Chapter 3: The five-paragraph essay is not globally recognized as good writing

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The five-paragraph essay has not been taught and valued globally; however, that does not mean that it is not taught or appreciated anywhere. Its status varies from never being introduced in some contexts, to being required in national assessments in others, and everything in between. This chapter considers and provides evidence-based answers to several important questions: How widely is the five-paragraph essay really taught around the world, in English-speaking countries, other first languages, and EFL classes? What circumstances surround its adoption or rejection? What values and ideologies are passed on through the teaching of the five-paragraph essay, to what effect, and how can we show students what lies beyond the curtain of the five-paragraph formula?

What the Research Says

The Five-Paragraph Essay in English-Speaking Countries

Before examining EFL contexts, we should first note that the five-paragraph essay is not taught everywhere in English-speaking countries. In the U.S., “the essay”—very loosely labeled—is taught or assigned most frequently, and it encompasses almost any multi-paragraph written text (as also mentioned in Caplan, Tardy, and Johns in this volume and Melzer, 2014). Often, various assignment types (e.g., research paper, essay, report) (Johns, 2011) are conflated under the “essay” category based on perceived shared structural features (Tardy, this volume).

Although in British Commonwealth countries writing courses do not exist the way they have in the U.S. since the creation of first-year composition courses at Harvard in 1875, the generic use of the terms “essays” and “papers” is prevalent. In large-scale research at 11 Canadian universities and 36 departments, Graves found that teachers across the disciplines
assigned “essays” and “papers,” particularly in the humanities, while in engineering proposals and reports were also frequent. A crucial difference from the U.S. is that the students were taught how to write these primarily through a multiple-draft approach and teacher feedback in the academic content courses in the students’ disciplines rather than required, separate composition courses.

In spite of the fact that the term “essay” appears to be used in practice to refer to almost any written text, it seems that the authentic rhetorical situations from which the features of genre emerge (Tardy, this volume) are better linked to writing assignments in other English-speaking countries than they are in the U.S. composition classrooms. In the U.S., “because of repeated exposure to the five-paragraph template, students (and teachers) often come to see the five-paragraph essay as a ‘composition classroom genre’” (Johns, 2015, p. 117) (Tardy, this volume), particularly in high school. In the U.K., on the other hand, the teaching of writing focuses more on the functional purposes of texts in context. The functional, context-aware approach to teaching writing has been linked to the reasons why significant cross-cultural differences can be found in the persuasive writing of students in English-speaking countries. Thus, in a study undertaken as part of the International Education Association study of written composition in England, New Zealand, and the U.S., Connor and Lauer (1988) found that the U.S. students received lower scores than the students from U.K. and New Zealand on several features of argumentative writing, their performance reflecting cross-cultural differences in what is emphasized about writing in the three countries. As Johns (1997, 2002, 2015) has pointed out, the perception that high school students in the U.S. form about texts as inflexible formats rather than permanent negotiations with a rhetorical situation, is largely due to exposure to the five-paragraph essay. This prevents them from successfully employing persuasive strategies even
Despite being conceptually aware of expository and argumentative rhetorical modes. In England, the transition from secondary school to university requires an ideological shift in learners, rather than socializing into a prescriptive format (Scott, 2002). That is to say, the weight rests on decyphering “internalized ways of knowing and doing” (p. 91) which serve as codes that new university students must crack. In contrast, in the U.S. the transition into university schooling involves extending past the organization of a five-paragraph essay.

The Five-Paragraph Essay in Other L1s

We also glean from the literature that the five-paragraph essay is not universally taught in other first languages, for cultural and rhetorical reasons. Important studies, first led by composition scholars in the 1980s and 1990s as well as more recently, highlight that:

- what is valued in one cultural context may not be valued in other cultural contexts;
- writing practices of disciplines outweigh in importance general composition courses;
- text-types are, for the most part, based on purpose rather than structure.

What is valued in one cultural context may not be valued in other cultural contexts.

The textual analyses of written compositions across cultures in Purves’s (1988) study have shown that what is considered as effective writing differs across cultures. For example, Kachru’s (1988) textual analysis of student writing in Hindi also reveals standards and expectations that clearly differ from those in English. The first paragraphs in essays provide an overall schema for general background, but no direct tie to the topic. Additionally, the unity of the topic is not a requirement of a paragraph; thus, digression is tolerable. There is no explicit need for topic sentences, and when crafting an argument, the claim and justification can be presented in
separate paragraphs. Even in terms of affective involvement, including the writers’ own judgments is acceptable.

Another example of how values in one culture may not be the same in another comes from Li’s (2002) report on her studies in China, showing the emphasis in that educational system in developing students’ intellect as well as moral ideology. This is seen in the shift from the prevailing style of narration (hiyongwen) before secondary school, to a focus on opinion writing (yilunwen). Li’s study identified patterns of student writing for college admittance, and identified a stress on the morality and historical knowledge, emphasizing the theme and content above the structure. Some texts echoed the formulaic eight-legged essay (Kaplan, 1968), characterized by eight rhetorical moves to present an argument. This indirect organization that Kaplan identified in many Chinese student writers “has clearly endured into modern times” (Kaplan, 1968, p. 3), but Li (2002) posits that greater stress is now placed on logic and theory in addition to analysis and interpretation. Notably, this is corroborated by You (2008), in a survey of writing themes employed in Chinese schools. You’s research indicates that the sociopolitical landscape significantly influences what and how students write, and he claims that the theme “decides the selection of types of writing and dictates the layout of text structure” (p. 254). You found that the treatment of theme in writing “carries equal, if not more, weight to textual organization” (p. 254), much in agreement with Li’s (1996) assessment of what is deemed “good” writing.

In the European context, Kruse & Chitez (2012) showed cultural differences in writing across the Swiss regions (Italian, French and German) and found that the Italian-speaking university stressed the use of “personal voice,” the French-speaking university stressed the voice of the discipline, and the German-speaking university expected students to switch between the academic and the personal, according to genre.
Writing practices of disciplines outweigh in importance general composition courses.

In Europe, the attitudes towards the ways good writing is acquired are quite different from those that have evolved in the United States (Caplan, this volume). In Germany and France, for example, writing is not taught as a separate subject of college education (Donahue, 2002). Instead, writing is taught as part of disciplinary socialization. As in the UK, in the transition from the secondary school to university settings, students develop authority and learn the genres of their discourse communities. Students must negotiate the interchange from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transformation, a difference between university studies and high school. Their experiences in the university setting represent an apprenticeship. They are not students of writing and subjects, but students of subjects into which writing is integrated. This leads student writers to navigate the practices of the discipline and to acculturate themselves into it, i.e., locating resources, organizing peer-group activities, and developing long-term, self-directed activities. Thus, learning to develop the rhetoric of the discipline is organic, but also a sink-or-swim situation, particularly for developing writers and for new immigrants who must master both their new languages and the ways in which these languages and discourses operate in their chosen disciplines (see also Caplan, this volume).

Text-types are based on purpose rather than structure.

This point is closely interrelated with the one above, and the approach to developing writing skills in the context of academic subjects/content courses by learning how to act rhetorically on specific purposes supports the point that purpose, not formulaic structures, controls genres. Thus, structures emerge from purpose. In addition, Donahue (2002) reviews four prevalent forms of writing from the French lycée (secondary) years: commentaire composé, étude d’un texte argumentatif, dissertation, and discussion. In the transition to the first year of college, writing
forms largely remain the same, often characterized by an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction is set off from the body, presenting the problem, the question the essay proposes to answer, a plan, and maintaining the thesis-antithesis-synthesis structure in all essay forms except the *commentaire*. The body consists primarily of explicit positions. In the conclusion, the writer returns to the introduction with the perspective on the argument and evaluation, and then ends with a personal viewpoint.

Overall, studies in this section show that what “good” writing is and what is learned in different educational contexts varies from country to country. The cultural background and the educational system make a significant difference in how a writer learns to present knowledge in a particular discipline, which will determine how students will format their writing. Though the idea that essays are structured texts recurs, it appears that the structure emerges for students through exposure and practice, inductively, in relation to specific disciplinary contexts and rhetorical purposes.

**The Five-Paragraph Essay in EFL Classrooms**

As far as EFL writing classrooms across the world are concerned, in recent years, there has been rising interest in documenting what is taught and what methods are used for teaching English writing. To our knowledge, focused, large-scale research on the use of the five-paragraph essay *per se* has not been conducted, though it would be useful. Much of the existing literature attests that pre-university (K-12) EFL classes tend to be integrated skills classes in which writing is but a small – quarter or less – portion of the curriculum. A case in point is the more extreme example of Egypt, with 2% of class time spent on teaching EFL writing (Abdel Latif & Haridy, 2018). Many EFL students lack genuine motivation to master writing in English unless they belong to the minority that intends to study abroad or work in multinational or foreign companies, which is
often something they do not know until they are in high school (Reichelt, 2005, about Poland). Thus, when studying writing, EFL students’ goal is not solely or primarily to learn how to write, unless the pressure of a standardized test is impending; rather, in EFL contexts writing is practiced in order to learn language and/or content (Manchón, 2011). This means that the focus on grammar and vocabulary, especially with novice writers in K-12, supercedes the interest in genre features and rhetorical strategies. However, it also means that many genres are experimented with, and these include so-called functional texts such as the letter or email. Creative writing may also be practiced, even if only to take an occasional break (Ene & Hryniuk, 2018; Ene & Mitrea, 2013).

Depending on their context and trajectory, many academic English writers around the world may not be exposed to the five-paragraph essay until they decide to study in an English-speaking country. Studies from vastly distant geographical locations and different educational systems illustrate the ubiquity of the essay broadly defined as a multi-paragraph text which may be expository or argumentative/persuasive and made up of main ideas, introduction, body, and conclusion. Many such studies (see, for example, chapters in the edited volume by Ruecker & Crusan, 2018) illustrate that, even though there is a strong correlation between the kinds of writing taught in K-12 EFL and those required on national standardized tests, that relationship does not always lead to a generalized use of the rigid template of the five-paragraph essay. In their comparative study of EFL writing practices among K-12 teachers of English from China, Mexico, and Poland, Ene and Hryniuk (2018) showed that the participating Chinese teachers reported teaching academic, persuasive essay writing, and professional letters and reports in accordance with tasks their students would have to perform on the CET (College English Test), a high-stakes national examination. Meanwhile, in Poland expository or persuasive academic
essays were seldom assigned (by 5% of the study participants) because informal letters and email writing had to be taught in preparation for the high school exit exam, the *Matura*. However, interestingly enough, the teachers from Mexico, where there is no national English test but globalist attitudes are felt, taught multi-paragraph expository and argumentative essay writing (which they identified as academic writing) the most. The teachers in this study did not indicate using the five-paragraph essay template at the time, though they acknowledged feeling obligated to closely follow model texts from their textbooks and focus on the genres that would be required on important tests.

The influence of large-scale policy is not always perceived as negative. In an account from Austria, Kremmel, Ebeharter and Maurer (2018) describe the positive effects of implementing the Common European Framework (CEFR), which outlines language achievement standards across the European Union. Transitioning to the CEFR and the use of the *Matura* from a previously solid use of communicative language teaching, Austrian teachers reported starting to teach a wider array of text types in addition to the essay, presented as “a familiar genre for most teachers and students” (p.125); the new texts include reports, email, articles, blogs, leaflets, proposals, and letters. At the same time, the use of opinion-based, persuasive, and narrative essays in the classroom also increased compared to before 2007. The teachers increased discussions of audience, context, and purpose, sociolinguistic aspects and register features. In addition, the Austrian teachers reported focusing their feedback and assessment on organization and cohesion rather than linguistic accuracy alone. No mention of using the five-paragraph essay template was made in this study.

In some global contexts, there is no doubt that strict essay structures, very likely organized in five paragraphs, are required and taught. There are contexts where strict national
testing policies, usually associated with high school graduation and university admission, coupled with insufficient teacher preparation and dire work conditions, force EFL teachers to teach to those tests by relying on the five-paragraph essay template. Ngo (2018) presents two teacher narratives from Vietnam which testify to the teaching of writing there being subservient to multiple-choice testing and – at the more advanced levels – writing assignments based on International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and Cambridge Main Suite exams. Such actions tend to reinforce the five-paragraph essay structure, although that may not be the intention of the test (Ruecker and Crusan, this volume). From Iran, which has a large young population competing for university positions, Marefat and Heydari (2018) review Iranian-produced tests of English writing which either emphasize formal and sentence-level aspects of the English language, or copy almost identically the Test of Written English (TWE), which, in instructors’ minds, appears to emphasize a formulaic essay form. Teachers participating in their research shared emphasizing the product rather than the process of writing in their classes, using templates and prefabricated essays that the students memorize in order to do well on their tests. In another telling example, West & Thiruchelvam (2018) report from the fiercely test-oriented Korean educational system:

    English language testing exists at every stage of Korean education. English plays a large part in the Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT) for college applications, most universities require a minimum score on one of several standardized English exams (i.e., TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), TOEFL, TEPS (Test of English Proficiency (South Korea)) to graduate, and many companies require a minimum score on the TOEIC to apply for a position. (p.139)
In response to criticism about Korean students’ low performance on productive skills despite the testing-oriented instruction, a Computer-Based English Test (CBET) was developed to test speaking and writing; for writing, the students are expected to write an email response, a description of a graph or visual data, and an argumentative or compare and contrast essay. In alternative courses students can take in order to prepare for the CBET, instruction focuses on the types of writing they need to perform on the test, including the essay. Once more, though no explicit mention is made of the five-paragraph essay, it is to be inferred that that structure or something closely similar is practiced, because of the CBET’s similarity to the TOEFL, TWE and other such tests.

A number of chapters in this book aim to illustrate that the five-paragraph essay is, at best, a pedagogical genre without significant benefits for the development of good writing. This chapter shows that the five-paragraph essay may not be taught everywhere in the world, but something form-oriented like it which can be described as a guided, structured essay, is taught in many classrooms globally. Anecdotally, personally, and through research, we know that many writing students and teachers in EFL contexts welcome the five-paragraph or highly-structured paragraph essay. Formed in systems in which writing skills have been developed by osmosis, through extensive reading and exposure to target genres and perhaps little explicit instruction both in their L1s and in English (Connor in Braine, 1999; Li, 1996; Graves & White, 2016), some teachers crave a structure that can help them and their students make sense of writing. Though this is not generalizable, we have those teachers like one of the participants in Ene & Mitrea (2013) in Romania who share the wish that the five-paragraph essay or something like it should be used to teach writing in the L1 so that students can learn to organize their thoughts in writing.
However, the use of the five- or highly-structured-paragraph essay as a dependable template that can serve as a solid point of reference for how to write in English comes with a set of perils. According to Myskow and Gordon (2009), too much dependence on text structures can be stifling, hindering not only creativity and originality but development itself. Originating in a deficit model, the five-paragraph essay risks to level all genres into a single structure and repetitive, unimaginative thinking. The oversimplification to a single structure creates a narrow, warped view of what real, good writing can be. Particularly important to this chapter is the point that using the five-paragraph essay structure to teach all writing in the classroom eliminates any local cultural flavor and relevance to specific contexts. One must be mindful that the values and assumptions resting beneath the surface of this particular writing system are essentially transmitted with it. Illuminating the status quo that endorses the five-paragraph essay, Tremmel (2011) posits that such “educational practice consistently attempts to use logic to cut up complex processes into manageable chunks thought to be easily disseminated to novices” (p. 30). Novices in writing classrooms are inadvertently subject to an approach that appeals to “a certain Western love of orderliness and efficiency” (Tremmel, 2011, p. 32). It is important that instructors be aware of such assumptions and how to approach composition from a critical English for Academic Purposes (EAP) perspective that values authentic learner writing needs and practices across cultures and disciplines.

Changes in Practice

As pointed out above, writing differs across varying cultural contexts. One means of preparing students for the complex cultural differences in writing standards is by applying principles of Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) to classroom instruction (Connor, 1996, 2011). IR is defined as “the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds”
The pedagogical movement of IR originated from Kaplan’s (1966) seminal work in Contrastive Rhetoric (CR). By continuing the tradition of systematic analysis of the influence of one’s L1 and culture onto one’s L2 writing, IR aims to help teachers understand difficulties second language writers face. The change in preferred term from CR to IR signaled a move away from looking at two pieces of writing as culturally and rhetorically disparate and toward viewing such texts as negotiations between and within cultures (Connor, 1996). This is especially pertinent in Atkinson’s (1999) call for a dynamic view of culture, in which IR is seen to advocate for greater sensitivity to the social contexts in which writing occurs, allowing for the development of a more comprehensive view of language. The evolution of IR promotes an understanding that texts are part of the social context in which they are written, that culture is complex and dynamic, and that written discourse is a complex negotiation (Connor, 2011).

1. **Prepare students to learn the “small cultures” that influence writing.**

In the new understanding of culture in IR, the concept of “large cultures” versus “small cultures” is important. Large cultures have ethnic, national, or international group features as essential components and tend to be normative and prescriptive. Small cultures, on the other hand, are non-essentialist and based on processes that relate to cohesive behaviors within social groupings. According to Adrian Holliday (1999), small cultures are rooted in activities and lead to specific discourses. Each classroom can be seen as having its own culture (also see Johns, this volume). In classrooms, there can be overlapping social practices, such as national culture, professional academic culture, classroom culture, student culture, and youth culture. We can also view small cultures as discourse communities (Swales, 1990), or groups of people communicating within a particular academic discipline. EAP genre theory informs instructors that various discourse communities have their own norms that characterize certain genres and social practices for
producing and consuming genres (Swales, 2004). We suggest to help learners map the large and small cultures they belong to.

- Ask them to reflect individually or work with a partner to create each other’s map of large and small cultures. Students can consider some large cultures: nationality, first language, and additional languages; and small cultures: gender, age, professional or academic field/background). Thus, a student may end up with American, Spanish L1, English L2 for large cultures and female, 21 years old, and university student majoring in business for small cultures. Conversely, her partner may have a very different profile, including Chinese nationality and L1 with English as an L2 as large cultures, and male, 22, majoring in business among his small cultures.

- Next, ask students to describe the ways in which they need to communicate to successfully work with and among other people participating in the same small culture, e.g. business, manufacturing engineering, biology, anthropology, etc. Our business majors from the examples above may agree that their communication needs to be generally clear and concise but also polite; additionally, they may agree on how difficult it is to express personal opinions using “I” in group work, though the American student may attribute this more to being female than to being a non-native speaker of English. Even though general, this step will raise awareness of similarities and differences, and will signal to the students that they have cultures, and that those cultures are not universally shared (although features may be). State this at the end of their brainstorm.
- Moving into a deeper level of specificity, ask your students to imagine writing an email or a business letter to their partner, who will likely have some different small or large culture traits. Ask the students to consider
  - who the addressee is,
  - what the purpose of the communication is,
  - in what context it is happening (business, academic, personal, etc.),
  - and what textual choices derive from these characteristics.

- Finally, let the students compose the text and exchange it with their partner for feedback. Have the students discuss together where their textual choices were successful or misfired, asking them to identify specific examples of mismatches between small or large culture traits and textual choices. At this and the previous point, our example students should discover additional nuances of how differently they achieve the common goal of being clear, concise, and polite, and should deepen their reflection on how their various small and large cultures affect the length of their texts, the specific words used in the opening and closing, the order in which they present the information, etc.

- Engage in a large-group reflective discussion about what the group learned from the activity.

- Ask the students to fill out an “exit ticket” listing three things they learned about small and large cultures and writing strategies.

### 2. Compare and contrast texts from similar genres but different cultural contexts.

Two examples from the research at the International Center for Intercultural Communication at IUPUI about comparing and contrasting genres and structures in teaching will
be presented here, one from an intercultural business setting, the other from an academic writing context. In an intercultural research study involving students from three different languages and countries, Connor, Davis, and deRycker (1995; 1997) collected and analyzed letters of job application among students in business classes. Students from Finland and Belgium wrote the letters in their EFL, while the US students wrote in English, their native language.

In the first year of the study, the students’ letters varied widely in their length and style. The US letters were long and included detailed information about the student’s accomplishments for the potential internship they were applying; the letters of the students from Finland and Belgium were short and matter-of-fact. They included sentences like: “I wish to apply for such and such internship. My vitae is attached. I am ready for an interview.”

As the study continued in the next two years, the teachers in the three countries were able to use letters from the previous year as samples about the expectations about the style of such letters in each country. The students quickly learned about the standards and norms of application letter writing in the different national contexts. The value of this intercultural project for the participating students and teachers was tremendous. At the time it was conducted, in the 1990s, the letters crossed the ocean by mail. In today’s world, with the internet, such real-life experiences in intercultural writing are much more easily accomplished. Specific teaching instructions for the genre are included in Connor, Davis, and deRycker (1995;1997).

Another example comes from EAP instruction. This is a revised lesson from a training program for students from China and Korea (see Connor, 2011), of which the goals were to build awareness of varying language discourses among the students. The two large cultures are Chinese and Korean, while the small cultures were quite diverse, representing various disciplines in the medical field, including nursing, surgery, gastroenterology, and urology.
In first introducing learners to the process of thinking about small cultures that emphasize the expectations for writing in specific disciplines, the characteristics of the research article abstract (adapted from Swales & Feak, 2012) should be presented to students (Figure 9.2.). Using the prompts in Figure 9.3., learners have been asked to outline abstracts in their first language and evaluate the type of language used in them relative to sample abstracts in their L1 as well as abstracts in English which display the characteristics listed in Figure 9.2. At the end of such an activity, learners further research and draft abstracts of their own after collecting and analyzing a small personal corpus of relevant samples.

Figure 9.2. Genre characteristics (adapted from Swales and Feak, 2012)

Research article abstracts have the following characteristics:
- It focuses on the major aspect(s) of the article.
- It condenses information from the research article.
- It is structured to incorporate background, aim, method, results, and conclusion.

Figure 9.3. Abstract outlining activity (adapted from Swales and Feak, 2012; Fowler and Aksnes, 2007)

Abstract Outlining Activity

For this activity you are going to read the abstract for the article “Does Self-Citation Pay?” by Fowler and Aksnes (2007). Fill in the outline below and prepare to discuss with your instructor and classmates.

I. Opening Sentence
- How do the authors begin? What is significant about this?
II. Body of the Abstract

- How are the major sections introduced (e.g. the background, aim, method, results, conclusion)? Are these specifically marked? For example, are there specific words or phrases used to introduce each section?
- In what order do these sections appear?

III. Concluding Sentence

- How do the authors end/conclude the abstract? What is significant about this?

IV. Language

- What tense(s) is/are employed throughout the abstract? Where and why?
- What is the overall technique for transitioning between sentences?
- How do the authors transition between each major section (i.e. what transitional word or techniques are used when moving from background to aim, or method to results?)
- How are numbers presented? Why do you think this is?

V. Compare and Contrast with an Abstract in Another Language

- Repeat the questions above with an abstract in your field of study from either your first language or another language with which you are familiar.
- Note the major similarities and or differences. Why do you think these similarities/differences occur?

VI. Compare and Contrast with an Abstract you Wrote

- Repeat the questions in part I through IV above with an abstract you wrote.
Note the major similarities and or differences. Why do you think these similarities/differences occur? What changes do you need to make to your own abstract? Why?

The major motivators in the preparation of the assignment were to give students’ multilingual backgrounds relevance by validating their first language expectation and values for a comparable genre. This allows learners to not just become aware of differences, but learn how to take agency over the preparation of writing and notice the expectations their audiences may have. Likewise, allowing learners to compare the assigned abstract with a self-produced abstract for their academic discipline provides the opportunity to identify the small culture influences and the implications these have for their writing. Thus, by planning and presenting an assignment that provides space for learners to engage with audience expectations, students are learning the why and how of writing, rather than being told to follow step-by-step procedures, e.g., the five-paragraph essay. In short, this assignment walks learners through the principles by first introducing small culture expectations (of their discipline and genre) so that they can become aware of how to approach a writing task. Next, comparing the research article abstract with similar genres in their first language, learners are exposed to differences in writing decisions they can make while seeing what is valued and expected in the target situation. Finally, the steps for this activity direct students to view their audience not through prescriptive rules but rather by teaching them how to conceptualize the writing task and why they are making such decisions.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has discussed how much of the focus around the world in writing instruction is not on the organization of five-paragraph essays, though there are exceptions to this rule. The
research presented indicates that the five-paragraph essay persists in the pedagogies of classrooms where teaching to the text predominates. The research also highlights the varying cultural values and standards underpinning what is considered “good” writing across cultural and national backgrounds. Foster and Russell (2002) clearly explicate the dissimilar pedagogical methods and mindsets instructors and institutions use in approaching writing. This means that when international and multilingual writers are brought together into one classroom, instructors must find new ways to teach and think of writing standards, and not rely on homogenous structures like the five-paragraph essay. IR’s emphasis on negotiation and accommodation positions instructors to engage in ongoing conversations about the evolution of L2 writing studies. IR can help to expand one’s understanding of English instruction by identifying preferred writing styles and structures in comparable genres across languages, as well as providing social, cultural, and historical explanations for such differences. It is also good for finding instances where negotiations have been used and accepted. Thus, IR has the potential to move toward the “practice-based” pedagogy advocated by Canagarajah (2013) if, as Belcher (2014) suggested, it can “continue to complicate, problematize and enrich our understanding of what community membership means for and to writers (and readers), not just with respect to the communities they are born into, but those they choose to join or hope to change or decide to create” (p. 66). With this pedagogical tool, scholars and educators alike can help writers to better compare genre expectations in target texts with similar genres in their first language. This will further their understanding of, access to, and implementation of successful linguistic and rhetorical choices for the discourse communities in which they seek to enter.
References


