

Intercultural Rhetoric and ESP/EAP

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Center for English Language Communication (CELC) Symposium 2013
National University of Singapore
May 27-29, 2013



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Overview

- Defining intercultural rhetoric
- Culture
- Intercultural rhetoric and ESP in practice
- Text studies



From *Contrastive* to *Intercultural* Rhetoric

- “Contrastive rhetoric, started by Robert Kaplan (1966), is an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them” (Connor, 1996, p. 5).
 - an applied linguistics field with a teaching concern
 - influenced by contrastive analysis
 - first real research interest in teaching writing to ESL learners in the USA (vs. spoken language)

Intercultural Rhetoric

- Intercultural rhetoric is defined as the study of discourse between and among individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
 - *Intercultural* provides an appropriate connotation of collaborative interaction between and among cultures, on one hand, and within cultures on the other (Connor, 2011, p. 1).

Intercultural Rhetoric

- “Intercultural rhetoric” is an umbrella term that includes cross-cultural studies (comparisons of the same concept in culture one and culture two) as well as studies of interactions in which writers from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds negotiate through speaking and writing (Connor, 2011, p. 2).

Three main premises of Intercultural Rhetoric

- Texts must be seen in their full contexts
- Small and large cultures interact in complex ways
- Accommodation and negotiation is necessary in intercultural communication

So how do we apply these premises in real-life situations?

Chinese college student's request for financial assistance from university

Dear Professor × × × :

I am an engineer of Aerospace Research Institute of Materials & Processing Technology (ARIMT), China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology and I am mainly engaging in the research and manufacture of the resin matrix composite products used for aerospace technology. A letter in January, 2004, from Jane Henderson, Director Graduate School Operations of University X, said that my application for the Ph.D. Program in Materials Science was approved by the University X Graduate School. I am very happy about it and I cherish this opportunity of learning and improvement. I hope to begin study and work as soon as possible. There is a question, however, it dose not specify my mentor in the Certificate of Application Review. On the ground of my research interest and job experience, I wish to engage in composite materials as an research assistant under your direction during my Ph.D. Program. I look forward to your instruction and help.

I acquired the Bachelor's Degree of Polymer Engineering in 1995...,The goal of my Ph.D. program is to study the advanced theory and means, explore innovative molding technologies in order to acquire the firm base for my research of low-cost, high-performance and multi-functional composite materials in the future.

The Materials Science and Engineering Department of University X has excellent research ability and facilities and the research group lead by you is the hardcore. So I am desired to join your team and get your advise. Thank you very much for your future help and look forward to hear from you soon.

My student number is 888221735

Yours Sincerely,



Culture as a Burning Issue in the 21st Century

- Culture is one of the two or three most complex words in the language (Williams, 1983, p. 87)
- Early notions of culture, the “received view,” consider large groups as sharing a definable culture (ethnic, national, international)
- Postmodern views see culture as “a dynamic, ongoing process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense and meaningfully operate within those circumstances” (Holliday, 1999, p. 248)
- Culture has become less and less a national consensus, but “a consensus built on common ethnic, generational, ideological, occupation – or gender related interests, within and across national boundaries” (Kramsch, 2002, p. 276)



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Small and Large Cultures (Holliday, 1994, 1999)

Small Cultures

- Nonessentialist, nonculturalist
- Relative to cohesive behaviors in activities within any social grouping
- No necessary subordination to or containment within large cultures
- Interpretive process

Large Cultures

- Essentialist, culturalist
- “Culture” as essential features of ethnic, national, or international group
 - Small (sub)cultures contained within and subordinate to large cultures
- Normative, prescribed



Large and Small Cultures in the Classroom

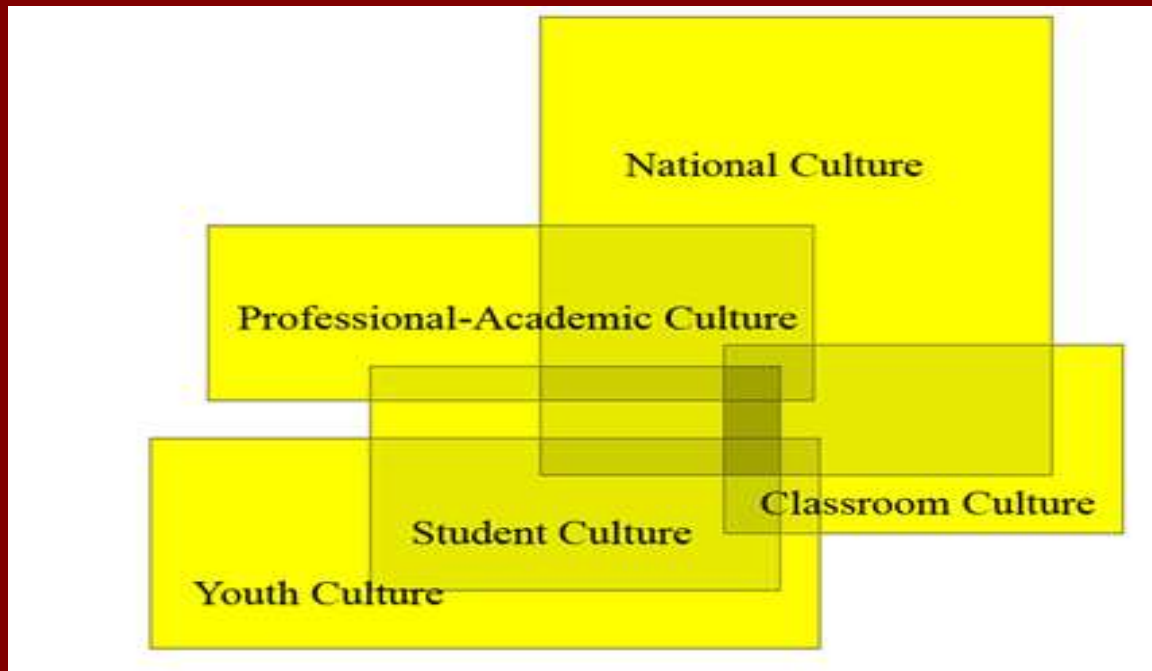


Figure 1: Interacting cultures in an educational setting [adapted from Holliday (1999) and Atkinson (2004)]

IR and ESP in practice: Examples from the Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC)

- Intercultural communication, oral and written academic English with American cultural experience for international faculty and professionals from overseas in short-term intensive programs
- English for Specific Purposes (ESP) workshops for international faculty and researchers on the IUPUI campus
- Assessment and training for international medical residents

ESP: VIED example

- Vietnam International Education Development (VIED)
- Consisted of seven weeks of English and teaching methodology classes, including guest speakers and classroom observations
- Large culture:
 - Vietnamese
- Small cultures:
 - Disciplinary
 - Generational
 - Gender
 - Degree level (Masters, Ph.D.)
 - Region within Vietnam



Culture from the bottom up

- Culture as represented in the lives of its individual users from their perspectives
 - Cultural studies of the person
 - People live “culturally”
- Cultural nature of the individual
 - How sociocultural influences contribute to individual identity
- Individual nature of the cultural
 - How cultural material is actively interpreted, appropriated, and (re)created by individuals
 - Atkinson, 1999; Atkinson and Sohn, in press



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Interaction and Accommodation (not Assimilation)

- Useful theories to develop IR
 - Speech accommodation (SAT) and later Communication accommodation theory (CAT) (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991; Coupland & Jaworski, 1997) for intercultural encounters
 - Accommodation for mutual intercultural understanding (Connor, 1999, “How like you our fish?”) in face-to-face situations



Accommodation in International Business Communication (Connor, 1999)

Sample messages by the broker in seller role to a (1) Japanese and a (2) Swiss buyer

- 1. *[Seller company name]* has not yet received any payments of green roe. Could you please check what is causing the delays or when it has been paid in Tokyo?
- 2. Good morning. We should have perch fillets for Wednesday shipment. Please let us know your needs. Prices are the same. Have a nice day!

Sample messages sent to a Norwegian supplier

- 1. They are not using minced salmon but they would like to look at the sample and possibility to substitute minced salmon trout. They are using a lot of minced salmon trout.
- 2. They are not using minced salmon trout, but feel that it is an interesting raw material. They ask a sample to *[Buyer company's name]*
- 3. They are introducing a new product based on minced salmon trout. They would like to study if they could use minced salmon as a substitute.
- 4. *[Buyer company's name]* asked for the price of 'mandel fisk' for next season. I have given *[price]* per kg. What you think? Next week we should receive comments of your samples.



Text Analysis: Language and Writing as Social Action

- Texts in contexts
- Genres as part of genre systems
- New methods of context-sensitive text analysis including:
 - Corpus analyses
 - Semi-ethnographic approaches

Text Analysis Methodologies in IR

- Corpus analysis
 - “Using computerized corpus analysis to investigate the textlinguistic discourse moves of letters of application” (Upton & Connor, 2001)
- Contextualized text analysis – supplementing text analysis with interviews, observations, and surveys
 - “Variation in rhetorical moves in grant proposals of US humanists and scientists” (Connor, 2000)
- Ethnographic and other naturalistic approaches
 - “‘How like you our fish?’ Accommodation in international business communication” (Connor, 1999)

Connor

Ulla Connor

INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC

IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM



It is easy to argue that the need for attention to how we navigate rhetorically within and across cultures has never been greater, given ever-increasing global migrations and seemingly instantaneous global communication. Yet, the conceptual basis of intercultural rhetoric (also known in the past as contrastive rhetoric) has been under fire ever since it first emerged as an area of research and pedagogical interest.

In recent years, Ulla Connor has built a steadily more extensive and sophisticated case for how a culturally contextualized study of rhetoric in any media can be carried out without static and reductive over-generalizations about culture/s or rhetoric. This volume provides both an eloquent summation and further theoretical expansion of Connor's arguments.

Readers who have wondered about the possibility of exploring connections between their students' (or anyone's) culture and discourse style will find many of their questions addressed in this volume; other readers who have not previously raised such questions will very likely begin to see the value of doing so.



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Questions?

For a copy of the PowerPoint or for further questions, contact

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