

# Cultural Transfer in EFL Writing: A Look at Contrastive Rhetoric on English and Indonesian

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**Abstract:** Studies in contrastive rhetoric since Kaplan's (1966) article have indicated the need of looking at L2 writing from different perspective by considering factors such as L2 learners' historical background in L1 writing, the development in their writing process, and the genres before we come to analyze the texts. By following such approaches, this study wants to see if there has been any cultural transfer in L2 writing of Indonesian writers. However, this has led to the probing of Indonesian L1 writing as well. This study again suggests the complexity of rhetoric in writing.

**Key words:** contrastive rhetoric; culture.

The study of contrastive rhetoric has undergone substantial growth since the publication of Kaplan's article entitled *Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education* in 1966. In his article Kaplan presented five drawings depicting five different rhetorics. English rhetoric was depicted as a straight line, Oriental rhetoric as a spiral, Arabic rhetoric as a series of zigzags, and Roman and Russian as lines heading downward but veering off at different angles along the way. Kaplan's 1966 research has been considered as the first major study that attempted to analyze how L1 cultures manifest in L2 writing, which was influenced by the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. He argued that L2 students writings, especially their paragraph organization, exhibited the students' L1 cultural thought patterns. (Allaei & Connor, 1990, p. 22). For some time the visual memory of the five sketches Kaplan proposed was dominating the thinking, learning, teaching and writing of teachers and students. Many ESL writing textbooks and teacher texts reprinted the sketches and generations of teachers and students learned that English speakers did develop their ideas in a linear fashion and Orientals in a non-linear and spiral fashion, etc. (Soverino, 1993, pp. 44-45)

After over thirty years of studies carried out in this field, there have been considerable reactions as to the qualification of Kaplan's position in contrastive rhetoric (Among them are: Hinds, 1987, 1990; Carell, 1987; Mohan and Lo, 1985; Matalene, 1985; Purves, 1986; Liebman, 1992; Allaei & Connor, 1990; Leki, 1991; Severino, 1993). It was argued that contrastive rhetoric research examines the product only, detaching it from and ignoring both the contrastive rhetorical context from which the L2 writers emerge and the process these writers may have gone through to produce a text. (Leki, 1991, p. 123). Liebman maintains that "Kaplan believed that texts reflected culture, yet the cultural context that produced these texts was not explored." (1992, p. 143) Kaplan himself has revisited his cultural thought patterns article which has been known as the "doodles article." He wrote that

In that study, I tried to represent, in crude graphic form, the notion that the rhetorical structure of languages differs. It is probably true that, in the first blush of discovery, I overstated both the difference and my case. In the years since the article first appeared, I have been accused of reductionism – of trying to reduce the whole of linguistics to this single issue. It was not my intent then, and it is not my intent now, to claim more for the notion than it deserves. Nevertheless, I have become gradually more convinced that there is some validity to the notion. (1987, p. 9)

Hence he was trying to reduce his strong conviction as proposed in his 1966 article, yet simultaneously still maintain the validity of the notion.

Several studies in contrastive rhetoric have shown that we need to approach this field with a stance that acknowledges the complexities of the rhetorics of different languages and cultures by examining the genre, age and class background in a complex discourse analysis (Indrasutra, 1988); the organizational patterns emphasized in school writing and students' pedagogical histories (Soverino, 1993); while continuing to examine contrasts in the smallest features of texts, investigations of the broad political and historical contexts for writing and recognition of not just rhetorical style but also purpose, task, topic, and audience, need to be included (Leki, 1991); or in a framework of what Liebman (1992, p. 142) calls the "new contrastive rhetoric" which considers not only in how people organize texts in different languages, but also in their approach to audience, their perception of the purpose of writing, the types of writing tasks, the composing process, and the role writing plays in their education.

So far the studies in contrastive rhetoric have been conducted in different languages such as Japanese (Hinds, 1983, 1987,1990), Chinese (Mohan & Lo, 1985), Thai (Indrasatra, 1988), Korean (Eggington, 1987), Hindi (Kachru, 1983, 1987, 1988), Arabic (Hatim, 1991), Vietnamese (Soter, 1988), and some European languages reviewed by Kaplan and Grabe (1996), but there has not been any significant study done on Indonesian EFL students' writing. As one of the major countries in Asia where English is getting more popular, I believe that the study of rhetoric in Indonesian writings may contribute and enrich the studies of contrastive rhetoric. Furthermore, as Indonesian culture is presumably close to Oriental cultures, it might be well considered to see if such "cultural transfer" in writing as having been conducted with other Asian writings has also constituted the same, similar, or even different problems compared to their Indonesian counterparts.

By considering the previous studies that have been conducted in contrastive rhetoric and the proposed approaches by some researchers, in this paper I will first see briefly the historical background of school writing in Indonesia. Then I will see how the writer and reader relationship, and text develop in the process of Indonesian writing.

## **BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LEARNING OF SCHOOL WRITING IN INDONESIA**

In the multi ethnic and multi cultures country like Indonesia, Indonesian language or *Bahasa Indonesia* has been used as our national language that was formally declared in October 28, 1928, even before Indonesia declared its independence in 1945. *Bahasa* has been taught in all schools in the entire country besides the regional dialect that is also taught until junior high. The curriculum of the teaching of *Bahasa* has also been undergoing a lot of changes. However, there has not been any significant formal instruction in the teaching of writing or composition. For instance, my own primary education in Indonesia during the sixties, writing in *bahasa* was hardly assigned by the instructor. When we did have to write, the teacher would usually assign a topic, such as *My vacation*, *My ideal home*, for us to write at home without giving us any guidance as to the organization or the style of writing. There was no revision after first draft was submitted. That was final and the teacher would give us grade on that first and final draft without any substantial comment given to the content, nor the organization.

During the eighties and nineties the curriculum of *bahasa* was undergone some changes, but still there has not been any significant formal instruction for writing. From the Curriculum of *Bahasa Indonesia* published by the Department of Education and Culture in 1995, the teaching of writing is integrated in the course. A *Bahasa Indonesia* teacher admitted that there is no separate course for teaching writing. It depends on the teacher's creativity to teach it. 1) A recent graduate from Indonesian high school reported that what she learned was mostly Indonesian grammar, reading, and some theories on literature. Another reported that she got some guideline from her primary school teacher that writing should consist of introduction, contents, and conclusion. But that was about it with no further elaboration and serious practice. Another admitted that the only thing he learned about writing in *bahasa* was the modes in writing with some paragraphs given as examples, but he and his classmates were never assigned to write a composition. Hence, like other courses taught at school, the study of *bahasa* is treated more like a science whose knowledge is to be learned and memorized than to be used in practical actual communication. At the end of their high school year, some schools assign their students to write a final paper on a certain topic, but what the students did was often imitating how former students had written. Again, there has not been any significant guidance as to how to organize a paper writing. Perhaps we are assuming that since *bahasa* is our own language, so there is no need for us to learn how to write as long as we know the grammar and how to write correct sentences, but this notion still need to be further investigated.

My Indonesian friends who have been studying overseas, and those who took English as their major in college agree with me that they started to learn how to compose a paper when they study English. So basically most of us would learn English rhetoric in their first formal learning of writing. Those who happen to like writing do write even when they are still in high school, but mostly they are in the form of creative writing such as writing a short story. Hence their style and organization are mainly urged by their creativity or by imitating how other writers wrote.

English as a foreign language in Indonesia is learned from junior high to high school as a required course. However, like in the learning of *bahasa*, what we learn in our English class is mostly grammar and reading. Thus, Indonesian students who come to study in the English speaking countries face some hard time in their oral communication, what is more in writing.

## THE WRITER-READER RELATIONSHIP

English is a subject prominent language. The person who is primarily responsible for effective communication is the speaker. Hinds categorizes writing as reader or writer responsible rhetorics, according to the degree to which a reader is required to make inferential bridges between propositions and to deduce meaning from a text, as opposed to the degree of the writer duty to explicitly provide explanations of propositions. (1987, p. 143)

Several researches that have been conducted in some Asian rhetorics like Chinese, Japanese, and Korean have focused on the reader versus writer responsibility. Hinds finds that Japanese uses a reader-responsible rhetoric. Japanese readers are to build transitions themselves in reading an essay. The responsibility for creating the transition lies with the reader in Japanese. Meanwhile classical Chinese appears to be more like Japanese, i.e. reader-responsible, while modern Chinese is more like English, i.e. writer-responsible. (Hinds, 1987, p. 145)

In general Indonesian speakers are very conscious of the relationship they have with their interlocutors. They often have to choose the proper terms of address and the language style when talking, based on the kind of relationship they both have. Otherwise people will think that the speaker is impolite and does not realize his or her self. In order to sound more polite and to reduce the speaker's responsibility on what he or she says just in case the thing he/she says may offend the interlocutor, in formal situation a speaker will usually tend to refer to himself or herself by using *we*, which in *bahasa Indonesia* has two different words *kami* and *kita*. 2) Thus, by using *we* a speaker may try to conceal his or her self in the statement and lessen his/her responsibility. The word *kami/kita* may show that what I say is not really my own words or ideas, but I am representing my group. This notion is clearly seen in Indonesian letter writing where the writer would refer himself or herself with *kami* instead of *saya* or "I". Here are some phrases taken from a letter written by Efendy Tanuwidjaja who complaint about some unfair treatment he got from an insurance company, published in a local newspaper (*Kompas*, February 22, 1998):

*Keluarga kami cukup lama menjadi peserta asuransi....*

*Ketika kami datang ke kantor...*

*Ketika kami tanyakan mengapa uang tersebut keluar...*

*Sudah beberapa kali kami mengadakan pengaduan...*

[Our family have been a member of the insurance company for quite long...

When we went to the office ...

When we asked why the money was deducted ...

We have complaint about it several times ...]

Notice the use of the term “our family” instead of “my family and I ” shows the avoidance of using “I”. Here even when the person who was most probably the only person who had to go to the office and complain, it sounds more appropriate to refer to himself with *we*, for he was representing the group/his family.

In Indonesia, many Javanese in particular, 3) usually have a high sense of communal feeling. Ideas need to conform with others or the majority. People admire uniformity, conformity, and harmony. (Suseno, 1996, p. 39) An open conflict needs to be avoided. (pp. 40, 42) A person tries to see him/her self as a part of the community by not trying to excel others or showing off. It is considered as a low profile attitude that enhances harmony and has positive effect in communication. The best way to show this is by concealing oneself in the “we” group. Even when one has an idea that he/she wants to put forward, the safest way is to state it in: *We think ...* or *We believe...* statements rather than an assertion of *I think* or *I believe*. In one sense, the person will look modest, but in another sense he/she may lessen the responsibility of proposing that statement as his/her own idea.

The stress on human relations among members of the community in Indonesia contrasts sharply with Americans. The perceived subjectivity of the self in the US allows individuals to have his or her own perception, opinions, choices, and creativity. This is shown in how American society implicitly accepts children to make their own decisions, develop their own opinions, solve their own problems, have their own possessions, and learn to view the world from the point of view of the self. (Stewart, 1991, pp 131, 133). This is also seen in English writing, a writer is fully responsible for what he/she states. In a subject prominent language like English, the structure of sentences favors a description in which the grammatical relation *subject-predicate* assumes primary importance. (Hinds 1987, p. 142)

Indonesian EFL students who learn to write in English using the subject prominent style where “I”, or the writer, plays an important role

and is the one who is responsible for the content of the writing may find this activity depressing at first. Once in a while they would still slip to the “we” style or use a passive sentence to avoid mentioning the “I” subject. One EFL student wrote in her first draft on a paper about culture (quoted below with student’s consent):

As we know it, many countries have its own cultures. When I was a high school student, I have learned about culture. ... To have behavior, which appropriate with the culture, we are supposed to learn it. And in my personal opinion, I believe in that perspective. ... Language is a good example for culture. We can see differences in language among countries in this world. ... However, culture is a very wonderful thing. There would never be “done” to learn it.

Here we can see the switching of subject from “I” to “we” alternately several times.

*Bahasa Indonesia* is also known as a highly contextual language. People do not often tell others what their actual intention is directly and explicitly. (Geertz, 1960, p. 246) In order for a person to understand what another person intends to say, he/she should consider many contextual factors surrounding the speakers, such as their relationship, how the person says it, and the setting. Many people also think that stating things directly and explicitly may sound too blunt or too aggressive. And it can be considered as impolite. One way to be implicit is to use the inductive way of expressing ideas. Indonesian EFL students who are used to thinking inductively where things are often stated implicitly will find it difficult to write deductively as in the English writing. English speaking people like Americans find clarity in language usage as better than ambiguity since precision leads to practical action. If the message is understood, then language and communication are good. (Stewart, 1991, p. 55)

Many Indonesians, however, are very sensitive to other people’s feelings when talking so as not to hurt others. By saying things implicitly one may avoid hurting other people with his/her directness and explicit language. (Geertz, 1960, p. 247). Sometimes the Javanese can even go beyond that implicit style. A person may state things that are not at all related to what he/she really wants. Other persons should figure out themselves what he/she means. A student once complaint to me while conferencing for her draft. “Don’t you think this is clear enough? I think

the reader will be able to figure out what I mean.” When I said “But I don’t think I understand it,” and I asked her to be more explicit, she said that it might be too blunt. Another student wrote a statement like this:

My stay in the boarding house made me become independent. I had to do my own chores that I was not used to. I also had to work harder for my study because I want my parents to be proud of me. However, I can now do whatever I want without having to ask my parents whether I can do it or not. I like my independence but sometimes I feel sad when I get sick.

When I asked her to clarify what she meant by “independent”, “to work harder”, “do whatever I want,” she found that those words should have been clear enough at least for us in the class. So explaining them might be too blunt. This evidence can also be viewed that as a matter of fact students may have realized themselves that what they have written can be ambiguous for others, yet they feel reluctant to make it more explicit just in case it might cause some bad feelings of others. This latter reason is in fact quite true in most Indonesian news report writing such as those published in the newspapers. Reporters often have to be intentionally ambiguous in their writing that criticizes the authority for fear that they might get accused of opposing the government and be arrested. Thus it will risk them in dangerous situation. Usually readers have to figure out themselves what the reporters are trying to say. In fact this also happens in both Taiwan and People’ Republic of China as Severino suggested. (1993, p. 55)

Even such kind of ambiguity can be seen in Indonesian writing; once Indonesian writers learn and practice their writing in English rhetoric, they show improvement in using subject prominent style. Some Indonesian students even reported their contentment in being able to express themselves freely. Hence Leki’s suggestion on approaching contrastive rhetoric research from which the L2 writers emerge and the processes these writers may have gone through to produce a text certainly needs to be taken into consideration when examining EFL students’ writing.

## THE TEXT

When ESL students learn writing, usually they learn how to write an expository writing which is especially needed when they have to write their academic papers. Writing expository prose requires reasoning and



rhetorical arrangement that are different from writing letters, dialogues, or narratives. In regard to English text, Kaplan (1990, p. 11) maintains that it is conventional in English text to have the organizational topic stated or implied somewhere near the beginning of the text. And there appear to be rhetorical rules that govern categories of texts within particular languages. (p. 12) However, Grabe argues that the single category of expository writing covered several subgenres as text types within the expository writing. Hence, he suggests that comparing or examining expository texts must be sure that they are the same type of text across cultures. (1987, p. 136)

Leki (1991, p. 127) found that some researches who continue to focus on L2 student texts in the studies of contrastive rhetoric seem to fall on the type of approaching contrastive rhetoric in stereotyping and overgeneralization. She maintains that researchers since Kaplan's time have made clear that professional native-speaker English writers do not, in fact, necessarily write in a straight line beginning with a topic sentence and moving directly to support. There are many variations in a normal English text. Eggington (1987, p. 167) also found that Korean academic texts may be written similar to academic English because the authors of the texts have been studied in an English speaking country. Severino (1993, pp. 52-54) who reported on Chinese students' explanation on their writings mentions a variety of reasons for writing in the way they wrote their compositions. One said that she never believed that Chinese wrote in a spiral fashion. Another said that she wrote indirectly and let the reader understand the main opinion at the end. Another said that in composition, Chinese students were using the four-part structure that is akin to the classical Chinese poetic form *chi-cheng-juan-he* described by Feng-fu Tsao. Severino concluded that what scholars have called "Chinese rhetoric" cannot simply be depicted with a spiral diagram, nor can we say that organizational patterns in Chinese are similar to those in English. The situation is too complex for such generalization. What was stated by Severino is also supported by Cahill (2003) who studied contrasted rhetoric between English and Chinese / Japanese. He found that there are rhetorical styles in China and Japan which are similar to 'western' rhetoric in which they show some structures which are not rhetorical move of "circularity" or "digression" as are usually pointed out in 'eastern' style. However, Cahill also found that western teachers cannot expect that because of this similarity in 'western' and 'eastern' rhetoric, the East Asian "nondirectness" and "nonlinearity" in the English compositions of

their Asian writing students should not be found. He maintains that even though their rhetorics are quite similar in their basics, they need not present an overriding obstacle for student writers crossing over into another language.

Given the fact that Indonesian schools do not really provide significant manuals in learning how to write Indonesian expository texts and that students hardly get sufficient information and practice in writing, EFL students in Indonesia will usually use English writing manuals and rhetoric the first time they learn how to write expository compositions. So students will usually learn how to write like the typical English introduction-body-conclusion pattern. So it is quite difficult to really find a text written by EFL students that are not influenced by the organization pattern like the one in the English rhetoric. Indonesian EFL students will usually try to write in the pattern that is taught in the English composition class. However, there is a tendency that students will put the thesis statement more explicitly in the conclusion instead of stating it clearly in the introduction when they write their first draft.

One Indonesian student who admitted that she had liked writing since she was in high school wrote about her experience in her writing class assignment (quoted as it appears in her writing):

.....

Many of my friends asked me about how my process to wrote. And believe it or not , I couldn't answer it. Because I'd never knew, how I did it. I just like dreaming. Dreaming about anything, which sometimes never came to the other people's mind. I just keep thinking about it. And then, one stories will complete in my mind. I just wrote my stories once. And I will save my stories in my computer. After few days, I will read it once again, to make some correction. I've never made a big correction. I just change the words, the dialogs, and another small corrections.

Many of my friends like my ending. Actually, I always focus my stories in the ending. I don't know why. But I always tried to give an impression on the reader mind. Because, I think, the good story will be forgotten accidentally in 1 hours after we finished it, if it didn't have a special ending. Also, the usual story, will be impression the reader if it have a special ending.

Actually my endings aren't too special. But I always try to make simple and natural endings. ...

Here she was telling the reader her experience in writing stories which she happened to enjoy doing outside her class activities. What she suggested about her hobby in writing in fact has nothing to do with any writing pattern she might have to follow. Her intention of using the ending of her story as the most important part of her writing is to impress the readers and to make them remember her story. In fact, she is not the only one who mentioned about her reason of wanting to put the emphasis in the ending. Some of my EFL students in Indonesia also gave me similar reason when I pointed out why they put their thesis statement or the main idea in the conclusion. So it could have been caused by this notion when they write their expository English composition which is different from writing a story.

Scollon and Scollon in their book *Intercultural communication* (1997, pp. 1-2) offer a very distinct example concerning the difference between Asian and Western rhetoric. According to the Scollons, an Asian speaker usually uses an order of presentation in which the main point is postponed until sufficient background has been put forward. The form of this pattern is:

*Because of Y (background or reason)  
So X (main point)*

On the other hand, the Western speaker tends to open a discourse by introducing the main point before he/she puts forward the reasons or arguments in support of the main topic. The form of the pattern is:

*X (main point)  
Because of Y (reason, background)*

In other words, Asian people usually use inductive approach while Westerners use deductive approach.

While it is quite difficult to look for EFL students' writing, especially in their final drafts, where this notion is revealed in the overall organization of their composition, I found it quite easy to get some Indonesian writings which show the inductive approach as Scollon and Scollon suggest. Here is one example taken from a letter to the editor, also published in the local newspaper (*Kompas*, February 22, 1998). Below is the translation of the report:

On January 17, 1998 around 2 p.m. Indonesian Western Time, I took a public bus *Kopaja* in the direction of *Kampung Rambutan* to *Blok*

M. After I paid the bus fee to the conductor, I then took a seat and after that there came four young men approaching me and asking me where I came from and pretending that they recognized my face but forgot where they had met me before.

Then they made a very good scenario. They said that their younger brother was murdered two days ago and they still could not find the killer, but they said that my face was similar to that person they were looking for. Then they snarled at me so that I would show them my ID card in my wallet so they could prove if I was really the one they were looking for or not.

Then they took out a weapon and pointed it to my body, and asked me to take out all the contents in my wallet including my credit card. Then they asked me to give them my PIN number. If I refused they threatened me that they would torture me. So I gave them my PIN number and they took away one and a half million *rupiahs* from my saving.

I want to call for your attention to keep your credit card safe. If you sense there are people who act strange, please be careful. The kind of threat I experienced was said to happen a lot in the super markets and malls.

Fredy, Depok.

Here I can see clearly the use of inductive approach in reporting the incident. Instead of starting his report with his important point, i.e. warning people to be careful in keeping their credit cards and in facing strange people, he started with the narration of the incident. Such rhetoric is in fact more common in oral communication among Indonesians where they will state their most important statement at the end or may not state it at all depending on the kind of reaction they get from their interlocutors first.

In order to see whether such inductive approach in Indonesian rhetoric is transferred or not when students learn English as L2, a research may have to be conducted with Indonesian EFL students who have not had any instruction on English expository writing to write an English composition. So we can see if such inductive approach is shown. So far the studies that have been carried out with other Asian EFL students are based on their composition in their writing class where instruction on how to write expository writing may have been given prior to the writing

assignment. Angelova et.al (1999) maintain that many EFL students in the United States were often advised to ask for help from the writing center in order to be able to write in the ‘western’ style. Many US teachers did not realize that paper writing was not a common practice in educational institutions outside the United States.

Another context to look at is the writing style. An interesting research was conducted by Jie and Lederman (1988) on Chinese students’ entrance exams in Chinese Universities. They found that essays were still written in more traditional style with elaborate metaphors and literary references. Such kind of writing style was apparently rated as high. Allaei & Connor (1990) compare western and Chinese rhetoric. They maintain that western culture espouse originality in writing through the authentic voice. They encourage self-expression and stylistic innovation. The logic is Aristotalean. In Chinese rhetoric, using a vast number of proverbs, maxims, and pieces of folklore based on memorization of literary and historical texts is important.(pp. 23-24) Purves (1986) classified the writing style of 14 different countries using categories like personal versus impersonal, ornamental versus plain, abstract versus concrete, single versus multiple focus, and propositional strategies versus appositional strategies. Perhaps the study in writing style would be better conducted in L1 texts if we want to see if there are differences across cultures.

It is therefore quite difficult to analyze Indonesian EFL students’ writings to see if there is any specific style that can be depicted as culturally affected. Furthermore, most EFL students are often well informed in English style when they study writing. Perhaps an analysis of L1 writing may reveal better result. However, to use the categories proposed by Purves, I would say that many Indonesian students feel hard to use “I” and write a personal essay. Some students feel that a personal essay is like disclosing their personal problems to others and they are not used to doing that. They said that writing about a certain topic that was not connected to the writer’s personal experience was much easier than writing about oneself. When students are given a chance to share their writing with a friend, they will usually choose someone they can really trust so that the friend will not disclose the content to others.

Beginning student writers will usually choose plain language when they write instead of ornamental sophisticated wording like what was reported about Chinese students’ L1 writing.(Allaei & Connor, 1990, p. 24) However, there is a tendency that students will imitate some words,

phrases, or sentences they read from books or from some model essays that they think are good in their own paper. This can usually be detected quite easily in students' writings though, especially beginning writers. Perhaps this is due to the habit in Indonesian L1 writing in which people usually follow the common expressions or formality that others use in writing. For instance many Indonesian people like to apologize at the end of a speech or writing, saying that there might be some shortcomings that need to be forgiven. Even Geertz (1960) in his dedication to the persons he wrote the book for needs to mention in Javanese: *Nuwun pangestunipun sedaja kalepatan kula*, which means: I apologize for all my unintentional mistakes. Hence, these cliché words are often repeated as if it is the formality that students should do.

Like what have been stated above on the ambiguity of the writer in presenting ideas in writing, Indonesian EFL students often use abstract words in describing a topic. For instance the phrase "to work harder" in the example given earlier in this paper is vague and abstract as readers will have difficulty to figure out what kind of work it was and how hard he or she did it. Some adjectives like interesting, bored, lovely, easy, difficult, etc. are not often described in a more concrete explanation. Thus make the description superficial and vague, although they argued that they should be clear enough for their friends. However, this tendency may also be caused by their developmental stage in writing, since this can also be found in native speaker beginning writers as it was once admitted by a NS composition instructor when commenting on the student's draft that I showed him. Hence, further studies on the text and writing style still need to be carried out.

## CONCLUSION

From the above study of the contrastive rhetoric of English and Indonesian I found that by looking at EFL texts only it is difficult to judge whether cultural transfer in Indonesian students' EFL writings does exist. The difficulty can partly be caused by the texts, especially the final drafts, that are used for the study are from EFL students who were studying writing and had been exposed to academic English writing. However, from the study of Indonesian writings, I could find how Indonesian culture is depicted more clearly in their writings. So it could be true that Indonesian rhetoric is more inductive, ambiguous, and impersonal, but whether this cultural dimension is transferred or not in EFL students'

writings still needs to be further investigated. Perhaps giving students freedom to develop their own way of writing in English and using their own style without the inference from their writing teacher's instruction may reveal more. I have also found that looking at the historical background of the study of writing in high school has helped me to see more on the background of EFL students' writing ability. Since there is not any significant instruction on Indonesian writing given to secondary school students, there will be a good chance to find out if Indonesian cultural patterns are seen in their creative writing.

Yamuna Kachru (1995) presents an interesting and important suggestion on how studies on contrastive rhetoric need to be done. By referring to Bhatia (1993) and Halliday and Hasan (1976), she suggests to study the traditions of writing in different cultures and registers, since "there may be genres which are unique to a language and culture, and there may be different rhetorical patterns associated with different genres." (p. 177) Given the minimum number of manuals that can be found in Indonesian rhetoric, a study of authentic Indonesian writings would certainly be a good beginning.

Kachru (p. 179) also notices that there is a "narrow perspective adopted by most researchers in Contrastive Rhetoric – the perspective of ESL as the teaching of academic English to international students in Inner Circle universities, i.e. in the English speaking countries." Meanwhile "an awareness of the wider perspective of ESL as relevant to the Outer Circle has so far been totally absent." Her view is that it is perfectly legitimate to make ESL writers conscious about the preferred rhetorical patterns of English writing, but they also need to know the different rhetorical conventions. Thus the study of contrastive rhetoric can also be a way to enhance cross cultural understanding and to appreciate cultural differences.

Notes:

1. Many of my respondents for this paper contacted me through e-mail. I also posted some questions concerning writing in *Bahasa Indonesia* in an Indonesian usenet. Other respondents are from Indonesian students who study in IUP.
2. *Kami* refers to the plural first person pronoun that does not include the person(s) addressed by the speaker, while *kita* refers to the plural first person pronoun which include the person(s) addressed by the speaker.

3. It is difficult to generalize what Indonesian culture is since Indonesian consists of many different ethnic groups who have their own specific cultures and language. However, people often refer to the Javanese as the dominant ethnic group and is often used implicitly in representing Indonesian cultures. So readers should be cautious that what is said to be Indonesian may just refer to the Javanese only.

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