



Negotiating into Academic Discourses: Taiwanese and U.S. College Students in Research Writing

YICHUN LIU*
National Chengchi University

XIAOYE YOU*
The Pennsylvania State University

ABSTRACT

Cross-national, or cross-cultural, studies of academic writing have moved beyond contrastive rhetoric's textual focus to broad concerns of students' first- and second-language literacy development. However, we remain in the dark as to how, in a micro view, students initiate into academic discourses in cross-national contexts. Situating our study in first-year writing courses in a Taiwanese and a U.S. university, we examined students' negotiation acts when they struggled to enter into social science discourses. Our study reveals that students in both institutions negotiated with academic writing at metacognitive, textual, and contextual levels. They brought rhetorical values, such as writing as a display of knowledge or writing grounded in evidential research, into their writing that they acquired in high school. Further, teachers' expectations, their new perceptions of research and writing, and their dreams and experiences all came into play in their writing.

KEYWORDS: academic writing, social sciences, students' negotiation, rhetorical traditions, metacognition, literature review

**Address for correspondence:* Yichun Liu. Foreign Language Center of National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan. Tel: +886 52771551. E-mail: liuyc77@nccu.edu.tw
Xiaoye You. The Pennsylvania State University, USA. Tel.: +1 (814) 8630595 E-mail: xuy10@psu.edu

I. INTRODUCTION

Cross-national, or cross-cultural, studies of academic writing have derived much of their synergy from contrastive rhetoric spearheaded by Kaplan (1966; 1972). Contrastive rhetoricians entertain a fundamental conviction that unique sociopolitical and cultural experiences of a nation render some distinctive features in the rhetorical practices of its people. These distinctive features are observable not only in students' first-language texts but also in their second (Connor 1996). In recent years, however, contrastive rhetoric has become limiting for studying writing in cross-cultural contexts. First, its essentialist conviction about rhetorical practices in cultures was criticized by scholars of non-Western rhetoric. In the case of Chinese rhetoric, Kirkpatrick (2005), Liu (1996), Mohan & Lo (1985), and You (2005) argued that despite a different cultural context from the West, traditional Chinese rhetoric shares similar values and practices with its Western counterpart. Second, contrastive rhetoric is censured for placing students in a passive, receptive position in relation to the macro-structure of their lives, or the national-ethnic culture (Canagarajah, 2006; Kubota & Lehner, 2004).

Sensitive to criticisms of contrastive rhetoric, some researchers (such as Foster, 2006; Foster & Russell, 2002; Isaksson-Wikberg, 1999; Li, 1996; Reichelt, 1997) have moved into field studies of school writing in cross-cultural contexts. Such studies offer us insights into how writing is actually taught to students during their mother-tongue literacy development. For example, Li (1996) studies American and Chinese teachers' perceptions of "good writing", and she shows that "good writing" resides not just with student texts, but also with the teachers who read and judge the texts. Cultural values, literary aesthetics, and teachers' socio-political experiences jointly shape the teachers' perceptions and efforts in nurturing good writers in their mother tongue. In Foster & Russell (2002), scholars examine, in broad terms, the role of writing when students move from secondary school to college in China, England, France, Germany, Kenya, and South Africa. They focus on how students write their ways into the communities of their chosen disciplines and on how they cope with the demands of academic and discipline-specific writing. Through field observations and interviews, Reichelt (1997) also investigates German and English composition theories and instruction at the secondary level in Germany. These studies not only reveal how native rhetorical traditions permeate students' literacy development, but also provide cultural and educational contexts for understanding students' writing in their second language. They offer valuable macro views of academic writing practices in cross-national contexts; however, we

remain in the dark as to how, in a micro view, students negotiate into academic discourses with the baggage of high school rhetorical training.

Our study breaks away from contrastive rhetoric's textual focus and recent cross-national studies' interest in broad pictures of academic writing, and seeks a micro view of college students' initiation into academic discourses in cross-national contexts. Situating our study in first-year writing in both Taiwan and the U.S., we examined how students in these two contexts struggled to engage in social science topics. Our study will reveal that neither knowledge of Chinese and Anglo-American rhetorical traditions nor knowledge of students' prior writing experiences is sufficient in accounting for ways that students manage to join in new academic discourses. In fact, students in both contexts actively bring various strands of knowledge (rhetorical, social, and personal) into their academic apprenticeship.

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a critical framework to examine students' negotiations in academic writing. Recent scholarship has advocated a critical awareness for students' agency in the writing classroom (Benesch, 2002; Brooke, 1987; Canagarajah, 2002; Greene, 1994; Leki, 2006; You, 2007). For example, Brooke (1987) points out that through the creative use of class activities and materials or by conducting activities "irrelevant" to course requirements, students can show that their identities are different from or are more complex than the identities assigned to them by the academic institution. This "underlife" activity is conducive to the kind of thinker and writer that composition instruction hopes to cultivate. "Writing, in short, is 'about' autonomy and action—to really learn to write means becoming a certain kind of person, a person who accepts, explores, and uses her differences from assigned roles to produce new knowledge, new action, and new roles" (Brook, 1987: 152). Canagarajah (2002) also suggests that the linguistic and cultural peculiarities that multilingual students display should be viewed as "resources" to enrich the academic discourse community and should be valued as representations of their unique voices and identities. As these students inevitably bring their values and discourses into their writing, teachers should assist them in strategically negotiating with academic conventions and in creating multivocal genres. The critical framework of academic writing, thus, has treated students as resourceful writers who are able to negotiate with both instructionally designated roles and with academic genres and conventions.

To investigate how students negotiate in academic writing in our own classes, the method of teacher research has been employed. In teacher research, teachers study their own

classes from a researcher's perspective. Teacher-researchers raise questions about what they think and observe in their teaching and in their students' learning. They collect students' work to evaluate their performance, but they also see students' work as data to examine the teaching and learning that produced it. Procedurally, teacher-researchers develop questions, investigate their questions systematically with their students, collect and analyze data from their classes, examine their assumptions and beliefs, articulate their theories, and share their research with a wide audience (Crookes, 1993; MacLean & Mohr, 1999; Nunan, 1989). The advantages of the teacher-researchers' ability to explore questions with their students systematically while improving their own teaching make teacher research opportune for the present study.

To teach and research our classes reflectively, two measures were taken in the present study. First, we used teaching journals to record our observations of and interactions with students as well as our reflections. The journal spurred us to be critical and reflective about our teaching. Second, through Microsoft Network (MSN) Messenger, we regularly discussed our teaching with each other. Our online exchanges sensitized us to critical issues arising from our teaching and helped us to recognize our students' acts of negotiation.

The pedagogy used in our teaching is called the sequenced writing assignment approach, which mimics social scientists' research and composing processes. We adopted a particular version of the approach suggested by Leki (1992) and tailored it to our own teaching. The approach consists of four interconnected writing assignments: personal experience, literature review, survey/interview, and a final report. In the personal experience essay, students select a topic and recount everything that they know about the topic. In the literature review essay, students are required to identify three publicly available documents on the topic and to summarize them. The survey/interview assignment asks students to use surveys or interviews to further explore the topic. Then, students need to reorganize the information that they have collected and to deliver it in a coherent way in the final report. The pedagogical approach, according to Leki, has several benefits. First, students practice a variety of academic writing skills through these assignments, such as idea generating, organizing, editing, and citing. Second, as the assignments are linked, in a sense, each serves as a draft for a larger work in progress. Third, students are empowered to develop authorial expertise and confidence by researching, selecting, and molding information on the subject matter. And finally, students are enabled to view writing as a process of making choices for communication and to develop a sense of discourse community. We believe that the pedagogy would initiate students in

social science discourses because these assignments came rather close to the steps that social scientists take when writing in their professions.

Following the teacher-research method, data was collected and analyzed systematically. The data came from our teaching journals, students' writing (writers' autobiographies, major papers, and end-of-semester reflection papers), and notes from teacher-student conferences. To gain an in-depth understanding of how students negotiate into academic discourses, we will only analyze students' negotiation acts in the first two assignments. These assignments asked that students articulate research questions after their personal experience accounts and that they review published studies in their topical areas. A paradigmatic approach (Bruner, 1985; Goodfellow, 1998) is taken to analyze the students' negotiation acts as observed by the two teacher researchers. The approach engages a logical mode of knowing in which human actions are analyzed to generate common themes that are then grouped and coded. In our analysis of students' negotiation acts, we focus on how students mediate between cognitive processes and social factors.

3. CONTEXT, TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS

English writing was emphasized for first-year students in both universities where the present study was conducted. The emphasis on English writing in the Taiwanese context is derived largely from the pressure of global competition in scientific research, education, and trade, which has made English proficiency an extremely marketable asset for both the state and the individual. For example, the Taiwanese government launched the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in 2000, which includes a writing component. Both government organizations and many businesses require that their employees pass the test as a condition for promotion. Some top universities also have adopted GEPT as one of their students' graduation requirements. For college students, good English writing ability thus, to some extent, promises a university degree and a decent job. At the American university, like many other US universities, undergraduates need to take freshman writing in their first year and writing in the disciplines in their junior or senior year.

As teacher-researchers, we are both insiders and outsiders in our institutional contexts. Both researchers taught ESL writing with the sequenced writing approach for two years while pursuing our doctoral degrees in the U.S. One of the researchers originally came from Taiwan. On one hand, after studying in the US for more than seven years, she was somewhat detached from the Taiwanese educational system. On the other hand, as a native Taiwanese who attended her primary school, middle school, and college in Taiwan, she was imbued with

Chinese cultural and educational values. While her outsider role helped her to maintain a critical distance in her teaching and research, her insider role afforded her sympathetic understanding of her students' writing experiences. The other researcher came from Mainland China and studied in the US for five years. After having taught English composition for years in the US, he was an insider to the culture of college composition instruction. However, after he freshly joined the faculty of the present American university, he became somewhat an outsider to the new institutional context.

The study was conducted in two research-extensive universities in fall 2005, when both researchers were hired as assistant professors of English. One researcher was assigned to teach two sections of English writing at the Taiwanese university. Two kinds of students could take the writing class. First, it was available to students who had completed freshmen English, including fundamental courses of listening, reading, and conversation. Second, it was allowed for freshmen whose English scores ranked within the top 15 percentile in the college entrance exam. The Taiwanese students' English proficiency ranged between intermediate and high intermediate levels as defined by the university. There were 20 students in each class, most of them science and engineering majors. According to their writer's autobiographies, the students had studied English since age 12 or younger. None of them had prior experience in academic English writing. With an emphasis on correct grammar and vocabulary, their high school English writing focused on personal experiences and feelings. The other researcher was assigned to teach one section of Honors Freshman Composition at the American university. Both honors students and students with high SAT scores could take this course. There were 21 students, all native speakers of English, in the class, who came from humanities, social sciences, management, sciences, and technology majors. According to their writer's autobiographies, their high school English writing focused on five-paragraph essay and literary analysis.

In the next section, we focus on students' negotiation acts when completing the personal experience and the literature review essays. Adopting the paradigmatic approach to sorting out the data, we have identified two major categories of negotiation acts. Students negotiated with both competing epistemologies of writing and different academic genres. When we explain the kinds of negotiations that our students performed in the following section, we will provide particular students' writing experiences for illustration and focused discussion.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Negotiations with Epistemologies of Writing

The personal experience essay intended to help students set their research agendas. When the assignment was introduced, both teachers emphasized the same points in class. The students would need, first, to introduce the topics that they would be writing about; second, to explain why their topics were interesting and important; third, to describe their personal experiences related to these topics; and, last, to develop and state research questions addressing what they would like to find out about their topics. The ultimate goal of this assignment was to help students to identify research topics that were intriguing to them and to frame their research projects by asking appropriate questions.

Taiwanese students' prior writing experiences challenged them in setting research agendas because research agenda entailed a brand new epistemological orientation for them. Most of the writing they did in high school focused on how to effectively deal with college entrance exams. Having time constraints, exam writing tended to focus on topics that encouraged knowledge display rather than knowledge construction or transformation. The sharp contrast between high school and college writing was captured well in a student's reflection paper (see Appendix I for the prompt of the reflection paper): "My writing experience can be compared to making a movie. I was like a movie actor in high school writing. I only needed to perform well (what had been written for me in the script). However, the sequenced writing project has also turned me into a playwright and a film director. It prompts me to consider what kind of writing the audience likes to read and what kind of textual structure will attract the audience. My high school writing has never prompted me to ask these questions." Apparently, academic writing offered the students more control, thus more responsibilities for choosing both the topic and the structure of their writing. The following student's writing experience illustrates the difficulties that some Taiwanese students went through when adapting themselves to their new roles ("playwrights and film directors") and responsibilities in research writing.

Wei-Shen¹, a student from computer science, proudly considered himself a computer geek in his autobiography. He chose "computer viruses" as his research topic. At the end of his personal experience essay, he explained his research questions: "In this research, I will discuss and ask people for their experiences about computer virus infection. Moreover, I want to tell the difference between hackers and crackers. And, how can they steal information through internet? What is the relation between crackers and viruses? What are the advantages

and disadvantages of different software to prevent from different viruses? Through discussion, I will tell the correct answers to these questions.” These are all ambitious questions to ask. During student-teacher conference, the teacher asked him whether he already knew the answers to these questions. Wei-Shen said that he chose “computer viruses” as his topic because he knew a lot about it. When reminded that research questions should deal with issues that he did not know much about but wanted to learn more through research, he seemed a little confused. In his literature review essay, Wei-Shen reshaped his research questions as: “What are computer viruses? What methods can be used to protect our computer from viruses? Is the antivirus software really effective to protect our computers?” Apparently, he only slightly altered the scope of his research.

Later, Wei-Shen had difficulty with his survey/interview essay. He interviewed a Computer Science professor about the above questions. After the interview, he came to see the English teacher for help. He was frustrated that he had nothing new to write about in his interview essay because what he wanted to write about had been almost completely written in his personal experience and literature review essays. When asked whether he was satisfied with the information that he had collected through his literature review and his interview about the research questions, unsurprisingly, Wei-Shen confessed that he already knew all of the “answers” before he started the project. He explained, “You wanted me to raise research questions that I knew little about but wanted to do further investigation on. I am interested in computer viruses, but I had the knowledge about computer viruses. Therefore, I pretended to know only a little about computer viruses in order to continue the project and conduct the interview.”² Indeed, he repeated the information that he had already known for all the writing assignments. In his reflection paper, he admitted that he had learned little about the subject matter through the sequenced assignments, and the most challenging assignment for him was actually the personal experience essay.

Wei-Shen’s “problem” lies in his “outdated” perception of writing. In the beginning, nothing seemed to be wrong with his topic and research questions. However, in the end, he did not live up to the expectations of the writing project because he wanted to demonstrate what he knew rather than to explore the unknown. Coming from a similar educational background, the teacher sensed Wei-Shen’s disorientation with choosing his research topic and research questions. She indicated the problem to him; however, he did not truly understand it until he was working on the survey/interview essay. Rather than rewriting all the previous papers, Wei-Shen chose to proceed with his work as originally planned. The teacher

expected Wei-Shen to negotiate his way through these two epistemological orientations; unfortunately, he failed.

American students were not spared from challenges when setting their research agenda. In their reflection papers, 11 students described wrestling with different aspects of the personal experience essay. Their difficulties, different from the Taiwanese students, seemed to have stemmed from the complexity of the topics that they chose to explore. For example, Jessica fumbled for some time before she finally decided on her research topic. The challenges of setting her research agenda were finally resolved due to both her gradual understanding of the assignment (or the teacher's expectations of the assignment) and to her consciousness as a female engineering student:

I found that I did not feel as passionate about some potential topics as I did about others. I knew that I needed to choose a topic for which I possess an intense interest. This fact made the process of narrowing down potential topics easier... Looking back on the decision-making process, I cannot believe that I did not think of writing about women in engineering earlier. My major is going to be aerospace engineering, and I plan to work in Mission Control in Houston, Texas, so anything concerning engineering is interesting and exciting to me... I have even found that now as a freshman I am one of few women in my engineering, physics, and math courses. By presently feeling the effects of the lack of women in engineering, I am very close to this topic and am curious to find out more about it.

Thus, for Jessica, setting research agenda meant a process of gaining deeper understanding of the subject matter. The personal experience essay prompted her to reflect upon her dreams and the social reality of being a female student in a male-dominant engineering program. Carrying out the research agenda would be a journey for her to fully grasp the stakes of being a female engineer.

Another student, Matthew, also finalized his research questions after an in-depth exploration of his subject matter. Matthew chose to write about the controversy in stem cell research in the US. The topic appealed to him because his father was injured in a car accident years ago, and Matthew often dreamed of something that could cure his father's injuries. Stem cells seemed to be a promising solution for Matthew. The difficulty in setting his research agenda was asking appropriate questions:

The facet of this paper I had trouble with was the questions we needed to pose. Prior to research, I found it tough to generate questions to be answered in my argumentative essay [the final report]. I am unsure of what points or issues my research will bring out,

so detailing what I expected to find was difficult. I have some background information on stem cells, from personal interest reading, but my knowledge is not complete, which led to some complications in planning. I ended up doing some basic research online in order to detail the fundamentals in the stem cell debate and plan on my other papers requiring more investigation.

The difficulty in posing questions was derived from Matthew's insufficient knowledge about his research topic. Therefore, he solved the problem by conducting more basic research on the Internet to identify key arguments in the current stem cell debate.

The difference between the ways American and Taiwanese students struggled when setting their research agendas could chiefly be explained by their prior research experiences in high school. Some Taiwanese students, like Wei-Shen, tried to stick to their old notion of writing as knowledge display by "faking" the research project. American students tended to explore their research topics further before they finalized their research agendas. The American students' strategy can be attributed to their high school preparation in evidential research. According to Pennsylvania Department of Education, students need to start developing their research ability as early as 3rd grade. They need to "select a topic for research, locate information using appropriate sources and strategies, and organize and present the main ideas from research" (2005: 16). When they reach their 11th grade, their skills in these three areas will be significantly refined and expanded (see Appendix II for a detailed list of research skills required in the 11th grader). In a survey performed at the end of the semester, 20 American students reported that they conducted research projects in high school. From the meticulous research requirements in Pennsylvania high schools, we can infer that while Taiwanese students had to learn how to transition from "actors" (or "actresses") to "playwrights and film directors", American students had completed the transition while they were in secondary school. Therefore, American students were able to interpret the personal experience essay assignment more in alignment with the teacher's expectations.

4.2 Negotiations with Academic Genres

The literature review essay intended to familiarize students with key issues that concerned scholars in their topical area. When the assignment was introduced, both teachers emphasized the same points in class. Students would look for three pieces of published material to summarize. The materials might be book chapters or articles in journals, magazines, newspapers, or materials from the Internet. The assignment consisted of a straightforward summary of each of the three documents and a framework for the summaries. The framework

is a normal introductory paragraph and a concluding paragraph in which students briefly discuss the three documents together, perhaps linking the most important or interesting information they have obtained from the three sources. Becoming familiar with the key issues in their topical area is the first step towards building their scholarly *ethos*.

One of the challenges that the Taiwanese students faced was how to position themselves in their new discourse community while using appropriate academic voices and genres. Though they had studied English for at least six years and had mastered quite a good number of vocabulary words, they had rarely written for an academic audience even in Chinese. Their reflection papers revealed that only one student had performed research-based writing in Chinese in high school. Therefore, the students struggled to sound dispassionate, projecting a scholarly *ethos* as is often expected in academic writing. The following student's writing experience showcases the kinds of negotiation that the Taiwanese students had to engage in while learning to develop their academic identity in the literature review essay.

Lee-Gung chose to explore a heated topic on campus that he also felt passionate about. The topic dealt with a government plan of merging the university with another top-notch university. Students and teachers had been debating on whether the merger was necessary. The merger plan was rejected by campus ballot that year, and the second, which was also the last, voting would be held the following year. In his personal experience essay, Lee-Gung revealed his strong favoring position toward the merger.

In the literature review essay, besides reviewing (summarizing) various published opinions on the merger plan, Lee-Gung ardently argued against opposing views. When he cited the opposing views, he immediately articulated his own opinions without fully explicating or analyzing the opposing views. For example, he wrote:

According to the ex-president Lee, "the two universities are famous for similar domains; therefore, merging provides little complementary benefit to each other but causes shift or layoff in employment." Although his concern really hits the mark, I think this problem is possible to be solved in whatever way, for example, some teachers now are too old to teach, then they can get early retirement. Professor Mau also pointed out that "even the two universities merged and received the first-stage funds (\$ 1.5 billion NTD), no one guarantees that the university supporting policy won't be changed later, or the political power won't be switched. Since government's policies are not stable, merging may cause more risks than benefits." However, nothing is for certain, everything has some risks in surface or potentially. If we are kept from achievements just because of the risks, I think it is too regrettable. What is important is how to overcome the risks when encountered them, and we need to

diminish adverse effects as more as possible, and look the bright side of the matter (Lee-Gung,)

Students were expected to summarize published literature on their subjects as a matter of fact. However, Lee-Gung turned a somber review of published literature into a full-fledged argument for his own position. Due to his misplaced personal opinions in the essay, the teacher gave him a low grade for this paper.

During a student-teacher conference, Lee-Gung protested against the teacher suppressing his opinions. The teacher first explained to him that research writing is characterized by the writer's detachment from the issues in question and that he needed to present both sides' views in an even-handed manner in the literature review. Lee-Gung asked politely, "What should I do if I want to speak out my personal points in an academic writing task?" The teacher suggested some strategies on how to position himself as a writer more professionally and also reminded him that academic writing usually focuses on the subject matter rather on the self.

Surprisingly, in his final research report Lee-Gung made a rhetorical move to fully justify the centrality of his subject position. He opened his report as follows: "I, as a member of National Chiao Tung University, care a lot about this merging issue. Although I personally agree with merging the two universities, there are many people who have opponent opinions. Through investigating the issue, I would like to find out what are the reasons make those people oppose merging the two universities, and what are the reasons that may be beneficial but overlooked by them? The purpose of the project is to persuade the opponents and hopefully change their mind and vote for merging next year." The statement dramatically shifted the focus of the research report from a rational examination of the subject matter to a self-centered persuasive endeavor. Clearly, Lee-Gung appropriated academic discourse for his own purpose from the very beginning. Writing, for him, was no longer an isolated, detached, abstract, and generic practice of rules, but a real battle to fight for his beliefs and values. His strong voice corroborated his authorial expertise and constructed his socially grounded, self-reflexive, and dialogical positioning.

Lee-Gung's impulse for expressing his views could be explained by his high school writing experience. According to Taiwanese students' writers' autobiographies and reflection papers, they were often asked to write argumentative essays with a topic given by the teacher in their Chinese writing classes. Students were not expected to research a topic, but rather they "wrote from [their] head", as one student put it. Thus, students formed the habit of

staging arguments based on their prior life experiences, readings, and imaginations. In high school English writing, the topics focused on personal experiences and feelings, again promoting the expression of the self. In contrast, in academic English writing, the student was expected to speak about a subject matter (not the self most of the time) in a somber, objective tone and to substantiate his or her arguments with clear logical reasoning and evidence. Thus, Lee-Gung's rhetorical move in his final report was a negotiation between his self-centered high school writing experience and academic writing that requires a detached self.

The American students also struggled to adapt themselves to the requirements of the literature review essay. Similar to the Taiwanese students, the American students were eager to engage in conversations with scholars in their essays. However, the reasons were not so much because of the five-paragraph essays that they practiced in high school, but rather they were derived from students' training in literary analysis. For example, Christine chose to write on the issue of bilingual education in the US because she worried that American monolingual (English-only) policies and mindsets would set the US behind other countries. When writing her literature review essay, she could not resist transferring her training in literary analysis. She explained the transfer in her reflection paper:

First, when writing ...the literature review, I had a difficult time leaving out my input on the articles, while instead simply summarizing the articles... In high school, when we did literature reviews we always incorporated quotes and wrote in an analytical style... Another difficulty that I have faced with the sequence writing project was the attempt to make new knowledge by synthesizing information which is already available to the public. This way of thinking was never really emphasized during my high school writing experience. In fact, most of the time all we had to do was pull out information from novels and analyze it in order to support previously argued points. In high school, we were never truly asked to make new knowledge.

Apparently, Christine somehow confused the literature review essay with literary analysis and book reviews in her high school literature class. While the literature review essay required synthesizing published research for identifying threads of issues in published studies, literary analysis and book reviews in literature class focused on extracting evidence from a literary work to support a certain interpretation or assessment of the work (Hudson & LeClair, 2004).

Writing strategies used in literary analysis markedly differ from those required in the literature review essay. According to Beach (1999), students need to use several strategies when responding to literature. They need to enter into and reflect on their experience with the literary text (*engaging*). They may retell what happened in the text (*retelling/recounting*).

They infer characters' traits, knowledge, beliefs, plans, and goals based on the characters' actions (*inferring/explaining*). As they enter the world of the text, they need to be able to construct that world as a culture constituted by certain norms and conventions (*reconstructing the literary world*). Students need to connect their responses to their own life experiences or other texts (*connecting*). They also need to infer larger thematic meanings and to judge characters' actions or the quality of a text (*interpreting/judging*). By contrast, when writing the literature review essay, students need to summarize a few published studies, to identify some major issues that have concerned researchers, and to recognize some gap that needs to be filled through further investigation (Swales).

Matthew, for example, was also quite confused by the different strategies required in the two genres. In an interview, he said, "Throughout high school, I was always taught that simply summarizing articles was a terrible offense. They stressed that summarization was an elementary skill and that analyzing literature was a much more mature way to write papers." As students felt compelled to analyze published studies as literary pieces, they lost sight of the assignment's purpose, which is identifying threads of issues and gaps for the potential of creating new knowledge.

After peer review and teacher-student sessions, American students came to understand the differences between the literary analysis and the literature review essays. Jane, for example, researched the effects of an environmental plan implemented in the State of Pennsylvania. Her new perception of the literature review essay prompted her to make connections and to identify gaps in published studies, which prepared her to construct new knowledge in the next step of her research:

Making connections, tying and synthesizing the information, is its own challenge. I saw firsthand the importance of making these connections when I began to find information that was contradictory. Conflicting data cause a re-awakening for the researcher; it made me return to the basis of my original design. The biases of others forced me to assess my own—those that had influenced my topic selection initially—especially my "pro-environment" stance that is always well-intentioned but sometimes muddled.

As Jane confessed in her retrospective account, conflicting data alerted her and encouraged her to go back to reexamine her original design, and studies that she discovered in her readings prompted her to reassess her own biases and subjectivity. In fact, making

connections, identifying conflicting data, and discovering biases in published scholarship are all crucial cognitive steps for social scientists to recognize areas that need further investigation. With a new understanding that published studies are not literary pieces, Jane was able to treat the literature review essay as a stepping stone for acquiring new knowledge on her topic.

5. DISCUSSION

Students in both universities actively negotiated with their writing projects at various levels—metacognitive, textual, and contextual. First, metacognitively, they envisioned their research projects, formulated research questions, set research agendas, and adjusted their agendas along the way. For example, they asked questions and designed their research in their personal experience essays. The essay served as a think-aloud tool for them to consciously assess their thoughts. As Paris, Lipson, and Wixon note, “Thinking about one’s thinking is the core of strategic behavior” (1983: 295). Influenced by their high school rhetorical training, some Taiwanese students chose their arguments for their final research reports in the beginning of the semester. Later, after conversations with the teacher, they realized that while pursuing their own arguments, they needed to remain detached from the subject matter. Rhetorical strategies taken by Lee-Gung in his final research reports demonstrated his effective metacognitive adjustments after a conversation with his teacher. American students also took some crucial metacognitive steps. For example, they constantly had conversations with themselves about what they did and did not know about their research topics and they came to grasp the major differences between the literary analysis and the literature review essays.

Second, the students also negotiated on the textual level. For example, Wei-Shen, although eventually failing the expectations of the writing project, followed the academic conventions to write his personal experience and literature review essays. Lee-Gung first “misplaced” his arguments in the literature review, but then he made a successful rhetorical move in his final research report to justify the centrality of his subjectivity. These textual decisions embodied the Taiwanese students’ wrestling with a shifting sense of the self, the content, the community, and the form required by research writing. Some American students negotiated at the textual level by keeping inserting direct quotes and their own opinions into their summaries of published studies. They negotiated between two sets of textual conventions that they acquired in literary studies and social sciences.

Third, once the students initiated their research and writing processes, they negotiated

with various contextual factors. They managed to grasp the purpose of the assignments in class. They consulted teachers about the issues they encountered in their research and writing. For the Taiwanese students, the writing project extended their roles from “actors” to “playwrights and directors”, thus bringing them more responsibilities. They had to fulfil their increased responsibilities by interacting with various “socioacademic relations” in the context of academic writing (Leki, 2006). The American students also fulfilled similar responsibilities when performing their researcher’s roles. For example, Matthew and Jessica had to consult extensive sources online or in the library before they could articulate their research questions.

In their negotiation acts, students of the two universities brought various strands of knowledge into play. Both Chinese and Anglo-American rhetorical traditions influenced students’ writings. For example, some Taiwanese students clung to the notion of writing as displaying knowledge in their research writing. American students actively sought evidence in their literature review by making direct quotes from published studies. However, traditional rhetorical values, such as writing as knowledge display and writing grounded in evidential research, were not the only cognitive framers that students carried into their writing. Students were also keenly aware of the market value of academic writing and research skills in an age of global competition in scientific research, education, and trade. They consulted each other and the teachers to make sense of the requirements of the assignments. Invariably, they brought their personal experiences, imagination, and inspiration into their composing processes. It was these strands of knowledge that made their negotiations effective and successful most of the time.

6. CONCLUSION

Rhetorical traditions remain important for understanding academic writing practices in different nations and cultures. We would not have understood Taiwanese and US students’ negotiation acts without some insider knowledge of their rhetorical training in high school. However, as critics of contrastive rhetoric have pointed out, sole knowledge of rhetorical traditions is insufficient for accounting for cross-national academic writing practices. Students will individually have to respond to social, institutional, and personal exigencies when performing academic writing. Fortunately, recent cross-national studies have started furnishing us with knowledge of the socio-cultural and institutional contexts of academic writing in different nations.

An important dimension of academic writing is to understand how students negotiate into academic discourses in different national and institutional contexts. Situating our inquiry

in first-year college writing courses in Taiwan and the US, we have examined how students struggled to engage in academic discourses. Our study reveals that both Chinese and Anglo-American rhetorical traditions and students' high school writing experiences played an important part in their initiation into new academic discourses. However, students did not passively follow writing conventions that they learned from high school, but rather they actively negotiated with the teachers' expectations, discipline-specific conventions, their own dreams and experiences, and other contextual factors in their academic apprenticeship.

NOTES

1. Students' names adopted in this article are aliases. Only those students who have given the researchers their consent to use their writer's autobiographies, major papers, and reflection papers are quoted in this study.
2. All quotes from conversations and students' reflection papers at the Taiwanese university were originally in Chinese. We translated them into English. Conversational quotes were derived from notes originally taken by the teacher at student-teacher conferences.

REFERENCES

- Beach, R. W. (1999). Evaluating students' response strategies in writing about literature. In C. R. Cooper & L. Odell (Eds.), *Evaluating writing: The role of teachers' knowledge about text, learning, and culture*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, pp. 195-221.
- Benesch, S. (2001). *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics, and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Brooke, R. (1987). Underlife and writing instruction. *College Composition and Communication*, 38, 141-153.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2002). *Critical academic writing and multilingual students*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2006). Toward a writing pedagogy of shuttling between languages: learning from multilingual writers. *College English*, 68, 589-604.
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Crookes, G. (1993). Action research for second language teachers: Going beyond teacher research. *Applied Linguistics*, 14, 130-144.
- Flower, L. & J. R. Hayes. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 21-32.

- Foster, D. (2006). *Writing with authority: Students' roles as writers in cross-national perspective*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Foster, D. & Russell, D. (Eds.) (2002). *Writing and learning in cross-national perspective: Transitions from secondary to higher education*. Mahwah, NJ: NCTE and Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Greene, S. (1994). Constructing a voice from other voices: A sociocognitive perspective on development of authorship in a beginning writing classroom. In K.-H. Pagner (Ed.), *More about writing: Odense working papers in language and communication*. Denmark: Odense University, pp.11-40.
- Hudson, S. & LeClair, M. (2004). *Thinking and writing in the humanities*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson.
- Hyland, K. (2002). Options of identity in academic writing. *ELT Journal*, 56, 351-358.
- Isaksson-Wikberg, M. (1999). *Negotiated and committed argumentation: A cross-cultural study of American and Finland-Swedish student writing*. Finland: Abo Akademi University Press.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning*, 16, 1-20.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1972). *The anatomy of rhetoric: Prolegomena to a functional theory of rhetoric*. Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2005). China's first systematic account of rhetoric: An introduction to Chen Kui's *Wen Ze*. *Rhetorica*, 23, 103-152.
- Kubota, R. & Lehner, A. (2004). Toward critical contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13, 7-27.
- Leki, I. (1992). Building expertise through sequenced writing assignments. *TESOL Journal*, winter, 19-23.
- Leki, I. (2006). Negotiating socioacademic relations: English learner's reception by and reaction to college faculty. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 136-152.
- Li, X. (1996). *"Good writing" in cross-cultural context*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Liu, Y. (1996). To capture the essence of Chinese rhetoric: An anatomy of a paradigm in comparative rhetoric. *Rhetoric Review*, 14, 318-335.
- MacLean, M. & Mohr, M. (1999). *Teacher-researchers at work*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.
- Mohan, B. & Lo, W. (1985). Academic writing and Chinese students: Transfer and developmental factors. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, 515-534.

- Nunan, D. (1989). *Understand language classrooms: A Guide for teacher-initiated action*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Paris, S. G., Lipson, M. Y., & Wixon, K. K. (1983). Becoming a strategic reader. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8, 293-316.
- Reichelt, M. (1997). *An investigation of first language and second language (English) composition theory and instruction at the secondary level in Germany*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Purdue University, the US.
- Russell, D. (1997). Rethinking genre in school and society: An activity theory analysis. *Written Communication*, 14, 504-554.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education (2005). *Academic standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening and academic standards for Mathematics* (22 Pennsylvania Code, Chapter 4. Appendix A). Retrieved September 1st.; <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/lib/k12/Reading.pdf>
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- You, X. (2005). Conflation of rhetorical traditions: The formation of modern Chinese writing instruction. *Rhetoric Review*, 24, 150-169.
- You, X. (2007). Rhetorical use of computer literacy in an ESL writing class: Implications for critical pedagogy and ESL writing." *Kairos* 11:2. Retrieved March 1st, 2007 from <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/11.2/binder.html?praxis/you/Index.html>.

APPENDIX I

Prompt for the Reflection Paper

Please compare your high school writing experiences with your experience with the sequenced writing project. In your comparison, please comment on three most different (from your high school experiences) or difficult aspects of the sequenced writing project, such as certain writing skills, certain ways of thinking, certain parts of the research or writing process, or certain dimensions of the types of writing. You may also comment on areas of English writing that you hope to improve.

APPENDIX II

Standards for Research in Grade 11 in the State of Pennsylvania

1.8. Research

1.8.11. GRADE 11

Pennsylvania's public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to:

- A. Select and refine a topic for research.
- B. Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies.
 - Determine valid resources for researching the topic, including primary and secondary sources.
 - Evaluate the importance and quality of the sources.
 - Select sources appropriate to the breadth and depth of the research (e.g., dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, interviews, observations, computer databases).
 - Use tables of contents, indices, key words, cross-references and appendices.
 - Use traditional and electronic search tools.
- C. Organize, summarize and present the main ideas from research.
 - Take notes relevant to the research topic.
 - Develop a thesis statement based on research.
 - Anticipate readers' problems or misunderstandings.
 - Give precise, formal credit for others' ideas, images or information using a standard method of documentation.
 - Use formatting techniques (e.g., headings, graphics) to aid reader understanding.

(Pennsylvania Department of Education, p. 16-17)