

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a foreign language
ESL: English as a second language
PP: Parallel Progression
SP: Sequential Progression
EPP: Extended Parallel Progression
L1: first language
L2: second language
TS-Body-CS/TBC: Topic Sentence-Body-Concluding Sentence
PKHS: provincial key high school
CKHS: city key high school
CHS: comprehensive high school
NS: the number of sentences
NT: the number of sentence topics
GI: General Introduction
TS: Topic Sentence
CS: Concluding Sentence
MSS: Main Supporting Sentence
SD: Supporting Detail
RP: Rhetorical Pattern

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专业 英语 语言文学 所呈交的论文（论文题目：论中国学生英语说明文结构中的修辞衍生）是我个人在导师指导下进行的研究工作及取得的研究成果。尽我所知，除了文中特别加以标注和致谢的地方外，论文中不包含其他人已经发表或撰写过的研究成果。本人了解福建师范大学有关保留、使用学位论文的规定，即：学校有权保留送交的学位论文并允许论文被查阅和借阅；学校可以公布论文的全部或部分内容；学校可以采用影印、缩印或其他复制手段保存论文。

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中文摘要

本文运用“语篇分析”、“主题结构分析”以及“对比修辞”等相关理论,旨在探究中国学生英语作文中的语篇错误,分析其错误产生的根源,从而培养师生对英语语言结构和英语思维模式的意识。

本文有三项主要研究目标。第一,依据英语作文修辞结构对学生作文进行语篇结构分析;第二,基于篇章主题与句子主题之间的语义关系,探讨学生作文中的主题结构分布;第三,通过比较研究,为写作初学者提供切实有效的写作课教学指导。本文以福建农林大学 2006 级英语专业三十名新生的作文为研究文本,运用“主题句——正文——结论”的段落写作方法和 Lautamatti(1987)的主题结构分析原理,对文本进行相关的整理、归纳和总结。

研究发现:第一,汉语修辞结构影响写作初学者英语说明文的篇章结构。其表现形式为:(1)主题句不明确,隐藏或滞后出现于段落末尾;(2)生搬硬套汉语“起承转合”写作模式,或通篇套用或部分混杂在英语作文段落中。第二,复杂的主题结构导致写作初学者英语说明文的不连贯性。其表现形式为:(1)较差学生作文中缺乏平行结构以及延伸平行结构;(2)较好学生作文中频繁使用平行结构以及延伸平行结构,但使用连续结构次数较少;(3)较差学生作文中多包含与文本主题无直接关联的连续结构。第三,水平较高的作者倾向于采用现代英语写作技巧和修辞手段;而水平较低的作者则屈从于母语的负面影响,多采用汉语写作技巧和修辞手段。通过修辞模式的比较分析,本文也为写作初学者提供了一套切实有效的写作课教学方案。

关键词:对比修辞;第一语言的修辞影响;语篇话题;修辞模式

Abstract

The current study intends to find out the discourse errors that Chinese EFL students have in their writings as well as analyzing the reasons underlying their performance, in applying the theories of “discourse analysis”, “topical structure analysis” and “contrastive rhetoric”. Ultimately, it is hoped to strengthen the awareness of both the teachers and the learners in terms of English language structure and English thinking pattern in the writing performance.

There are three main purposes of this study. First, by reviewing the EFL students’ written texts, this study is aimed at exploring the different kinds of rhetorical patterns employed by the EFL intermediate learners. Second, this study is attempted to further examine the topical development of the writing samples, focused on the semantic relationships between discourse topics and sentence topics. Finally, the objective of this study is to offer suggestions for EFL writing instruction of intermediate learners. Thirty written texts, produced by EFL students majoring in English at Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, are collected and analyzed in accordance with the “Topic-Body-Conclusion” paragraph writing convention in English as well as Lautamatti’s (1987) topical structure analysis.

Three major findings are concluded in the current study. First, the Chinese rhetorical patterns influence the written discourse of first-year English majors in their English expositions. They present these two types: (1) the topic-delayed pattern in which the themes are not stated clearly, hidden in the discourse or postponed; (2) the misuse of Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern in which either the

whole pattern or the separate parts are adopted into the writings of English compositions. Second, the topical progression patterns employed by the competent and less competent students contribute to incoherence in writing. They demonstrate the following three types: (1) writing samples from the less competent students often lack parallel progressions and extended parallel progressions; (2) writing samples from the competent students contain more parallel progressions and extended parallel progressions but less sequential progressions; (3) writing samples from the less competent students are identified to contain more indirect sequential topics. Third, high-proficiency learners prefer the adoption of contemporary English writing strategies and rhetorical patterns, while low-proficiency learners, tend to yield more to the influence of the first language, and therefore resort more frequently to Chinese rhetorical patterns.

By analyzing the rhetorical patterns and topical development of Chinese EFL expository writings in detail, this study also suggests an effective method of instruction to guide students in writing for academic purposes.

Key Words: Contrastive Rhetoric; Rhetorical Influence of L1; Discourse Topic;
Rhetorical Pattern

中文文摘

英汉文章在中心思想表达以及主题句位置分布上存在显著差异。前者倾向于在文章开头直截了当陈述主题,进行论述,篇章结构呈演绎型;后者的中心思想或隐含或在结尾处表达,篇章结构呈归纳型。本文运用“语篇分析”、“主题结构分析”以及“对比修辞”等相关理论,通过对福建农林大学 2006 级英语专业三十名新生的英语说明文分析研究,旨在探究汉语修辞结构对于英语写作初学者篇章结构的影响以及主题结构分布与语篇连贯性的关系。

本文分为五章,第一章为序言部分,简要介绍了“对比修辞”理论对本研究的重要指导作用,强调“对比修辞”主要研究第二语言学习过程中母语修辞模式对第二语言写作的影响。它在发展过程中受到应用语言学、英语写作教学理论及篇章语言学等各种理论的影响,这些理论为“对比修辞”学提供了对比基础、分析方法及研究手段,在此基础上进行的大量研究对促进语言写作教学具有直接作用。此外,还指出第二语言写作要求写作者不但要具备一定的目的语的词汇、语法等语言基础知识,还应该按照目的语的思维方式和修辞结构进行写作,即要求掌握目的语的表达方式、段落结构、谋篇布局等写作知识和技巧。最后,简要介绍了本研究的目的、意义以及局限性等。

第二章为文献综述。本章是介绍著名学者提出的有关“语篇分析”、“对比修辞”和“主题结构分析”等相关理论的重要论述。

第一节主要介绍一些学者对“语篇”、“语篇分析”和“文本”的定义和区分,而后指出语篇分析需要从宏观(文本组织架构)和微观(衔接与连贯)这两个层面展开,尤其强调篇章的粘连性与连贯性对篇章整体结构的影响。有学者(Lautamatti, 1987)认为,英语段落的篇章结构的特点是:首先,它强调段落必须是一个完整的统一体;其次,表达的中心思想必须做到语义直接相关,依照一定连接手段(如平行结构、连续结构和延伸平行结构),固定顺序、合乎逻辑、明确地连接起来。通常每段段首有主题句,而且每段只有一个中心思想,段落内容必须与主题句直接相关,段落结构严谨,每个段落由话题、主体及结论组成。主体部分陈述除必须与主题句直接相关外,还必须做到一般陈述和具体陈述,副主题和例证之间的平衡。

第二节主要介绍研究者在“对比修辞”领域的研究成果。美国的卡普兰是最早研究第二语言写作与修辞关系的开拓者。1966年他在“跨文化教育的思维模式”一文中假设:向美国学生和外国学生教授阅读和写作的方法不应相同,这一教学方法上的差别主要是源于修辞性质上表现出来的文化差异所致。卡普兰先生通过搜集本土及国际背景学生的作文进行对比研究后得出结论:来自不同文化背景的学生,使用不同的书面话语模式(并非指语法等表面差异而是指作者在论证命题,连句成段方面的不同)。根据他的归纳,英语-汉语的修辞模式分别可用直线型和螺旋型加以概述(限于说明文)。英语段落呈直线性展开,先有主题句后为自然衔接的例证句,而后收尾。或先有例证句以主题句收尾,即典型的演绎与归纳段落。其间不附加任何与主题没有直接关系的内容。而汉语段落呈螺旋性展开,作者不直接论证主题而是在主题外围“团团转”,从各种间接角度来说明问题,这种写作方式通常使西方读者困惑不解。显然,卡普兰的这一归纳具有一定的片面性,过于笼统。各个民族的语言和思维方式存在差异,但这并不意味着一种思维模式只能在一种文化中存在,也并不意味着一种文化只局限于某一种特定的思维方式。

继卡普兰假说(直线型螺旋型)之后,对汉英之间存在的差异,学者们有着各不相同的概括与解释。如 Cai (1993), Mo (1982) 和 Tsao (1982) 等认为中国学生的英语写作深受汉语“起承转合”模式的影响。“起承转合”源于中国古代诗歌的韵脚格律中,古文讲究行文的跌宕起伏,注意开头部分如何预为伏笔,生发下文,中幅如何呼应跌宕,结尾如

何大海回澜,收住全文。在现代汉语篇章结构中,“起”是文章的开端或议论的起点,也是全文主旨提出的前奏。“承”是对论点加以说明或对问题加以分析。“转”是对论题更高层次的阐述,“合”并不完全是归纳文章的结论,有时则代表一种开放式的结尾,等待读者的参与。这种篇章结构与英语篇章结构有所不同。一般英文说明文/论说文在文章开端就点出全文的主要论点,在主体部分具体深入谈论主要论点的各层面并提供详尽的解释与例证。文章结论是对前文观点的重申或回顾。

Scollon (2000) 等认为,差异来自两种语言采用的推理模式不同。在他们看来,汉语主要采用归纳式的推理,而英语主要采用演绎式的推理。归纳就是先提出次要论点,然后再从中推出主要论点。演绎是先提出主要论点,然后提供次要的论点和支持论证。这两种模式在不同语言文化中虽然都能见到,但其使用者偏好的不同在很大程度上反映出不同语言文化间的差异。

也有学者持不同观点。Hinds (1987, 1990) 曾提出,的确存在一种与西方不同的东方写作方式,但这既不是归纳式的,也不是演绎式的,而是他称为的“半归纳式”。该写作方式中,话题的引出常常隐藏在语段中某处,而不是出现在语段开头或结尾处。Hinds 还曾提出读者责任型语言与作者责任型语言的观点来解释差异。一般认为汉语文章是读者责任型,而英语文章是作者责任型。读者责任型语言要求读者对文章的理解负主要责任,要求读者自己去弄清主题与文章其它部分之间的语法和逻辑联系。换言之,写作者可以较多地依赖读者对写作内容的知识储存,没有写出的内容读者应该去意会、补充。而作者责任型语言则假想读者对文章内容甚至各命题都缺乏了解,作者要对读者理解尽最大可能的责任。这就是说,写作者在写作内容、表达方式等方面进行选择时不能过多地臆测读者,而要采用适当的表达方式向读者交代足够细致的内容。

第三章为研究方法,主要介绍了本研究的调查对象,收集的文本,调查所使用的工具以及研究步骤。本研究所调查的对象是福建农林大学 2006 级英语专业的三十名新生,收集的文本是他们入学后所接受的第一次说明文写作任务,其中包括七篇较好的作文和二十三篇较差的作文。本研究依据主题句——正文——结论的英语段落修辞结构以及 Lautamatti (1987) 的主题结构分析法分别对学生作文进行篇章结构分析和主题结构分析,重在探究学生英语作文的修辞模式,以及平行结构、连续结构和延伸平行结构在语篇中的分布和运用,分析语篇主题与语篇连贯性的关系。

第四章为数据分析,主要是对研究文本的概括、整理和归纳。对文本修辞结构分析发现,主要有六种类型,分别为主题句——正文——结论结构,主题句——正文结构,引言——主题句——正文——结论结构,汉语的起承转合结构,引言——主题句——正文结构以及主题句延迟结构。对文本主题结构分析发现,主要有三种显著特征,其表现形式为:(1) 较差学生作文中缺乏平行结构以及延伸平行结构;(2) 较好学生作文中频繁使用平行结构以及延伸平行结构,但使用连续结构次数较少;(3) 较差学生作文中多包含与文本主题无直接关联的连续结构。

第五章为总结和建议。对于研究得出的结论,可以归纳为以下三个方面:第一,汉语修辞结构影响写作初习者英语说明文的篇章结构。其表现形式为:(1) 主题句不明确,隐藏或滞后出现于段落末尾;(2) 生搬硬套汉语“起承转合”写作模式,或通篇套用或部分混杂在英语作文段落中。第二,复杂的主题结构导致写作初习者英语说明文的不连贯性。第三,水平较高的学生倾向于采用现代英语写作技巧和修辞手段;而水平较低的学生则屈从于母语的负面影响,多采用汉语写作技巧和修辞手段。此外,依据研究结果,本文也为写作初习者提供了一套切实有效的写作课教学方案。首先,通过相同主题的英汉范文比照,点明英汉写作修辞模式的差异,然后,以师生互评、同辈互评等形式对实际写作任务进行修改,其中融入对段落主题句的展开,语篇衔接和连贯性等方面知识的教学,最后,给予

学生初稿和修改稿必要的反馈。

Synopsis

It is generally acknowledged that there exist prominent discrepancies between English and Chinese written discourse, especially on the expression of main ideas and the distribution of topic sentences. Native writers of English prefer a deductive rhetorical pattern, introducing the theme at the beginning of a paragraph or a composition. Comparatively speaking, native writers of Chinese tend to employ an inductive pattern of writing, couching the main idea in the discourse or postponing at the end of a paragraph or a composition. The current study intends to explore the influence of Chinese rhetorical patterns upon the expository texts of intermediate learners, as well as the relationship between topical structure and coherence within the written discourse, in applying the theories of “discourse analysis”, “topical structure analysis” and “contrastive rhetoric”. The study hopes to provide Chinese learners of English with the awareness of contemporary English rhetorical pattern and eliminate the possibility of their transfer and application of first language writing habits into English ones.

Five chapters are included in the thesis. Chapter one starts with a general introduction to contrastive rhetoric. In this chapter, the author points out that the major concern of contrastive rhetoric is on the influence of rhetorical conventions of first language upon writing in a second language. Recent research has expanded it towards an interdisciplinary area of cross-language and cross-culture study that benefits from the theories and methods of such related fields as applied linguistics, composition and rhetoric studies, and discourse analysis, which in turn provide sophisticated analytical techniques for the prosperity of contrastive rhetoric. In addition, the author suggests that basic linguistic knowledge, such as the accumulation of vocabulary and grammar rules, in combination with the acquisition of thought pattern and rhetorical conventions, contribute to the proficiency of writing in the target language. This chapter concludes with the presentation of the purposes and limitations of the study.

Chapter two discusses important theories such as “discourse analysis”, “topical structure analysis” and “contrastive rhetoric” proposed by famous applied linguists and rhetoricians. It falls into two sections. Section one deals with the definitions and classifications of “text”, “discourse” and “discourse analysis”. It further examines the relationship between cohesion and coherence as well as their influences on the discourse structures. It also suggests that effective discourse analysis be conducted at both macro and micro levels, respectively referring to textual organization and cohesion and coherence. Moreover, an important analytical device raised by Lautamatti (1987), “topical structure analysis” is presented in this section. As Lautamatti (1987) recommends, a typical unified English paragraph is characterized by the smooth flow of discourse topic and sentence topic within the paragraph and the semantic ties achieved by three topical progressions, i.e. parallel progressions, sequential progressions and extended parallel progressions. It is common that a paragraph is initiated by a topic sentence, followed by a body section and a conclusion. The contents within the paragraph are closely related to the theme and logically organized, with no superfluous information; meanwhile, it is equally important to maintain the balance among each supporting subtopic and supporting detail or general statement and specific statement.

Section two reviews some earlier contrastive rhetoric research and recent discovery. In 1966, Kaplan published his famous article ‘Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education’, which marked the birth of the notion now known as contrastive rhetoric. In this article, he asserts

that one's native language influences one's thoughts. He, further, assumes that different languages have their own specific and culturally bound conventions and patterns of writing. Therefore, the teaching of reading and writing to nonnative English learners should be in accordance with the cultural and rhetorical conventions of the target language. According to his assertion, English paragraph usually begins with a topic statement, and then develops the topic with related ideas supporting it, and at last makes a conclusion of the whole essay. It is also possible that an English paragraph ends with a main idea sentence, supported by sufficient and well-organized illustrations or arguments. Either way, deductive or inductive, proves that all the sentences in a paragraph focus on a single idea, and no irrelevant ideas are dropped in. In contrast, essays written in Chinese follow a spiral pattern. That is, a specific idea is hidden inside the paragraph or not stated clearly, which to some extent, often puzzles the native readers of English or violates their expectations. However, this primary research has been criticized by many scholars for a variety of reasons: it was too simplistic, many languages were omitted from the initial study, distinct language groups were oddly grouped, and the diagram was too simple a model for the representation of a theory of contrastive rhetoric. It is undeniable that discrepancies are revealed in languages and thought patterns of different nations; nevertheless, it is not an equivalent that a particular thought pattern is confined in a culture or a specific culture is innate with a certain thought pattern.

Researchers after Kaplan offer varied interpretations and explanations to differences between English and Chinese exhibited in writing conventions. According to Cai (1993), Mo (1982) and Tsao (1982), the typical embodiment of Chinese thought pattern in Chinese writing might be a traditional rhetorical device of "*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*" originated from Chinese poetry study and may refer to four consecutive lines of poetry, to four consecutive sentences or ideas in a single paragraph of prose, or to the four parts of a whole essay. In modern Chinese, "*qi*" means introduction, or an episode of the theme; "*cheng*" means development or elucidation of the theme; "*zhuan*" means transition to a deeper illustration of the viewpoint; "*he*" means summing up but not necessarily a closure or restatement of the topic. They are four parts and meanwhile four steps of a composition. In contrast, an English composition usually consists of three parts: an introduction of a topic, a body in which the thesis is analyzed and developed by examples and illustrations, and a conclusion echoing the topic.

Scollon and Scollon (2000) attribute such divergence to the preference of deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. They noticed that an inductive pattern is more favored by the Asians while a deductive pattern is more favored among westerners, though both patterns are used by the two groups of people (Scollon & Scollon, 2000: 75).

Hinds (1987, 1990) describes how Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean writers prefer to use a quasi-inductive style rather than an explicit inductive or deductive style. He argues that there is an Oriental writing style, which cannot be classified as either deductive or inductive. This style involves "delayed introduction of purpose" with the topic or thesis statement implied, not stated. He proceeds that readers in Chinese are expected to think for themselves, to consider the observations made, and draw their own conclusions. In English, however, it is usually the writer's responsibility to convince readers by explicitly presenting the idea in a way that they would be able to follow. In the writer-responsible perspective, the writer has to express his/her idea explicitly in a written form in order to avoid any misunderstanding by the readers. Writing should be perfectly "clear" in terms of organization, tone, level of detail, reference to other

sources, and even visual design to meet the readers' expectations. On the other hand, the readers require less effort in figuring out the writer's view-point and purpose. In the reader-responsible perspective, the writer always allows for the reader's engagement, to apply their intelligence and knowledge through the interaction with the writer.

Chapter three introduces the method of analysis, the selection of samples for analysis and the instruments for analyzing the linguistic and rhetorical features. Thirty written texts, including seven with relatively good quality and twenty-three with poor quality, produced by EFL students majoring in English at Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, are collected and analyzed in accordance with the "Topic-Body-Conclusion" paragraph writing convention in English as well as Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis.

Chapter four is the analysis and generalization of the data and written texts. Examining the discourse rhetorical features found in the intermediate learners' EFL writings reveals that there are six writing patterns at paragraph level. They are:

- (1) topic-body-conclusion pattern;
- (2) topic-body pattern;
- (3) introduction-topic-body-conclusion pattern;
- (4) Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern;
- (5) introduction-topic-body pattern;
- (6) topic-postponed pattern.

Exploring the topical structures within the paragraph reveals the following characteristics. First, the poor writings contain more sequential progressions but less parallel and extended parallel progressions. Second, the good writings exhibit more parallel and extended parallel progressions but less sequential progressions. Third, there are more indirectly related sequential topics identified in the poor writing samples.

Chapter five provides research findings, educational implications and tentative plans for further study. Three major findings are concluded in the current study. First, the Chinese rhetorical patterns influence the written discourse of first-year English majors in their English expositions. They present these two types: (1) the topic-delayed pattern in which the themes are not stated clearly, hidden in the discourse or postponed; (2) the misuse of Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern in which either the whole pattern or the separate parts are adopted into the writings of English compositions. Second, the topical progression patterns employed by the competent and less competent beginning writers contribute to incoherence in writing. They represent the following three types: (1) writing samples from the less competent students often lack parallel progressions and extended parallel progressions; (2) writing samples from the competent students contain more parallel progressions and extended parallel progressions but less sequential progressions; (3) writing samples from the less competent students are identified to contain more indirect sequential topics. Third, high-proficiency learners prefer the adoption of contemporary English writing strategies and rhetorical patterns, while low-proficiency learners, tend to yield more to the influence of the first language, and therefore resort more frequently to Chinese rhetorical patterns.

Furthermore, this study suggests an effective method of instruction to guide students in writing for academic purposes. Firstly, the diversities in rhetorical patterns between Chinese and English are displayed in the comparison of sample texts containing similar contents in the two languages. Secondly, students' writing assignments are modified by means of teacher-student

correcting and peer-correcting, combined with the instruction of cohesion, coherence and discourse topic development. Finally, students' first and final drafts are checked and feedback are given on how well the texts have been revised or which features *still need* to be revised.

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Overview

In Chapter One the author outlines a general introduction to contrastive rhetoric and stresses the importance of acquiring such theory in the field of EFL education, especially in the case of Chinese EFL students.

In Chapter Two, theories such as “discourse analysis”, “topical structure analysis” and “contrastive rhetoric” are explored. Moreover, the focus is on the illustration of Chinese rhetorical patterns as against English rhetorical patterns exhibited in written texts. As suggested by many researchers (Cai, 1993; Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Hinds, 1987, 1990), the traditional “*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*” pattern, and the “inductiveness-favored” and “reader-responsible” approach seem to be the features that most commonly appear in descriptions of Chinese EFL texts. These Chinese rhetorical writing techniques, when applied to English compositions, violate the expectations of native English readers who are exposed to the conventional English rhetorical patterns. Reasons why these features tend to be negatively perceived by native English readers are discussed, in particular as they relate to thought pattern and cultural values.

In Chapter Three the method of analysis is explained. The selection of samples for analysis and the instruments for analyzing the linguistic and rhetorical features are described.

In Chapter Four, selected Chinese EFL writings are examined and analyzed. Thirty expository writing samples from the subjects’ writing assignments are examined at both linguistic and rhetorical levels. The combination of the two related analysis aims at explaining how Chinese rhetorical patterns influence EFL writings and how they contrast with the appropriate rhetorical features expected in English exposition.

In Chapter Five, the educational implications and tentative plans for further study are discussed. Considering the result of the data analysis, the importance of the rhetoric-and-culture based approach in EFL curriculums for expository writing is restated. Some suggestions for the teaching of EFL writing are presented.

1.2 Contrastive Rhetoric

The notion of contrastive rhetoric, that is, the study of rhetorical structure across cultures, was initiated by Robert Kaplan in his article entitled, “Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural

Education” (1966). Kaplan (1966, 1987) noticed that students who were non-native speakers of English organized text differently from native speakers of English. After a simple evaluation on more than seven hundred essays written by ESL students, he classified language patterns of rhetorical organization into five language groups with diagrams to show the characteristics of each. The five diagrams he proposed have become well known and are meant to describe the English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian patterns.

Despite its early limitation and deficiency, Kaplan’s observations prove useful to both English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) educators. The notion of contrastive rhetoric puts forward a brand-new conception that each language has a culturally preferred way of organizing ideas in discourse and that writers from different sociolinguistic and cultural backgrounds may transfer their preferred discourse patterns when they write in English. In other words, even after ESL students achieved English proficiency levels necessary for writing text, their writings still have differences not only at the syntactic level but also at the broader level of organization of the whole text (Kaplan, 1987).

1.3 Study of Texts at Rhetoric Levels

Texts written by EFL students contain features which are clearly unlike the writings of natives, much to the disappointment of native readers. These writing features were once considered grammatical mistakes since such linguistic mistakes are often the most obvious features of EFL writings, especially those written by less proficient EFL learners. Grammatical mistakes are, for example, the incorrect choice of words or tense, and the wrong phrasings. Acquiring essential grammatical proficiency may help to improve EFL writing to a certain extent; however, there are other types of EFL writing features beyond grammatical proficiency.

As Kaplan (1966, 1987) points out, writing involves not only the linguistic level but also the rhetorical level. In other words, writing in another language is not only a matter of translating word by word or sentence by sentence from one language to another. Replacing each word or sentence of one language with a word or sentence in another by following grammatical rules does not sufficiently compose fluent writing in a target language. For example, most teachers from English speaking countries still have difficulty in comprehending compositions written by advanced Chinese learners, because of the errors at discourse level.

Since the study in the area of contrastive rhetoric stresses the cross-cultural difference in the

written discourse, the need for more culture-specific EFL research has been advocated and more research has been done in the discourse pattern of writings across culture (Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Johnson & Roen, 1989; Purves, 1988). However, there is little research that points out in what ways the features are contrastive across specific cultures. If the first language rhetorical pattern influences EFL writings, then the discrepancies and similarities in rhetorical patterns between English and a specific language need to be examined.

Cai (1993) is one of the researchers who focus the study of contrastive rhetoric on a specific culture. His studies are concentrated on analyzing the Chinese rhetorical pattern, “*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*” and make a significant contribution to the area of contrastive rhetoric between English and Chinese. He describes the writings of Chinese EFL students are guided by the eight-legged writing principle, that “the rhetorical patterns of discourse strategies of a first language exert an overwhelming influence over students’ writing habits in a second language. This influence extends the syntactical and grammatical levels to the rhetorical and ideological levels of discourse” (ibid: 11) However, his research mainly analyzes essays written by overseas Chinese ESL students, who account for only a small amount of Chinese English learners, rather than examining the textual works written by EFL students in Mainland China, who are the dominant language learners.

1.4 Purposes of the Study

This thesis tends to find out the discourse errors that Chinese EFL learners have in their writings, in applying the theories of “discourse analysis”, “topical structure analysis” and “contrastive rhetoric”; meanwhile to analyze the reasons underlying their performance, and thus strengthen the awareness of both the teachers and the learners in terms of English language structure and English thinking pattern in the writing performance.

There are three main purposes of this study. First, by reviewing the EFL learners’ written texts, this study aims at exploring the different kinds of rhetorical patterns employed by the EFL beginning writers. Second, this study attempts to further examine the topical development of the writing samples on the basis of Lautamatti’s (1987) topical structure analysis. Finally, the objective of this study is to offer suggestions for EFL writing instruction of beginning learners.

In order to achieve the goals of this study, the following questions are examined:

- (1) What are the influences of Chinese rhetorical features upon the writing samples of

Chinese EFL students?

(2) What are the topical structures employed by competent and less competent beginning writers in their expository compositions?

(3) Is it predictable that high-proficiency learners adopt more English rhetorical patterns in their English compositions, and vice versus?

1.5 Limitations

There are certain limitations in this study due to the limited understanding of the author.

First, the number of the subjects is not large enough. In the present study, only 30 written texts were collected. Thus, the results of the data analysis, which were based on the limited protocols, might not be able to offer a complete explanation over the Chinese rhetorical patterns upon EFL writing.

Second, all the subjects in the present study are from English Language Department of Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University. A further study that includes students of other majors at the university and/or students from other universities may vary from the data analysis of this study.

Third, the analysis is limited to a small domain of issues, specifically covering linguistic features of coherence and rhetorical features of expository text structure. Grammar is deliberately excluded in the analysis. Other important elements of development have been similarly overlooked. Thus, while the analysis is carefully undertaken, it is limited in scope.

Chapter Two Literature Review

This is an interdisciplinary study covering theories, practices and empirical researches in Discourse Analysis, Topical Structure Analysis and Contrastive Rhetoric.

2.1 Discourse Analysis

According to the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Pearsall, et al., 2001: 527), the noun form of “discourse” originated from Medieval Latin “argument”, denoting the process of reasoning. With the evolution of this term, in modern English, discourse means (1) “written or spoken communication or debate” and (2) “a formal discussion of a topic in speech or writing.” In this sense, discourse refers to a speech or piece of writing in a special situation. Discourse analysis, therefore, means the study of a specified language form and the situation in which it is used.

Linguists have also defined “discourse” and “discourse analysis” from different perspectives. In 1952, the publication of *Discourse Analysis* by Harris marked the beginning of scientific research in discourse analysis. From 1950s to the early 1970s, it grew out of work in a variety of disciplines, including sociolinguistics, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology. Over the last two decades, scholars have come to have different interpretations of the two terms. Connor (1996: 5) defines discourse analysis as an analysis that extends beyond the sentence level. The aim of discourse analysis is to learn the characteristics of language in use, including written texts of all kinds and spoken data from conversation to highly institutionalized forms of talk.

Richards et al. (cf., Huang & Ghadessy, 2006: 35) define “discourse” as “examples of language use, i.e. language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication.” And “discourse analysis” is defined as “the study of how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc.” The following is a fourth related definition given by Stubbs (cf., Huang & Ghadessy, 2006: 35): Discourse analysis “refers mainly to the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected spoken or written discourse ... it refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause.”

From the above definitions, we may understand that discourse analysis is the examination of language use by members of a speech community. It involves looking at both language forms

and language functions and includes the study of both spoken interaction and written texts. It identifies linguistic features that characterize different genres as well as social and cultural factors that aid in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk. A discourse analysis of written texts might include a study of topical development and cohesion and coherence across the sentences.

2.1.1 Distinction between “Discourse” and “Text”

In a broader sense, the two terms are often used interchangeably; however, some researchers may favor more restrictive definitions. The most often quoted is found in Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English* (1976: 1), “The word ‘text’ is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole.” As is pointed out by them, if a speaker of English hears or reads a passage of the language which is more than one sentence in length, he can normally decide without difficulty whether it forms a unified whole or is just a collection of unrelated sentences. This suggests that there are objective factors involved---there must be certain features that are characteristics of texts and not found otherwise. Halliday and Hasan continue to elaborate the definition that a text may be “spoken or written, prose or verse, dialogue or monologue. It may be anything from a single proverb to a whole play, from a momentary cry for help to an all-day discussion on a committee” (ibid: 1). A text is a unit of language in use. It is not something like a simple sentence but a combination of correlated sentences. It is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form, but of meaning, while a sentence is a minimal unit of language in terms of its structure or syntax.

Werth (1984: 50) enlarges the scope of discourse to some extent by stating, “Discourse might either refer to a subject area, or function as a term within that subject area. In the first use, it refers to the linguistic level above the sentence, considered as an object of study. In the second use, it denotes a unified set of one or more sentences, connected semantically, and ideally representing a completed utterance. The term has also been used somewhat promiscuously to refer either to the concrete sequence of sentences, or the abstract structure underlying them. Text, however, has come in recent years to be used more or less exclusively for the abstract, underlying form of a connected sequence which a grammar is concerned with.”

Some linguists adopt “written” and “spoken” to separate “text” from “discourse”. For Coulthard (1977), text refers to a sequence of written elements, while discourse is viewed as

spoken passages. Van Dijk (1997) distinguishes discourse from text that discourse is a non-theoretical concept and an ordinary everyday term, while text is related to language competence. Brown and Yule (1983: 6) perceive “discourse” as a process of communication, and “text”, serves as the representative of discourse, referring to the verbal record of a communicative act. In Connor’s point of view, a theory of text linguistics provides a descriptive apparatus for describing textual cohesion, structures of texts, theme dynamics, and metatextual features. Text linguistics is treated, in her works, synonymously with text analysis, discourse analysis, and discourse linguistics of texts. “Text linguistics is often spoken of synonymously with text analysis and written analysis. Text linguistics is written discourse analysis, an analysis of texts that goes beyond the sentence level.” (Connor, 1996: 11) Thus, most recent publications treat text linguistics as an analysis of written texts that extends beyond the sentence level and considers the communicative constraints of the context.

In this thesis, the terms “discourse” and “text”, referring to written passages, are used interchangeably without distinctive differences.

2.1.2 Discourse Analysis at Different Levels

In stating the range of discourse analysis, McCarthy and Carter (2004) covers both higher order features such as paragraphing and realizing elements of textual and demonstrative patterns, and lower order features such as pronoun and demonstrative reference. This is what they mean by a discourse grammar. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 23) point out that the concept of cohesion can be usefully supplemented by that of “register”, since the two together effectively define a text. By register they mean the “macrostructure” of the text that establishes it as a text of a particular kind —conversation, narrative, lyric and so on (ibid: 324). Hu (1994) adds the cohesive and coherent aspects of the text to the “microstructure” of the text. Thus discourse analysis can be carried out at both micro- and macro-levels.

(i) Discourse Analysis at Micro-level: Cohesion and Coherence

In English, the set of linguistic resources that link one part of a text to another are reference, substitution and ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through vocabulary, which can be referred as grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. In the description of a text, it is the cohesion that exists within sentences that is significant. Hoey (1991) offers the definition of cohesion as the way certain words or

grammatical features of a sentence can connect that sentence to its predecessors and successors in a text. McCarthy (1991) takes the view that cohesion contributes to the grammatical regulations observable in well-formed written text and implications in paragraphs or a whole text. In this sense, cohesion refers to the grammatical and/or lexical relationships among different elements of a text (Richards et. al, 1998).

In addition to that, Halliday and Hasan's explanation of cohesion can be regarded as a detailed and complete account. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is a certain linguistic feature presenting in that passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving it texture. The key determinant of whether a group of sentences do or do not constitute a text depends on cohesive relationships within and between the sentences. Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another.

Generally speaking, coherence means natural or reasonable connection. In language communication, it refers to a logical, orderly and aesthetical relationship between parts, in speech, writing, or argument. In van Dijk's view-point (1997: 93), coherence is a semantic property of discourse formed through the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences, with "interpretation" implying interaction between the text and the reader. Phelps (1985: 21) defines coherence as "the experience of meaningfulness correlated with successful integration during reading, which the reader projects back into the text as a quality of wholeness in its meanings". Coherence is also the use of transitional devices such as "however", introducing a contrasting statement and "therefore", setting up a conclusion of the train of thought. These devices and many more help to link ideas within a paragraph (Kies, 2004). Coherence in writing is much more difficult to sustain than coherent speech simply because writers have no nonverbal clues to inform them if their message is clear or not. Therefore, writers must make their patterns of coherence much more explicit and much more carefully planned.

(ii) Discourse Analysis at Macro-level: Text Organization

EFL students who have acquired a fairly solid language basis should pay more attention to text structure, paragraph transition and logic development, when they come to writing. Writing smoothly requires not only the accuracy and coherence of the sentences but also the effectiveness of the whole text which refers to a sound textual structure. In fact, according to the marking scheme of TEM-8 writing (He, 2004), a composition with 18-20 points should have such

qualities as demonstrating a well developed logical organizational structure with clearly stated main ideas and sufficient supporting details. The qualities indicate:

(1) the thesis statement should be clear and precise, so that the essay as a whole will be clear and precise;

(2) a paragraph has unity when the whole paragraph concentrates on a single idea, and all evidences, examples and reasons used to develop that idea must be relevant;

(3) fully developed information contributes to the completeness in the paragraph;

(4) the concluding paragraph should be short, forceful, substantial, and thought-provoking.

Lee (2002) identifies five features of a coherent text as follows:

(1) The text has a macrostructure that provides a sense appropriate to its communicative purposes and functions. The macrostructure is an outline of the main categories or functions of the text, e.g. when the writer's purpose is to tell a story, it is common to arrange the events in a chronological order.

(2) The text has an information structure that guides the reader in understanding how information is organized and how the topic of the text is developed. This involves the giving of old information before new information.

(3) The text shows connectivity of the underlying content evidenced by relations between propositions. A text is coherent if the propositions it contains are justified or exemplified with detail.

(4) The text has cohesive devices to establish a relationship between sentences and paragraphs. This feature is associated with the surface structure of coherence which links sentences and points being made.

(5) The text contains appropriate metadiscourse features. Metadiscourse markers in texts help readers organize, interpret and evaluate information. Some examples of these markers are sequencers (first, second, finally), and certainty markers (certainly, no doubt), etc.

2.1.3 Discourse Topical Structure

To describe coherence in a text, topical structure analysis, which Lautamatti (1978) developed from the topic-comment theory of the Prague School of Linguistics, inspects the semantic relationships between sentence topics and the overall discourse topic by investigating the repetitions, shifts, and reoccurrences of topic.

Sentence topic and the organization of ideas in texts or discourse have long been studied. Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis, describing coherence in texts, is adopted widely in the studies of ESL/ EFL writing. The analysis focuses on the semantic relation between the sentence topic and the discourse topic. It is used to examine how topics repeat, shift, and return to earlier topics in discourse. The analysis method is based on work growing out of the theory of functional sentence perspective (Danes, 1974), i.e. Prague School Linguistic theory, which describes how information is distributed in sentences. The Prague School linguists used "theme" to refer to known information, meaning what the sentence was about, and "rheme" to refer to new information, meaning what was said about the theme. Later, the term "topic" came out as a synonym for "theme" and the term "comment" for "rheme".

By working on functional sentence perspective, Lautamatti examines the relation of topic and comment in sentences. In her study, "topic" is the main idea of the sentences, most of time, realized by a noun or a noun phrase. It refers to known information, which is not new to the readers or the listeners. Moreover, "comment," refers to what is being said about the topic. It indicates new information in the sentence (Li & Thompson, 1981). Cerniglia, Medsker, and Connor further argue that topic sentence "often, but not always, coincided with the grammatical subject of the sentence" (1990: 230). According to Lautamatti, the development of the discourse topic within an extensive piece of discourse may be thought of in terms of succession of hierarchically ordered sub-topics, each of which contributes to the discourse topic, and is treated as a sequence of ideas, expressed in the written language as sentences

Lautamatti identifies three possible progressions of sentence topics. The first type is "parallel progression" in which the topics in a number of successive sentences are identical or synonymous. The second type is "sequential progression" in which the comment of one sentence becomes the topic of the next sentence. The third type is "extended parallel progression" in which the first and last topics in a text are parallel but are interrupted by some sequential progressions. The Lautamatti's (1987) analysis is reproduced in Figure 2.1.

Language and Community

(1) When *a human infant* is born into any community in any part of the world, it has two things in common with any other infant, provided neither of them has been damaged in any way either before or during birth. (2) Firstly, and most obviously, *new born children* are completely

helpless. (3) Apart from a powerful capacity to draw attention to their helplessness by using sound there is nothing *the new born child* can do to ensure his own survival. (4) Without care from some other human being or beings, be it mother, grandmother, sister, nurse, or human group, *a child* is very unlikely to survive. (5) *This helplessness of human infants* is in marked contrast with the capacity of many new born animals to get to their feet within minutes of birth and run with the herd within a few hours. (6) Although *young animals* are certainly at risk, sometimes for weeks or even months after birth, compared with the human infant they very quickly develop the capacity to fend for themselves. (7) It would seem that *this long period of vulnerability* is the price that the human species has to pay for the very long period which fits man for survival as species.

(8) It is during this very long period in which *the human infant* is totally dependent on others that it reveals the second feature which it shares with all other undamaged human infants, a capacity to learn language. (9) For this reason, biologists now suggest that *language* is 'species specific' to the human programmed in such a way that it can acquire language. (10) This suggestion implies that just as *human beings* are designed to see three-dimensionally and in color, and just as they are designed to stand upright rather than to move on all fours, so they are designed to learn and use language as part of their normal development as well-formed human beings.

1. a human infant
2. new born children
3. the new born child
4. a child
5. this helplessness of human infants
6. young animals
7. this long period of vulnerability
8. the human infant
9. language
10. human beings

Figure 2.1 Topical progression of the original text proposed by Lautamatti (1987: 92, 96).

In parallel progression, adjacent sentence topics are semantically identical, as in (1)-(4). In sequential progression, the sentence topics derive from the comment of preceding sentences, as in (4) and (5), (5) and (6), and (6) and (7). Furthermore, Lautamatti points out that an introduction of successive new sub-topics by sequential progression creates a topical depth. She

also argues that if the sentence topic of one sentence is created based on the contrastive idea of the comment of the previous sentence, the progression is also called sequential progression. Sentence (5) and (6) is an example. The sentence topic of sentence (6) develops from the comment of the previous one by listing cases of “non-mother.”

Working on Lautamatti’s theory, Cerniglia, Medsker, and Connor (1990: 238) discuss more about each topic progression. They point out that parallel progression “helps reinforce an idea in the reader’s mind, but too much repetition can become tiresome.” Sequential progression “helps develop a topic, but too many new topics may distract the reader from the main idea.” In addition, they argue that extended parallel “often develops an idea well but also brings the reader back to the main idea to achieve a closure.” Among the three types of topic progressions, a good prose is regarded as having a good ratio of sequential progression to expand parallel progression (Connor, 1996; Connor & Farmer, 1990). However, if a writer develops too much on a sentence topic which is not the main idea of the paragraph, then the development details might distract the readers from the main idea.

It is suggested that Lautamatti’s (1987) topical structure analysis is a satisfying method for analyzing coherence than others put forth previously (Connor & Farmer, 1990) and a self-revision strategy that helps writers consider the relationship between discourse level and sentence level of their writing (Connor, 1996; Connor & Farmer, 1990). Schneider et al. (1990) even applied Lautimatti’s topical structure analysis to develop a computer program for language learners to check the coherence in their written texts. Furthermore, they provide their own coding guidelines for topical structure analysis. The guidelines are replicated below (See Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Schneider and Connor's Coding Guidelines for Topical Structure Analysis

<p><u>T-Units (T):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any independent clause and all its required modifiers. 2. Any non-independent clause punctuated as a sentence (as indicated by end punctuation). 3. Any imperative.
<p><u>Parallel Progression (PP):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any sentence topic that exactly repeats, is a pronominal form, or is a synonym of the immediately preceding sentence topic. 2. Any sentence topic that is a singular or plural form of the immediately preceding sentence topic. 3. Any sentence topic that is an affirmative or negative form of the immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., artists, no artists). 4. Any sentence topic that has the same head noun as the immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., the idea of scientists, the ideas of artists; the contributions made by scientists, the contributions made by artists).
<p><u>Sequential Progression (SP):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any sentence topic that is different from the immediately preceding topic, that is, not (1)-(4) in PP. 2. Any sentence topic in which there is a qualifier that so limits or further specifies an NP that it refers to a different referent (e.g., a nation; a very small, multi-racial nation, referring to two different nations). 3. Any sentence topic that is a derivation of an immediately preceding sentence topic (science, scientists). 4. Any sentence topic that is related to the immediately preceding sentence topic by a part-whole relationship (e.g., these groups, Housewives, children, old people). 5. Any sentence topic that repeats a part but not all of an immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., science and art, science, art).
<p><u>Extended Parallel Progression (EPP):</u></p> <p>Any sentence topic that is interrupted by at least one sequential topic before it returns to a previous sentence topic.</p>

(Excerpted from "Analyzing topical structure in ESL essays: Not all topics are equal," by M. Schneider and U. Connor, 1990, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 12: 427.)

From their findings, they suggested that the ratio of sequential progression was not an absolute guiding principle for deciding the quality of an essay. The quality of an essay was evaluated in terms of the tight relations between each sentence topic and the discourse topic of the text. Thus, they further suggested three categories of sequential topics. They are "directly related sequential progressions", "indirectly related sequential topics", and "unrelated sequential topics" (Schneider et al., 1990: 422). Directly related sequential progressions contain "(a) neighboring topics related by topic-comment patterns (the comment of the previous sentence

becoming the topic of the following sentence), (b) word derivations (science, scientists), and (c) part-whole relations (these groups, housewives, children, and old people).” Indirectly related sequential topics refer to topics that are “related by semantic set (scientists, their inventions and discoveries, and the invention of the radio, telephone, and television).” Unrelated sequential topics refer to topics that are not “clearly related to either the previous sentence topic or the discourse topic” (ibid: 422).

In summary, the above studies suggest that a good composition should involve the three types of topical progressions. The reason that a composition is regarded as poor is that it does not stick to the topic and it develops too many new topics. In other words, sticking to the topic and involving less sequential topics are two important conditions for constructing a more coherent writing product. In addition, deleting irrelevant topic in a written text is also important for a coherent writing.

2.2 Contrastive Rhetoric

In 1966, Kaplan published his famous article “Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education”, which marked the birth of the notion now known as contrastive rhetoric. In this article, he reinforced the Whorfian Hypothesis in its weak form which asserts that one’s native language influences one’s thoughts. He further assumed that different languages had their own specific and culturally bound conventions and patterns of writing. This causes difficulties for nonnative speakers writing in the target language. Their writings may violate the structure and rhetorical convention of the target language; therefore, such students need to be taught the appropriate language patterns and their associated logic.

2.2.1 Robert B. Kaplan’s Research Findings

Kaplan’s research (1966) was the first major study that analyzed how L1 thinking and discourse structure are manifested in L2 writing. As an assistant professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Southern California, Kaplan noted that ESL students did not write in the way that was expected by natives. In other words, what the students wrote was not necessarily wrong in grammar, but it was not idiomatic in terms of discourse requirement. In an attempt to examine this phenomenon, Kaplan conducted a research into the rhetorical practices of students whose first language was not English. After examining a collection of nearly seven hundred English essays written by ESL students, Kaplan published in 1966 his paper in

Language Learning entitled "Cultural Thought Pattern in Intercultural Education".

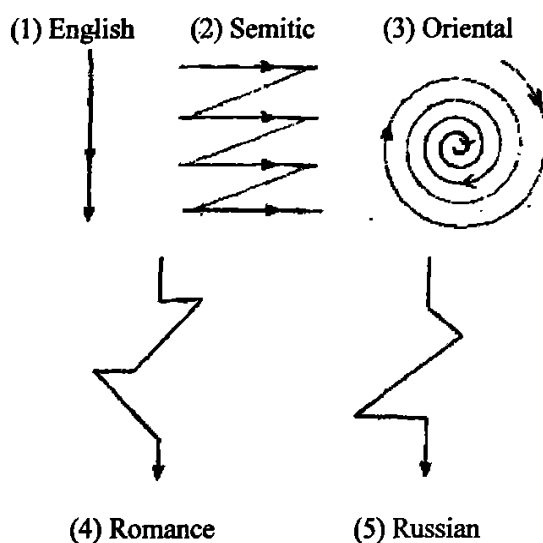


Figure 2.2 Cultural Thought Patterns

(Kaplan, 1966: 15)

Kaplan used the above diagrams to express several different thought patterns. They represent respectively the thought patterns of the people who speak English, Semite, Chinese, Korean, Romance, Slovak and Russian. Kaplan claims that the basic feature of English writing is that it normally follows a straight line of development, as it is shown in the first diagram. This means that the paragraph often begins with a statement of its central idea, known as a topic sentence, followed by a series of subdivisions of the central ideas, and then at last makes a conclusion of the whole paragraph. Thus, English paragraph development is characterized by linearity, directness, clarity, and logic, which in general, are regarded as critical criteria of good English writing by natives. The second diagram tends to follow a series of zigzagged parallel lines of development. It represents Semitic language group and indicates that "Semitic" paragraph development takes its root on "a complex series of parallel constructions" that are of the same importance in the whole essay. This means parallelism is a typical writing feature for Arabian and Jewish students. However, this kind of paragraph development is not appreciated by native speakers of English, because people could hardly find the focus of the essay. The third diagram is the representation of the Oriental language group including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Thai and so on. "Oriental" group is marked by a circular, spiral line suggesting of "indirectness". Such paragraph organization is often labeled as "off the point", "out of focus" and even "awkward".

What's more, the English natives may quickly come to a conclusion that Oriental people are incapable of grasping the main idea of an essay, or even worse, they are not as honest or straightforward as Occidentals. Such biased and oversimplified statement is a great barrier towards cross-cultural communication, especially in the initial stages. The fourth diagram displays the line of thought in Spanish, or in some other Romance languages. It is a rather complex back-and-forth digressive zigzag. It means that people from Romance language group allow the introduction of unrelated materials in their essays. The last diagram represents the Russian Language group. Compared with the fourth diagram, the two share a similar shape, but the latter one follows a dotted line instead of a solid line, symbolizing the higher tolerance for subordination in "Russian" paragraph development.

To sum up, Kaplan's research was the first attempt at ESL to consider the rhetoric of writing rather than the purely linguistic features emphasized by traditional sentence-based analysis. However, this primary research has been criticized by many scholars for a variety of reasons: it was too simplistic, many languages were omitted from the initial study, distinct language groups were oddly grouped, and the diagram was too simple a model for the representation of a theory of contrastive rhetoric. Later, Kaplan (1987, 1988) has modified his earlier statement, suggesting that rhetorical differences may also reflect different writing conventions that are learned in a culture.

Nonetheless, Kaplan's investigation of nonnative students' essays initiated the theory of contrastive rhetoric. He called for analysis of texts that extend beyond the sentence level and introduced a discourse-based analysis. In this, he was a pioneer ahead of his time, despite other defects. Since then, there have been a substantial number of research reports, colloquia papers, and doctoral dissertations being written or published on contrastive rhetoric. As a result, contrastive rhetoric has invariably established itself as a viable object of linguistic inquiry and secured for itself a niche in the field of applied linguistics.

2.2.2 Contrastive Text Linguistic Studies

Text linguistics is the study of linguistic devices of cohesion, coherence and discourse structures within text (Enkvist, 1974, 1984). It is also concerned with the processes involved in the production and interpretation of texts. Contrastive text linguistic studies examine, compare, and contrast how texts are formed and interpreted in different languages and cultures using

written discourse analytic techniques. Several text linguistic studies have contrasted various coherence and discourse patterns in different languages (Clyne, 1987; Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Eggington, 1987; Hinds, 1983, 1987, 1990; Hirose, 2003). Hinds's work is perhaps the most influential in this area. He shows that writers in different languages use certain textual structures to achieve coherence. He describes how Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean writers prefer to use a quasi-inductive style rather than an explicit inductive or deductive style. He argues that there is an Oriental writing style, which cannot be classified as either deductive or inductive. This style involves 'delayed introduction of purpose' with the topic or thesis statement implied, not stated. Hinds's argument for quasi-inductive style is related to his (1987) assertion that Japanese is a reader-responsible language as opposed to English which is a writer-responsible language. Hinds claims that readers in Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Korean languages are expected to think for themselves, to consider the observations made, and draw their own conclusions. In English, however, it is usually the writer's responsibility to convince readers by explicitly presenting the idea in a way that they would be able to follow.

2.2.3 Chinese EFL Students' Problems in Writing

EFL students, and particularly students from mainland China, are often considered problematic learners because of their poor writing skills (Agnew, 1994). Chinese EFL learners may face more distinct obstacles than English cognate language speakers when learning English writing skills because of the remoteness of their language from English grammatical and syntactic features. EFL educators in China usually emphasize grammar in a curriculum, assuming that grammar instruction will help students to acquire writing fluency. Although having the grammatical and syntactic proficiency is fundamental to writing skill, it does not allow full proficiency in second language writing.

The awkward features of Chinese EFL students' writings are often due to cross cultural rhetorical differences. EFL writings which are influenced by Chinese writing features seem to be negatively evaluated by native-English researchers (Cai, 1993; Grabe & Kaplan, 1989; Hinds, 1983; Johns, 1984; Kaplan, 1966, 1987; Reid, 1989). The unconventional features of Chinese EFL writings which impart a negative impression on native speakers may appear most obviously in expository writing since English expository writing is highly conventional.

Another reason that attaining writing proficiency is so challenging for most EFL students,

especially for Chinese EFL students, is their first language education are so different from English. For example, in North America as well as in European continent, evaluation of a student is often done by assessing a report, a research paper, or an essay. Students are required to have skill in expository writing at an early age (BC Ministry of Education, Integrated Resource Package, 1996). To be academically successful, having good expository writing skill is important (Scarcella, 1984). However, in China, the academic achievement of students is assessed mostly by examination, and students are rarely asked to write expository essays in elementary and secondary schools (Kohn, 1992). Expository writings, such as reports, research papers, or essays, which are very common for native English writers, are rarely assigned in the Chinese school curriculum.

Furthermore, the expectations towards literacy are different between Oriental countries and Occidental countries. In the western perspective of literacy, more importance is placed on the ability to be eloquent in a logical, argumentative way and making a clear statement of one's opinion. In contrast, in most of the Oriental cultures which are greatly influenced by Confucianism, being argumentative and making a clear statement of one's opinion are often negatively perceived as self-centered or arrogant traits. Rather, being eloquent in an aesthetic manner and capable of expressing feelings seems to be more valued. For the EFL students educated in this type of culture, making a logical argument directly and clearly could be in opposition to their aesthetic value unless they understand the different cultural values and adapt English writing style.

2.2.4 Chinese Rhetorical Pattern vs. English Rhetorical Pattern

(i) Chinese qi-cheng-zhuan-he vs. English Topic-Body-Conclusion

In respect to differences between Chinese and English writings, one traditional Chinese rhetorical pattern has been widely discussed in contrastive rhetoric literature, the “*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*” (commonly glossed as “beginning”, “development”, “turn” and “conclusion”) pattern.

Qi-cheng-zhuan-he originated from Chinese poetry study and may refer to four consecutive lines of poetry, to four consecutive sentences or ideas in a single paragraph of prose, or to the four parts of a whole essay. The Chinese textual organizational pattern *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* may be better described as a prosodic structure rather than a rhetorical or functional structure. Since

these four Chinese characters(起承转合) can be quite polysemous, each step such as *qi*, *cheng*, *zhuan*, or *he* can be applied to different rhetorical functions. This prosodic structure concerns itself with the “waves” or “ups and downs” in texts such as poems, literary prose, personal accounts and examination papers. It can accommodate various functional structures and each step in this structure could be identified to serve different purposes in different contexts from a functional discourse analytical perspective.

It is suggested that English compositions by Chinese ESL students might show evidence of the use of the four-part pattern, in order to organize the paragraphs easily (Cai, 1993). The meanings of these four-part are: “*qi*” prepares the reader for the topic, “*cheng*” introduces and develops the topic, “*zhuan*” turns to a seemingly unrelated subject, and “*he*” sums up the essay (cf., Connor, 1996: 39). It is claimed that classical Chinese poetry consists of four five-character or seven-character lines, proving that the principle of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* serves one function with each line (Tsao, 1982). However, it must be added that there are other common valid patterns of Chinese writing, both for essays and poetry. Mo (1982) finds from his research that this four-part paragraph organization (*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*) is the most common principle of paragraph organization in Chinese (He does not refer to other available principles). Mo (1982: 110) gives a similar but clearer explanation of this four-part organization that “*qi*” (literally, ‘beginning’; introduction of topic), “*cheng*” (literally, ‘hook up’; elucidation of topic), “*zhuan*” (literally, ‘turning’; turning to another viewpoint), and “*he*” (literally, ‘coming together’, ‘closing’; summary of conclusion). Mo and Tsao (1982) argue that the “*qi*” section in Chinese cannot be regarded as serving the same function as the topic sentence in English. This “*qi*” part should be related to the general theme in some way or other, but it is not necessarily as a theme statement. Second, the “*zhuan*” part in most cases involves a change of some kind—a change of mood (from factual to suppositional), a change of place, a change of time, a change of point of view, a change of tone, or simply a change of grammatical subject/topic, etc. The following is one of the examples given by Mo:

[*Qi*] Human and political freedom has never existed and cannot exist without a large measure of economic freedom. [*Cheng*] Those of us who have been so fortunate as to have been born in a free society tend to take freedom for granted, to regard it as the natural state of mankind. [*Zhuan*] It is not-it is rare and precious thing. Most people throughout history, most

people today, have lived in conditions of tyranny and misery, not of freedom and prosperity. [He] The clearest demonstration of how much people value freedom is the way they vote with their feet when they have no other way to vote (Mo, 1982: 43-44).

Fagan and Cheong (1987) find from their research that 50.9 percent of the students wrote their English compositions following the Chinese four-part model instead of the English pattern. This demonstrates that this particular hint of historical transfer can occur, but it also shows that (as one might expect) not all students are influenced by the L1 pattern.

While *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* is the traditional model of writing rooted in Chinese culture, for native English writers, there is a common model of expository writing at paragraph level, the topic-body-conclusion model.

The topic-body-conclusion pattern (TS-body-CS) has been regarded as the common framework for expository writing at paragraph level. Paragraph writing is often considered as the initial stage of writing performance. A carefully-written paragraph is a unified, coherent and well-developed unit of thought. It is a combination of related sentences, the topic sentence, several supporting sentences, and the concluding sentence, focused on one central thought. The theme is usually summarized in what is called the topic sentence. It often appears at the beginning of the paragraph; however, it may also be found in the middle or at the end of a paragraph (Bander, 1978; Quirk, 1985; Hu, 1992; Shen, 1988). As for beginning writers, it is recommended by some researchers (Arnaudet and Barrett, 1990; Oshima and Hogue, 1997) to place the topic sentence at the beginning because such paragraph organization is “simple, effective and easy for a writer to manage and easy for readers to understand ” (Arnaudet and Barrett, 1990: 3). What’s more, the topic sentence helps a writer stick to the theme of the paragraph when developing the supporting sub-topics and details.

To illustrate the differences between Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* and English TS-Body-CS at Paragraph Level, Table 2.2 provides a more explicit comparison of the two paradigms.

Table 2.2 Comparison of *Qi-cheng-zhuan-he* and TS-Body-CS

<i>Qi-cheng-zhuan-he</i>	TS-Body-CS
Four sections within a paragraph	Three sections within a paragraph
<i>Qi</i> : an introductory sentence, indicating a more implicit theme	A topic sentence: an explicit statement of the theme
<i>Cheng</i> : development of the theme	Body: main supporting sentences (subtopics) + supporting details
<i>Zhuan</i> : shifting of idea from the main theme to a sub-theme, where there is a kind of topical relation but not directly connected to the major theme	
<i>He</i> : a conclusive implication, speculation or suggestion	A concluding sentence: restating the topic

More explanation is required to further depict the contrasting features between Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* and English TS-Body-CS. The purpose of this explanation is to reduce misunderstanding and to identify the cross-cultural differences inherent in the two patterns.

The first part of Chinese organizational framework is “*qi*” which means to begin or start. Here the writer brings a topic, however it is not always a thesis statement as is expected in the English exposition. Neither is it like an English introduction which introduces a summary of the essay. Rather, it is a warming-up of the whole essay. In other words, “*qi*” could be an implicative statement toward the following part of the essay, thus the beginning part; “*qi*” does not necessarily introduce the main focus directly but works more like a prelude part of symphony music.

In the beginning of the TS-Body-CS pattern, the theme should be clearly stated. This often puzzles Chinese EFL students since they sometimes mingle the introduction with the topic sentence. Therefore, their topic sentence would likely be seen as insufficient or confusing by native English readers.

The body of Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* consists mainly of two parts: “*cheng*” and “*zhuan*”, which parallel the body part of the TS-Body-CS pattern. “*Cheng*”, the second part, means to receive or take over, where the writer develops the topic mentioned in “*qi*”. “*Zhuan*” is also a part of the topic development; however this third part gives an awkward impression to native English readers. The Chinese character of 转 (*zhuan*) means to shift or change. Thus, at

“*zhuan*”, the topic usually shifts to a sub-thematic section. This change seems to be off-topic for native readers who expect the TS-Body-CS pattern of body development involving the supporting topics for the theme. The TS-Body-CS structure does not have any equivalent for “*zhuan*”, so native readers perceive this part as awkward and generally refer to it as digressive and incoherent (Hinds, 1983). However, what native readers couldn’t understand is that “*zhuan*” is not a rhetorical move of “circularity” or “digression” as commonly assumed in English-language scholarship, but rather serves as the occasion to develop an essay further by alternative means (Cahill, 2000, 2003). In other words, “*zhuan*” could be interpreted as a cohesive tie uniting the theme and sub-themes. If that is the case, the Chinese four-part mode comes very close to the three-part English exposition writing mode. The problem lies in that most EFL writers are incapable of utilizing such writing ability skillfully and applying it into EFL writing mechanically. As it is shown in the above example by Mo (1982), the sentence indicating the shift of the subtopic is a rigid and vague transition, which is undoubtedly discouraged by native readers.

The concluding part, “*he*”, also differs from that of TS-Body-CS. “*He*” means to tie up or close. This, again, is not the same kind of conclusion as in an English expository essay. It does not need to be decisive. It could be just an implicative statement or an interrogative speculation. It often ends without referring to the main thesis but leaves the conclusion open to the readers.

(ii) Inductiveness-favored Approach vs. Deductiveness-favored Approach

According to Kirkpatrick (1995), deductive reasoning is a way of reasoning that moves from a general idea or set of facts to a particular idea of fact. In a deductive argument, a topic is introduced at the beginning of a discourse, and then the minor or supporting arguments are presented afterwards. The deductive pattern owns the following framework:

X (comments, main points, or action suggested)

Because of

Y (minor points, background, or reason)

In contrast, inductive reasoning is a way of reasoning in which known facts are used to present general laws. By inductive argument, it indicates that the minor points of the argument is placed first and then the main point as a conclusion is derived from those arguments. The structure could be sketched out as:

Because of

Y (minor points, background, or reason)

X (comments, main points, or action suggested)

Scollon noticed that an inductive pattern is more favored by the Asians while a deductive pattern is more favored among westerners, though both patterns are used by the two groups of people (Scollon & Scollon, 2000: 75). They further compared an “Asian inductive” pattern that delays the introduction of topics within a conversation with a “deductive pattern” in which westerners introduce topics early into a conversation (ibid: 113). Hinds (1990) claimed that in both deductive and inductive styles that English convention of writing employ, the thesis statement should be clearly presented either in the beginning or in the end of the paragraph. Contemporary English rhetorical organization favored a deductive style, which means that they prefer to open a paragraph with a topic sentence, followed by supporting sub-themes.

(iii) Reader-Responsible Style vs. Writer-Responsible Style

* The preference of writing style seems to vary between cultures and languages. The differences in rhetorical features of Chinese and English appear as distinct as are the language themselves. However, it would be very difficult for native speakers of Chinese and English to point out the specific differences unless they are familiar with both rhetoric styles.

If English writing is characterized as a “writer-responsible” style, then Chinese could be perceived as a “reader-responsible” style (Hinds, 1987). Contemporary English writing is writer-responsible, that is, the writer assumes the responsibility to make clear, logical and well-organized statements for the reader to understand. On the other hand, Chinese writing is more reader-responsible, where it is the reader’s responsibility to understand what the writer intends to say in the text (ibid, 1987).

In the writer-responsible perspective, the writer has to express his/her idea explicitly in a written form in order to avoid any misunderstanding by the readers. Writing should be perfectly “clear” in terms of organization, tone, level of detail, reference to other sources, and even visual design to meet the readers’ expectations. On the other hand, the readers require less effort in figuring out the writer’s view-point and purpose.

In the reader-responsible perspective, the writer always allows for the reader’s engagement, to apply their intelligence and knowledge through the interaction with the writer.

Eliciting the writer's intention from the text written in a reader-responsible style seems like mind reading, which, to some extent, puzzles the native English reader. But this style of writing is compatible with the oriental culture where the communicative style "stems from the social dogma of collaboration, harmony, we-relationships and group interest" (Hofstede, 1980; Samovar, Porter and Stefani, 1999; Hu and Grove, 1991). In addition, there is an underlying assumption that the more educated the readers are, the better understanding they achieve. The writer thus also makes some kind of assumption as to how knowledgeable their readers should be. The readers are responsible for the depth of content understanding. The readers also have been trained to assume correctly what the author has intended to say. The writer, therefore, does not have to include much detail, regarding things the target readers are expected to know. It is very different from the expectation in Western cultures, where a writer has to be fully responsible for clarity in the text without regard to the background knowledge of the readers.

2.3 Conclusion

The present literature review gives a brief account of the rocky history of contrastive rhetoric, the research finding of Kaplan and its recent development. In addition, some important concepts relevant to this study are defined and examined, like discourse analysis and topical structure analysis. Then special focus is upon the discrepancies between Chinese rhetorical patterns and English rhetorical patterns on written discourse, along with the problems encountered by Chinese EFL learners.

Chapter Three Research Methodology

The current study intends to investigate the rhetorical features and the textual organizations of the writing samples produced by EFL beginning writers. In this chapter, the background of the selected participants, the procedure of data collection, the instruments and the data analysis are discussed.

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were thirty freshmen majoring in English. They were enrolled in the Department of English at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University in 2006. They were taking a New English Course in the academic year 2006-2007. The thirty beginning writers were selected from a total of eighty freshmen attending the course. The eighty students were required to take an assignment in which the students were asked to write a one-paragraph English composition in their first class meeting at the college. According to their writing proficiency, the writing samples of the students with higher grades were then selected because of convenience.

All the participants in the current study were native Chinese speakers and all had similar English educational backgrounds. They experienced at least six years of English learning at junior and senior high schools. Before the students entered the college, the basic concepts of English grammar were taught in regular schools or cram schools.

The background information of the participants was summarized in Table 3.1. Among the thirty students in the current study, there were eight male students and twenty-two female students. Two of the thirty students graduated from key high schools sponsored by provincial educational bureaus, nineteen of them graduated from key high schools sponsored by city educational bureaus and nine graduated from comprehensive high schools. None of the students received systematic education on contemporary writing skills before college life.

Table 3.1 The Background Information of the Participants

Gender			Types of High School			Systematic Writing skills
Student No.	F	M	PKHS	CKHS	CHS	
Total=30	22	8	2	19	9	0

★PKHS stands for provincial key high school

★★CKHS stands for city key high school

★★★CHS stands for comprehensive high school

3.2 Data Collection

The writing samples of the current study were the participants' English compositions obtained from the tutor of the New English course. Writing was an important task within the course. Before taking this course, all the students have no systematic knowledge of writing skills. In the current study, one English composition from each participating student was collected. The 30 writing samples, ranging in length from 120 to 300 words, were produced at the beginning of the course. The writing samples were the subjects' first take-home English composition, in other words, no time limit was imposed. According to the tutor, since all of the students in the New English course were EFL beginning writers, the writing assignments were limited to one paragraph. The topic of the writing task was the following:

Some people prefer to make friends by means of internet and e-mail. Others choose to stay with one or two close friends within their social circles. Which of the two ways of making friends do you prefer? Please give reasons to support your choice.

The topic was selected for it was believed writing would be easier and more interesting for beginners if they were asked to write something related to their personal experiences.

The students' writing samples were collected after informing the tutor of New English course. Based on the teaching syllabus, the writing assignments of the class were to enhance the students' ability in writing well-structured English paragraphs, in accordance with the writing conventions of contemporary English and to teach them the notion of cohesion and coherence. Before any of the English writing conventions was taught, the tutor gave the students the writing task as their homework and requested them to hand in the assignment in the next class meeting.

This was the first writing task the students performed in the New English course. After all the students submitted their writing assignments, the researcher got the writing samples from the tutor.

3.3 Research Instruments

The current study aims at exploring the rhetorical patterns and the topical structures in the beginning writers' EFL writing. First of all, in order to discover the rhetorical patterns in the

students' writing samples, the use of a general introduction, main supporting sentences, supporting details and concluding sentence, as well as the use and the location of a topic sentence, are examined. Secondly, with the purpose of discovering the topical structures in the subjects' writing samples, Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis is adopted as the analysis approach. In the following section, the two instruments for examining the rhetorical structures and topical structures are discussed.

3.3.1 The Instrument for Analyzing Rhetorical Patterns

The students' writing samples are examined in terms of their use of a general introduction, a topic sentence, main supporting sentences, supporting details, and a concluding sentence in order to explore the rhetorical patterns of the written texts. A general introduction is, based on Clouse (1999: 32), the background information of a written text and is developed before the generation of the main idea. Take the student's writing sample below as an example.

Example 3.1

(1) As I grew into a matured person, I realize the importance of attitude on friendship. (2) A friend, to me, is more important than money, love, personal failures or successes. (3) Friends we get along with will influence our behaviors, thoughts or philosophy of life. (4) However, the remarkable thing is we have a chance to select our friends who we want. (5) In my opinion, I prefer to spend time with close friends who I can see whenever I like. (6) I think real friends should be hearty and close, so we only need real friends in life ...

The first four sentences in the text are identified as a general introduction. The writing instruction requires the writer to select a preferred way of making friends and provide the reasons to support it. The first four sentences express the importance of friendship and friends. However, they are not directly related to the topic, the choice of one's friends, stated in sentence 5. Consequently, the four sentences are judged as a general introduction.

In accordance with the writing conventions of modern English, a paragraph should consist of a topic sentence, a body and a concluding sentence. The topic sentence expresses the theme of a paragraph, while the body of a paragraph refers to sentences that follow and support the topic sentence. Finally, the concluding sentence restates the main idea of the paragraph at the end. In addition, the body of a paragraph should involve main supporting sentences and supporting details for each main supporting sentence. The rhetorical pattern of an English paragraph is

presented in Figure 3.1. It is adopted from the writing textbook, *Introduction to Academic Writing*, written by Oshima and Hogue (1997: 83).

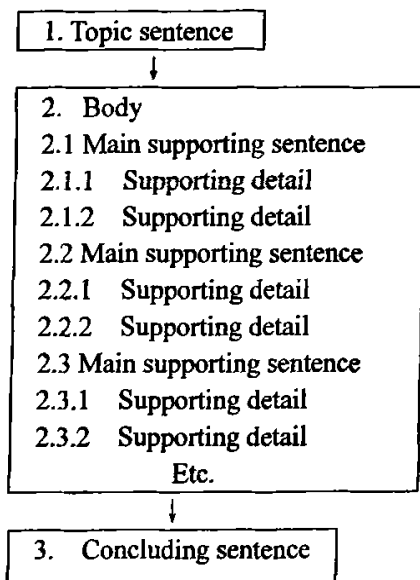


Figure 3.1 Rhetorical Pattern of an English Paragraph

In regard to English writing conventions, the use and location of the topic sentence, the use of main supporting sentence, supporting details and the concluding sentence in the students' writing samples are examined. It is noticeable that the "topic sentence", is found not only at the beginning but also in the middle and final part of a paragraph in the current study. For instance, in Example 3.1, the topic sentence is the fifth sentence, following the general introduction. The writing sample below offers another example of the location of a topic sentence.

Example 3.2

(1) I prefer to make friends with one or two close friends at life. (2) It is convenient to obtain help from friends that are close than to make online call and get unpractical advice from e-pals. (3) We can do whatever we like to do. ...

In the text, the first sentence states directly the writer's preference for making friends with people familiar to him. It is identified as the topic sentence because it expresses the core idea of the text.

In addition, the use of main supporting sentences and supporting details were examined, based on the English paragraph writing conventions. Main supporting sentences, in accordance with the writing conventions of contemporary English, are sentences that generally express ideas

supporting the topic of a paragraph. Supporting details refer to one or more sentences following a main supporting sentence. The sentence or sentences convey several ideas to support the sub-topics. Accordingly, the sentence or sentences are identified as supporting details (Clause, 1999: 34). An example of a main supporting sentence and supporting details is shown below:

Example 3.3

(1) It is certainly wrong for athletes to use drugs, but the reasons they do so are understandable. (2) First of all, the pressure for professional athletes to justify their huge salaries is so great that they often see performance-enhancing drugs as the answer. (3) They are so focused on the increased strength, stamina, and size that result from steroid use, they may overlook the abuse their bodies are sustaining—often until it is too late. ...

In the example, sentence 2 is identified as a main supporting sentence and sentence 3 as a supporting detail. Sentence 2 describes the first reason: there is undeniable pressure on professional athletes. For this reason, it is identified as a main supporting sentence. Often the main supporting sentence would be led by a transition, such as *first of all*, in the text. Sentence 3 provides examples, such as increased strength, stamina and size to further explain the side-effects that are caused by using drugs. It is identified as the supporting detail of sentence 2.

Finally, the use of a concluding sentence in the students' writing samples is examined as well. According to the English writing convention, the concluding sentence is located at the end of a paragraph and restates the main idea of the paragraph (Clause, 1999: 39). The following text offers an example of a concluding sentence.

Example 3.4

(1) I prefer to choose friends from my social circles. (2) It is easier to organize some activities with friends that are close to me. (3) We can do whatever we like to do. ... (20) That's why I prefer to form a stable relationship with friends within walking distance.

In the text, sentence 1 is the topic sentence, in which a preference for choosing friends from one's social circles is expressed. Sentence 20 restates this main idea and is located at the end of the text. For this reason, the sentence serves as the concluding sentence of the text.

The criteria for exploring rhetorical patterns are listed as follows. In the parenthesis the abbreviation of each rhetorical term is given.

1. General Introduction (GI): General introduction is constituted of one or more

sentences preceding the topic sentence of the text. It is used to express background information and to stimulate the reader's interest. It is not directly relevant to the topic of the text.

2. Topic Sentence (TS): Topic sentence highlights the topic or the main idea of a paragraph.

3. Main Supporting Sentence (MSS): Main supporting sentence generally expresses an idea to confirm the topic of a paragraph. Mostly, it is preceded by transitions such as first of all, secondly, or finally.

4. Supporting Detail (SD): Supporting detail refers to one or more adequate and relevant points that follow a general supporting sentence and elaborate it.

5. Concluding Sentence (CS): Concluding sentence is located at the end of a paragraph. It is a summary of the major points or a restatement of the theme of the paragraph.

3.3.2 The Instrument for Analyzing Topical Structure

The best way of looking at how people organize their ideas in writings is to analyze the way they arrange sentence topics. Sentence topics are closely related to the coherence of a text.

Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis, developed for describing coherence in text, is used in this study to examine the topical development of the writing samples. By adopting this analyzing method, the semantic relations between the sentence topics and discourse topics in the students' writing samples are examined. In addition, the relation of topic and comment in sentences is examined to identify topical progression.

According to Lautamatti (1987), sentence topic refers to what the sentence is about. In other words, it is the core idea of the sentence, which is often, but not always, identical to the grammatical subject of the sentence. Mostly, a noun or noun phrase expresses the topic. Sentence topic could appear at the beginning, middle or end of a sentence. The remaining part of the sentence was the comment. Comment refers to what is being said about the topic. In a sentence, topic is known information and comment is new information. Example texts that show sentence topics in different positions are presented below. They were excerpted from Lautamatti's study (1987: 92).

Example 3.5

Newborn infants are completely helpless.

Example 3.6

Biologists suggest that newborn children are helpless.

Example 3.7

There are many newborn children who are helpless.

Example 3.8

Although young animals are certainly at risk, sometimes for weeks or even months after birth, compared with the human infant, they very quickly develop the capacity to fend for themselves.

In Example 3.5, the sentence topic is “newborn infants”, identical with the grammatical subject of the sentence. In Example 3.6 and 3.7, the sentence topics are in the middle positions of the sentences. The sentence topic of Example 3.6 is “newborn children” instead of “Biologists”, while the sentence topic of Example 3.7 is “newborn children” in the middle of the sentence, not the grammatical subject. Example 3.8 is a sentence that consists of a main clause and a subordinate clause. In the sentence, the topic of the main clause and that of the subordinate clause have the same referent “young animals”. In the example, either “young animals” or “they” could be selected as the sentence topic. However, in the current study, the topics of the main clause are mostly selected as the sentence topic in this kind of sentence.

In the current study, three possible progressions of sentence topics: parallel, sequential, and extended parallel were investigated in the students’ written texts. Based on Lautamatti’s topical structure analysis, parallel progression is where the sentence topics of successive sentences “have the same referent”, producing a repetition of topic that reinforced the idea for the reader (1987: 89). Sequential progression refers to the one where the sentence topic of one sentence is “based on some part of the comment of the previous one” (ibid: 99). In other words, topics of successive sentences are always different, as the comment of one sentence becomes, or is used to derive, the topic of the next. Lautamatti argues that the “introduction of successive new sub-topics by sequential progression creates a topical depth” (ibid: 100). In an extended parallel progression the first and the last topics of a piece of text are the same but are interrupted with some sequential progression.

The following text shows examples of parallel and sequential progression type. It was excerpted from Lautamatti’s study (1987: 89).

Example 3.9

(1) Newborn infants are completely helpless. (2) They can do nothing to ensure their own

survival. (3) They are different from young animals. (4) Young animals learn very quickly to look after themselves.

In Example 3.9, sentences 1 to 3 create parallel progressions in the text and sentence 3 and 4 create a sequential progression. “Newborn infants” is introduced as the topic of sentence 1. This topic is continued through the text in a pronominal form in sentence 2 and 3. The topics in the three sentences indicate the same referent; therefore, they are parallel topics. The comment of sentence 3 turns into the topic of the following sentence 4. Consequently, sentence 3 and 4 is a sequential progression.

The following example displays the topical progression of sequential and extended parallel. It was again excerpted from Lautamatti’s study (1987: 111).

Example 3.10

(1) A helpless baby will only survive if another human-being looks after it. (2) The other human-being need not necessarily be the mother. (3) A grandmother, sister, or someone who is not related to the child, may care for it. (4) Human babies are unusual in this characteristic, if we compare humans to other animal species.

In Example 3.10, the first three sentences form sequential progressions, and the first and the last sentence form an extended parallel progression. The topic of sentence 1 is “a helpless baby”. The topic of sentence 2 is “the other human-being”, referring to the comment of the previous sentence. The topic of sentence 3 is created based on the contrastive idea of the comment of the previous sentence. In other words, the topic of sentence 3, by listing cases of “non-mother,” developed from the comment of sentence 2. According to Lautamatti, this progression is also called a sequential progression. The first three sentences create sequential progressions. The topic of the last sentence refers back to “baby”, the topic of sentence 1. Consequently, sentence 1 and 4 is an example of extended parallel progression since the topics of the two sentences are parallel but interrupted by some sequential topics.

In addition to Lautimatti’s definition of sequential progression, in the current study, a newly raised topic, which is not mentioned in the previous sentence or relevant to the discourse topic, is identified as a sequential progression. However, this kind of topic is called indirectly related sequential topic, termed by Schneider and Connor (1990).

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions in the current study, the English compositions produced by Chinese EFL college students are analyzed. Firstly, the rhetorical features in each student's expository writing are examined according to the features proposed in the previous section. Secondly, the organization of the topics in each student's EFL writing is examined according to Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis.

3.4.1 Analysis on Rhetorical Patterns

The first step in analyzing the rhetorical patterns of the Chinese EFL writing is to identify rhetorical feature, i.e. topic sentence, general introduction, main supporting sentence, supporting detail and concluding sentence and their corresponding position in the paragraph. Then the identified characteristics are coded with the student number, the sentence number, and the abbreviation of each rhetorical feature, a collection of the initial letter of each word. The coding symbols are placed above the identified rhetorical features. Table 3.2 shows an example of the coding system.

Table 3.2 The Record of Rhetorical Features in the Student's Writing Samples

Student number	Sentence number	Rhetorical feature
20	01	TS

Example 3.11

(1) In my opinion, I prefer to make friends by means of internet....

After the identification of rhetorical features of each text, the analyzing data are filled into a summary table shown in Table 3.3

Table 3.3 The Application of Rhetorical Patterns in the Participants' Writing Samples (N=30)

Student Number			Location of TS					
	GI	TS	Beginning	Middle	End	MSS	SD	CS
01		*			*			*
02	*	*		*			*	*
03	*	*	*	*				
30		*	*					*
Total	10	30	18	10	2	4	3	13

In Table 3.3, for instance, the text for student number 1 is found to have the topic sentence

located at the end of the paragraph, identical with the concluding sentence. The total number of the rhetorical features found in the students' texts is clearly displayed in this table. In addition, by further examining the use of rhetorical features, the researcher attempts to identify the rhetorical patterns employed by the EFL writers.

3.4.2 Analysis on Topical Structures

The general introductions are not involved in the investigation of the topical structures because, in accordance with the writing conventions of contemporary English, the general introductions are not necessarily related to the topic of a paragraph and sometimes they are omitted in the making of a paragraph. The analyzing steps for examining the topical structures in the competent and less competent students' texts will be further discussed in this section.

First of all, the students are divided into competent and less competent writers according to their writing performance assessed from the English writings collected for the current study. The researcher and the English tutor grade the students' writing separately. The grading differences are modified and the final score calculate after discussing with the tutor.

Secondly, the researcher identifies the sentence topics in each writing sample and highlights them. During the process of identifying sentence topics, the researcher would always question herself, "what is the sentence talking about?" in order to find more accurate sentence topics. After the sentence topics are identified, the topical progressions of the students' texts are analyzed according to Lautimatti's analyzing method.

The numbers of sentences and sentence topics as well as the development of parallel progression, sequential progression, and extended parallel progression in each writing sample are coded and arranged in a summary table. The following text shows how the students' written texts are coded.

Example 3.12

(1) *I think if my intimate friends stay near me and understand me enough, I can trust them and tell them the inner voice in my heart.* (2) *So, I would prefer to make friends within my social circle.* (3) *We can easily find a quiet place that we all like it, and have a meaningful talking together.* (4) *Even if we need help or company, we 'll call each other at first.* (5) *Besides, I think making friends by means of internet is a waste of time.* (6) *Everyone has different thought.* (7) *They just enjoy the momentary happy and waste their time on talking nonsense.* (8) *It's easy to*

get tired to talk with people on-line, especially meaningless jokes. (9) That's my opinion, and my close friend will agree with me. (10) I guess so ...

Example 3.12 contains ten sentences and five sentence topics. Sentences 1 and 2, sentences 3 and 4, and sentences 6 and 7 are identified as parallel progressions. Sentences 2 and 3, sentences 4 and 5, sentences 5 and 6, sentences 7 and 8, and sentences 8 and 9 are identified as sequential progressions. Sentences 1-2 and 10 are identified as an extended parallel progression. The topical structure information of the text is arranged in the summary table shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Topical Structure Development

Text No.	NS	NT	PP	SP	EPP
12	10	5	1-2;3-4; 6-7	2-3;4-5;5-6; 7-8;8-9	1-2,10

Note. NS: the number of sentences

NT: the number of sentence topics

PP: parallel progression

SP: sequential progression

EPP: extended parallel progression.

The table indicates that there are ten sentences and five sentence topics in the text. In addition, three instances of parallel progressions, five instances of sequential progressions and an extended parallel progression are identified.

In addition, since the focus of this study is on rhetorical patterns and topical development of students' compositions, grammar errors as well as non-idiomatic usages are deliberately overlooked.

Chapter Four Findings and Analysis

This study focuses on exploring the writing structures the Chinese EFL writers employed in their expository writing samples. The research questions of the current study are:

(1) What are the influences of Chinese rhetorical features upon the writing samples of Chinese EFL students?

(2) What are the topical structures employed by competent and less competent beginning writers in their expository compositions?

(3) Is it predictable that high-proficiency learners adopt more English rhetorical patterns in their English compositions, and vice versus?

To answer the three questions, 30 students' expository writings produced in an English class are collected and examined. The writing samples are analyzed first by the use of rhetorical features, referring to the location of topic sentence in a paragraph, the use of general introduction and concluding sentence and the characteristics of reasoning patterns.

In addition, the topical structures of competent and less competent students' writing samples are further examined and compared to probe into the coherence problem in the students' writing. Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis is adopted to explore how the topics developed in the subjects' writing samples especially in the body sections.

Accordingly, the following section presents the results of the discourse structure analysis. The results are shown in two main parts: rhetorical patterns and topical structures. In the first part, the paragraph structures and the students' writing samples are co-presented. In the second part, the topical structures manifested in the poor and good writing texts are analyzed, accompanied by the students' writing samples.

4.1 The Rhetorical Patterns of the Writing Samples

In this section, both results of the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis are discussed. The quantitative analysis includes the location of the topic sentence, the use of the general introduction and the concluding sentence. The qualitative analysis involves the rhetorical patterns the participants employed.

4.1.1 Quantitative Analysis

After examining the students' use of the rhetorical patterns, it is found that the writing

samples are not composed in accordance with the writing conventions of contemporary English. The findings of the students’ use of the rhetorical patterns are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

The Application of Rhetorical Patterns in the Participants’ Writing Samples (N=30)

RP No.			Location of TS in the Paragraph			
	GI	TS	Beginning	Middle	End	CS
total	10	30	18	10	2	13
Percentage	33.3%	100%	60%	33.3%	6.7%	43.3%

Note: RP: Rhetorical Pattern

Table 4.1 indicates that ten instances of general introduction are identified in the current study amounting to 33.3% of the writing samples. A topic sentence is found in every writing sample, but its location in the paragraph varies. Altogether eighteen topic sentences are located in the beginning of the paragraph, ten are in the middle and two are at the end of the paragraph. In addition, thirteen concluding sentences are identified amounting to 43.3% of the writing samples.

4.1.2 Qualitative Analysis of the Paragraph Structures

In this section, the author attempts to identify and categorize the rhetorical patterns the participants employed to construct their English paragraphs. It is found that the majority of the students don’t compose their written texts according to the writing conventions of contemporary English. Rather they follow complex forms. After examining the rhetorical patterns of the students’ writing samples, six different rhetorical patterns are categorized. These patterns include TS-Body-CS Pattern, TS-Body Pattern, GI-TS-Body-CS Pattern, Chinese *qi-cheng-chuan-he* Pattern, GI-TS-Body Pattern, and Topic Postponed Pattern.

Table 4.2 The Classification of Paragraph Structure (N=30)

	Type	TS- Body- CS	TS- Body	GI- TS- Body- CS	Chinese <i>Qi-cheng- Zhuan-he</i>	GI- TS- Body	Topic Postponed
Writing samples	Total	9	10	4	3	2	2

As shown in Table 4.2, only nine writing samples are identified as following a TS-Body-CS pattern, the preferred rhetorical pattern of English writing. Table 4.2 also indicates that ten of the writing samples are written in accordance with the TS-Body pattern, four with the GI-TS-Body-CS pattern and three with the Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern. In addition, two writing samples follow the GI-TS-Body pattern and two the Topic Postponed pattern. The six paragraph structures are discussed respectively in the following section.

(i) *TS-Body-CS Pattern*

TS-Body-CS pattern, as Figure 4.1 shows, is composed of a topic sentence, a body section, and a concluding sentence.

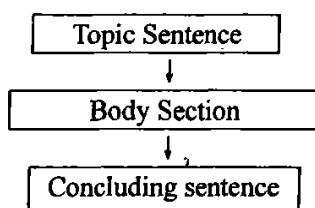


Figure 4.1 TS-Body-CS Pattern

As Figure 4.1 indicates the topic sentence of the TS-Body-CS pattern is located at the beginning of the text, the body section immediately follows and the concluding sentence is located at the end of the paragraph. Nine writing samples in the current study are identified as following this pattern. However, after further examining the concluding sentences, it is revealed that four of the concluding sentences are not concurrent with the main idea of the paragraphs.

Text 1, shown in Figure 4.2, was an example written in accordance with the TS-Body-CS pattern. The words, in the figure, above the boxes state the rhetorical features and the italic script in the boxes are the exact words the student wrote in her paragraph.

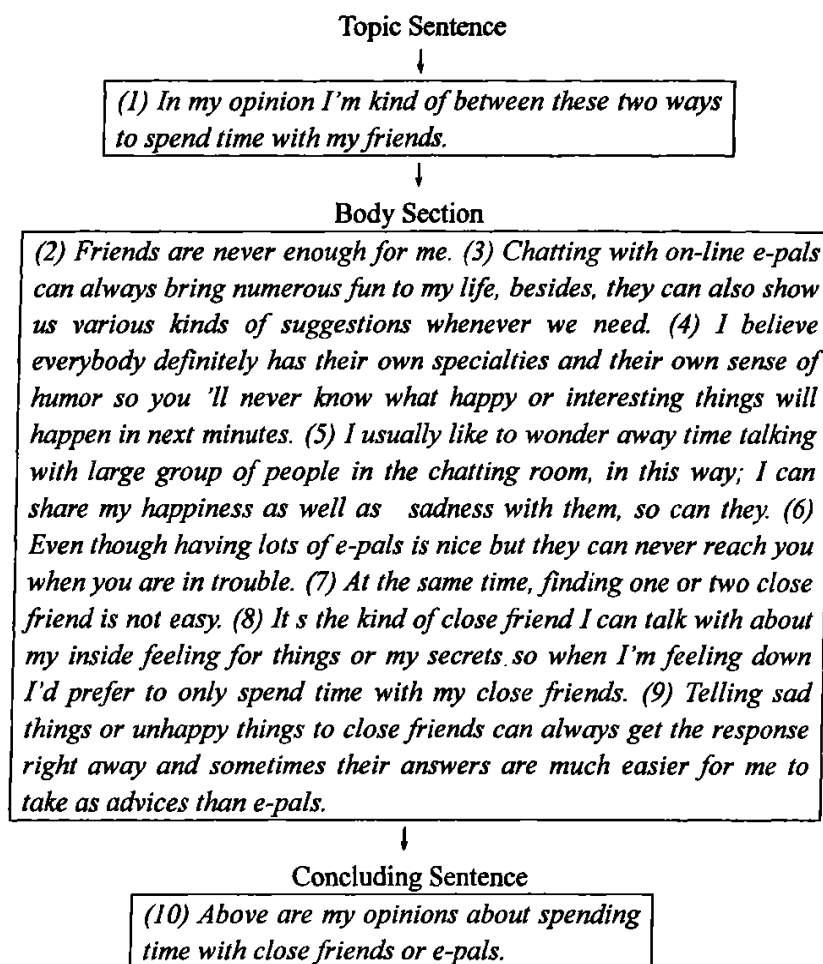


Figure 4.2 Paragraph Structure of Text 1 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

Text 1 is written by Student 16. After examining Text 1, it is found that the text can be divided into three parts: the topic sentence, the body section, and the concluding sentence. The first sentence of the text is a topic sentence, sentences 2 to 9 is the body section, and the last sentence is a concluding sentence. The writer expresses her preference for spending time with both a group of e-pals and a few close friends in sentence 1. Then in sentences 2 to 5, Student 16 describes the happiness of being with her on-line friends. While in sentences 6 to 9, she states the advantages of being with one or two close friends. Finally, she ends her paragraph by stating that "Above are my opinions about spending time with close friends or e-pals."

Examining the topic sentence in some depth reveals that the sentence fails to fulfill the requirement of the writing prompt. The writing prompt requests the writer to make a choice between the two ways of making friends, but Student 16 does not make a choice between them.

Six of the participants in the current study don't express a preference for making friends. In other words, their topics are, to some extent, not clearly stated.

Text 2 below is another example following the rhetorical pattern – TS-Body-CS. The content of Text 2 is shown in Figure 4.3.

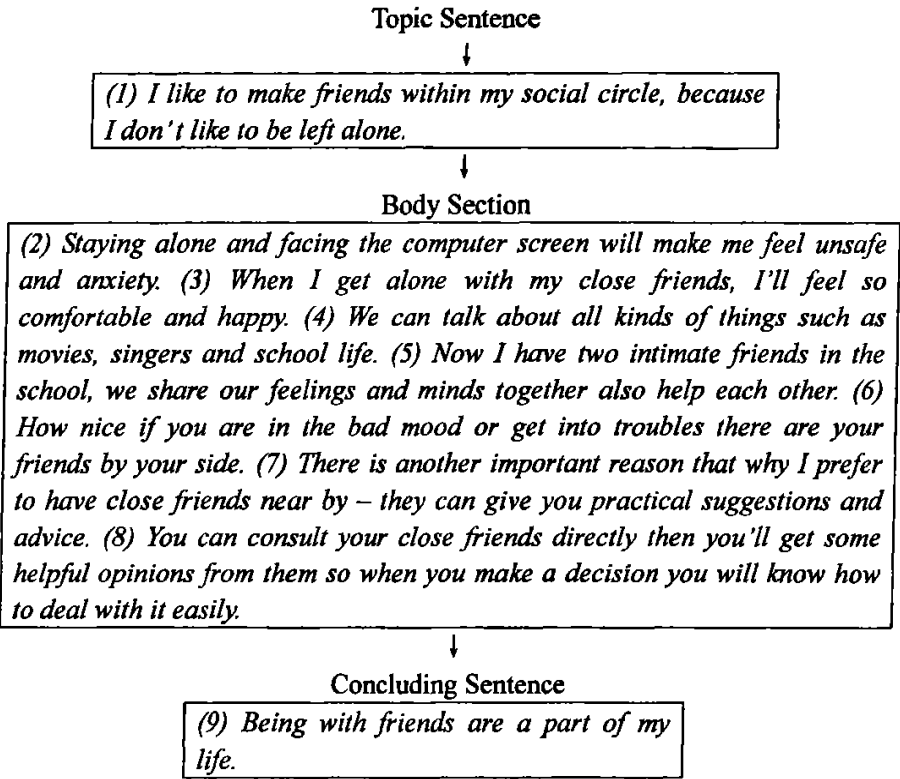


Figure 4.3 Paragraph Structure of Text 2 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

This text is written by Student 9. She expresses her preference for making friends within her social circles in the first sentence, as shown in Figure 4.3. Then, she provides more ideas to support her choice in sentence 2 to 8. She states that getting alone with her close friends makes her feel comfortable and happy and her friends could give her helps when she has some troubles. Finally, in sentence 9, the last sentence, she tries to conclude by saying that “Being with friends are a part of my life.” However, this concluding sentence is a more appropriate conclusion for explaining why spending time with friends is important to her, not why she likes making friends within her social circle. Student 9 concludes her paragraph based on an idea in the body section she thought was important, not on the topic sentence. In this sense, the concluding sentence serves more like “*he*” in Chinese writing rhetoric, being not simply an echo of the topic, but

rather an implicit conclusion.

(ii) TS-Body Pattern

In this pattern, the paragraph structure is composed of the main idea and a body section as shown in Figure 4.4. There is no concluding sentence in this type.

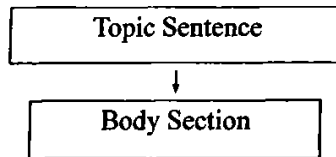


Figure 4.4 TS-Body Pattern

As Figure 4.4 indicates, in this paragraph structure the topic sentence is located at the beginning of the paragraph and the body section develops immediately after it. In the current study, ten samples are written in accordance with this pattern. These samples make up one-third of the student texts. Figure 4.5 shows an example of this rhetorical pattern. This written text is composed by Student 4.

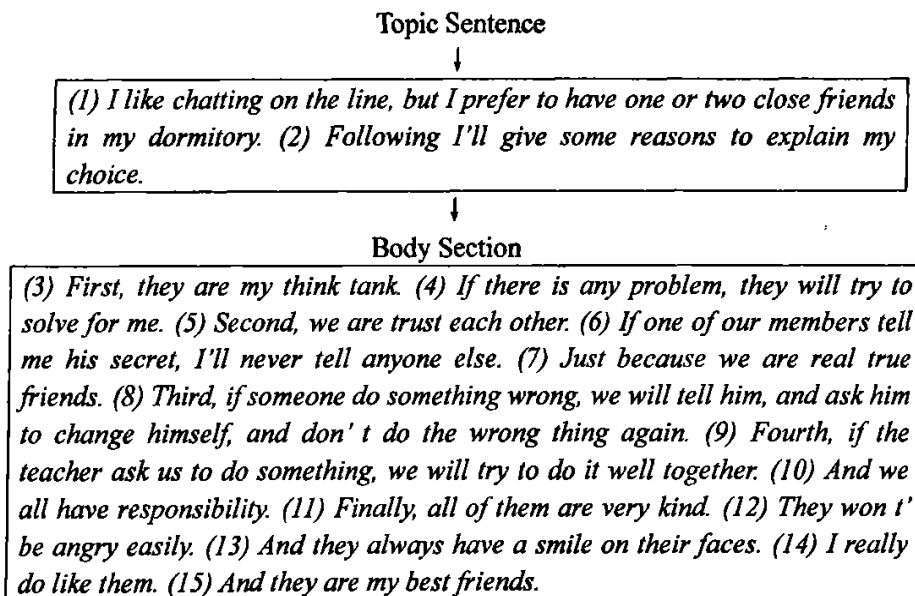


Figure 4.5 Paragraph Structure of Text 3 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

Compared with the other writing samples, Text 3 is considered a better-organized paragraph because the writer uses transitions, such as *first*, *second*, *third*, *fourth*, and *finally* to link the reasons he describes in the body section. As Figure 4.5 shows, Student 4 states his preference for making friends from the acquaintances he knew in the first sentence and then clearly expresses reasons to support his choice in sentence 2. Sentences 3 to 15 are the body section of the text. In

these sentences, five supporting reasons are given and linked by the five transitional words. Referring to the figure, we can clearly see that there is no concluding sentence at the end of the text. Accordingly, the text is interpreted as following the TS-Body Pattern.

Text 4 below shown in Figure 4.6 is another example of this pattern.

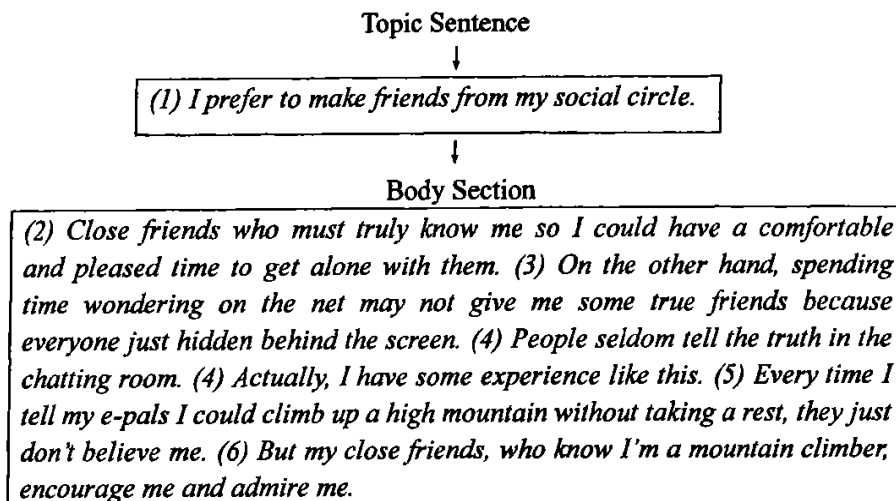


Figure 4.6 Paragraph Structure of Text 4 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

Text 4 is written by Student 20. He expresses his preference for making friends from familiar social circle in the first sentence and then provides ideas to support his choice in the following sentences. Similar to Text 3, Text 4 is comprised of a topic sentence and a body only. No concluding sentence is identified at the end of the paragraph. Accordingly, Text 4 is interpreted as following the paragraph structure – TS-Body pattern.

(iii) GI-TS-Body-CS Pattern

The paragraph structure, shown in Figure 4.7, involves a new rhetorical feature. That is a general introduction. A general introduction in this pattern does not express ideas directly relevant to the topic of the paragraph. It merely provides the background information of the paragraph. Four of the students in the current study compose their English compositions by briefly stating the background information of the paragraph before stating the theme of the paragraph. In this pattern, the influence of Chinese writing technique is traceable. Again, the general introduction here is like “qi” in Chinese rhetoric, indicating a more implicit theme, leaving room for the readers to anticipate.

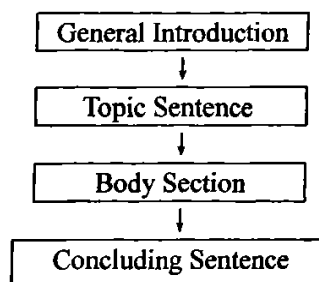


Figure 4.7 GI-TS-Body-CS Pattern

As Figure 4.7 indicates, the GI-TS-Body-CS pattern begins with a general introduction which is not directly relevant to the main idea of the paragraph in terms of the writing conventions of contemporary American English. This paragraph structure also involves a topic sentence, a body section, and a concluding sentence. After further examining the four concluding sentences in the type, one concluding sentence is found digressive. Text 5, written by Student 11, is an example of this type. The content of Text 5 is shown in Figure 4.8.

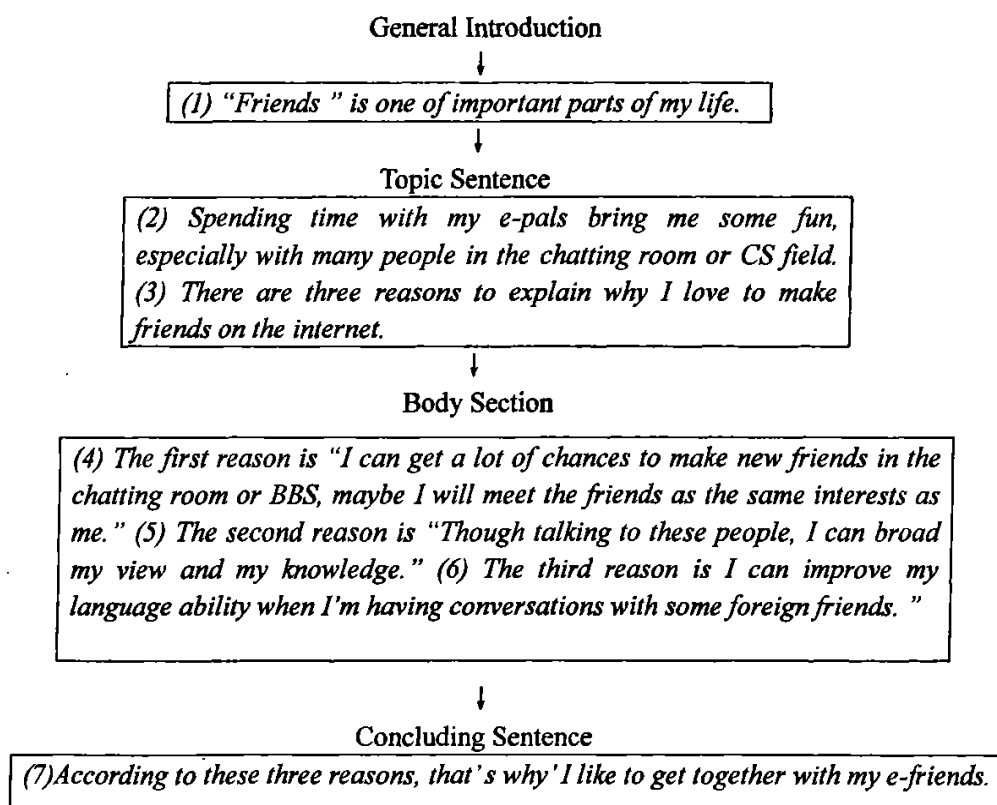


Figure 4.8 Paragraph Structure of Text 5 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

After examining Text 5, the first sentence of the text is identified as a general introduction, in which Student 11 expresses her personal opinion that friends are important to her. This idea, as

Figure 4.8 shows, is not directly relevant to the topic of the text. Figure 4.8 also indicates that the theme of the text is first implied in sentences 2 and then states clearly in sentence 3, in which the preference for making friends by means of internet is presented. Based on this topic, Student 11 provides three reasons in sentences 4 to 6 to support her choice. Similar to Text 3 written by Student 4, this text is considered a well-organized sample at the body part, after comparing it to the rest of the students' writings. In addition, at the end of the text the concluding sentence restates her preference for having e-friends. Accordingly, this text is considered written in the GI-TS-Body-CS Pattern.

(iv) Chinese qi-cheng-zhuan-he Pattern

This is considered as a traditional Chinese rhetorical form. It is composed of four parts: “*qi*”, “*cheng*”, “*zhuan*”, and “*he*”. Compared with the rhetorical structures of English compositions, “*qi*” serves the same function as an introduction part, “*cheng*” and “*zhuan*” are the body part, and “*he*” can be seen as the concluding sentence. However, the difference between Chinese and English rhetorical patterns is the absence of “*zhuan*” in the body section of English compositions. “*Zhuan*” conveys a different, opposite, or seemingly unrelated idea to the main idea of a composition and is regarded as digressive in the English writing conventions. The reason why it suffers a “bad” reputation among western scholarship lies in the different treatment of “opposite” opinions. It is commonly acceptable to put the for-and-against opinions within a paragraph in the writing conventions of Chinese. However, when the students of low-proficiency are transmitting this writing technique, they totally abandon the “smooth shift” to a new idea concerning the topic; rather they tend to make a dramatic change to an unrelated idea. Figure 4.9 presents the pattern and the two example texts below display the awkward imitation of Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern.

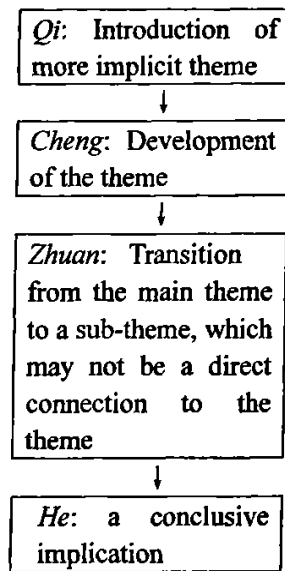


Figure 4.9 Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* Pattern

The “*qi*” section of this paragraph structure includes the general introduction and the topic sentence. “*Cheng*” and “*zhuan*” comprises the body section of the paragraph. As Figure 4.9 shows, the general introduction and “*zhuan*” are not directly relevant to the topic of the text. In addition, “*he*” is the concluding sentence and ends the paragraph by integrating the topic discussed in the body section with the most important idea of the text. In the current study, three writing samples are composed in this Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern. Text 6 below, written by Student 17, is an example of this pattern.

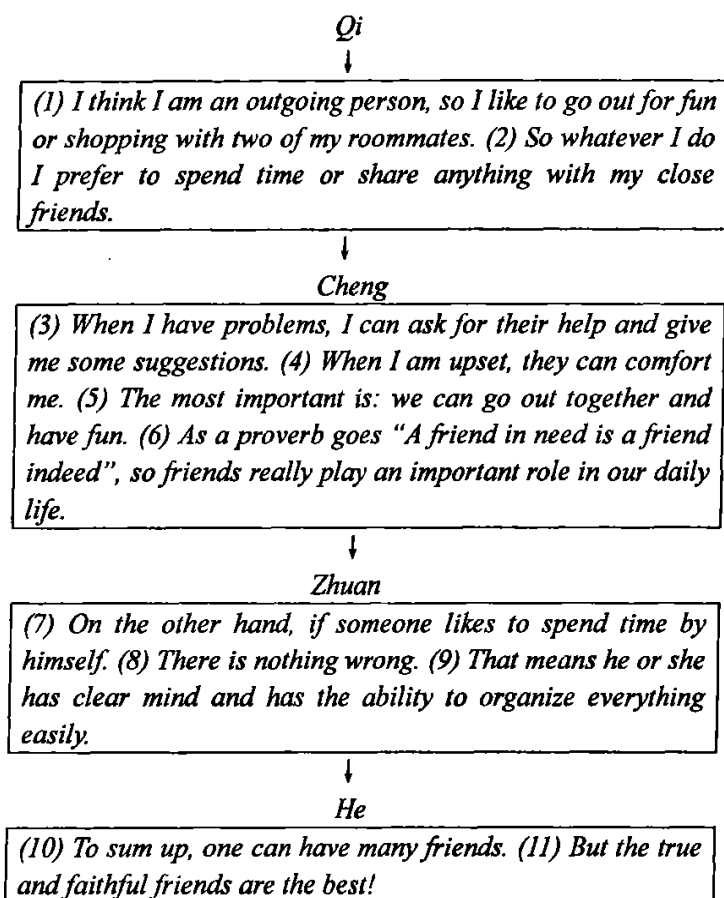


Figure 4.10 Paragraph Structure of Text 6 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

This text exemplifies a mechanical imitation of Chinese rhetorical structure of “*qi*”, “*cheng*”, “*zhuan*”, and “*he*”. Sentences 1 and 2 are “*qi*”, sentences 3 to 6 are “*cheng*”, sentences 7 to 9 are “*zhuan*”, and sentences 10 and 11 are “*he*”, as Figure 4.10 shows. In sentence 1, written as an opening, Student 17 describes herself as an outgoing person who likes to have leisure time with friends. In sentence 2, the topic sentence, she expresses her preference for making one or two close friends. The following sentences 3 to 6 are “*cheng*”. In this section, Student 17 provides examples and her personal beliefs to further explain and support the main idea. Sentences 7 to 9 in the text are considered as “*zhuan*”. In this section, totally different topics, such as spending time alone, are discussed by using the transition “*on the other hand*”. This subtopic is irrelevant to the main idea of the text and distracted the reader’s attention from the main topic. Accordingly, it is suggested that the subtopic be deleted, not only to prevent distraction but also to meet the requirements of English writing conventions.

Finally, the last two sentences 10 and 11, beginning with the cohesive device “to sum up” is considered as “he”, i.e. concluding sentence. However, the conclusion is considered off-the-route. Student 17 concludes the paragraph with what she thought was the most important idea, not the topic, the preference for making friends with her roommates, expressed in sentence 1 and 2. In the concluding sentences, Student 17 implies that having true friends is more important than having a lot of nodding acquaintances. As a matter of fact, her conclusion is irrelevant and somewhat out-of-focus.

Text 7, written by Student 24, is another example of a text following the Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern. The content of the text is presented in Figure 4.11.

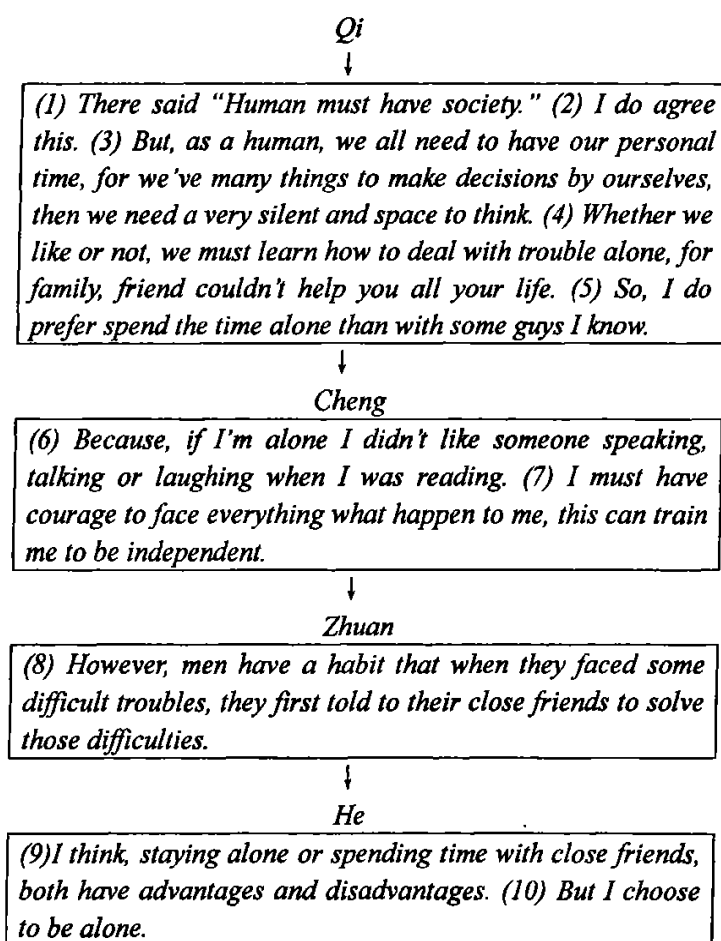


Figure 4.11 Paragraph Structure of Text 7 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

Examining the text reveals that sentences 1 to 4 are the general introduction, the “*qi*” part, sentence 5 is the topic sentence, sentences 6 and 7 are “*cheng*”, sentence 8 is “*zhuan*”, and sentences 9 and 10 are “*he*”. In the general introduction, Student 24 provides the background

information of the text, in which he describes that learning to be independent, is necessary for human beings. After the background information, he expresses his preference for staying alone in sentence 5, the topic sentence. Then, based on this preference, he tries to explain that being alone allows him to read and be more independent in the following sentences 6 and 7. However, in sentence 8, Student 24 raises an opposite topic: People often consult their friends when confronting troubles, implying friends could help solve problems. At this point, a contradictory state of mind emerges, since the writer is facing a dilemma, to be alone or not. Finally, the writer re-adjusts his view-point and turns back to his original topic, the preference of being alone.

In addition, there are two weaknesses within the text. First, it is the unbalanced lay-out of the paragraph. The general introduction, or the “*qi*” section, occupies half of the text, leaving little room for the development of the topic. Second, the whole text contains too much irrelevant information, which greatly distracts the readers’ attention.

(v) GI-TS-Body Pattern

This pattern is composed of a general introduction, a topic sentence, and a body section, as presented in Figure 4.12. However, a conclusion is missing in this type.

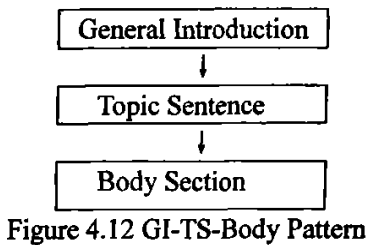


Figure 4.12 shows that in this pattern, before the topic sentence, a general introduction opens the paragraph. However, this general introduction is not directly relevant to the main idea. In addition, after the topic sentence, a body section is developed but a concluding sentence is not found at the end. A total of two subjects in this study follow this pattern to compose their English compositions. Text 8, written by Student 5, is an example of this rhetorical pattern. It is presented in Figure 4.13.

General Introduction



(1) Some people like to stay with his or her intimate friends, while others love to get together and play PC games with many e-pals. (2) However, no matter what kind of friends you want to get together with, the most important thing is that you need to treat them with a sincere heart.



Topic Sentence

(3) As for me, I enjoy spending time with a few intimate friends of mine.



Body Section

(4) I think I am not a netbug; therefore, it is unsuitable for me to take part in an on-line game or chatting with e-friends for many hours. (5) I may feel tired in this condition. (6) In addition, I don't think it is safe to talk too much to your e-friends. (7) You will never know what your e-friends are. (8) In my opinion, it's very lucky for me to have some true friends around me. (9) I won't expect more of it for true friends are really hard to find. (10) One or two friends are enough for me to spend time developing solid friendship with them. (11) If they can become my intimate companions, I will be very glad to spend time with them. (12) Also, I am willing to have a simple personal relationship with others; consequently, as long as I could stay with my friends, chatting, playing or traveling, it is already fortunate for me to lead a beautiful life.

Figure 4.13 Paragraph Structure of Text 8 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

As indicated by Figure 4.13, the text could be divided into three parts. Sentences 1 and 2 comprise the general introduction. These sentences are not directly relevant to the topic of the paragraph. Sentence 3 is the topic sentence and sentences 4 to 12 consist of the body section. Student 5 describes, in sentences 1 and 2, that everyone can choose to have one or two true friends or just have fun with many e-pals, but the importance lies in one's sincerity towards friends. Again, same mistake is seen in the text as Text 7, the general introduction contains irrelevant information, which may also lead to readers' misunderstanding of the writer's real purpose in writing this composition. Besides, the lack of a conclusion in the final part of the text is leaving incompleteness to the readers' heart.

(vi) Topic Postponed Pattern

The sixth is the topic postponed pattern. In this pattern, the topic sentence of the text is postponed until the end of the paragraph. This rhetorical pattern is not commonly seen in English compositions since the development of the topic requires accurate distribution of the supporting sub-topics and details as well as the use of cohesive ties and coherence marks to achieve the building-up of the topic at the final part. Thus, it is not encouraged to be used by beginning writers. This structure is represented in Figure 4.14 below.

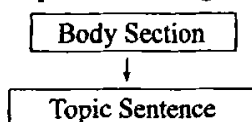


Figure 4.14 Topic postponed pattern

Figure 4.14 indicates that, different from any of the previous types, the topic sentence is postponed to the end of the text. In the current study, two students follow this structure in their English paragraphs. Text 9 below, written by Student 14, is an example of this type. It is presented in Figure 4.15.

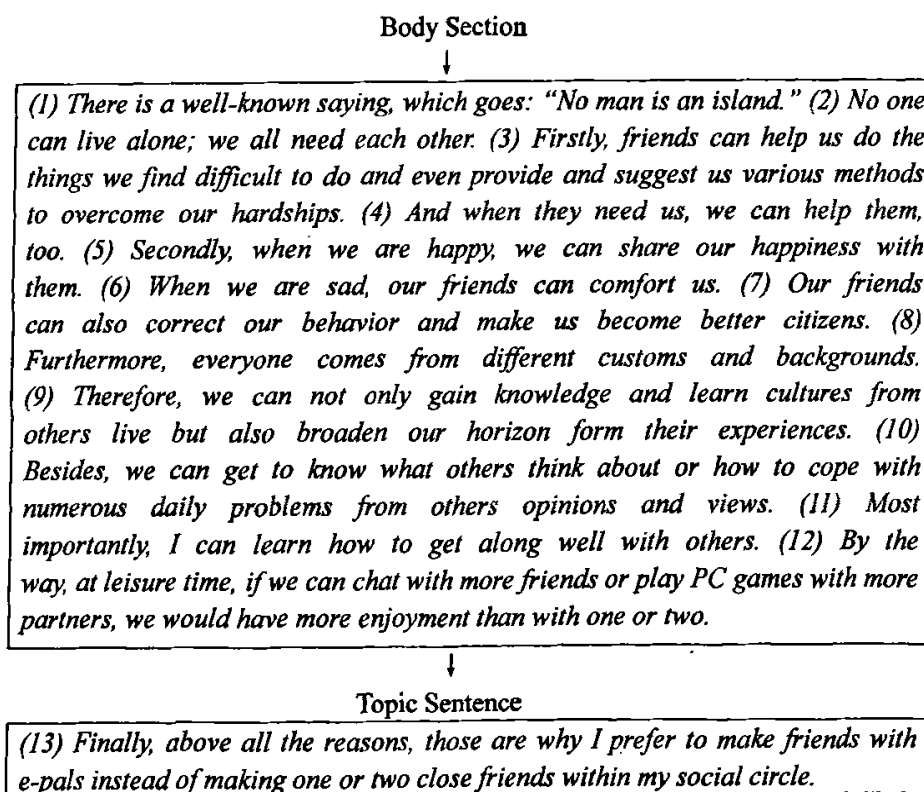


Figure 4.15 Paragraph Structure of Text 9 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

As Figure 4.15 shows, the text is divided into two rhetorical parts. One is the body section, comprising of sentences 1 to 12, and the other is the topic sentence, sentence 13. Instead of stating her preference for making a lot of e-pals at the beginning part, Student 14 initiates her view-point by quoting a famous proverb. And then she continues to point out several advantages of making friends. For instance, she expresses her feeling that friends can help her solve problems in sentences 3 to 7, she can share happiness and sadness with them in sentence 6 and she can broaden her horizons being with a group of people in sentences 9 and 10. Those advantages, as a matter of fact, are the reasons explaining her preference for making a lot of e-friends. After the advantages are fully expressed, Student 14 states the main idea of the text, at the end of the paragraph. Accordingly, Text 9 is written in the Topic -Postponed pattern.

(vii) Extended Analysis of the Rhetorical Structures of the Bodies in the Writing Samples

In terms of the writing conventions of contemporary English, the body section of a paragraph should contain several main supporting sentences and their corresponding supporting details. In addition, as Montan-Harmon (1991) points out, English writing emphasizes logical relationships between one idea and the subsequent idea and frequently marks them by using transitions, such as *first*, *second*, or *third*. However, further examining the body sections of the writing samples in the present study reveals that the writers have tremendous difficulty composing a coherent body section in accordance with English writing conventions. Most of the writing samples are found incoherent because they lack connections between the main supporting sentences and their supporting details or because information presented deviates from the topic, or because of both. In other words, the topics discussed in the subjects' writing are jumbled together within the body sections and the pattern of main supporting sentence and supporting details for each sub-topic is discarded or randomly used.

Among the 30 writing samples, only one clearly expresses main supporting sentences in the body section by listing them one by one. The writing sample is written by Student 28 and is reproduced below in Figure 4.16.

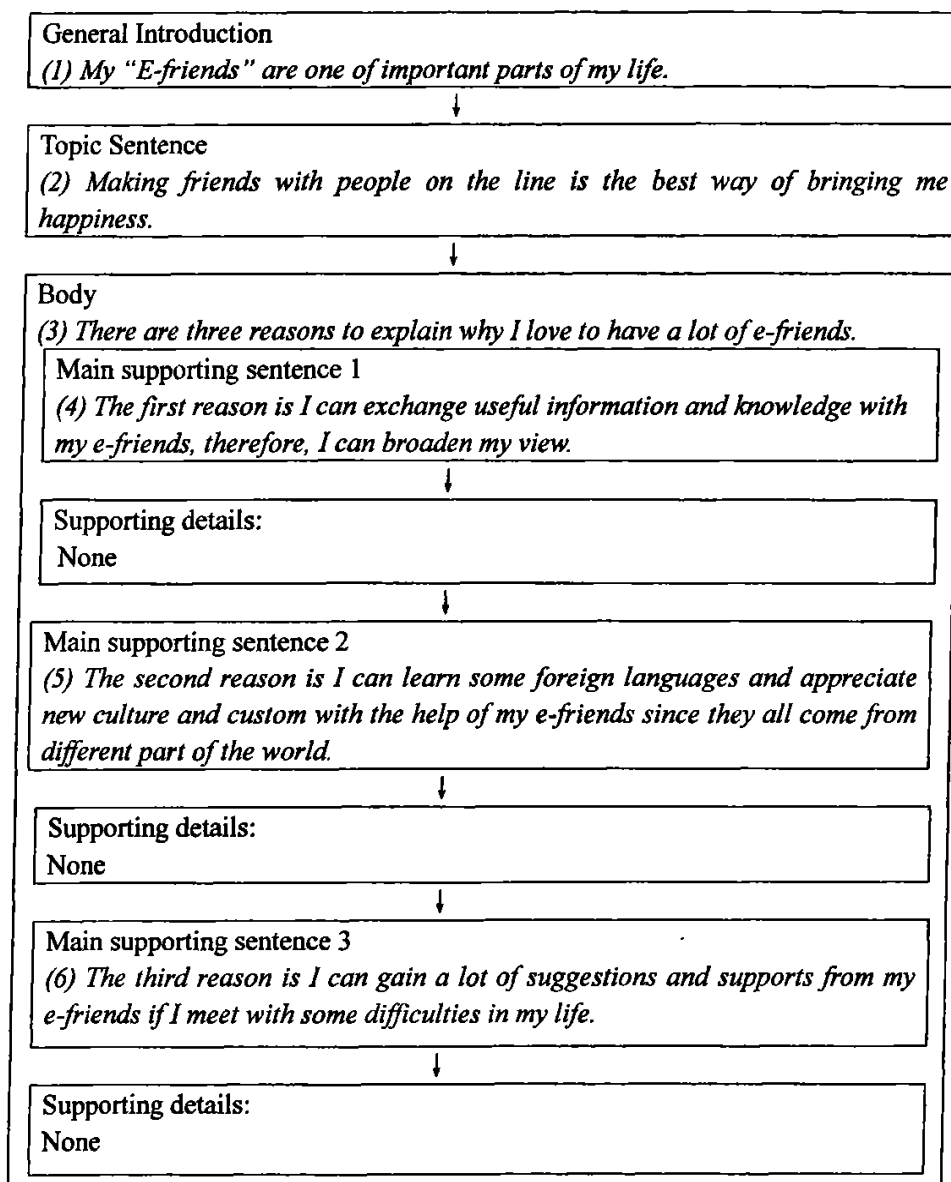


Figure 4.16 Body Structure of Text 10 along with its Rhetorical Features and Content

This text follows the GI-TS-Body pattern and sentences 4 to 6 develop the body section of the paragraph. Student 28, the author of the text, develops a well-organized body section by using cohesive ties, *the first reason*, *the second reason*, and *the third reason*, to link the main supporting sentences. However, no supporting details are given after the three main supporting sentences.

As Figure 4.16 shows, Student 28 expresses her preference for making a lot of e-friends in sentences 2 and 3. Then, she clearly states her three reasons in sentences 4 to 6. First, she

explains that she can broaden her view by exchanging information and knowledge with her e-friends. Second, being with her e-friends she will learn several foreign languages and appreciate new culture and custom. And finally, she reckons her e-friends can give her many suggestions if she were in troubles. However, no supporting details for each reason are provided. As a result, it would be difficult for the readers to ascertain how or why the writer can broaden her mind, appreciate new culture or gain supports from her e-friends. Basically, the text is well-organized but weak in the content.

4.2 Topical Structures of the Writing Samples

In the following section, the topical structures of the competent and less competent students employed in their English written texts are discussed. The quantitative analysis, comparing the topical structures of the good and poor writings is presented. Then the results of the qualitative analysis derived from the usages of the topical progressions in the good and poor writings are discussed. The writing samples best exemplifying a topical progression type are presented in this analysis.

4.2.1 Quantitative Analysis

(i) The Topical Structures of the Good Writing

The topical development of each good writing sample is presented in Table 4.3. There are 67 sentences and 32 sentence topics in the seven good writing samples. On average, a sentence topic is found in about every two sentences. In addition, there are 16 instances of parallel progression, 24 instances of sequential progression, and 11 instances of extended parallel progression identified in the good wiring samples. About the sequential topic, there is only one indirectly related sequential topic identified. On average, there is a parallel progression about every 4.2 sentences, a sequential progression about every 2.8 sentences, and an extended parallel progression about every 6.7 sentences. In addition, all three topical progressions are identified in each writing sample.

Table 4.3 The Topical Developments of the Good Writing (N=7)

Number	NS	NT	PP	SP	EPP
N1	5	2	1-3	3-4	1-3,5
N2	13	4	1-2;3-4; 7-10;12-13	2-3;4-5;8-9	1-2,6,12;2-4, 10-11,13;5,7-8
N3	10	3	1-6;9-10	5-6;7-8	1-6,7,9-10
N4	6	3	2-4	2-3;4-5	2-4,6
N5	15	10	3-4;13-14	1-2;2-3;4-5; 5-6;9-10; 10-11;11-12; (14-15)	1,7,15;3,4,9
N6	8	4	2-3;4-5;6-7	1-2;3-4;6-7	2-3,5-6,8
N7	10	6	1-2;3-4;6-7	2-3;4-5;5-6; 7-8;8-9	1-2,10
Total	67	32	16	24(1)	10
Average Topical Progression		2.1	4.2	2.8	6.7

Note: The indirectly related sequential topic is marked in the parentheses.

(ii) The Topical Structures of the Poor Writing

The topical developments of the poor writing samples are presented in Table 4.4. There are 223 sentences and 134 sentence topics identified in the twenty-three poor writing samples. On average, there is a sentence topic in about every 1.7 sentences. In addition, there are 31 instances of parallel progression, 107 instances of sequential progression, and 26 instances of extended parallel progression identified in the poor writing samples. Among the 107 sequential topics, 40 of them are identified as indirectly related sequential topics. On average, there is a parallel progression about every 7.2 sentences, a sequential progression about every 2.1 sentences and an extended parallel progression about every 8.6 sentences.

As opposed to the good writing samples, some of the poor samples do not contain instances of parallel progression or extended parallel progression or both. The writing samples P2, P6, P9, P12, and P19, lack in parallel topics and the writing samples P1, P6, P13 and P20 don't develop extended parallel topics. Among the nine writing samples with no parallel progression or extended parallel progression, sample P6 is found to have neither a parallel topic nor an extended parallel topic.

Table 4.4 The Topical Developments of the Poor Writing (P=23)

Number	NS	NT	PP	SP	EPP
P1	7	4	1-2;6-7	2-3;3-4;4-5	0
P2	8	5	0	1-2;(2-3);(4-5);6-7	1,4,6,8
P3	18	11	4-5	1-2;2-3;(3-4);(5-6); 7-8;(8-9);(9-10); (13-14);(14-15);(16-17)	1,7,11-13, 16,18
P4	8	4	1-2;5-6	2-3;(4-5);(6-7)	1-2,4;5-6,8
P5	12	9	8-9	1-2;(2-3);3-4;5-6; 7-8;(9-10);(11-12)	1,5,7,11
P6	10	7	0	1-2;3-4;5-6;(6-7); 7-8;8-9;(9-10)	0
P7	13	9	4-6	1-2;2-3;3-4;(6-7);(7-8); (8-9);(9-10);(10-11)	1,12-13
P8	8	4	2-3;4-5	1-2;5-6;6-7	1,4,5;6,8
P9	8	6	0	1-2;(3-4);4-5;(5-6); (6-7)	1,3;5,8
P10	14	7	2-3;5-6; 7-8;10-11	(1-2);3-4;4-5;6-7; 8-9;11-12	5-6,10-11; 12,14
P11	11	3	1-5;9-11	5-6;6-7	1-5;9-11
P12	9	8	0	1-2;2-3;3-4	1,5,9
P13	10	7	1-3;7-8	3-4;4-5;5-6;6-7; 8-9;9-10	0
P14	10	6	5-7	1-2;(2-3);3-4; (4-5);7-8;8-9	1,10
P15	9	3	1-2;5-9	(2-3);(3-4)	1-2;5-9
P16	8	5	2-3	1-2;(3-4);(4-5);(7-8)	2-3,6
P17	4	3	1-2	2-3	1-2,4
P18	10	5	3-4;5-7	1-2;2-3;7-8;9-10	2,5-7,10
P19	6	5	0	1-2;2-3;4-5;(5-6)	1,4
P20	9	6	3-6	1-2;2-3;6-7;7-8;8-9	0
P21	9	5	2-3	1-2;(3-4);(4-5);(7-8)	2-3,9
P22	14	7	2-3;5-6; 7-8;10-11	(1-2);3-4;4-5;6-7; 8-9;11-12	5-6,10-11; 12,13,14
P23	8	5	2-3	1-2;(3-4);(4-5);(7-8)	2-3,6
Total	223	134	31	107(40)	26
Average Topical Progress- ion		1.7	7.2	2.1	8.6

Note: The symbol 0 in the table represents the type of topical progression which is not identified in the writing sample. In addition, the indirectly related sequential topics are

marked in the parentheses.

4.2.2 Qualitative Analysis

(i) Analysis on the Topical Progression of Parallel Type

Both the good and poor writing samples in the current study are found to have parallel progression, except the five poor writing samples, P 2, P6, P9, P12 and P19. Here is a sample of parallel topic progression from a good writing sample.

(1) I like chatting on the line, but I prefer to have two close friends in my dormitory. (2) Following I'll give some reasons to explain my choice. (3) First, they are my think tank. (4) If there is any problem, they will try to solve for me. (5) Second, we are trust each other. (6) If one of our members tell me his secret, I'll never tell anyone else. (7) Just because we are real true friends. (8) Third, if someone do something wrong, we will tell him, and ask him to change himself, and don't do the wrong thing again. (9) Fourth, if the teacher ask us to do something, we will try to do it well together. (10) And we all have responsibility. (11) Finally, all of them are very kind. (12) They won't be angry easily. (13) And they always have a smile on their faces. (14) I really do like them. (15) And they are my best friends.

The discourse topic of the written text is the preference for making close friends within the writer's social circle. In the written text, sentences 1-2, sentences 3-4, sentences 7-10, and sentences 12-13 develop on sentence topic "I", "they", "we", and "they" respectively. Sentences 1 and 2 describe the writer's preference for being with two close friends. Sentences 3 and 4 develop the topic "they" which is taken from the comment of sentence 1. "They" refer to the two close friends mentioned in sentence 1. Sentences 7 to 10 develop on the same sentence topic, the pronoun, "we". Although "we" has no clear referent from the previous sentences, a possible referent, the writer and his close friends, could be identified from previous sentences. In sentences 7 to 10, the writer explains that he and his close friends will correct each other when they make mistakes and work cooperatively on their homework. These sentences support his preference for being with only close friends within his social circle. In addition, sentences 12 to 13 develop on the sentence topic, the pronoun, "they". The writer, in the two sentences describes that his close friends are kind and always wear smiles on their faces.

The writing sample below is another example of parallel topic progression excerpted from the poor written texts.

(1) I think I am an outgoing person, so I like to go out for fun or shopping with two of my roommates. (2) So whatever I do I prefer to spend time or share anything with my close friends. (3) When I have problems, I can ask for their help and give me some suggestions. (4) When I am upset, they can comfort me. (5) The most important is: we can go out together and have fun. (6) As a proverb goes "A friend in need is a friend indeed", so friends really play an important role in our daily life. (7) On the other hand, if someone likes to spend time by himself, there is nothing wrong. (8) That means he or she has clear mind and has the ability to organize everything easily. (9) To sum up, one can have many friends. (10) But the true and faithful friends are the best!

The writer of this text expresses her preference for making two close friends in her dormitory and explains her reasons in the paragraph. For this, the discourse topic of the text is the preference for making close friends within her social circle. The parallel progressions identified in the text are created by sentences 1 to 3 and sentences 7 to 8. All three sentences (1-3) have the same topic, the pronoun "I". In the three sentences, the writer describes and explains her preference of getting together with her close friends because she is an outgoing person, enjoying the leisure time with her two friends and appreciates her friends helping her solve problems when she is in trouble.

The following text is also an example of parallel topic progression excerpted from the poor writing samples.

(1) I prefer to stay alone by myself; I love to stay alone especially on big grassland under a tree, this way, I may relax and could think of things clearly. (2) The reason why I don't like to have any friend is that I love to be alone. (3) What does it mean? (4) Well, I was born in a large family in the countryside, I have a lot of brothers and sisters, when I go to the university, I often miss them, so I try to be alone and think of them.

Examining the text it reveals that the writer has great difficulty identifying the correct theme of this written assignment. Except for this problem, the writer sticks to the topic "I" when developing the text. The discourse topic of the text is the preference for staying alone. In the text, a parallel progression is identified between sentences 1 and 2. However, the two sentences express ideas unrelated to the discourse topic. In sentence 1, the writer states that he likes to spend time alone and also how he spent his time alone. In sentence 2, the writer reclaims his

preference for staying alone. In other words, the two sentences, which occupy half the text, are weak in content.

The following text is also an example of parallel progression excerpted from the poor writing samples.

(1) I prefer to have a few true-hearted friends, I always like to share my pleasure with some of my friends and I also enjoy the happy time when we get together. (2) In the other hand, when I feel sad or lonely, all my dear friends would stay with me and comfort me. (3) When I faced the problems, they would be the best consultants to give me suggests. (4) And then I could pass the difficulties safely. (5) So wherever I arrive I will try to get some friends closely because I believe only if my friends are happy then I will be happy, too. (6) Like recently, this is just the second week but we had already gathered together for three times in the short time. (7) Maybe it's not very anxious. (8) But just drinking, eating and chatting then we would feel we were so close to each other.

Examining the text reveals that the discourse topic is the preference of having several true-hearted friends. And two parallel topical progressions are identified between sentences 2 and 3, and 4 and 5. The two sentences (4-5) share the same topic, the pronoun "I". In sentence 4, it is inferred that the writer can solve problems with his friends' help. In sentence 5, he further explains the importance of friends to him. Although sentences 4 and 5 have the same sentence topic, what was written in sentence 5 is not directly related to the discourse topic.

Comparing the usage of parallel topic progression in the good and the poor writing samples reveals that in the poor writing samples some parallel sentences are found to be irrelevant to the discourse topic. However, the parallel sentences of the good samples are found to be relevant to the discourse topic. Meanwhile, the repetition of such parallel progression turns the texts into tedious ones.

(ii) Analysis on the Topical Progression of Sequential Type

As pointed out in the previous section, both the good and poor writings in the current study are found to contain a large number of sequential progressions. The difference between the good and poor writing is the involvement of indirectly related sequential topics in the text. The good writing samples contain few indirectly related sequential progressions.

(1) I prefer to have one or two close friends in my life. (2) It is easier to have same interests

with close friends then to have same interests with a large group of e-pals whom you don't know much. (3) We can do whatever we like to do. (4) Even if we just take a walk and do nothing, we do not find it boring. (5) Sometimes it is difficult to arrive at a common point while we communicate with a large group of people in the chatting room. (6) For example, one may think that Yao Ming is a very good basketball player, another one argue that Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all. (7) I also find that I can receive useful suggestions from my close friends when I need to talk to someone. (8) They understand me, so they may offer some pieces of advice which meet my need. (9) We can talk to our heart's content and share our opinions. (10) For me, close friends equals true friends. (11) True friends care about you and are reliable. (12) It is comfortable to be with them. (13) Sometimes we can be very active while other time we can be very quiet. (14) We do not just laugh away the hours but cherishing every moment while being together. (15) In my opinion, I think that the real happiness lies on how well you can be with your friends. (16) It does not lies on how many friends you have. (17) That's why I prefer to own one or two close friends in my life.

There are eight instances of sequential progressions identified. The discourse topic of the text is the preference of having one or two close friends in one's life. The first sequential progression is created by sentences 1 and 2. The topic of sentence 2, "*to have same interests with close friends*", was related to the comment, "*one or two close friends*", of sentence 1. The second sequential topic is created by sentence 2 and 3. The topic of sentence 3, the pronoun "we" has no clear referent in the previous sentences; however, a possible referent, the writer and her closer friends, could be inferred.

The third sequential progression is created by sentences 4 and 5. The topic of sentence 5, "*to arrive at a common point*", is not mentioned in the previous sentence. It seemed as if an example of an indirectly related sequential topic. However, further examining sentence 5 reveals that the information told about the topic is relevant to the discourse topic. The writer expresses her feeling that reaching a common point in a network group discussion is not easy. In other words, the information in sentence 5 describes the negative side of the issue, the preference of having a lot of e-friends. Besides, the theme of sentence 6 focused on the disagreement raised by e-chatting counterparts, and it creates the forth sequential progression.

In addition, the fifth, sixth and seventh sequential progressions are created in sentences 9 to

12. The topic of sentence 10, “*close friends*”, and that of sentences 11 and 12, “*true friends*” and “*to be with them*” are taken from the previous sentences. Finally, the last sequential progression identified is created by sentences 14 and 15. The sequential topic is an indirectly related sequential topic because the topic of sentence 15, “*the real happiness*”, has no referent from the previous sentences and is not directly related to the discourse topic, the preference for being with one or two close friends.

Here is another example of sequential topics. It is a writing sample excerpted from the poor written texts.

(1) Although I prefer to be alone, but I don't go out alone. (2) I can do whatever I want to do and I don't have to care of what other people think. (3) In my 20 years of life, there isn't any close friend of mine. (4) Of course I do want one, but the person never come out yet. (5) I like to go out with one or two friends, and when I need to talk to someone I like to be with them. (6) Because I can say what I really feel and they can give me some suggestions. (7) If there is anyone who wants to talk to me I would be glad to listen to him or her. (8) I also like to chat with a large group of e-bugs. (9) Because I like to listen or read people's words of communication on BBS or QQ when I don't feel like to talk and I like the feeling of playing games with a large group of on-line players.

Examining the text reveals that the writer is indecisive in stating his preference in the text. In other words, there are three different discourse topics in the text, his preference for staying alone, being with one or two close friends and/ or with a group of e-bugs. Further examining the topical progressions of the text reveals two indirectly related sequential topics. The first sequential topic, *any close friends of mine*, in sentence 3 has no referent in the previous sentences as well as the second sequential topic, *the person*, in sentence 4.

The text below is another example of sequential topic progression from the poor writing samples.

(1) I love to make friends around the world, but most of the time I prefer to spend time with one or two close friends. (2) We can not only talk more, but also talk detailedly. (3) Therefore, we can understand each other more. (4) There are thousands of people or even more live in this magnificent world, but how many are they suit for us? (5) It is not a piece of cake to find a close friend because everyone has different kinds of personality. (6) We have to spend a

lot of time to know if they really suit for us. (7) Finding an intimate friend overnight in this big world is impossible. (8) The only and the best way to make a special friend is to work hard and treat people sincerely.

The discourse topic of the text is the preference for being with one or two close friends. The first sequential topic “we” in sentence 2 has no clear referent from the previous sentence, but a possible referent, the writer and her close friends can be inferred from the previous sentence. The second sequential topic “they” in sentence 4 is identified as an indirectly related sequential topic because it was not mentioned in the previous sentence and no referent could be found from previous sentences. In addition, the information told about the sequential topic is actually irrelevant to the discourse topic. The third sequential topic “to find a close friend” in sentence 5 and the fourth sequential topic “to work hard and treat people sincerely” in the last sentence are identified as two indirectly related sequential topics because they are not related to the comments or the topics of previous sentences as well as the discourse topic.

Further examining the text reveals that the discourse topic is the preference for spending time with one or two close friends. From this sense, the topic is more or less away from the originally aimed one. Nor is it a smoothly organized topic in the text. The writer describes that she likes being with one or two close friends in sentences 1 and 2; however, she then focuses on the difficulty of making close friends when developing the topics of sentences 3 to 7. In other words, the discourse topic of sentences 3 to 7 shifts away from the correct topic, making one or two close friends. Sentences 3 to 5 illustrate the difficulty of making close friends; sentence 6 describes the impossibility of finding close friends overnight; sentence 7 states that treating people sincerely is the best way to make special friends.

(iii) Analysis on the Topical Progression of Extended Parallel Type

Both the good and poor writing samples in the current study have the topical progression of the extended parallel type, except the four poor writing samples, P1, P6, P13, and P20.

Here is a writing sample using extended parallel progression excerpted from the good writing samples.

(1) Having a lot of e-friends makes me see the world from a brand-new angle. (2) There are three reasons to explain why I love to make friends with people from different parts of the world. (3) Firstly, I can get the latest information about everything from my e-pals. (4) Secondly, I can

improve my spoken English when talking to some foreign friends in the chatting room. (5) Thirdly, my e-partners can help me perfect my communicational skills. (6) Above all, that's why I like to have a lot of e-friends.

The discourse topic of the text is the preference of having a lot of e-friends. This sample is analyzed showing extended parallel progression because the topic of sentences 2 to 4, the pronoun “I”, is the same as that of sentence 6, though the topic of sentence 5 differs as the paragraph develops. The writer, in sentence 2, explains that there are three reasons that she prefers to have a large group of e-friends. In sentence 3, the writer describes her first reason that communication with her e-pals will help her gain the latest information. In sentence 4, the writer continues to explain that she can improve her oral English with the help of some foreign friends. Finally, in the last sentence, the writer restates her preference for having many e-friends.

The following text is another example showing extended parallel progression taken from the poor writing samples.

(1) In my opinion, I prefer to have one or two close friends. (2) I think real friends should be hearty and close, so we only need one or two close friends. (3) Because giving is a serious and expensive thing, we have to be cautious to select our friends. (4) I can't build a close relationship with many people at the same time. (5) Just like the saying goes, “please everyone, please none.” (6) If I do so, I will be too tired to treat everyone well. (7) Everyone has a heart that is so fragile that everybody cannot touch it deeply and easily. (8) Therefore, I prefer to devote more of my time to understand and help to a few close friends.

The discourse topic of the text is the preference of spending time with one or two close friends. The sample is analyzed showing extended parallel progression because the topic of sentences 1, 2, 6 and 8, the pronoun *I*, is the same, though the topics of sentences 3, 4 to 5, and 7 differ as the paragraph is developed. The writer expresses, in sentence 1, her desire to have one or two close friends. In sentence 3, she describes the difficulty of having close relationships with many people. Then, in sentence 6 she continues to explain that she will feel tired if she treats everyone well. Finally, in sentence 8 she describes her preference of devoting time with close friends. Nevertheless, further examining the information surrounding the sentence topic reveals that the themes of sentence 3 and 6 are not directly related to the discourse topic of the text.

4.3 Summary of the Data Analysis

This section summarizes the discourse rhetorical features found in the beginning writers' EFL writings.

Examining the writing samples in the current study reveals six rhetorical patterns at the paragraph level. The first type is comprised of a topic sentence, the development of a body, and a concluding sentence. This type is commonly accepted by natives for writing a paragraph. Among the 30 writing samples in the current study, nine of them are found to follow the TS-Body-CS pattern. The beginning writers of this type state their preferences of choosing one or two close friends within their social circles or a lot of e-friends at the beginning of their paragraphs and then develop a body section. Finally, the writers close their paragraphs by a concluding sentence. However, only five of the writers conclude their writing by restating the main idea. The rest of the writers are found to end their paragraphs by the most important ideas they thought in the paragraph, instead of by the theme of it.

The second type of paragraph development consists of a topic sentence and the body section. There is no concluding sentence found at the end. Similar to the previous pattern, the writers express their preference of choosing friends in the beginning. Then, they proceed to develop a body section. None of the writers conclude their paragraph by one or two sentences restating the topic. In the current study, ten writing samples follow the TS-Body pattern.

The third type consists of a general introduction, a topic sentence, the development of a body, and a concluding sentence. The writers of this type start their paragraphs with background information before expressing the theme. The background information, which is considered indirectly related to the main idea of the paragraph, is called a general introduction in this study. The general introduction is similar to "*qi*" (introduction) paragraph in Chinese compositions. Four of the writing samples in the current study follow this GI-TS- Body-CS pattern. The writers of this type of writing discuss the importance of friends or the meaning of close friends and so forth in the beginning of their paragraphs. Such discussion is indirectly related to the theme, but regarded as a general introduction to the paragraph. After the general introduction, the writers put forward the main idea, develop a body section and end the paragraphs by a concluding sentence.

The fourth pattern is the Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern. In this type, a different idea, which might be opposite or irrelevant to the topic, is identified in the body section of the writing

samples. For instance, one of the participants expresses her preference of staying with one or two close friends as the topic sentence. However, in the body section, she describes how other people might prefer to be alone before the concluding sentence. This rhetorical pattern is more like the Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern. Three writing samples follow this pattern.

The fifth type consists of a general introduction, a topic sentence and the development of a body. Similar to TS-Body type, there is no concluding sentence found in this type of writing. The beginning writers of this type express in the general introduction that different people might have different ways of making friends. Then, they address their preferences in the topic sentence. After the topic sentence, they raise ideas or opinions to develop the body sections of their paragraphs. They don't generate a concluding sentence restating the main idea to achieve closure at the end of the paragraphs. In the current study, two writing samples are identified as the GI-TS-Body pattern.

The sixth type is called topic-postponed pattern. It is composed of a body section and a main idea sentence at the end. This type of writing is the least preferred style in the writing conventions of contemporary English, but it is acceptable in Chinese compositions. This writing develops a body section at the beginning of the paragraph and then postpones the main idea sentence until the end. For instance, one of the writers in this type comments on the advantages of having one or two close friends at the beginning of the paragraph and then expresses her preference of being with one or two close friends at the end. In the current study, there are two writing samples following the topic-postponed pattern.

Examining the topical structures of the good and poor writing samples reveals the following characteristics. First, the three different types of topical progression are identified in the good writing samples. After comparing the good and poor writings, it is found that the good writings exhibit more parallel and extended parallel progressions but less sequential progressions. On the contrary, the poor writings contain more sequential progressions but less parallel and extended parallel progressions. Second, there are more indirectly related sequential topics identified in the poor writing samples. There are 40 out of 107, i.e. about 37.4%, sequential topics identified as indirectly related topics in the poor writing samples. However, there is 1 out of 24, i.e. about 4 %, sequential topics identified as indirectly related topics in the good writing samples. Third, not all three topical progression types are identified in the poor writing samples. Some of the poor

writing samples lack parallel progression and some others lack extended parallel progression. One of the poor writing samples doesn't have parallel and extended parallel progression. However, in each good writing sample, parallel, sequential, and extended parallel progressions are identified.

Chapter Five Findings and Pedagogical implications

In this study, ESL writing samples are analyzed by comparing and contrasting English and Chinese rhetorical patterns in order to specify Chinese ESL writing features that appear unconventional in English expository writing. From this study, it is hoped to contribute some guidance to the ESL educators who have been wondering why the writing proficiency of Chinese ESL students does not develop as naturally as that of other ESL students whose first languages are cognate to English. In this chapter, first the findings which can be utilized for teaching will be reviewed, then the teaching implications for providing more effective instruction to Chinese students will be discussed followed by a model teaching plan, and last further research will be suggested.

5.1 Findings of this study

In this study thirty samples have been examined to identify rhetorical patterns of English expository paragraph written by ESL students. This study also focuses on the topical structure of each written piece. There are three major findings which raise instructional implications.

The first is at the rhetorical level and arises from the analysis of the rhetorical patterns within the paragraph. It proves that the Chinese rhetorical patterns influence the written discourse of first-year English majors in their English expositions. They present these two types:

(1) the topic-delayed pattern in which the themes are not stated clearly, hidden in the discourse or postponed. When examining the writing samples of the current study, 33.3% of the students are found to place their topic sentence after a general introduction, which is not directly relevant to the theme and 6.7% of the students postponed the topic sentence to the end of the paragraph. For instance, some of the students wrote, "Friends is one of the important parts of my life", "I love to make friends around the world," or "I think if my close friends understand me enough, I can trust them and tell them most of stuff in my heart," before they put forward the topic sentence of the paragraph. Initiating a topic by a general introduction, which provides the background information of a text, is a common practice in Chinese composition. However, in English composition, it is expected to open a discourse by introducing the main topic and presenting the logical arguments successively.

(2) The misuse of Chinese *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* pattern in which either the whole pattern or

the separate parts are adopted into the writings of English compositions. Three out of thirty students are discovered to have completely transformed this pattern into their writing samples. And over twenty percent of the students mistakenly copy this pattern when composing the topic sentence, the body section and the conclusion. For example, even in the nine writing samples following the TS-Body-CS pattern of contemporary English writing, four of them are found to have the concluding sentences drifting away from the topics.

The second is at the linguistic level and arises from the analysis of the topical development within the paragraph. In the current study, the topical progression patterns employed by the competent and less competent beginning learners contribute to incoherence in writing. Based on the pervasive use of parallel and extended parallel progressions in the good writing, it is found that the good writing concentrates on less sentence topics, while the poor writing develops on more sentence topics. In addition, the frequent use of sequential topics and the involvement of indirectly related sequential topics in the beginning learners' written texts are identified as important factors contributing to the problem of incoherence. The findings of sequential topics indicate two characteristics of beginning writers, especially low-level beginning writers. (1) The beginning writers are inclined to construct their texts based on their free will. The phenomenon can be observed from the students' text in which relevant and irrelevant topics are mingled. Less competent beginning writers tend to discuss too many topics in one paragraph, jumble topics in the body section, and also lose their attentions from the topics of the paragraph when writing in English. (2) The beginning writers are likely to adopt "what next" approach, termed by Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987), when composing in English. As pointed out by Scardamalia and Bereiter, the beginning writers tend to immediately write down whatever came into their mind without evaluating the appropriateness of the wording or the ideas formed during the composing process. Their attentions might be completely taken over by finding the next thing to say, or producing the next sentence relevant to the previous one. Accordingly, the viewpoints they generate might be relevant to the previous one but irrelevant to the discourse topic.

The third is at the proficiency level and arises from the understanding of the writing prompt, the organization of the whole paragraph and the distribution of the three topical structures. It is found that high-proficiency students prefer the adoption of contemporary English writing strategies and rhetorical patterns. High-proficiency beginning students are equipped with more

knowledge of the second language and have relatively richer resources to draw upon in English writing. Therefore, there are less Chinese rhetorical features revealed in their writing samples and their written products present better quality. However, low-proficiency writers, hindered by their limited knowledge of the English writing skills, tend to yield more to the influence of the first language, and therefore resort more frequently to Chinese rhetorical patterns. As they are unable to handle the written knowledge they acquire at their disposal, they are, to some extent, blind to the rhetorical differences between Chinese and English, consequently, in most cases, they fail to adapt to English writing convention and exhibit the awkward mechanical copy of Chinese writing skills, which inevitably results in poor quality.

5.2 Relevant Pedagogical Implications Suggested by Other Researchers

Concerning thesis development, some researchers strongly advocate the employment of contrastive rhetoric insights in the ESL classroom. As Leki (1991, 1992) notes, it is important for ESL teachers to make their students know of the following: English-speaking readers are convinced by facts, statistics and illustrations in arguments, they move from generalizations to specific examples and expect explicit links between main topics and subtopics.

Zeng Lisha (1994) has conducted a study of the linear development of English paragraphs. He points out a familiarity with English textual schemata is important to helping learners improve the effectiveness of their writings. Chinese learners' writing seems confusing and incoherent in paragraph structure in the native speakers' eyes because the Chinese people have different sequence of rhetoric and thought. So if the Chinese learners pay more attention to English textual schemata, they will produce writings more acceptable to the English-speaking audience.

Other linguists suggest doing exercises to improve writing. As Grabe and Kaplan (1989:277) suggested, students should be trained in identifying topic sentences in texts, and sorting supporting information from the development of topics.

Wang Ping and Liu Wenjie (2001) study the relationship between college English writing and the discrepancies of the oriental and occidental modes of thinking and negative transfer. They suggest some strategies in teaching: (1) introduce the occidental modes of thinking and compare it with the oriental one for the purpose that students will realize the influences which the modes of thinking have on writing. If the students are sensitive to and curious about the

western culture, they will find and generalize its features. Therefore, negative transfer from first language is less likely to take place; (2) Design exercises such as summary writing and text rewriting in order to help students realize the difference between Chinese and English writing in discourse features.

Classroom settings are also important in encouraging students to reflect on what they want to write and then to choose the appropriate language forms (Leki, 1990). Students should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate feedback themselves in order for it to be effective. The focus should be on idea development, clarity and coherence before grammar correction (Cumming, 1989). Feedback is of utmost importance to the writing process. Without individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement in writing may not take place. Students need feedback from teachers on the form and structure of writing. If this feedback is not part of the instructional process, then students will be disadvantaged in improving both writing and language skills (Myles 2002).

5.3 My Pedagogical Suggestions from This Study

The following lessons are designed for ESL beginning writers to learn contemporary English expository writing conventions for an academic purpose.

Lesson 1: Presenting students sample essays to clarify the differences between English and Chinese rhetorical patterns

The teacher provides a few example passages for students to understand English and Chinese rhetorical patterns more precisely. The examples should contain similar contents. This way would help students to identify the rhetorical difference more clearly. The example passages would be something like the following:

Table 5.1 The Rhetorical Differences between English and Chinese in Sample Essays

<p>谈友谊</p> <p>作者：梁实秋</p> <p>朋友居五伦之末，其实朋友是极重要的一伦。所谓友谊实即人与人之间的一种良好的关系，其中包括了解、欣赏、信任、容忍、牺牲……诸多美德。如果以友谊作基础，则其他的各种关系如父子夫妇兄弟之类均可圆满地建立起来。当然父子兄弟是无可选择的永久关系，夫妇虽有选择余地，但一经结合便以不再脱离为原则，而朋友则是聚有散可合可分的。不过，说穿了，父子夫妇兄弟都是朋友关系，不过形式性质稍有不同罢了。严格地讲，</p>	<p>On Friendship (Anonymity, 2007)</p> <p>Friendship is a kind of relationship that may accompany you all your life. The relationship with your wife or husband occurs only after you are married and runs the risks of being cut down by divorce. The relationship with your parents will be put to an end with their passing away. The relationship</p>
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凡是充分具备一个好朋友的人，他一定也是一个好父亲、好儿子、好丈夫、好妻子、好哥哥、好弟弟。反过来亦然。

我们的古圣先贤对于交友一端是甚为注重的。《论语》里面关于交友的话很多。在西方亦是如此。罗马的西塞罗有一篇著名的《论友谊》。法国的蒙田、英国的培根、美国的爱默生，都有论友谊的文章。我觉得近代的作家在这个题目上似乎不大肯费笔墨了。这是不是叔季之世友谊没落的象征呢？我不敢说。

古之所谓“刎颈交”，陈义过高，非常人所能企及。如 Damon 与 Pythias, David 与 Jonathan, 怕也只是传说中的美谈吧。就是把友谊的标准降低一些，真正能称得上朋友的还是很难得。试想一想，如有银钱经手的事，你信得过的朋友能有几人？在你蹭蹬失意或疾病患难之中还肯登门拜访乃至雪中送炭的朋友又有几人？你出门在外之际对于你的妻室弱媳肯加照顾而又不照顾得太多者又有几人？再退一步，平素投桃报李，莫逆于心，能维持长久于不坠者，又有几人？总角之交，如无特别利害关系以为维系，恐怕很难在若干年后不变成路人。富兰克林说：“有三个朋友是最忠实可靠的——老妻，老狗和现款。”妙的是这三个朋友都不是朋友。倒是亚里士多德的一句话最干脆：“我的朋友们啊！世界上根本没有朋友。”这句话近于愤世嫉俗，事实上世界上还是有朋友的，不过虽然无需打着灯笼去找，却是像沙里淘金而且还需要长时间地洗炼。一旦真铸成了友谊，便会金石同坚，永不退转。

大抵物以类聚，人以群分。臭味相投，方能永以为好。交朋友也讲究门当户对，纵不像九品中正那么严格，也自然有个界线。“同学少年多不贱，五陵裘马自轻肥”，于“自轻肥”之余还能对着往日的旧游而不把眼睛移到眉毛上边去么？汉光武容许严子陵把他的大腿压在自己的肚子上，固然是雅量可风，但是严子陵之毅然决然地归隐于富春山，则尤为知趣。朱洪武写信给他的一位朋友说：“朱元璋作了皇帝，朱元璋还是朱元璋……”话自管说得很漂亮，看看他后来之诛戮功臣，也就不免令人心悸。人的身心构造原是一样的，但是一入宦途，可能发生突变。孔子说，无友不如己者。我想一来只是指品学而言，二来只是说不要结交比自己坏的，并没有说一定要我们去高攀。友谊需要两造，假如双方都想结交比自己好的，那就永远交不起来。好像是王尔德说过，“一个男人与一个女人之间是不可能存在友谊的。”就一般而论，这话是对的，因为如有深厚的友谊，那友谊容易变质，如果不是心心相印，那又算不得是友谊。过犹不及，那分际是很难把握的。忘年交倒是可能的。弥衡年未二十，孔融年已五十，便相交友，这样的例子史不绝书。但似乎以同性为限。并

with your children begins late in the middle of your life. You have an association with your colleagues, but it is always changing, because one day, one or another colleague may disappear suddenly out of your routine by changing jobs and you may similarly jump out of your colleagues' lives. You have connection with your neighbors only for the sake of living in the same neighborhood and it will break down when you or one of your neighbors moves. Only friendship can be everlasting and steady. You may have friends as early as infancy. No matter whether you are married or not, no matter where you live and work, your friends are your friends. It is not based on bloodline. It is not absolutely an objective social relationship which befalls you. It is rooted in the desires and feelings derived from social experiences. It relies on your intention. In my opinion, that is the social nature of friendship. Making friends is to meet people's varying needs. People have all kinds of desires. To achieve progress, you make friends with those who surpass you. To enjoy freedom, equality and mutual respect, you make friends with those who are of equal stature with you. On behalf of your vanity and relaxation you make friends with the inferior. To you, some friends are fun-loving, some give encouragement, some offer knowledge, and others help you to find your own identity. You expose your worries and weakness to some friends, while you show only your merits, your bright side, in the face of other friends. Before your friends, you may act as a supervisor, a learned brother, a lovely child, a gentleman or a playmate. In a word, friendship helps you to be a full person. So friendship can

<p>且以我所知,忘年交之形成固有赖于兴趣之相近与互相之器赏,但年长的一方面多少需要保持一点童心,年幼的一方面多少需要显著几分老成。老气横秋则令人望而生畏,轻薄佻则人且避之若浼。单身的人容易交朋友,因为他的情感无所寄托,漂泊流离之中最需要有一个一倾积愤的对象,可是等他红袖添香稚子候门的时候,心境就不同了。“君子之交淡若水”,因为淡所以不腻,才能持久。“与朋友交,久而敬之。”敬就是保持距离,也就是防止过分的亲昵。不过“狎而敬之”是很难的。最要注意的是,友谊不可透支,总要保留几分。Mark Twain说:“神圣的友谊之情,其性质是如此的甜蜜、稳定、忠实、持久。可以终身不渝,如果不开口向你借钱。”这真是慨而言之。朋友本有通财之谊,但这是何等微妙的一件事!世上最难忘的事是借出去的钱,一般人为最倒霉的事莫过于还钱。一牵涉到钱,恩怨便很难清算得清楚,多少成长中的友谊都被这阿堵物所戕害!</p> <p>规劝乃是朋友中间应有之义,但是谈何容易。名利场中,沆瀣一气,自己都难以明辨是非,哪有余力规劝别人?而在对方则又良药苦口忠言逆耳,谁又愿意别人批他的逆鳞?规劝不可当着第三者的面前行之,以免伤他的颜面,不可在他情绪不宁时行之,以免逢彼之怒。孔子说:“忠告而善道之,不可则止。”我总以为劝善规过是友谊的消极的作用。友谊之乐是积极的。只有神仙和野兽才喜欢孤独,人是要朋友的。“假如一个人独自升天,看见宇宙的大观,群星的美丽,他并不能感到快乐,他必要找到一个人向他述说他所见的奇景,他才能快乐。”共享快乐,比共受患难,应该是更正常的友谊中的趣味。</p>	<p>benefit every individual and thus complete society which is composed of numerous individuals. That is the very social function of friendship.</p> <p>I hold the point of view that friendship also has its historic nature and functions. Friendship is created since it is needed and lasts until it fulfills its tasks. If you are obsessed by a problem, a certain friend may come into your help until the problem is solved and then will be somewhat estranged from you. Friendship is produced because you want a helper and he is willing to be a helper. Friendship is estranged because it has served both of your purposes. The fact that a friend can become an enemy is demonstrated by the historic nature of friendship. So when a friend drifts apart from you, don't be sad. What you should do is to cherish the friendship that once existed between you and your friend, and be grateful to him.</p> <p>Life is a bouquet, friendship is flower.</p>
<p>Essay A in Chinese</p>	<p>Essay B in English</p>

Both essays are written in expository styles in accordance with respective writing convention. The teacher could use such examples to encourage students to judge which one is preferred. Then, students could discuss what goes wrong if Chinese pattern is adapted to English pattern.

Explicit examples are helpful for students in conceptualizing the differences in writing style more clearly. Explaining new concepts without detailed examples always have some risk of misleading students. For example, some EFL students are not familiar with the term “exposition”. Some might have not understood the TBC pattern as the teacher expects. Showing clear examples can reinforce students’ understanding of the first lesson.

Lesson 2: Explaining the TBC pattern in more detail as differentiated from the pattern of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*

The teacher explains first the structure of TBC using the chart (as it is previously designed in Table 2.1). It is crucial to check students' understanding of the differences between those patterns. This could be done by assigning students to write or simply asking them the similarities and differences of the two patterns. Here students can point out each feature of the patterns in an example like the ones in Table xx.

In this lesson the teacher needs to help students understand the following concepts: (1) In TBC type, the occurrence of topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph is appreciated. (2) Both the topic and supporting subtopics should be relevant to the theme of a paragraph. (3) Logic and credibility are created by the usage of cohesive ties, evidence and reliable information.

Lesson 3: Assigning students to write TBC pattern paragraph

Ask students to write a short exposition of one paragraph in TBC pattern as a reminder of the points mentioned in the first two lessons.

Lesson 4: Evaluating assigned exposition

Let students evaluate each other's writing, adopting the criteria of English expository writing.

Lesson 5: Applying topical structure analysis into longer expository essay writing

Bring one essay selected from students' samples and let all the students read it. Teach students the topical structure analysis and together make a coherence diagram using the model essay. Then, encourage students to analyze topical structure and make coherence diagrams using another sample essay. After students have made out a coherence diagram, check their perception of essay writing.

Lesson 6: Assigning students to examine their own essays

This lesson aims at exploring students' consciousness of their writing style and expectations of expository writing. First students are encouraged to identify the topic development of their own essays and make coherence diagrams. Then students are required to revise the discourse errors in their own essays.

Lesson 7: Introducing the impersonal mode and the effective use of cohesive markers

This lesson is an extensive one in revising texts. First introduce students to the features of

impersonal mode by using model sentences such as:

(a) When I was teaching at the university, I always had too much curriculum to cover in a limited course period.

(b) The curriculum that needed to be covered at the university was always overloaded for a limited course period.

Then, ask the students to change the sentences that contain the personal mode to the impersonal.

Lesson 8: Teaching the effective use of cohesive markers

This is another extensive lesson in revising texts. First, provide students with a list of cohesive markers that could fit the English pattern for organizing a text in a specific type, such as sequential progression, parallel progression, cause/effect, problem/solution, comparison or collection of description (Carrell, 1985). Using model sentences to teach students how the clarity of text can be changed by using cohesive markers. Students practice the effective use of cohesive markers by editing the model sentence first together with a instructor, then by themselves.

Lesson 9: Feedback to students' texts

Check students' first and final drafts and give them feedback on how well the texts have been revised or which features still need to be revised. This could be done as a personal feedback comment or class discussion.

5.4 Further Study Implications

All the analyses of EFL writing in this study are done through the eyes of a native Chinese teacher in order to detect negative rhetorical influence in the subject student's writing pattern. One complicating factor is that the unconventional features referred to are identified as such only on the basis of published descriptions of such features. Further research could be done by having native English teachers identify the expository features found in this study and judge to what degree they are unconventional. Although they are described as unconventional or violating the expectation of native speakers by Kaplan (1966), Kaplan and Grabe (2002), Matalene (1985), Mohan and Lo (1985), Scollon and Scollon and Kirkpatrick (2000) in the published literature, it remains to be seen how native speakers react to these features. Further research questions should involve how unconventional Chinese EFL features actually are to native speakers of English.

Some of these unconventional features could appear even in texts written by native speakers

of English. For example, a pilot study shows a low level of familiarity with formal academic writing even among native speakers of English. In Anthony and Harna's study (1996), fifty percent of native English speakers (including one teacher) chose the text written in narrative style as a good expository essay. In addition, there was no consistency in the identification of the best expository passage. These results indicate confusion about the expository features of writing amongst native speakers.

Further research may be required to examine the criteria which native speakers of English use for identifying good expository writing. Further research could apply this study's method of analysis to EFL students' texts from other universities to examine whether the EFL features found in this study would be commonly found in other EFL students' texts. Also, examining EFL writing development along with explicit instructions of rhetorical convention would show the effect of instruction on the developmental process. These results could then be compared to writing from Chinese students who have not been taught rhetorical structures. As an extensive study, comparing texts written by international ESL students and EFL students in other oriental countries such as Japan and Korea would be interesting because the features of their English writing could be different due to education or cultural backgrounds.

5.5 Conclusion

The main findings of this study direct our attention to the importance of the rhetorical dimension in EFL text development. This does not deny that the linguistic level of proficiency is basic to the composing of a text. The grammatical mistakes not dealt with in this study are often the most obvious problem in EFL writings. Yet the linguistic problems of EFL writing such as grammatical and syntactical mistakes are expected to improve along with the overall improvement of a writer's proficiency. Moreover, linguistic problems are relatively easily detected by any native speaker. However, it is the rhetorical level of proficiency overlaying the level of linguistic skill that most influences EFL writings. EFL problems at the rhetorical level are more difficult to identify. In order to identify this type of writing problem, knowing the characteristics of the writer's native rhetorical pattern as well as English rhetorical patterns is required. However, it may be not so easy to become familiarized with all types of EFL students' first language rhetorical patterns. EFL educators should explain rhetorical conventions in English more explicitly in order to acquaint EFL students with the differences in rhetorical conventions

between English and their first language. Without explicit instruction, the rhetorical conventions of English expository writing are very difficult for EFL students to learn.

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