla Connor in her numerous studies into what she later re-termed *intercultural rhetoric* (Connor, 2011). Yet a defining contribution to this debate was made by John Hinds in

1987 in his article on reader versus writer responsibility, a distinction he used to describe language typology and the expectations of the reader, noting that in English “effective written communication [...] is the sole provenance of the writer” (Hinds, 1987, p. 152), whereby readers’ lack of understanding is not due to the fact that they have not exerted sufficient effort to understand, but that the writer has not been sufficiently clear enough. Reader-responsible languages, by contrast, charge readers with the responsibility to extract the meaning from the text. Hinds went on to further refine these culture-specific patterns of organization into discourse styles: deductive, inductive, and quasi-inductive (Hinds, 1990).

This distinction in the expectations of the reader, and thereby also the role of the writer, in different rhetorical paradigms is the key difficulty faced by L1 Mandarin speakers learning academic English at tertiary level because Mandarin and English are respectively examples of reader versus writer responsibility. Within the UK context, there are now almost as many Chinese students (23%) on full-time postgraduate courses at English universities as there are British students (26%) (UKCISA, 2016). Helping them transition to new expectations in written academic literacy is imperative for UK Higher Education Institutions. Within the Chinese context, many postgraduates are expected to publish in English; the same being true in Hong Kong, where many degree courses are delivered through the medium of English. Through a joint research project we are exploring these influences on academic writing in English and the implications for teaching.

This paper gives an overview of the corpus-based research being carried out on L2-student writing looking at the frequency differences of linking words (Swales & Feak, 2009) at both Tsinghua University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University, followed by a discussion of how the results of this research are informing international student academic literacy support at the University of Cambridge.

Case Study 1: Tsinghua University

Due to internationalization, the ability to publish articles in academic journals abroad has become an increasing need for Chinese PhD candidates. This case study explores rhetorical issues in Chinese students’ academic writing by comparing the frequency of some linking words and phrases¹ used by Tsinghua PhD candidates and L1 scholars in research articles.

Why linking words?

First, the research article is a difficult genre both rhetorically and culturally for second or foreign language students (Bliss, 2001) because it requires a large amount of abstract reasoning and coherence in building logical relationships in the text. Moreover, different cultures have different rhetorical conventions, particularly for those whose culture is different from Anglo-American conventions. It has long been highlighted by contrastive rhetoric (e.g., Connor, 1996, 2002; Kaplan, 1966, 2000; Lee, 2004) that Chinese students’ writing is often incoherent and inexplicit as a consequence of insufficient rhetorical language, for instance, metadiscourse, used to signpost the logical relationship between ideas.

Second, academic writing is dominated by argument. Whether a reader believes what is stated in a research article depends not only on “the demonstration of absolute truth”, but also on the particular forms of persuasion (Hyland, 2005, p. 66). There are two opposing beliefs concerning whether rhetoric is relevant to academic discourse. The

traditional belief maintains that academic writing represents facts objectively (Lemke, 1995); while the modern one represented by Hyland believes that a successful academic text reveals truth or proof by involving the rhetorical construction of a convincing writer. He suggests that academic discourse should be viewed as “the use of various devices to enhance persuasiveness in order to appropriately frame disciplinary submission [...] Among the most important of these are metadiscourse markers” (Hyland, 2005, pp. 66-67). Metadiscourse markers are linking words and phrases that help to gel sentences and messages together by connections signalling relationships between ideas rather than a random collection of unrelated sentences. The current study builds on Hyland’s view by proposing that an effective academic writer should utilize metadiscourse to link ideas or to make transitions from one idea to the next and even to involve the reader in the text. An experienced academic writer turns to rhetoric to produce explicit, coherent and logical texts. According to Hyland (2005), metadiscourse not only plays a linguistic role but also rhetorical and pragmatic roles. In this study, metadiscourse is viewed as a rhetorical strategy writers apply to produce coherent and logical academic discourse. The focus is on the frequency of some linking words and phrases (proposed by Swales & Feak, 2009) used by Chinese PhD students and L1 scholars in research articles.

Those “linking words and phrases can help a writer maintain flow and establish clear relationships between ideas” (Swales & Feak, 2009, p. 27) to achieve cohesion. Case 1 reports a comparative study of these linking words and phrases comparing the academic writing of Chinese English learners and L1 scholars. The study looked for cultural impact reflected in rhetorical patterns by attempting to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences between the frequency of the linking words and phrases used by Chinese PhD students and L1 academic scholars?
2. Do Chinese students have preferences in employing certain linking words and phrases?
3. Are Chinese students influenced by their native language in using linking words and phrases? If yes, what are the causes and consequences?

Data collection

This case study compares 160 term papers collected from Tsinghua University first year PhD candidates with equal numbers from four disciplines: physics, life sciences, materials science, and computer science with 160 published articles taken equally from the same 4 disciplines (Table 1). The term papers were written under the supervision of students’ English instructors with respect to language and structure but the instructors’ interventions were small given the fact that each instructor is responsible for about 100 papers in a semester. The published papers were selected from high impact journals (Table 2). The criteria for selection were the authors’ names and affiliations. The latter is important because lecturing at universities in English-speaking countries suggests their English should be native-like. Although there will be a qualitative gap between L1 scholars’ published articles and Tsinghua PhD students’ academic papers, the former provides a reference for the latter because the students’ purpose in writing academic papers in English is to publish them in well-known English language journals.

Data results

A comparison of the frequencies of linking words and phrases (Table 3) provides four interesting insights. Firstly, L1 scholars use more linking words and phrases than Chinese students (higher in 22 out of 35 items). Sometimes more than three times more, such as *however* in adversativity used as sentence connector, *in spite of*, *i.e.*, *in contrast*, and *conversely*; while *for example*, *furthermore*, *nevertheless*, *despite*, *because*, *as a result*, *consequently*, *hence*, *thus*, and *due to* are about twice as frequent. Two words: *although* and *while* are about a third more frequently used. There is little difference with *since*, *therefore*, *however* for contrast as sentence connector, and *unlike*.

Table 1. Comparison of the corpora

Discipline	Chinese PhD students		L1 scholars	
	Paper	N	Paper	N
Materials Science	40	88592	40	215998
Computer Science and Engineering	40	105509	40	356254
Physics	40	92498	40	121889
Life Sciences	40	99678	40	232457
Total	160	385889	160	926598

Table 2. Impact factors of the journals

Discipline	Journal	Impact factor
Materials Science	Journal of the American Ceramic Society	2.780
	Advanced Functional Materials	12.311
Computer Science and Engineering	Computer-aided Design	1.957
	Computer Communications	1.625
Physics	Applied Physics Letters	3.569
	Physical Review Letters	7.36
Life Sciences	American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology	4.416
	Human Molecular Genetics	6.850

Secondly, Chinese PhD students use the following linking words and phrases more than L1 scholars: *in addition*, *moreover*, *because of*, *on the contrary*, *even though*, *as a result of*, *in other words*, *that is*, *whereas*, *on the other hand*, *for instance*, and *in fact*. The first four are used at least twice as often.

Thirdly, L1 scholars use *i.e.* a lot more than Chinese students (92 vs. 16), while Chinese students use *that is* (24 vs. 16) more often.

Fourthly, perhaps because of first language influence, there are certain mistakes Chinese students are inclined to make, such as *However...but* and *in addition...also* which the Chinese tend to use together. Chinese students also often confuse *because* with *because of*. The following are examples of some typical mistakes Chinese students have made in their writing:

- P24: **Although** mercury was chosen as the target material for these high power neutron sources, **but** there is not many basic and primary conceptual...
- M38: **In addition**, the Si₃N₄ are **also** of much concern in the solar energy industry, used as the mould release coating of the extremely expensive ceramic crucible.
- M10: **However, although** the studied plane is located far from the focal plane, the fit between simulated and measured values is below 15% error...
- C38: **Although** terahertz detection technology has great advantages, **but** in a very long period of time, due to a lack of ...
- M20: **Because of that** the application of magnesium alloy is restricted so seriously.
- C6: **Despite this method adds** a certain amount of computation, but the estimation of global motion “samples” less, thus ...
- C23: the most challenging phase in a lunar or planetary mission is the power descent process, **because** the signal degrades to such a low level, due to the large distance from the probe to the earth...

Discussion

Proponents of contrastive rhetoric (e.g., Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966) maintained that rhetoric was culturally influenced and learners of second/foreign languages very often transfer their first language rhetoric into their second/foreign language writing. The frequency differences of the linking words and phrases used by Chinese students and L1 scholars indicate that Chinese students have difficulties in linking sentences and in establishing relations between ideas in academic discourse. They have not yet fully developed the ability to build connections to signpost sequence of thought through rhetoric. The low use of linking words and phrases by Chinese students is the result of Chinese culture as well as the Chinese rhetorical tradition. The notion of reader-responsible (Chinese) versus writer-responsible (English) languages explains the differences between texts produced by L1 and L2 writers (Uysal, 2008). Chinese writers often expect their readers to draw upon the assumingly shared knowledge to make sense of the text, instead of spelling out everything explicitly for readers. This is the Chinese way of being polite and showing respect for their readers. Writers in the reader-responsible Chinese language are less specific when identifying relationships, and providing background information; while writers in writer-responsible English provide information and build transitions and connections to guide the reader through the entire discourse. In the Anglo-American community of academia, it is expected that writers “keep with the writer-responsible tendency” and provide texts with “a sense of ‘flow’ so that the audience can read them fluently” (Chazal, 2014, p. 208).

Chinese is also a high-context culture in which people usually have extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues, and other people who are involved in close personal relationships. Consequently, for most communications the Chinese neither require nor expect in-depth background information. English, however, is a low-context culture in which when people interact with others, detailed background information is necessary. That is why writers in English always have to be explicit, as textual meaning in low context languages is realized largely through rhetoric. Therefore it is suggested by Chazal (2014) that Chinese students in the English writing process should constantly ask themselves if the ideas they want to express are explicitly connected, whether their text flows well and whether it reads fluently with sufficient

signposts to guide the reader. Only when a text is sufficiently connected through rhetoric, such as linking words can the reader be guided through the whole text.

This study also reveals that there are certain mistakes that are culturally specific to Chinese students due to first language transfer. English proficiency, first language interference and cultural impact, all affect the rhetorical construction of Chinese students' English academic discourse.

Table 3. Frequency differences between the two corpora (per 100,000 words)

Linking words and phrases			Chinese PhD students	L1 scholars
Addition	Sentence connectors	Furthermore	35	87
		In addition	81	45
		Moreover	60	24
	Phrases linkers	In addition	13	43
Adversativity	subordinators	Although	104	168
		Even though	14	11
	Sentence connectors	However	1	7
		Nevertheless	7	15
	Phrase linkers	despite	16	43
		In spite of	1	3
Cause and effect	subordinators	Because	41	96
		since	147	161
	Sentence connectors	Therefore	174	184
		As a result	11	27
		consequently	8	22
		Hence	33	64
		Thus	129	204
	Phrase linkers	Because of	88	23
		Due to	173	322
		As a result of	13	10
Clarification	Sentence connectors	In other words	11	9
		That is	24	16
		i.e.	16	92
Contrast	Subordinators	while	104	168
		whereas	14	11
	Sentence connectors	In contrast	10	49
		However	401	407
		On the other hand	27	24
		Conversely	5	25
	Phrase linkers	Unlike	14	18
Illustration	Sentence connectors	For example	51	100
		For instance	14	13
Intensification	Sentence connectors	On the contrary	9	2
		As a matter of fact	0	0
		In fact	22	18

Summary

This study has found that Chinese students use fewer linking words and phrases in comparison with L1 scholars in writing academic articles in English, which indicates that Chinese students have difficulties in linking sentences, transiting from idea to idea. When writing in English, the Chinese are likely to employ their own rhetorical strategies, which may lead to incoherence as a result of different rhetorical traditions, and even lead to mistakes because of first language transfer. Since “L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing” (Silva, 1993, p. 669), EFL and EAP instructors should help develop students’ rhetorical strategies of written persuasion in academic writing.

Case Study 2: Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) is the second oldest university in Hong Kong. It has about 1400 PhD students. English is the medium of instruction in higher education in Hong Kong; therefore students are required to have a high level of academic writing in English to construct disciplinary knowledge, to demonstrate attainment in their research and to communicate with the professional world. The English standard of research postgraduates is frequently a source of concern for supervisors and the university (Evans & Morrison, 2012) whose reputation is directly related to the postgraduate students’ research profile and the quality of their thesis writing.

The PhD thesis is a special genre in academic writing which forces us “to represent ourselves in certain ways” and “second language students often experience even greater problems as they encounter writing conventions which can differ considerably from those in their first language” (Hyland, 2009, p. 6). Consequently, PolyU runs the *Effective English for Postgraduate Research Students* (EEPRS) which includes various workshops on thesis writing. The most welcome activity is the face-to-face, one-to-one mentoring session, where PhD students can submit about 15 pages of their thesis draft and have a one-hour meeting with a teacher who has content-reviewed it. A pre- and post-mentoring survey reveals that over 90% of research students regard this type of learning as very efficient because it is tailor-made and directly fits their individual needs.

A goal of the research project described here is to understand PhD student academic writing with research questions echoing those of our Tsinghua colleagues. The project is two-pronged: understanding student difficulties in thesis writing through a questionnaire and analysing students’ writing by corpus and discourse analysis. This paper focuses only on the textual analysis. The data used in this research consists of 340 sections of thesis drafts collected from Sept 2013 to June 2014 through the EEPRS programme. The sections are: introductions, literature reviews, conclusions or segments of data analysis. Each section is about 15 pages long amounting to a corpus of about 510K.

This study focuses on connectives which are “important devices for creating textual cohesion” (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 875). In academic discourse, “the resource of clause complexes is used to guide the local development of text [...] and the clause complex is the most extensive domain of relational organization, whereas the cohesive system of CONJUNCTION has evolved as a complementary resource for creating and interpreting text” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 538). Conjunction is a relationship indicating how the subsequent sentence or clause should be linked to the preceding or the following sentence or part of a sentence. Swales and Feak (2009) listed 34 linking words and classified them by their position in

a paragraph/sentence and by logico-semantic relations of the two parts connected. This list is used as the basis for frequency analysis. The British Academic Written English corpus (BAWE) was used as a reference corpus because it has similar features to the EPRS corpus. They both consist of university student writing which is argumentative in nature and related to a particular discipline. We attempted to find out:

1. How do PhD students in Hong Kong use linking words in regard to overall frequency and semantic relations?
2. How do linking words signal thematic development in a sentence and paragraph?
3. What are the differences of using linking words between students in Hong Kong (English as a Second Language environment) and students in the UK (English as a Native Language environment)?

Findings

The findings reveal that British students use 28% more linking words than PolyU students. This is probably because English readers expect and require landmarks of coherence and unity, while the Chinese language places emphasis on coherence of meaning rather than coherence of form (Shen & Yao, 1999).

The 34 linking words were used as the basis for analysis because they are grouped into seven semantic relations (Swales & Feak, 2009). Those relations are used in Table 4 to compare the linking words used by Hong Kong students and British students. Log-Likelihood (LL) tests were conducted for significant differences in frequency because the two corpora have different sizes. Of the different statistical tests used in corpus study, the LL test “places more emphasis on grammatical words” (Baker, 2006, p. 102). The result shows that in every semantic relation, the difference in using linking words between the two groups is statistically significant.

Table 4. Frequency differences (items per million [ipm]) in connectives signaling semantic relations

Semantic relation (after Swales and Feak, 2009)	Frequency in EPRS (PolyU students)	Frequency in BAWE (UK students)	LL	P
Addition	807	631	21.595	0.00
Adversative	1247	3243	-919.123	0.00
Cause and Effect	4262	4798	-31.729	0.00
Clarification	167	109	12.280	0.00
Contrast	1984	2937	-185.729	0.00
Illustration	660	764	-7.602	0.00
Intensification	159	292	-39.811	0.00
TOTAL	9286	12774	-553.824	0.00

Interestingly, although the PolyU students use considerably fewer connectives on the whole, they use more linking words of Addition and Clarification than British students. The students at PolyU seem capable of using linking words of Addition, Illustration, Cause & Effect, Clarification and Intensification. There are no striking differences between the groups in dealing with these types of semantic relations. For example, the word *moreover* occurs 200 ipm (item per million) in the BAWE and 232 ipm in EPPRS corpus. Both *in addition* and *moreover* are used frequently to indicate an additive or juxtaposing relation between sentences giving the reader signals to receive more information. However, the structure “*in addition to* + noun” seems to be the most comfortable structure for Hong Kong students. There are 359 instances in the EEPRS data, while only 150 *in addition to* + noun phrases were found in the writing of UK students.

In contrast, linking words signalling Adversativity and Contrast seem to be more challenging for PolyU students who use them much less than British students. For instance, the connective *however* (frequency = 612) in the EEPRS corpus is the most frequently used word for adversative and contrast relations, but is used three times more (frequency = 1937) in the BAWE corpus. The connective *despite* occurs 89 times in the EEPRS data but 347 times in the BAWE.

The contrastive pair *on the one hand* and *on the other hand* shows another difference between the two student groups. British students do not seem to conjugate the two linking expressions and *on the one hand* is often omitted. Only 26% of *on the other hand* in the BAWE have the counterpart. In the Hong Kong EEPRS corpus the frequency is only 13.2%.

Of the 98 *on the other hand* in the corpus, 59.1% were used correctly, that is, signalling contrast, marking incompatibility between information in different discourse units, especially when the connective pair occurs together. When *on the other hand* is used independently, problems may occur. The meaning of *on the other hand*, according to Biber et al. (1999), is to mark incompatibility between information in different discourse units in some way, or signal concessive relationships. The two clauses must have mutually exclusive conflict with each other and there should be logical connections between two clauses, two sentences or even two paragraphs. A number of students used it only for conjunction purposes without considering its logico-semantic meaning. 21.5% cases actually mean addition without exclusive conflict between the two discourse units. 19.4% shows other logico-semantic relations or no relation at all, as seen in the following examples:

Example 1

It showed that some of the interface design and configuration of the phone were not sufficiently adapted to different users' needs. On the other hand, the website required the users to download the printed self-management forms which was also a problematic task for many older adults who have no printer at home.

In this discussion of mobile phone functions, the two sentences do not have the same theme. The second one raises an internet problem and further describes printing problems. The extension of the discourse is to signal additional meaning of the first part, rather than contrast them; the two themes are not explicitly different, therefore the connective *moreover* or *in addition* can be used here.

Example 2

Zonabend (1992) stated that case studies are designed for paying attention to typical cases to represent and practise the context of complete study by observing, reconstructing, and analyzing the cases adopted. On the other hand, they are designed to bring out the details from

the in-depth investigations with a full circle on the selected cases by using multiple sources of data (Tellis, 1997b).

On the other hand is often used in a literature review where students describe, evaluate, clarify, summarize and integrate different sources of information correctly or incorrectly. The pronoun *they* in the second sentence of the above paragraph refers back to the theme in the first sentence: *cases*. The second sentence is a further elaboration of the same theme. It leads to the result, not the difference of the first sentence. “**Therefore** *they are used to bring out...*” can show a more logical relation.

Example 3

When they have internalized the values and benefits of conducting self-management tasks, they can develop intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, previous study also found that when people have developed internationalization, autonomous response is more dominant to maintain the behaviour so convenient and reduce time to perform are more important in this stage.

Again this is a part of a literature review. There is no contrast between the two sentences. The additive adverbial *also* serves to mark the information added to the previous information. *On the other hand* is redundant.

Summary

Linking words or connectives prove to be one of the rhetorical problems for Chinese L1 PhD students due to a misunderstanding and improper presentation of logico-semantic relations between discourse units. The implication of this study for the teaching of academic writing is that grammatical words should not be ignored because they play an important role in the rhetoric of academic argumentation in English.

Research-informed practice: University of Cambridge

The research findings of the Tsinghua and PolyU corpus-based studies bear out what is experienced in practice at Cambridge University by Chinese L1 students and others whose L1 is “reader-responsible”. These results are being used to inform international student support and develop a new test of academic literacy.

Given the high English language proficiency entrance requirements and the challenges that international students meet at Cambridge, the primary focus of the Academic Development & Training for International Students section of the University Language Centre has been on developing strategies and training to assist postgraduate students² to develop their discipline-specific academic literacy skills set in English.

We are looking to address Kaplan’s unanswered question: namely, what are the “expectations of the native reader” (Kaplan, 1966, p. 13). But, more importantly, where have they come from and even more importantly, how can an (L2) student adopt them? However, as Kaplan (1972) was later to explain: rhetoric, which is the basis of argument, is language-specific, yet in English, this is assumed rather than clearly defined. Andrews has noted that in UK higher education this remains a skill that still sadly lacks explicit instruction, relying heavily on a “trial and error approach” (Andrews, 2010, p. 197). In fact, he goes much further than this to say that:

because there is no instruction in different text types such as the argumentational research paper, the critique, the synthesis, the thesis [...] the student often has to guess how best to write down what they think and know [...] [and] it is assumed that something magical will happen in

the student's mind and that it will be expressed in perfect argumentational form in writing submitted for assessment (Andrews, 2010, p. 197).

To address this skills gap at UK universities, which has become more evident in recent years because of internationalization and widening participation policies (Andrews, 2010), in our provision we are seeking to make the *implicit explicit* by attempting to explain in plain terms the “expectations of the native reader” (Kaplan, 1966, p. 13). To this end, we explore the rhetorical heritage of English to understand the argumentative structural preference for a tight chain of reasoning, before using a range of examples to highlight how this logical cohesion is achieved in practice. Our experience shows, however, that students from reader-responsible L1 backgrounds tended to face difficulties achieving this tight chain of reasoning when writing in English. Exploring this problem with respect to L1 Chinese speakers was the stimulus for the joint research project. The results of the project are fed into ongoing course development to the benefit of L1 Chinese speakers, the wider international student body and L1 English speakers. Of the benefits of such a course informed by these research findings, one L1 English student remarked:

It's revolutionised how I write. Also, I feel much more confident about my ability to write a clear, convincing, and stylish dissertation. [...] I learned an excellent array of clear and effective techniques that I can apply easily and simply to my own writing, and anyone else's! These techniques also help me to 'untangle' others' writing so I can understand what I read more clearly.

However, focusing on developing academic literacy once students have started postgraduate study is arguably too late to be at its most effective, which is why we are also working together with the Admissions Testing Service section of Cambridge Assessment to design and develop the new *Test of Academic Literacy*. Currently, all standardised secure English language tests, whilst providing a global benchmark, also have marked disadvantages, such as sacrificing much of their validity to make their tests reliable which causes negative washback concerns, as is the case with IELTS, the only test currently accepted for a UK visa and immigration application. All currently available English language tests are “entirely focused on language proficiency” and thus “have been shown to have little predictive value of students' ability to use language in an academic context” (Wingate, 2015, p. 10). The results of the current study will feed into the test development, the assessment criteria and the preparatory materials. As DePalma and Ringer (2011) have observed, education is always about transfer and so raising the students' awareness of the potential rhetorical transfer between their L1 and English is key in assisting them to transition to either studying through the medium of English or publishing in English.

Conclusion

Despite the many criticisms and revisions of Kaplan's initial ideas in his 1966 article, exploring the issues he raised is still a rich seam for research and moreover, an area that produces practical applications to assist students in developing their written academic English. As Bloch (2013, p. 243) has argued, the value of this field of enquiry “arose from its ability to synthesize disparate fields that had long existed separately, in this case applied linguistics and contemporary rhetoric, into a new, highly generative area of enquiry”. Casanave (2004) was right to highlight, however, that it has not yet lived up

to its apparent pedagogical promise of clear and compelling practical applications for the classroom. This study is looking to enact this *rhetorical transfer*.

Notes

1. The software AntConc 3.0.1 was employed to check the frequency of the linking words and phrases.
2. The focus is postgraduate because 65% of postgraduate students at Cambridge are international (compared to 20% of the undergraduate student body) and many of these, according to their application documentation, have not studied through the medium of English prior to their admission to the University [2015-2016]

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