Exploring the Placement of the Thesis Statement in Moroccan Students' Argumentative Essays: An Intercultural Rhetoric Perspective

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Abstract- The present study explored the placement of the thesis statement in the Arabic and English argumentative essays of Moroccan EFL master students in relation to the educational context. The study adopted a qualitative research method with triangulation of data sources: questionnaires on the practices of argumentation in the writing classes and the previous writing instruction of the students, the writing tests, and stimulated recall interviews after the writing tests. The data gathered was described and qualitatively analysed adopting within-subject analysis and using frequency counts of the employment and location of the thesis statement. The results revealed a slight dominance of induction (thesis in final position) Arabic essays and predominance of deduction (thesis in initial position) in English essays notwithstanding the traces of transfer in both directions. In this perspective, the educational context, audience awareness, and the proficiency level of the students were found responsible.

Index Terms- argumentation, culture, intercultural rhetoric, thesis statement, writing.

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between culture and writing has been the subject matter of a plethora of studies in applied linguistics. Research on such an issue has pointed to the tight relationship between texts and their context of production (Mauranen, 2001). Many a researcher view writing as a social, personal, and an interactional practice embedded in a culture (Connor, 1996; Hyland, 2009; Kaplan 1966) that serves a purpose in a given context. In relation to writing, culture is claimed to construct students' background "understandings, or schema knowledge, and are likely to have a considerable impact on how they write, their responses to classroom contexts, and their writing performance" (Hyland, 2003, p.36). Culture then is thought to shape students' presumptions and views, including those they employ in their writing and everyday communication. Hence, argument as a type of academic discourse has been reported to be culture-based (Connor, 1996; Drid, 2015; Suzuki, 2010; Uysal, 2008). Specificities of argumentation across cultures and the features that distinguish it from narration or description often deter students from producing well crafted pieces of writing that meet the academic standards, especially when dealing with abstract notions (Raimes,1983). The problem is not owing to linguistic reasons but to the different expectations of writers and audience. In other words, what makes the argumentative essay laborious for most students is that the concept of a compelling argument is governed by the conventions of the target audience or community (Clark, 2003).

For instance, writing an argumentative essay to an Anglo-American audience using writing conventions alien to those of the audience ruins the piece of writing due to the discourse nonconformities that the writer has used (Drid, 2015). The main reason for such a "foreigness" is the fact that cultures differ in "what is seen as logical, engaging, relevant, or well-organized in writing, what counts as proof, conciseness, and evidence" (Hyland, 2003, p. 45). Therefore, a close understanding of culture and argumentation is necessary to setting the theoretical framework for the research paper.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Argument

The origin of the terms *argument* and *argumentation* is the Latin word *argumentum* (argument)*,* which is derived from the Latin verb *arguo* (argue) (Rigotti & Morasso, 2009). In English, argue refers to giving reasons and proving by giving necessary justification (White & Billings, 2008). For Mayberry (2009), an argument is a stand clearly supported by clear-cut evidence and solid facts. Suzuki (2010) defines an argument as an assemblage of statements used to communicate the speaker's opinion or belief likely to build around the use of reason and logical appeal. In academic writing, the terms argument, argumentative, and argumentation are used interchangeably to refer to the type of essays where writers can agree or disagree with an issue providing reasons and powerful arguments and solid evidence to persuade an audience of the validity of one's point of view (Crowhurst, 1990).

Culture

Providing a clear-cut definition for the word 'culture' is quite a difficult task (Connor, 2011), for a myriad of books grapple with the challenge of defining the concept. Culture "has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought" (Williams, 1983, p.87). Culture is "multi-discursive; it can be mobilized in a number of different discourses…. It may be the discourse of nationalism, fashion, anthropology, literary criticism, viti-culture, Marxism, feminism, cultural studies, or even common sense" (O'Sullivan, 1994, pp. 68-69).

Hall (1976) defines culture in terms of the surface culture, the sub-surface culture, and the deep culture. The submersed elements of culture, however, are the most difficult to see and understand as they are invisible. The product of a culture that people easily notice is the visible part of the iceberg. Cultural behavior, social context, and the way people regard situations of a particular culture are the hidden or submersed part that is difficult to see. Atkinson (2004) defines culture in terms of small culture and big culture. While small culture refers to classroom culture, disciplinary culture, youth culture, etc., big culture refers to national and ethnic culture.

Other definitions of culture consider culture as any aspects of knowledge that people of a particular community share to operate appropriately in a social context (Kachru & Smith, 2008). In this vein, Geertz (1973) defines culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (p. 89). Therefore, argumentation as a form of academic discourse (cultural by-product) practised in a small culture (the classroom) is thought to carry the imprints of its culture (Connor,1996; Drid, 2015).

Intercultural Rhetoric

Initiated by the American linguist Robert Kaplan in 1966, early intercultural rhetoric, referred to as contrastive rhetoric, is an area of research in writing that studies the affinities and discrepancies in writing between two languages and cultures. The main objective is to discern how rhetorical conventions of a language and a culture affect the way people write in another (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Influenced by the Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic relativity (Matsuda 2001), which stipulates that the mother tongue impacts the thought patterns of learners and therefore affects their L2 acquisition (Connor, 1996), Kaplan (1966) studied paragraph organisation in ESL students' essays.

Kaplan (1966) identified five types of paragraph development: English, Romance, Russian, Oriental, and Semitic. Whilst the Anglo-European expository essays adopt the linear aspect of paragraph development, Semitic languages favour the overuse of parallel and coordinate clauses as a prominent feature of their paragraph and essay development. The same study revealed that the so-called "Oriental languages" prefer an indirect approach that adopts indeterminate spiral progression of ideas. In the same vein, paragraph development in Romance languages prefer "quasi-linear digressions", and Russian contains aspects which are, according to the linear aspect of Anglo-American paragraph, inappropriate or awkward (Kaplan1966).

Kaplan's hypothesis has attracted widespread criticism due to a number of flaws. Contrastive rhetoric was criticised for examining only the writing of ESL students, ignoring the process of their language acquisition, being ethnocentric (Hinds, 1983), and claiming that the students' paragraphs reflect their cultural thought patterns (Severino, 1993). Contrastive rhetoric has been also castigated for being reductionist, deterministic, and prescriptive, elevating the culture of native speakers of English to the center, while relegating the non-native writers' culture and rhetoric to the periphery (Leki, 1997; Kachru, 1995; Kubota and Lehner, 2004; Spack, 1997).

 The perennial attacks contrastive rhetoric has come under were the initial impetus that has motivated contrastive rhetoricians to broaden the scope of their research and rectify the methods of their investigation. This way, contrastive rhetoric scholars have tried to turn contrastive rhetoric into a more dynamic and viable field. In this context, to differentiate between the often-quoted ''static'' model and the new advances that have been made, the situation necessitates substituting contrastive rhetoric or cross-cultural rhetoric with the term intercultural rhetoric (Connor ,2004, 2008). Hence, intercultural rhetoric has known a paradigm shift by focusing on small and big cultures, giving a new interpretation of rhetoric, exploring intercultural communication, and taking into account the social context of texts (Connor, 2011).

Argumentation and Culture within Intercultural Rhetoric

The interaction between culture and argument has instigated a plethora of intercultural rhetoric studies all over the world. To mention but a few examples, argument is reported to be indirect and inductive in Eastern cultures, such as China and Japan, whereas it is reported to be direct and deductive in Western cultures: Germany, Italy, Greece, France, and the United States (Connor, 1996; Tannen, 1998). In low-context cultures, arguments are reported to be linear and logically developed, while they are reported to be indirect and circular (non-reason based) in high-context cultures (McCool, 2009; Suzuki, 2010).

The placement of the thesis statement in argumentative essays has been reported to be culture-based (Kaplan, 1966; Kubota, 1998; Ostler, 1987). In this perspective, Okabe (1976) maintains that Japanese writers, representing an Eastern high-context culture, use a climactic structure of argument placing the main claim (thesis statement) towards the end. On the other hand, American writers, representing a low-context culture, employ anticlimactic structure of argument, placing the claim (thesis statement) at the outset of the essays. Exploring bidirectional transfer of rhetorical patterns in the Turkish and English argumentative essays of Turkish students, Uysal (2008) found that the participants exhibited a tendency towards deduction (placement of the thesis statement in initial position) in Turkish essays and induction (placement of the thesis statement in final position) in English essays.

Wu and Rubin (2000) explored the impact of collectivism and individualism on the argumentative writing of Taiwanese and American students. They found that Taiwanese students develop their English argument inductively, delaying the thesis statement and avoiding to state their opinion directly, due to the collectivist aspect of Chinese culture. Petrić (2005) compared the students' argumentative essays of Russian before and after short writing

classes to examine cultural differences in writing vis-à-vis the location of the thesis statement. The results revealed that the essays after the writing instruction contained more thesis statements, yet they were less varied in terms of lexical choices and sentences structures.

Liu (2009) examined the placement of the thesis statement in the argumentative essays of sixty high school students in China and fifty American high school students in the United States. The students were asked to write a three-hundred-word argumentative essay in forty minutes, using the words agrees or disagree to facilitate the location of the thesis statements in their essays. The results revealed the placement of thesis statement in initial, middle, and final position in the writing of both groups. Besides, the location of the thesis statement in both students was similar: 92% of Chinese subjects and 86.67% of American subjects wrote their thesis statement at the beginning of their essays.

Alotaibi (2014) investigated the use of the thesis statements in the argumentative writing of eight Saudi students in the United States. The study contrasted the cultural disparities in using the thesis statement in English and Arabic argumentative essays before and after a writing workshop. The study focused on the location of the thesis statement and the linguistic and rhetorical features students use to formulate it. The pre and post-test results revealed different findings. Whilst half of students' essays did not have a thesis statement in the pretest writing, seven out of eight essays contained a thesis statements in the post-test, yet six of them were located in the body and conclusion.

Taking the reviewed studies above into consideration, it is possible to say that the previous research studies that have investigated argumentation across cultures display conflicting results. Whereas some findings have pointed to different forms and types of argument across cultures and confirm the transfer of such elements from L1 to L2, others have found the opposite and therefore reject such findings. Taking such points into account, there seems to be a need for further research as regards the placement of the thesis statement across cultures. In addition, studying the placement of the thesis statement in the argumentative writing of Moroccan students has been a neglected area of research within intercultural rhetoric. The purpose of this study is to account for such a gap.

III.   METHODOLOGY

Taking into consideration the conflicting results of the aforementioned intercultural studies, the present study aims at answering the following research question:

Do the argumentative essays of Moroccan students' exhibit any affinities or differences vis-à-vis the placement of the thesis statement?

Motivated by intercultural rhetoric new directions that call for a shift from the purely quantitative text-based studies and emphasise employing new research methods that take into account the cultural context of the L1 texts, the research at hand is a qualitative study that examines transfer of Arabic rhetorical patterns in the argumentative essays of Moroccan master students at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco. As for data collection methods, the study employed qualitative methods including essays, questionnaires, and interviews to account for the students' placement of the thesis statement in argumentative essays. The reason for such triangulation or blend of techniques was that text analysis alone might fail to highlight the writer's thought or rhetorical patterns (Matsuda, 1997).

Participants

Thirty-four students (n=34) at the Department of English at Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco participated in the study. The students were semester two (S2) master students participated in the study. In terms of English knowledge and writing experience, students had advanced English level, given their major the day of the data collection. In addition, five professors (n=5), chosen via convenience sampling, filled in a questionnaire about some of the teaching practices of argument writing at Department of English at Ibn to Fail University. They have spent between six to fourteen years teaching argumentative writing for undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. Their choice was based on their teaching experience and the levels they teach.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

First, the students completed a questionnaire that sought to know about their language level and past writing instructions in Arabic and English. In addition, the professors at the Department of English at Ibn Tofail University were assigned a short questionnaire. The students 'questionnaire was adopted from the ones used by Liebman (1992) and Uysal (2008). It was modified to meet the objective of the study. The professors' questionnaire was designed by the researcher for the same objective. The purpose was to get information about some of the teaching practices of argumentative writing at Ibn Tofail University.

A week after the administration of the questionnaires, thirty-four students wrote two argumentative essays on two different topics (sixty-eight essays in total). The reason is that writing tests, among other research tools, enables researchers to supplement information collected from other sources (Mackey & Gass, 2007) and underlies the circumstances that controlled the production of that text (Hyland, 2003). First, students wrote Arabic essays on a topic. The following day, the same participants wrote an English essay on a different argumentative topic. The

rationale was to find explanations for students' textual results via comparing students' answers with theirs in the interviews to elicit and ensure solid reliable information.

To analyse the writing process of ESL or EFL subjects, researchers recommend using introspective methods such as think aloud and retrospective methods like stimulated recall interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Such a method is one of the most convenient and frequently adopted to have insight into the cognitive process of students during the phases of writing (Dörnyei, 2007; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Mackey & Gass, 2012). In the present study, students were divided into groups, each interviewed separately one by one Having reached saturation after data coding, twelve students were chosen at random, for no new themes emanated from analysis (Mackey and Gass, 2012). As a retrospective technique, stimulated recall enables researchers to study students' "cognitive processes, thoughts or feelings" (Phakiti, 2014, p.149) during writing. Kasper (1987 as cited in Drönyei, 2007) recommends a short interval, less than twenty-four hours if possible, not beyond forty-eight hours, between the task and the interview.

Method of Data Analysis

To answer the research question, the present study adopted within-subject analysis to examine similar and different locations of the thesis statement in both essays of students. A strategy such as this has proved efficacious in the field of applied linguistics and discourse analysis (Cho, 2010; Doushaq, 1986; Hirose, 2003; Kobuta, 1998b; Uysal, 2008). In addition, the study employed Kubota's (1998) framework: initial (thesis statement in the introduction), middle (thesis statement in the body paragraph), final (thesis statement in the conclusion), collection (no encompassing of the writer's opinion, but the opinion is stated in more than one paragraph), Obscure (the writer's point of view is implicit or unclear). First, a global between-subject comparison was drawn across essays to see whether or not they contain a thesis statement. Next, the location of the thesis statement in Arabic and English essays was examined. After that, a within-subject comparison of students' Arabic and English essays for each essay was drawn. In other words, the between-subject analysis of Arabic essays took place first to examine the location of the thesis statement between subjects. Then, English essays were checked to detect common affinities or dissimilarities vis-à-vis the placement of the thesis statement in the students' writing.

To avoid being trapped into subjectivity, the researcher and two doctorate holders, who have been teaching writing and other skills for thirteen years at high schools, compared every single essay of the same student in both languages. By the same token, the background and professors' questionnaires were analysed to provide evidence

from the educational context of Arabic and English to corroborate or refute the findings of the stimulated recall interviews to provide solid explanatory factors. All data was described and analysed qualitatively, providing frequency counts for the employment of the thesis statement in each essay.

IV. FINDINGS

Analysis of the location of the thesis statement sought to discern the line of argument employed in the participants' essays. Studying the position of the thesis statement was necessary to classify claims as direct/anti-climactic (initial thesis statement) or indirect/climactic (middle and final thesis statement), claimed to be characteristics of high-context and low-context cultures.

Between-subject Analysis of Arabic and English Essays

Table 1
The Location of the Thesis Statement across Arabic Essays

Location of the thesis statement	Number of essays	Percentage
Initial	10	29.4%
Middle	2	5.9%
Final	15	44.1%
Obscure	3	8.8%
Collection	4	11.8%
Total	34	100%

As illustrated in table 1 above, most essays had a thesis statement in a direct or an indirect way, yet the difference exist in where it was placed. As for Arabic essays, remarked was the placement of the thesis statement in final position in fifteen (44.1%) out of thirty-four essays (100%). In addition, ten participants (29.4%) put their statement in initial position, four (11.8%) had unclear thesis statement (obscure), three participants (8.8%) had a thesis statement in more than one position (collection), and two participants (5.9%) located their thesis statement in middle position.

Table 2
The Location of the Thesis Statement in English Essays

The Thesis statement	Number of essays	Percentage
Initial	22	64.8%
Middle	1	2.9%
Final	9	26.5%
Collection	1	2.9%
Obscure	1	2.9%
Total	**34**	**100%**

With regard to the placement of thesis statement in English essays (table 2), twenty-two English essays

(64.8%) out of thirty-four (100%) had a thesis statement in initial position, nine essays (26.5%) in final position, and

three essays (8.8%) a thesis in different positions (see table 2 above).

Within-subject Analysis of Arabic and English Essays
Table 3
Analysis of Similar Locations of the Thesis Statement in Arabic and English Essays

Participants by number	Placement of the Thesis Statement	
	Arabic	*English*
1	Initial	Initial
4	Initial	Initial
6	Initial	Initial
9	Final	Final
15	Final	Final
16	Initial	Initial
17	Initial	Initial
19	Final	Final
21	Final	Final
24	Final	Final
25	Final	Final
27	Initial	Initial
29	Initial	Initial
31	Initial	Initial
33	Obscure	Obscure
34	Initial	Initial
Total	**16**	**16**

As shown in table 3 above, sixteen participants (47.1%) out of thirty-four (100%) had a similar position of

thesis statement in Arabic and English essays. Nine participants (26.5%) put their thesis in initial position, six

(17.7%) in final position, and one participant had obscure thesis statements in both essays.

Between--subject Analysis of Arabic and English Essays
Table 4
Analysis of Different Locations of the Thesis Statement in Arabic and English Essays

Participants by number	Placement of the Thesis Statement	
	Arabic	**English**
2	Final	Initial
3	Collection	Initial
5	Obscure	Final
7	Collection	Initial
8	Final	Initial
10	Final	Initial
11	Obscure	Final
12	Obscure	Final
13	Final	Initial
14	Final	Initial
18	Final	Initial

22	Middle	Initial
23	Initial	Middle
26	Final	Initial
28	Middle	Collection
32	Collection	Initial
Total	**18**	**18**

As shown in table 4 above, eighteen participants positioned their thesis statements differently in both essays. In other words, more than 50% of Arabic and English essays of the same individual had different locations of the thesis statement. For instance, participants 2,8,10,13,14,18, 20, 26, 30 had a final thesis statement in Arabic essays, but they had initial thesis statement in English essays.

The between-subject analysis and the within-subject analysis revealed that having a thesis statement in initial position was the choice of more than half of the participants, especially in English essays. Among of the sixty-eight essays, thirty-two had initial thesis statement, twenty-four had a final thesis statement, five essays had obscure thesis statements, and three essays had a middle thesis. Initial and final positions of thesis statement were the two dominant features in both essays.

Explanation for dominance of induction in Arabic essays came from the interviews. Reasons such as 1) the inability to produce a thesis statement notwithstanding the fact that such a pattern was highly emphasised in writing classes, 2) the inability to employ what had been done in writing classes 3) personal convictions, 4) individual preferences, and 5) unawareness of audience expectations were reported to be among the reasons for the placement of the thesis statement in the participants' essays.

Participants 2 and 31 revealed that writing a thesis statement in Arabic was an arduous task they strove to accomplish. In addition, participants 2 and 14 explained it was their choice to have a final thesis statement in their essays. Participant 14 added he believed "it is a fallacy because in argumentative writing, you cannot actually come forwards and state your opinion" despite the fact that he was aware of the need to provide a thesis statement at the beginning of the essay. By the same token, an explanation for placing the thesis statement in final position found a reflection in some participants' tendency or oblivion to delay their opinion until the end. Participant 14 believed delaying an opinion until the end is the ultimate aim of argumentative writing.

Participant 3, who has been to the United States for many times, provided astounding explanations for having initial thesis statement in English and final collection in the Arabic essay. Asking her about her choices for divergent locations for the thesis statement in Arabic and English, the lady displayed awareness of intercultural communication differences, stating "Arabic is less direct. I feel English is more to the point". She never thinks of

thesis statement when she writes. Such a thing happens unconsciously. On the contrary, participant 24, exhibited reader-responsible tendency, pushing the reader to "have a deep reading to get" his opinion in the English essay. He even claimed it was something he had learnt at school.

The interviews revealed that the writing process the participants followed and the difficulties they faced during the writing process seemed to have contributed to the placement of thesis statement in different positions in both essays. However, there were some special cases that managed to write initial thesis statements even if they did not process their writing.

Participant 3 (collection in Arabic essay and initial position in English essay) explained that thinking about writing the thesis statement hinders her writing, especially in English. She prefers writing without outlining or thinking about thesis statement. Even if she placed her thesis statement initially, she admitted not thinking about the thesis statement during the process of writing. Particpant13 (final thesis in Arabic essay and initial thesis in English essay) indicated that during the pre-writing stage, she had to think about the thesis statement and how to make everything revolve around it. Similarly, participant 14 (final thesis in Arabic essay and initial thesis in English essay) said he had to brainstorm the thesis statement of his English essay, which he came with after writing a map to generate the ideas he wanted to develop. Participant 24 (Final thesis in both essays) thought about the ideas to develop in his essays, yet he did not think about the thesis statement. Participant 2 (final thesis in Arabic essay and initial thesis in English essay) explained that generating a thesis statement was a demanding task.

However, other participants who thought about the thesis statement could position it initially. Participant 1(initial thesis for both essays) said he had thought about having a blueprint for his essay. Participant 4 (initial thesis for both essays) said he had thought about the thesis statement during the pre-writing phase. She had to write an introduction moving from the general to the specific. Participants 17, 27, and 31 (initial thesis for both essays) stated that thinking about the thesis statement took place in the pre-writing phase.

All mentioned participants above indicated they had not processed their Arabic writing or thought about the thesis statement. Only participant 14 said that he had brainstormed ideas and constructed a mind map, yet he had neither thought about a thesis statement nor written an outline. As a result, most of the participants who did not process their Arabic writing ended up having a final thesis statement or collection in Arabic essays except participants 1, 4, 17, 27, and 31 who had initial theses in both essays.

Education might have influenced the way participants placed thesis statements in their essays, especially in Arabic. Despite having enough writing practice, said more than 50% of participants, twenty-seven participants (79.4%) mentioned that the placement of thesis statement was not prioritised in Arabic writing classes. On the contrary, English classes were different from Arabic ones. Asking participants about the features their writing professors accentuated when writing argumentative essays, 28 participants (82.4%) reported it was the thesis statement. Evidence from professors of English questionnaire revealed that writing classes foregrounded thesis statement among other features. All professors (100%) indicated that the thesis statement was part of the writing features they emphasise when teaching argumentative writing.

In sum, the between-subject analysis and the within-subject analysis revealed a tendency towards initial placement of thesis statement in English essays and final placement of thesis statement in Arabic essays. Explanation from interviews pinpointed various reasons behind the participants' employment for inductive style in Arabic and deductive style in English. Such factors include personal tendencies or false convictions about the placement of the thesis statement, inability to make use of classrooms input, absence or inadequate instruction in Arabic writing classes, and inadequate or no writing process regarding both essays. Findings from the questionnaire revealed that education could have played a role in the placement of thesis statement in Arabic and English essays.

V.   FINDINGS DISCUSSION

In the current study, similarities and differences existed as regards the placement of the thesis statement. As for similarities, almost all participants had a thesis statement in both essays either implicitly or explicitly. Moreover, having a similar location of the thesis statement appeared in about half of the essays. Sixteen participants (47%) placed their thesis statements in the same position in both essays. compared to other intercultural rhetoric studies on the same issue, the findings of the present study are to some extent different from the ones by Cho (2010) and Hirose (2003). Cho (2010) reported that Korean students put the main idea at the outset of their English and Korean essays. In a similar vein, Hirose (2003) found that Japanese students placed their thesis statements initially in L1 and L2 essays.

Differences vis-à-vis the placement of the thesis statement were somehow higher. Eighteen participants located thesis statement differently in Arabic and English essays. In the present study, initial placement of the thesis statement in Arabic essays was lower than in English essays. Ten participants (29.4%) placed the thesis statement at the outset of Arabic essay, and 44.1% had a thesis statement in final positions in Arabic essays, favouring inductive

development of argument. As for English essays, twenty two students (64.8%) were found to be more direct in locating thesis statements initially and, therefore, developing their English essays deductively. Thus, it is possible to say that Moroccan students use deductive development of argument, placing the major claim initially. Such findings concur with those of Liu (2009) in which 92% of Chinese subjects placed the thesis statement at the beginning of their English essays.

Nevertheless, the findings at hand do not accord with other intercultural rhetoric studies vis-à-vis the placement of thesis statement as an indicator of deductive style. Alotaibi (2014) found that his participants had middle and final thesis statements. Liu (2007) found that Chinese students develop English essays inductively, with a delayed thesis statement in final position. Uysal (2008) reported that only 28% of her subjects placed the thesis in initial position. Wu and Rubin's (2011) found that Chinese students employed an inductive style of argument development and avoided stating opinion directly owing to the collectivist aspect of Chinese culture. Furthermore, the findings of the present study vis-à-vis the placement of the thesis statement do not accord with Kaplan's (1966) claims that the writing of nonnative speakers of English tend to be non-linear and inductive. The findings of the current study show the tendency of Moroccan students to achieve linearity of argument via placing thesis statements in initial position.

Apparently, the educational context (small culture) where students explained they had been taught the conventions of English essay writing was found responsible for the achievement of such a level of linearity in Moroccan students' English essays. However, the educational context was to blame for not providing enough input in Arabic classes in relation to the thesis statement. Traces of bidirectional transfer of writing conventions were found and could be responsible for similar placement of the thesis statement in both essays, especially from English to Arabic. The writing process strategies adopted by students and the inability to retrieve what they had studied in writing classes could be among the factors that pushed students to resort to Arabic or English writing conventions to structure both essays. Such conclusions were drawn from the interviews and the questionnaires.

VI.   CONCLUSION

The present study has sought to explore whether the rhetorical patterns of Arabic affect the placement of the thesis statement in the English argumentative writing of Moroccan master students. Taking into consideration the recommendations of intercultural rhetoric that call for studying texts within their contexts, the current study showed that Moroccan students, to some extent, tended towards induction in Arabic essays, yet they opted for deduction in

English ones. Many a factor was found responsible for such findings. Arabic and English past writing instruction was found to affect the students' rhetorical and writing strategies. In addition, the writing strategies the students adopted during the writing process of essays, individual choices, and audience were found responsible. Nevertheless, any loose claims that Arabic writing of Moroccan students is inductive will be futile unless future intercultural rhetoric studies analyse the placement of the thesis statement together with the macro-level rhetorical patterns of the Moroccan students to see where they locate their topic sentences and how they develop their paragraphs.

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