

Chapter 6

The Impact of Knowledge of English Rhetorical Patterns of Organisation on BA Accounting and Finance Students' Writing Academic Genres

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the impact of knowing the English rhetorical pattern of organisation on BA Accounting and Finance students' academic writing. More specifically, it focuses on the knowledge of how to structure a letter of application for job hunting purposes. This case study involved the analysis of 40 letters of application written by 40 Accounting and Finance students in the Department of Accounting and Finance at the University of Ghardaïa, Algeria after they had been trained to structure this type of letter. The training lasted for two sessions in the Department of Accounting and Finance at Ghardaia University, Algeria. The training was a direct instruction in which students were shown activities that assisted them in mastering the rhetorical pattern of organisation that concerns letters of application. They were also shown the difference between formal and informal letters of application. The obtained results demonstrated the efficiency of the direct instruction in teaching Accounting and Finance students how to write a letter of application.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching academic writing has been a challenge for many practitioners, mainly in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) contexts as it is related and due to a lack of consideration of its importance by both institutions and graduate and post-graduate students. Specificity of the discipline requires specific courses (Basturkmen, 2010) that consider the type of the discipline, the learners, the content, and the objective behind the course. In an Accounting and Finance department as the one in Ghardaia University, it has been noticed that there is no clear objective for teaching English for either graduate or post-graduate students, and this lack has made teachers rely on themselves to provide courses based on mainly teaching specialised vocabulary while neglecting the reading and writing skills. Concerning the latter which are interrelated (Grabe, 2003, 2006, 2009; Grabe and Stoller, 2001), there should be a focus on developing them as they are needed for many objectives which range from writing business letters, memos, e-mails, reports up to dissertations. Grabe (2003) claims that “reading and writing might reinforce or accelerate the learning content, the development of literacy skills, and the acquisition of language abilities” (p. 242). Nonetheless, students should have linguistic knowledge, English in this case (Alderson, 2000). Swales and Feak (2004) maintain that “Graduate students face a variety of writing tasks as they work toward their chosen degrees.” (p. 7). Letters of application are required for job hunting, and are not taken into consideration by the majority of teachers in business studies, mainly in Accounting and Finance content area, which implies teaching how they are structured through a specific framework.

BACKGROUND

Origins of Research on Rhetorical Patterns of Organization

Connor (1998) argues that contrastive analysis is an area of research in second language acquisition that aims to identify any problems in writing experienced by second language writers. In fact, it is regarded as a pedagogical solution to the problems of Second Language (L2) rhetorical patterns of organization, suggested by Robert Kaplan (Kaplan, 2005; Matsuda, 1997) in his article entitled ‘Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education’ published in 1966. The article argued that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers should be aware of the rhetorical patterns of organisation that second language students use and that are not familiar with, especially in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) settings. Kaplan suggested a theoretical framework that is affected by the Whorfian hypothesis and that argues that language influences thought. This field of inquiry impacted many researchers

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