Intercultural Rhetoric in IELTS-Style Argumentative Essays: Analyzing Moves and Cultural Influences Among English and Non-English Majors in a Chinese University

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Abstract

This research is on intercultural rhetoric of IELTS style argumentation essays between English major and non-English major students in a China's university. The study uses a combination of genre and thematic approaches to examine essay organization in order to gain insights into the effect of cultural and education on writing style. Comparing genres across the two student groups shows how they use moves in their essays and the order of these moves. Additional enlightenment is provided by thematic analysis towards high school education, Chinese language and English teachers and a small effect of university major on essays writing. The results suggest that English major's writing is greatly conditioned by the pedagogical approaches, as well as the academic culture of Chinese education system, whereas non-English major's writing is more affected by the balanced positioning from their high school. This study has implications for ESL/EFL pedagogy where culturally sensitive teaching strategies are necessitated to handle diversity of educational backgrounds of students. There is room for further studies in intercultural rhetoric in ESL/EFL settings, in relation to pedagogy and students' performance in writing.

Keywords: Intercultural rhetoric, IELTS essays, English language education, Chinese university students, Argumentative writing

1. Introduction

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) refers to an exam that was designed by three organizations namely British Council, IDP Education Limited and Cambridge Examination Limited together. This is where the IELTS test comes into picture which was created for foreign students aspiring for admissions into English speaking universities and colleges that teach in English language. IELTS test is also used to enhance international movement of people with immigration motives or improve their careers (British Council, 2023).

There are two forms under which the IELTS test can be conducted: IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training. Both tests encompass four sections: listening, reading, writing and speaking. However, it should be noted that there is a distinction in writing and reading for IELTS General Training and IELTS Academic. IELTS Academic deals with issues related to academic or work environment. However, IELTS General Training touches on subjects related to daily affairs (IDP IELTS Australia, 2023). For both categories of IELTS exam, there are two tasks but there are different types of questions depending on each case. In task one of IELTS Academic, test takers have twenty minutes to compose with no less than 150 words an essay based on given graphic and diagrams. For the writing task two, participants are required to write a minimum of about 250 words essay, presenting and arguing points in respect of a certain subject within forty minutes (British Council, 2023). Most importantly, this task involves a specific type of writing that is very crucial in the academic world, namely presenting ideas in a structured style.

1.1 Research Significance

This paper presents an analysis of Writing Task Two of the IELTS Academic test and how it

is structured based on the argumentative essay genre. Writing of a well organized argumentative essay also becomes an indicator test for the ability to think critically, culture general knowledge as well as all other academic qualities. Writing argumentative essays in IELTS Academic remains challenging for ESL learners, and even more so for Chinese learners of English.

This research is significant in many ways. The first is related to the intricate interaction between the academic rhetoric and language proficiency by the Chinese learners of English. Most students who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds or non-western education system have never encountered these standards as they were formed in a western rhetorical tradition and therefore sound unfamiliar and hard to comprehend. This research presents unique perspectives on how Chinese students adjust to some of the English as a second language (ESL) writing practices by scrutinizing argumentative essays of English and non-English majors in a Chinese university.

In addition, the outcomes of this research are relevant to the instruction of English writing in China. It is critical for creating a culturally pertinent pedagogy to comprehend what are the peculiarities of writing of Chinese students. Accordingly, this study provides meaningful suggestions on how teachers in China can design and deliver language content to facilitate the acquisition of competencies in academic writing by students. Moreover, the article is valuable for IELTS preparation and assessment for Chinese learners. This underscores the importance of IELTS preparation courses that take into account language proficiency, as well as different writing styles and cultural nuances.

Lastly, the study has an important aspect on future improvement of the educational performance of Chinese speakers of English in global learning environments. This study provides assistance in pinpointing the particular requirements of Chinese students which help in enhancing their skills in academic writing proficiency that acts as an imperative facet for academic success. This study highlights the peculiarities and strengths of Chinese learners as well as dismantling obstacles to academic success and helping them integrate into international academic environments.

1.2 Literature Review

Intercultural Rhetoric plays an important role in ESL and EFL (English as a foreign language) education. Contrastive Rhetoric into Intercultural Rhetoric constitutes one of the key turns in this area. This development was discussed by Li (2008), who stressed the importance of incorporating a more holistic, qualitative approach for non-English writers. This change was reflective of a global perspective on cultural aspects of ESL writing which expanded beyond contrastive rhetoric constraints. Likewise, Kaplan (1966) stressed on the influence of cultural rhetoric upon the foreign student's pedagogy. His seminal contribution has been recognized as vital for understanding the role played by cultural thought structures in L2 acquisition. Belcher (2014) reviewed both the productive and problematic features of international relations. The review indicated a brief background on challenges and advantages of teaching intercultural rhetoric, and further its significance within a theory development and classroom practice.

There have been many improvements in the methodology of this field. The tenets of intercultural rhetoric applied by Ene et al. (2019) in investigating the translingual practices of postgraduate L2 writers revealed that a blend of linguistic and cultural elements influences writings. Li & Liu (2019) investigated how teaching Chinese EFL students to incorporate outlines into their essay writing helped them understand English academic writing. McIntosh et al.(2017) elaborated on why intercultural rhetoric was applicable in English for Academic purposes writing studies based on the new norms of academic literacy in an increasingly multilingual globe.

Some of these studies focused on cultural influences on rhetoric. Huh and Lee (2019) uncovered the influence of cultural assumptions on EFL student's culture-related rhetorical templates when writing an argument. Wei's study (2020) was a research about mental-awareness related to linguistic transfer between Chinese learners of English as a foreign language. Yao (2014) discussed Chinese students' writing in IELTS revealing the role of culture and language on cohesion and coherence issues.

In terms of American student views on the use of evidence in Chinese yilunwen writing and contrasts between cultural practices of rhetoric. In their article published in 2020, Zhang and Zhan addressed the notion of voice in spoken English of Chinese students and rejected deterministic viewpoints on cultural impact and proposed an alternative vision of voice as interrelated with language and culture dynamics.

These reviewed literature emphasized the intricacy and fluidity of intercultural rhetoric in ESL/EFL settings. It emphasizes the need for specific instructional strategies that account for the cultural and language differences in a classroom setting. The transition from contrastive rhetoric to intercultural rhetoric is an indication that culture is not fixed but adaptable and context matters. It is still relevant for teachers and researchers to explore how best to teach writing in a multilingual, multicultural society.

1.3 Research Gap

Literature review concerning intercultural rhetoric in ESL/EFL education provides an understanding of complex processes existing for various aspects connected with interculturalism in educational contexts. On the other hand, it highlights major research deficiency particularly on Chinese learners of English in universities. Although previous studies focused on the effect of cultural and linguist background onto ESL writing and offered recommendations for teaching strategies, there exists gaps of research that investigate the comparative rhetorical strategies applied for English major and non-English major students studying in a Chinese university setting. It is essential for analyzing the appropriateness of certain instructional strategies that are directed towards this particular category of students.

Additionally, the literature review reveals that there are little attempts to identify and evaluate the impacts caused by cultural disparities concerning the organization process of IELTS argumentative model within university learners, including between English majors and other students. In general, most studies have addressed the effects on ESL writing but did not look

into a specific analysis of an argumentative essay within the context of IELTS. Omission of the role of cultural background, discipline and essay structure is a noticeable gap in essay writing researches that makes researchers doubt in what way these factors influence essay's structure and organization. Filling up this gap might be helpful in determining effective ways of improving teaching and learning in various field topics as well as different cultures regarding ESL writing education.

1.4 Research Questions

Considering the research gaps, two research questions are put forward:

1) What moves are employed by English majors and non-English majors in a Chinese university when composing an IELTS-style argumentative essay?

2) How do cultural differences between English majors and non-English majors in a Chinese university affect the organization of IELTS-style argumentative essays?

2. Method

A multifaceted approach has been adopted towards taking this aspect into account. This will entail a strong survey process that uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This involved studying argumentative essays with related interviews for gaining further information about student understandings and their writing processes.

2.1 Data

This research's foundation is formed by the data that was gathered for this study, which helps understand what influences a student's argumentative writing competency level when it comes to a non-English academic environment. Firstly, a corpus of argumentative essays written in response to an IELTS style text, and second, interviews with the essay writers. The next sub-section will discuss the features of the essay corpus such as the criteria for selecting the essays, the kind of prompts used, and the demography of the essay writers.

2.1.1 Corpus

This research analyzes argumentative essays written as part of the International English Language Testing Systems (IELTS), which is a highly popularized standardized test to validate a candidate's level of English language proficiency. The argumentative essay is defined by its purpose which is to persuade the reader of correctness of a central statement (Hyland, 1990). In this research, an argumentative essay prompt is excerpted from Writing Task 2 of Test 4 of IELTS ACADEMIC 18. There are two types of IELTS tests, namely IETLS for academic purposes and IELTS for general training. The IELTS writing prompt adopted in this research is the academic type that aims to test a test taker's English language abilities in an academic environment. Students from non-English speaking countries are requested to take IELTS test for academic purposes if they apply to study in English speaking countries. Students can take either a paper-based test or an internet-based test, both of which are consistent in terms of paper content and difficulty. The IELTS writing score requirements vary depending on the requirements of different universities and programs. However,

generally speaking, a score of 6 or 6.5 is the basic requirement for entry into tertiary education.

In this research, the data is from 30 sophomore students in a Chinese university, 15 of whom are English majors and the other half of whom are non-English majors. The students are asked to write an academic IELTS-style essay.

According to IELTS Writing Task 2 Band Descriptors, a score of 6 in writing task 2 means the examinee addresses the main part of the prompt and uses an appropriate format. A stance directly linked to the prompt shall be presented although the conclusion drawn may be unclear, unjustified or repetitive. Main ideas are pertinent, but a few of them may be not sufficiently elaborated or clear, and there might be some less relevant or inadequate supporting arguments and evidence (IELTS, 2023).

After essays submissions, the researcher analyzes them on the basis of the rubrics of IELTS test and make a genre analysis. Undergraduates in China are potential candidates to take IELTS test. The purpose of the essay writing is to help the students improve their writing proficiency.

2.1.2 Interview

The interview part of this study was designed to complement the genre analysis of the essays by providing insights, into the students writing processes and perceptions. The researcher, with the assistance of Prof. Han and Prof. Zhao, conducted the data collection for the interviews. They collected essays from 30 sophomore students with half being majors and the other half non English majors.

After collecting the essays the researcher conducted interviews to gain an understanding of how students approach writing IELTS style essays. The interview questions were specifically created to address the research questions and explore how educational and cultural backgrounds impact students writing styles. Here are the questions asked in the interviews;

1) Can you please explain why you structured your essay based on the given question prompt?

2) Do you think that your education in China influences how you structure your IELTS style essay?

3) Do you believe that being an English (or English) major affects how you write your IELTS essay? If so, in what ways? If not why?

To ensure clarity and understanding, these questions were provided, in both English and Mandarin Chinese during the interviews. The interviews were conducted using Tencent Meeting, a platform developed by a Chinese high-tech company known as Tencent. Four students were interviewed for this study consisting of two majors and two non English majors. The interviews were conducted through sessions, where the students were encouraged to respond in their preferred language. Initially the English majors answered in English. For explanations or clarifications, several follow-up questions were asked in Mandarin Chinese,

and the interviewees switched to Mandarin Chinese. On the other hand, the non English majors primarily provided their responses in Mandarin Chinese. To ensure analysis and accessibility of data all interviews were transcribed. For responses given in Mandarin Chinese, translations into English were provided.

In addition to the interviews email interviews were conducted with 26 remaining students. 13 majors and 13 non English majors. These email interviews involved written responses to the set of questions. Translations into English were again provided but these data is not under discussion in this paper.

By utilizing both sessions and email correspondence for data collection this study aims to gather a qualitative dataset that offers valuable insights, into how students approach writing IELTS style argumentative essays.

2.2 Analysis

This research's analysis part is focused on dividing and explaining the collected information so as for one to detect hidden patterns, relationships, and insight. It is imperative to include this stringent review in order to meet the research objectives as well as answer the asked question. It is divided into two primary components: genre analysis and thematic analysis. Every one of these analytic approaches affords a separate viewing point for comprehending the issue at hand in totality.

2.2.1 Genre Analysis

As research tool, genre analysis has become a key component in understanding different kinds of texts in various interactive settings. Bhatia (1991) considers genre analysis as a powerful investigatory tool that enables us to identify the link between form and meaning and dramatically improves knowledge on language specific cognitive organization of information. These notions may be useful for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) professionals while constructing activities adapted to meet certain communicational aims within special academic and work environments. By systematic analysis of the text, it will be possible to reveal commonality of norms and variety. This analytical process gives light to the intrinsic characters of texts, as well as the sociocultural and institutional forces that surround and are surrounded by these genres.

Intercoding was also included as a critical research method for maintaining the validity and credibility of the data analysis. The intercoder reliability is an indicator for consensus on identical coded data which denotes the extent to which different researchers classify data uniformly (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). It aims at reducing personal biases, improve data reliability and strengthen the trustworthiness of the research outcomes.

The intercoder in the research is a college professor, Prof. Huang, who teaches in the English Language Department of a Chinese university. Additionally, she has a master's degree in English teaching and education. This allows for a deeper and broader inquiry into the research due to having a complete and complex perception of the facts given that she has strong professional qualifications and her education background.

The procedure followed by intercoder entailed copying what the author went through during the coding process. Specifically, Table-1,2,3 was given to the intercoder and 20% of the data (six essays) were analyzed according to the moves in Table-1. The intercoder did not have an access to the author's results and worked independently. At completion, intercoder's findings was matched with that of author to assess that it was overall a percentage concurrence of 80 and above. This would prove that a successful intercoding was achieved. The author and intercoder would meet and discuss, so as to agree on a common point that suited both.

2.2.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis involves detecting and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire, 2017). Braun & Clarke postulated the six-phase coding framework for thematic analysis, including familiarization of data, generation of codes, combining codes into themes, reviewing themes, determine significance of themes, reporting of findings (2013). This method of analysis is especially valuable because it allows researchers to explore a range of data types, including interviews, text based content and even media materials.

In the initial stage, the researcher transcribed the four interviews conducted online and translated the Chinese part of the transcripts into English. When the preparation work was done, the researcher went through the transcripts and asked Prof. Zhao to check the validation of the transcription and translation. In the next step, the researcher coded the data in the interview, highlighting the phrases and sentences with high frequency and coming up with the initial codes. Next, themes were made on the basis of the extracted codes. In the next stage, the researcher reviewed the coding and in order to validate the codes and themes, Prof. Han was invited to perform the intercoding and the results were consistent with the researcher. In the subsequent stage, the researcher defined and named the themes to better answer the research questions. The results were presented in the results section of the paper.

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The present paper follows ethical standards to protect the integrity of the subjects' personality and preserve their fundamental rights. Written informed consent was received from each participant who completed a detailed consent form that was also made available in both English and Mandarin. The form detailed the purpose of the study, the protocol, potential risks, benefits and ensured that the participants gave informed consent freely. Personal information of the participants will be kept confidential and it will be indicated using pseudonym for any publication relevant while personally sensitive information shall be stored in trusty records that will serve for research purpose only. In addition, this reduces the risk and highlights the right for participants to leave the study anytime they please without incurring penalties of any kind. Nevertheless, the study's design ensures that participants remain free of financial pressure at any given time. This ensures ongoing confidence by explicitly outlining prospective uses of the data by the researcher. These ethical considerations are maintained by the principal investigator and co-collaborates who also give clear contacts of the participants to raise questions or concerns. Such an approach allows for respect towards the participants' autonomy and preservation of ethical integrity throughout

the study.

3. Results

In this section, genre analysis results and thematic analysis results will be presented.

3.1 Genre Analysis Results

To address the research questions, genre moves IELTS essays, obligatory and optional moves in IELTS essays and sequence of moves in IELTS essays are described in this section.

Table 1. Genre Moves of IELTS Essays

Moves (EM)	Purpose	Content	Language Markers
Lead-in (L)	To start the essay	Introduction	"With the increase of the..."
			"With regard to..., I consider that..."
			"Today, ... problem is becoming a big trouble to the government for every country in the world."
Thesis Statement (TS)	To present your stance on the topic	Thesis statement of their stance	"I think there is a huge extent that..."
			"In my opinion, the disadvantages of ... outweigh the advantages."
			"In my opinion,..."
			"I believe that..."
			"As far as I am concerned,..."
			"In my view,..."
			"This problem is definitely a bad thing."
			"As far as I'm concerned, in the context of..., the benefits outweigh the disadvantages for society."
			"In my opinion,..."
One Side Argument (OSA)	To present one side of the argument	Argument	"First, it's a potential to..."
			"First of all,..."
			"Secondly,..."
			"In addition,..."

			"Last but not least,..."
			"For one thing,..."
			"The benefits of...are manifold."
			"What`s more,..."
			"First of all,..."
			"First and for most,..."
			"Second,..."
Other Side Argument (OTSA)	Taking another side to the one the writer is putting forward.	Counter argument	"By contrast, ..."
			"Another aspect that...is..."
			"...has many drawbacks."
			"However, to a certain extent, there are also some benefits of..."
			"For another,..."
			"I think the ... is still a serious problem, which has many disadvantages."
			"On the contrary,..."
			"While... brings the above benefits, there are also some challenges and problems."
			"On the other hand,..."
Illustration (I)	To explain your point	Examples	"For example,..."
Final answer (FA)	To make a conclusion of the essay	Conclusion	"But overall,..."
			"To sum up,..."
			"All in all,....."
			"Therefore,..."
			"To conclude,..."
			"In short,..."
			"Anyway, ..."
			"In a word,..."
			"Overall,..."
			"In general,..."

According to Table 1, the researcher will undertake a genre analysis by examining six distinct moves: Lead-in (L), Thesis Statement (TS), One Side Argument (OSA), Other Side Argument (OTSA), Illustration (I), and Final Answer (FA). An argumentative essay contains these six moves which constitute its structure. The lead-in is one of the most important elements for any argumentative paper since it is meant to engage the audience, give them enough background on the topic of discussion, and prepare them for the main arguments that are presented later on. Thesis statement provides direction to readers; it helps them understand what the essay is about. One side of argument presents relevant information and justification for the thesis thus making the debate complete on both sides. Nonetheless, the other side argument intensifies the dialogue, enabling it to go deep, involving various perspectives. The use of illustrations reinforces the claims in addition to providing tangible proof thus increasing the credibility of the subject. At last, the final response brings closure, strengthens the thesis, giving the audience important conclusions or points to reflect on after having gone through the talk.

Table 2. Obligatory and optional moves in IELTS essays

Moves	Lead-in (L)	Thesis Statement (TS)	One Side Argument (OSA)	Other Side Argument (OTSA)	Illustration (I)	Final answer (FA)
EM1	0	1	1	1	1	0
EM2	1	1	1	1	1	1
EM3	0	1	1	0	0	1
EM4	0	1	1	1	1	1
EM5	0	1	1	0	1	1
EM6	0	1	1	0	1	1
EM7	0	1	1	0	1	1
EM8	0	1	1	0	1	1
EM9	0	0	1	1	1	1
EM10	0	1	1	0	0	1
EM11	1	1	1	1	1	1
EM12	1	1	1	1	1	1
EM13	1	1	1	1	1	1
EM14	1	1	1	0	0	1
EM15	1	1	1	0	0	1
NEM1	0	1	1	1	1	1
NEM2	1	1	1	1	1	0
NEM3	1	1	1	0	0	1
NEM4	0	1	1	1	1	1
NEM5	1	1	1	0	1	1
NEM6	1	1	1	1	1	1
NEM7	1	1	1	1	1	1
NEM8	0	1	1	0	1	0
NEM9	1	1	1	0	1	0

NEM10	0	1	1	0	1	0
NEM11	1	1	1	1	1	1
NEM12	1	0	0	0	1	0
NEM13	1	1	1	1	1	1
NEM14	1	1	1	1	1	1
NEM15	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total	17	27	29	15	25	23
Obilgatory/ Optional Moves	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional

We can see from Table 2 distinct patterns in the essay writing styles of these two groups. Both groups exhibit a commonality in their approach, particularly in the inclusion of thesis statements and one-side arguments, which are almost universally present in the essays of both cohorts.

However, variations emerge in other areas. Specially, NEM students demonstrate a higher inclination to incorporate lead-ins, other-side arguments, illustrations, and final answers in their essays compared to their EM counterparts. This indicates a more comprehensive approach to essay writing among NEM students, characterized by a balanced presentation of arguments and a clear emphasis on conclusion. EM students, while consistent in presenting their thesis and primary arguments, exhibit less frequency in offering counterarguments and illustrations, and their essays are less likely to feature a distinct final answer.

It is noteworthy that all the moves are categorized as 'Optional', although some appear almost indispensable. Specifically, the Thesis Statement and One Side Argument are used 27 and 29 times, respectively, suggesting their near-obligatory role in the students' writing. The moves L and OTSA are the least frequent, with occurrences of 17 and 15 respectively. Their similar low counts suggest that they are truly optional in the students' writing approach.

According to Appendix 2, the agreement percentage between the intercoder and the author stands at 97%, surpassing the 80% threshold, thus confirming the results as credible and validated. The sole point of contention between the two parties centers around the inclusion of an illustration in the sample essay of sample one. Despite discussions, the author maintains a stance contrary to the intercoder's perspective. Consequently, the findings documented in Table-2 are retained, reflecting the author's assessment.

Appendix 2 reveals that from the viewpoint of a Chinese student, only TS and OSA are obligatory elements in IELTS style essay writing. Other components like L, OTSA, and I are optional. Notably, in some instances, FA is not present. The result contradicts the researcher's for the reason that the sample size is not big enough for the intercoder. Therefore, the researcher adopts the original results.

Table 3. Sequence of moves in IELTS essays

Text	Sequences of moves
EM1	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I
EM2	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
EM3	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM4	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
EM5	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM6	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM7	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM8	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM9	OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM10	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM11	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
EM12	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
EM13	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
EM14	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
EM15	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM1	TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM2	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I
NEM3	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I^ FA
NEM4	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM5	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM6	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM7	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM8	TS ^ OSA ^ I
NEM9	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I
NEM10	TS ^ OSA ^ I
NEM11	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM12	L^I
NEM13	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM14	L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA
NEM15	L ^ OSA ^ I

Table 3 delineates the sequence of moves in IELTS essays by English majors and non-English majors adopt in structuring their essays. As can be seen from Table 3, a variety of approaches are adopted to arrange the sequence of moves. Basically, the researcher finds that two sequences prominently stand out due to their high frequency. The sequences "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA" and "TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA" both recur five times. Following these, another sequence, "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA", is observed three times. Two other sequences, "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA" and "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I", are seen twice. The rest of the sequences are unique, appearing only once.

Appendix 3 exhibits a discrepancy between the intercoder and the author concerning the sequences of movements of information EM1. This confrontation is in consistency with the findings in Appendix 2, in which the intercoder did no longer perceive the instance factors. However, echoing the writer's assessment of the intercoder's consequences in Appendix 2, this divergence can be ignored, and the writer's findings can be retained.

3.2 Thematic Analysis Results

This part discusses the thematic analysis of interviews done amongst four undergraduates, two majored in English while the others studied the non-English courses. These interviews were used to emerge systematically with the subsequent themes which appear in the following tables. The purpose of this analysis is to give an insight into the issues, opinions, and views expressed by the individuals.

The Appendix Four contains the detailed discussions for the interviews on themes of interest, thereby enabling the reader to understand them.

Table 4. Themes of English major interviews

Themes	Excerpts
Theme one: Influence of Chinese education on essay structure	"Yes, I think so. Writing teachers often require us to write in a fixed structure..." (Interviewee A) "Yes, I believe the education I received in China has impacted the structure of this essay..." (Interviewee B)
Theme Two: Influence of being an English major	"Yes, I believe being an English major does influence the way I write my essay..." (Interviewee A) "Okay, so as an English major, ...? Yes." (Interviewer and Interviewee B)
Theme Three: Influence of Chinese teachers in the Foreign Language School	"I usually writing my English writings in a fixed structure from my writing on lessons." (Interviewee A) "The Chinese teachers who teach English." (Interviewee B)

The central themes derived from student interviews are presented in Table 4 above. From this table, we can discern three primary themes that emerged prominently: how Chinese education affects essay structure, being an English major and how teachers in the foreign language school influences the English writing.

As for the first theme, interviewee A, and interviewee B highlight the important role that Chinese education played in shaping the structure of their essays. For instance, interviewee A, mentions that writing teachers would require them to follow a certain order as this would form part of the standard model ingrained in them through their teacher training. This is as noted by interviewee B who admits that her education in China shaped how she put down words in their essay. In this respect, by examining the influence of Chinese education on student behavior when writing an essay, it may turn out that students tend to adhere to a formulaic and systematic pattern.

In relation to the second theme, especially Interviewee B notes the impact being an English major has had on their essays. Specifically, they say that their majors improve one's word bank, vocabularies and some writing discipline. Interviewee A does directly discuss with this subject matter, thus suggesting that the English major affects her writing structure.

Thirdly, the impact of the Chinese teachers on the Foreign Language School. Firstly, both the interviewers admit that such educators influence their writing. The interviewee A discusses how she first learned to write in a prescriptive form which was probably taught at her language class. On the other hand, Interviewee B simply refers to "the Chinese teachers who teach English" highlighting this key influence on her style of writing an essay.

In Table 4, thematic analysis derived from the interviews with English majors showed that there is tendency for structural writing processes, mostly based on Chinese educational practices and teachings of English language educators.

Table 5. Themes of Non-English major interviews

Themes	Explanatory Text
Theme One: Influence of High School Education on Essay Structure	"It might be influenced by my experience in high school, where we were taught to write essays with a balanced perspective, which led me to adopt the four-paragraph structure." (Interviewee C)
	"I think it does have some influence. In terms of the writing education I received from childhood to adulthood, my teachers emphasized the importance of a fixed essay structure..." (Interviewee D)
Theme Two: Influence of Chinese Language and	"Sure, I think both my Chinese language and English teachers had an influence. They often emphasized presenting a balanced view in argumentative essays..."

English Teachers	(Interviewee C)
	"I think all these teachers have an influence because I chose political science and history as my high school subjects. Teachers in these subjects emphasize how to write essays with a structured approach. Both Chinese language and English essays also emphasize structure." (Interviewee D)
Theme Three: Limited Influence from University Major	"Sure, my major is Food Safety and Nutrition. I don't think my major has much influence on the structure of my argumentative essays..." (Interviewee C)
	"I believe that my major, which is Food Hygiene and Nutrition, does not have a significant influence because our major primarily focuses on food nutrition and involves a lot of chemistry and biology knowledge..." (Interviewee D)

The analysis of data extracted using Table-5 shows clear themes about the impacts of essay writing for non-English majors. These themes are as follows: the influence of high school education on essay structure, the influence of Chinese language and English teachers, and the limited influence of the university major.

The influence of high school education on essay structure can be seen clearly in Interviewee C and D's responses. The four-paragraph structure was adopted after a high school experience where they were taught how to write balanced essays. Likewise, Interviewee D points out that she was trained on how to write in fixed essay format from an early age of her life as this is what they were being taught at school and this must have an impact of her response to essay writing now.

The Chinese language and English language teachers were the major players according to the two interviewees. Interviewee C noted how both Chinese language and English teachers stress on balanced arguments within the argumentative essays. With this in mind, interviewee D added teachers of political science and history who also stressed that a structured approach to essay writing was reinforced across different subjects. The influence of language and subject teachers represents their overall dominance over how the students write in the end; a cross disciplinary effect which can be termed as pervasive.

Essay writing structures of the interviewees appear hardly affected by their university majors. Interviewee C who is pursuing a course in Food Safety and Nutrition states that their major has minimal effect on what they use. In line with this, interviewee D with the similar major observes that the area of study in food nutrition and the sciences is irrelevant to the structure of writing IELTS argument essay. The theme implies that prior education and early learning dominates the impact of university major on a person's competence.

In summary, the information provided by non-English majors demonstrates that senior high schooling and language instructors' effect is of significant importance for essays approaches development, whereas a certain university specialty reveals insignificant significance here.

4. Discussion

At this stage of the discussion, the research findings regarding IELTS-style argumentative essays written by both English majors (EM) and non-English majors (NEM) at a Chinese university is presented, along with cultural influences affecting their organization. The analysis focuses on three observations regarding moves used within these essays (and whether or not these moves are compulsory/optional use and sequence), obligatory use/optionality ratio and sequencing compared between groups as well as any cultural influences on organization among both groups EMs/NEM students providing insight into Chinese higher education academic writing dynamics at play within Chinese higher education context. We answer the two research questions put forward at the beginning of the paper.

4.1 Answers to Q1

Q1. What moves are employed by English majors and non-English majors in a Chinese university when composing an IELTS-style argumentative essay?

The results of genre analysis point to three main observations about the IELTS essays written by Chinese students.

First, in terms of moves: Both English majors (EM) and non-English majors (NEM) in a Chinese university exhibit similarities in their essay writing styles. A shared characteristic in their approach is the consistent inclusion of thesis statements and one-side arguments, which are almost universally present in the essays of both groups. However, there are notable differences as well. Specifically, NEM students tend to incorporate lead-ins, other-side arguments, illustrations, and final answers more frequently than their EM counterparts. This suggests that while EM students are consistent in presenting their thesis and primary arguments, they are less inclined to offer counterarguments, illustrations, and a distinct final answer.

Second, in terms of the obligatory and optional use of these moves: All the moves are categorized as 'Optional'. However, some moves, particularly the Thesis Statement (TS) and One Side Argument (OSA), are employed so frequently (27 and 29 times, respectively) that they seem almost indispensable. This suggests a near-obligatory role for these moves in the students' writing. On the other hand, moves like L and OTSA are the least frequent, with occurrences of 17 and 15 respectively, indicating that they are genuinely optional in the students' approach to writing.

Third, in terms of sequencing of the moves: A variety of approaches are adopted by both EM and NEM students to arrange the sequence of moves in their essays. Two sequences, "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA" and "TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA", are particularly prominent, recurring five times each. Another sequence, "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I ^ FA", is observed three times. Sequences "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ FA" and "L ^ TS ^ OSA ^ I ^ OTSA ^ I" appear twice.

All other sequences are unique, indicating a diverse range of strategies adopted by students in structuring their essays.

The study's utilization of intercoding underscores a commitment to rigorous and reliable data evaluation, more advantageous via the strategic choice of an experienced intercoder. This technique, characterized with the aid of a blind evaluation method, yielded a 97% settlement between the intercoder and the writer, attesting to the robustness and credibility of the findings. Insights from the appendices reveal nuanced dynamics of IELTS essay writing from a Chinese student's viewpoint, with TS and OSA identified as compulsory factors and others like L, OTSA, and I being optional. The absence of FA in a few times invites similarly exploration. Although the result shows some differences with the researcher's, the researcher insists on the original finding.

4.2 Answers to Q2

Q2. How do cultural differences between English majors and non-English majors in a Chinese university affect the organization of IELTS-style argumentative essays?

Based on the themes identified in Tables 4 and 5 and the data analysis, the research question regarding how cultural differences between English majors and non-English majors in a Chinese university affect the organization of IELTS-style argumentative essays can be addressed as follows:

Cultural differences among English major students and non-English major students greatly affect how IELTS Argument essays are organized in a Chinese University. As shown in Table 4, for the English major, the influence of Chinese educational practice such as teaching methodology adopted by their teachers and overall culture they have acquired during staying in China is of great importance. On the other hand, this power influences essay organization towards being a more rigid format, possibly less flexible because it is standardized through their education. Furthermore, being an English major is yet another factor in their writing style as it tends to influence their essay-writing approach.

On the same note, Table 5 shows some influencing factors for non-English majors. High school education puts a strong focus on maintaining a neutral point of view as well as utilizing a four-paragraph format for essay writing which plays a role in defining how students write during this period in life. Chinese language teachers and English teachers play a big part demonstrating an integrated effect from teachers in any other subject, which leads to their writing style. It is interesting that for non-English majors, the effect of their university major on essay writing appears insignificant. The choice of majors is largely unrelated to their language and literature; hence, it does not impact on how they approach an IELTS essay writing task.

It is worth noting that the variation of culture in these two groups shows up clearly at the organization level of an essay. In particular, English majors have specialised training on language and literature which give them a more structured approach because of what they have learned while in college. However, non-English majors depend mainly on background provided by them at high school education and widespread impact of teacher among various

disciplines, resulting in style of writing which might be more complicated as far as forms are concerned though not so much tied with modern theme of study. This differentiation illustrates how the education background and choice of major among Chinese university students are able to diversely influence their arrangement of IELTS style argumentative essays.

5. Conclusion

The nuances of the intercultural rhetoric are explored in this work with the organization of the IELTS-style argumentative essay written by the English and non-English majors in a Chinese college. Grounded on genre and thematic analyses, the exploration provides answers on the two prime research questions as well as opens opportunities for the next exploration and even educational implications.

Our findings show that when it comes to the first research question involving essays written by both EM and NEM there are some similar elements such as having a thesis statement and arguing in just one side. However, different approaches are witnessed in NEM where students tend to be extensive in their coverage by including such elements like lead-ins, illustrations, counter arguments, and conclusion statements. On the other hand, these elements are lacking in EM students who have had a structured writing style instilled in them as part of their learning experience. This distinction not only identifies different rhetorical strategies, but it also shows dissimilar amounts of flexibly and inclusivity in argumentative structures within these groups.

The second search question is then addressed in the study which highlights about how a number of cultural and educational factors influence the ways in which the learners approach essay writing. It appears that most of the English majors have been molded primarily from the highly structured methodologies and academic culture, which are characteristic of most Chinese educational background. On the contrary, on-English majors rely on their high school knowledge characterized by balance and a certain structural orientation in which their experience of earlier learning has always prevailed towards their present studies. It indicates that the school education still prevails over the university major while affecting non-English majors' essay writing.

These findings have a lot of implications. This clearly shows that for Chinese educators, pedagogical strategies should be sensitive to cultural and local needs whereby students have different backgrounds and education. By offering pedagogy that promotes flexible and pluralistic forms of writing, perhaps English majors would develop broader skill in rhetoric than they are currently equipped with. To improve on developing students' critical thinking and building of strong argument in their already well structured approach for non-English majors will ensure that their writing competencies are improved upon.

Future studies can broaden the focus to include other groups of ESL/EFL students in order to provide a more complete picture of intercultural rhetoric in the ESL/EFL context. Such investigations could shed light on the long term effects of different teaching methods on student's writing development. Additionally, expanding this study to include different

cultures would bring about a more complete picture on intercultural rhetoric and contribute considerably in ESL/EFL teaching.

Therefore, the above study provides more clarity regarding the relationship that exists between culture, education, and language on the writing styles of Chinese university students. It helps reveal those shades through which better and relevant to the globalized education scenario ESL/EFL pedagogical approaches can be provided with the subsequent improvement of academic writing competence among international learners.

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