

텍스트 속 자신의 표현: 영어 편지글에 나타난 수사 형태와 작문 활동에 관한 탐색

Written Voice in the Text: Investigating Rhetorical Patterns and Practices for English Letter Writing

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요약

본 연구는 영어 편지 글에 나타난 자신의 표현, 수사 형태, 그리고 작문 활동을 중심으로 한국 대학생의 서면 텍스트의 특성을 살펴보는 것을 목적으로 한다. 자료로는 학생들의 영어 취업지원서를 포함하였으며, 분석을 위해 '목적-의지' 모델을 채택하였다. 연구 결과, 학생들은 재설정된 상황에서 글 쓰는 이로서의 자신을 표현하기 위해 독특한 전략을 사용하였다. 취업 지원을 위한 편지 속 학생들의 표현 방법은 매우 다양하였고, 어느 누구도 날씨를 언급하는 한국식 편지 쓰기 방식을 채택하지 않았다. 수사 형태는 정형화된 형식에서 벗어나 다양성과 통합된 모습을 보여주었다. 작문 활동을 통해 학생들은 글 쓰는 이로서의 고유한 내적 가치를 보여주었으며, 이는 곧 학생들의 작문 결과가 교수자의 강의 내용과 동일한 모습으로 나타나지 않는다는 것을 의미한다. 이러한 결과는 학습은 특정 담화 공동체 내에서의 상황 활동이라는 사회 문화 이론을 뒷받침한다. 그러므로 영작문 교수자는 학생들의 삶과 학습 경험이 텍스트 속 정체성과 작문 활동에 영향을 미친다는 사실을 인지하고 지도해야 한다.

■ 중심어 : | 텍스트 | 편지 글 | '목적-의지' 모델 | 수사 형태 | 작문 활동 |

Abstract

This study aims at exploring features of Korean university students' written text, focusing on the written voice, rhetorical patterns, and writing practices through English letters. The data comprised examples of students' English job applications, and a 'purpose-will' model was adopted for the data analysis. The findings showed that the students used unique ways of strategies to convey their voice in a recontextualized setting. Their written voice in the job applications were various, and nobody applied the Korean convention of weather opening. Their rhetorical patterns were a transformation from convergence to divergence, showing integrated patterns of written voice. Students' writing practices revealed their internal values of writing for a task, and they do not directly learn from the teacher's syllabus. This supports the sociocultural framework that learning is a situated activity in a specific discourse community. The study concludes that writing teachers should understand that life-world and learning experience can impact on students' written voice and practices.

■ keyword : | Text | Letter Writing | 'Purpose-Will' Model | Rhetorical Patterns | Writing Practices |

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I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, less attention has been paid to writing than reading in the instruction of English. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly common that EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners are required to produce texts for specific purposes in their own fields of interest in English. It is widely acknowledged that writing is an act in which writers position themselves in texts through linguistically realized actions. It is also acknowledged that these linguistic actions become visible through products that may be glossed by others as 'voice'[1].

Written text has played an important role in the development of writing research and applied linguistics. In writing for a specific purpose, writers need to appreciate their audiences' needs and expectations in their text. Different cultures have different rhetorical preferences to organize the written text. Since culture and language are interwoven, genre awareness in the first language (L1) can be either in the line with second language (L2) genre awareness or can be in a different direction and make problems for L2 writers[2].

This study adopts an ethnographic approach among qualitative traditions to investigate students' written texts. The ethnographic approach includes (i) a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, (ii) a tendency to work with unstructured data, (iii) an investigation of a small number of cases, and (iv) an analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings of human actions[3]. It will focus on what is going on in the students' written voice and texts, which provides a deeper

understanding of their English writing in the Korean EFL context.

Based on this approach, this study deals with how textual elements in the specific linguistic structure provide a way of capturing "whether the writer is present in the writing with a strong authorial voice or not"[4]. More precisely, the aim of the study is to explore divergent aspects of text, focusing on the written voice, rhetorical patterns, and writing practices through English job applications produced by Korean university students. Shaped by the belief that letter writing is a social practice[5], this study was guided by the following research questions:

- (a) What are the features of students' voice in English job applications?
- (b) How students' rhetorical patterns are revealed in their written texts?
- (c) How do students' written texts become visible through writing practices?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Written Voice

Written voice can be described as the expression of a 'unique inner self', and individual written voice varies substantially across cultures. The notion of written voice has played an important role in the development of education and continues to occupy a significant place in the writing research and applied linguistics. The ways in which voice is constructed are not universal; different languages provide different possibilities for the construction of voice, because many linguistic features are available across various languages[6].

Written voice is related to the writer identity

because it shares significant components of identity. Writer identity can be divided into four aspects: 'autobiographical self', 'discoursal self', 'self as author', and 'possibilities for self-hood'. Among these, discoursal self and self as author correspond to the notion of voice. The discoursal self has to do with the writer's voice that is conveyed by the writer's discourse practice. It is 'self-representation' that refers to the process of conveying an impression of the writer to others through social actions[7].

The self as author refers to the writer who originates a position in the writing. These aspects of writer voice are concerned with actual writing practice and written text. The discoursal self and self as author are affected by the socio-culturally available subject and privileging patterns in the given context[7]. In this study, students' written voice in EFL letter writing based on the Korean social context may be reflected the discoursal self and self as author.

2. Text Analysis

In the broader sense, text can be defined as the words in a book, magazine, or any types of written materials. In the literature on text analysis, a recurring theme is rhetorical patterns or organizational structures. Rhetoric refers to 'styles of expression' or 'patterns of discourse', aspects beyond the word and sentence level in written text. The issue of rhetorical patterns can be traced to the field of contrastive rhetoric since Kaplan's 1966 study[8].

Contrastive rhetoric maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena and is interested in assessing the direct or indirect effect of communication. Contrastive rhetoric

suggests the need for the teachers to be aware of the different cultural, linguistic and rhetorical traditions that students bring with them[9]. Nevertheless, research on contrastive rhetoric tends to lose sight of the way that writing is usually a part of immediate social and contextual event, as believed by social theorists of literacy[10].

Text may 'make sense' only in terms of the context and be fundamentally misunderstood in isolation from it[11]. This is particularly so in EFL writing classrooms, where most students negotiate their meaning-making in the recontextualized setting of their writing tasks. Recontextualization takes place when writers' texts are moved into other arenas and used for different purposes. Shifting a letter from its location in interactional practices to other educational material such as a writing task is an example of the recontextualization of a text[12]. In line with this understanding, this study deals with the understandings and organizational patterns in students' letter writing in the recontextualized setting at a Korean institution.

3. Letter Writing

A letter is wide spread across a variety of uses and cultures as an earliest type of writing. It can be a useful object of literacy practice and is particularly flexible and diverse. This is because letter writing is embedded in particular social practices, cultural beliefs, and values in a given context. There are significant cross cultural differences in the way that the same speech act such as making requests, writing letters, applications are performed in different languages.

Letter writing comprises various

communicative events, and writers of letters share some sets of communicative purposes. The cultural differences in writing letters are reflected in Barton and Hall[5]. They found that letters written by the white working class community were written by one person to another, composed privately and read privately. Meanwhile, the letters in the Muslim communities were written by one family to another composed collaboratively and read publicly within the family. These findings support that letter writing is a socially negotiated practice.

The social context sets structural conditions on the different parts of a letter such as date, greetings, beginning, body, and closing. Different society has different ways of organizing information or ideas in letter writing which reflect their cultural and rhetorical patterns. To discuss how language is structured and interpreted, it is necessary to examine how text is embedded in the cultural context of the environment[13].

Letter writing in English normally requires several rhetorical prerequisites such as directness in presenting the point, little stylistic ornamentation, and emphasis on the content. On the other hand, a typical Korean letter writing will have deferential lexical spread based on the politeness of the first language, starting with weather opening. Thus, many aspects of letters written in Korean and in English may be different from each other in terms of the forms, functions and rhetoric.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants were 30 English major students who attended 'Basic English Composition' class as an optional course at a Korean university. Among them, twenty-three (77%) were sophomores, four (13%) juniors, and three (10%) seniors. Their age ranged from 20 to 27 years old. According to the students' self evaluation, they represented a wide range of writing proficiency, i.e., 3 as excellent, 20 as intermediate, and 7 as poor. This context might represent one of the writing classrooms in the natural Korean EFL settings.

2. Writing Task

As one of assignments, the students were asked to write a letter for a job application to be a reporter in a newspaper or a magazine in a position of recontextualization. They could write about their own plans, experiences with their own voices by valuing a variety of expressions. The total score of the letter writing was 20 points, including four elements presented by the class teacher, i.e., format (8 points), content (4 points), organization (4 points), and linking (4 points). The teacher's criteria on the elements were not dealt with because the main focus of the study was students' written texts.

3. Collection of Written Text

To examine the characteristics of the writers' voice and rhetorical patterns, 30 pieces of letter writing were collected from the students. Among them, this study focused on 10 pieces of letters from the three different groups in terms of the scores of exams and assignments: 4 from high (scores: 17-19), 3 from intermediate (score: 16), and 3 from low levels (scores: 10-15). This could roughly represent the overall

features of the students' written voice.

4. Framework for Data Analysis

To analyze the rhetorical patterns in students' job application letters, the 'Purpose-Will' pattern was developed from Hoey's (2001) Goal-Achievement pattern[11]. This model includes four steps such as *Purpose* → *Situation* → *Achievement* → *Will*, and these elements are associated with job application letters, because a job application can be regarded as an advertisement in which the applicant sells him/herself to an employer, persuading the reader of the writer's ability or confidence with some unique forms of self-advertisement. [Table 1] shows the functions, definitions, and examples of the four components.

Table 1. Functions in a job application letter

Step	Function	Definition	Illustrative phrases
1	Purpose	Goal of letter writing	'want to' 'would like to' 'my aim' 'my objective'
2	Situation	Position or status of the writer	'My major is...' 'I'll graduate...'
3	Achievement	Good points and qualifications of the writer	'I am good at' 'I have'
4	Will	Attempts appealed by the writer to achieve the goal	'I will' 'I hope'

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Written Voice

The students' written voice in the job applications were various, and nobody applied the Korean convention of weather opening[8]. This indicates that most students attempt to recognize themselves as the self as author in the recontextualized setting in which they originate a position of an applicant who wishes

to get a job. That is, they showed the strategy of 'accommodation' in which they conveyed significant impressions to the reader through discourse practice for English letter writing[14].

For example, six letters (#2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9) put the full components of English letter writing: sender and recipient's addresses, date, salutation, body, complimentary close, and signature. Two (#1 and 10) included titles of the letters with 'resume', and two (#1 and 10) wrote addresses in the top-middle of the letter with 'From' and 'To'. Three letters (#1, 5 and 10) omitted writers' signatures, and four (#1, 6, 7 and 10) omitted 'Dear'.

Two letters (#4 and 5) put 'skip 2 lines' and 'skip 4 lines', and one (#8) put '2 bytes' to separate out each component of the letter. Interestingly, two (#1 and 7) used the strategy of 'petition' i.e., 'Please give me life's one-time opportunity and allow me work for you' and 'Please allow me entering your company.' Some letters started the writing with 'Dear Dr. Johnson' (#4, 5, 6, 8 and 9), 'Dear Prof. Johnson' (#2), 'Dear Mr. Johnson' (#3) for the recipient of the letter.

Some letters omitted writers' full names after the signature (#7 and 9), and two omitted the complimentary close (#7 and 10). One indicated the enclosure with the phrases of 'Encl: Curriculum Vitae and certificate of grades' (#4) and with 'Attaching things: My licenses and improving my ability' (#7). Regarding the layout, six letters (67%) were completely laid out in the way that would normally be accepted as the perfect conventions for English letters. This reflects that most students' written voice attempt to adopt the conventionality of English writing and their voices reveal a variety of differences in terms of the meaning making and

format. That is, they have their own ways of written voices based on their experiences and purposes for the writing task. These findings correspond to the textual and contextual demands of letter writing in the given context.

2. Rhetorical Patterns in the Letters

Each of the students showed entirely different access to the rhetoric, and nobody shared the same patterns in their writing [see Table 2]. Three letters started with *Situation* as the first step rather than presenting a *Purpose* straight away (#6, 9, and 10). This seems to reflect the Korean convention of letter writing in which background of the writing is somewhat lengthy. Many repeated *Purpose* several times in the same letter (#1, 2, 3, 8, and 9).

Three letters missed out *Achievement* or/and *Will* with insufficient body (#4, 8, and 10). Two letters did not include gratitude in the end of the writing (#8 and 9). These findings are associated with the findings of research on contrastive rhetoric that one major difference between L1 and L2 writing is the patterns of written text.

This difference can be a major problem in writing for EFL students. In this study, each student attempted to bring a different way of discourse and rhetorical patterns with the 'fundamental recognition that individuals do not have equal access' to writing products although they were exposed in the same practices[8][15].

Here, it is suggested that students bring together their views of learning and making decisions in their own perspectives from outside classrooms. This implies an understanding of the relationship between writing and social context. The students in this study bring the rhetorical patterns to the letter writing in terms of their beliefs about what is expected from the task and purposes of the letter. This affects the process and outcomes of writing.

3. Text and Writing Practice

A writer's text can be a useful way to understand his/her perspectives on a job application and how this shapes his/her writing practice. Here, letter #9 which had the longest length was selected as the example. Letter #9 consisted of long *Situation* (S1-S6), *Purpose* (S7), *Achievements* (S8-S12), warning (S13), repeated the *Purpose* (S14), and a gratitude (S15) throughout fifteen sentences [see Figure 1].

It started the first sentence with 'Hello, My name is Kim OO. (S1)' rather than a formal opening, 'I am writing to ...' which was expected in a job application. This can be interpreted as meaning that the writer recognizes the knowledge of 'distanced person' who needs some information about the writer although the reader is given in the recontextualized setting[16].

Table 2. Rhetorical patterns in the ten letters

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
S1	P	P	P	P	P	S	P	P	S	S
S2	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S3	S, P	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S4	S	A	S	S	A	S	S	S	S	P
S5	A	A	P	W	A	P	S	S	S	S
S6	A	W	A	(G)	A	A	A	P	S	S
S7	(G)	P	A		A	A	A		P	W
S8		(G)	A		(G)	A	A		A	W
S9			W			W	W		A	S
S10			(G)			(G)	(G)		A	W
S11									A	(G)
S12									A	(G)
S13									(W)	
S14									P	
S15									(G)	
Score (20)	16	19	17	18	16	16	14	17	15	10

Notes) #1-10: No. of Letter, S1-15: Sentence No
 P: Purpose, S: Situation, A: Achievement, W: Will,
 (W): warning, (G): gratitude
 () indicates extra elements in the 'purpose-will' pattern.

<p>Dear Dr. Johnson:</p> <p>(S1) Hello. My name is Kim OO. (S2) I'm a student at OO Univ. (S3) And my major is Business Administration. (S4) I will tell you the reason of my letter. (S5) I will graduate from Univ. this winter. (S6) And I get introduce your company by Job Application Center of OO Univ. (S7) I'd like to get a job in your company.</p> <p>(S8) I will tell you about my possibilities. (S9) I study very hard for four years, so my grade is very high. (S10) And I am good at office programs of computer. (S11) I have some license. (S12) I also good speaker of English. Because I studied at OO Univ. as exchange student in the U.S. (S13) If you don't pick me, you lost treasure. (S14) And I want to work for your company. (S15) Thank you very much for reading my letter.</p> <p>Regarding good answer.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sincere Kim OO (Signature)</p>	<p>S1 Situation</p> <p>S2</p> <p>S3</p> <p>S4</p> <p>S5</p> <p>S6</p> <p>S7 Purpose</p> <p>S8 Achievement</p> <p>S9</p> <p>S10</p> <p>S11</p> <p>S12</p> <p>S13 (Warning)</p> <p>S14 Purpose</p> <p>S15 (Gratitude)</p>
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Figure 1. Reproduction of Letter #9: Text and structure
Note) S1-15: Sentence No.

The writer listed a number of Achievements (S9-S12) and showed a strong confidence for these with the expression 'possibilities' (S8). Interestingly, she created the sentence, 'If you don't pick me, you lost treasure. (S13)'. This can be interpreted as meaning that the writer demonstrates her unique text, using the warning strategy in the formal letter. The writer might see herself as 'authority' in producing and shaping her own text and writing practices[17].

On the other hand, the letter #9 gained score 15 out of 20, relatively a low level, despite the creative textual features. This can be assumed that the teacher's criterion for organization, format, content, and speech act affect the mark more strongly than the creativity or uniqueness.

V. IMPLICATIONS

This study has examined Korean university students' written voice focusing on their rhetorical patterns and writing practices for

letter writing. Students' learning of EFL writing was a process of attempt for text and meaning making. They adopted unique ways of strategies to convey their voice in the recontextualized setting. Their rhetorical patterns were a transformation from convergence to divergence, which showed integrated patterns of written voice for job application letters. This reflects that students do not directly learn from the teacher's syllabus. This also indicates that EFL writing in one context will not necessarily guarantee success across a range of other learning contexts.

The student's writing practice revealed in letter #9 showed prominent perspectives of her own internal value of writing in applying for the recontextualized task. This study thus can be evidence which supports the social cultural framework that learning is a situated activity acquired from meaningful participation in a specific community. We as writing teachers can understand that both life-world and learning experience inside/outside classrooms can impact on students' written voice and practices.

Although the written voice and rhetorical patterns were very different among the students in this study, the small number of samples may not be generalized to EFL letter writing. Therefore, a further study is needed to include a big size of samples and to add interviews with writers for a deeper exploration on voice and text.

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