

A comparison of rhetorical strategies used by Polish, Chinese and American apprentice writers in argumentative essays

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The differences between native and non-native production do not only encompass such linguistic features as lexical, grammatical or syntactic factors, but they also occur at the macrolinguistic level and are related to the ways discourse is structured by both groups of language users. Such discrepancies reflect broadly understood cultural differences and are studied within the framework of contrastive rhetoric.

This paper presents a study investigating rhetorical strategies used by Polish and Chinese advanced learners of English as well by American native-speaking students. The simplest method was chosen to analyse the discrepancies between the argumentative essays written by the three groups: the comparison of wordlists also known as the keyword analysis. The study revealed interesting textual differences between Chinese, Polish and American essays which reflect the discrepancies in such rhetorical strategies as the choice of general versus experience-related arguments, the level of formality and the use of structuring devices.