RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PERSUASIVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION OF ARABIC AND SPANISH L₂ LEARNERS: FOCUS ON CROSS-CULTURAL AND COGNITIVE VARIATION

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ABSTRACT

Ever since 1980s, much research has been done investigating the writing processes of L_2 writers of different ages and abilities. Despite the abundance in such a research, there seems to be a dearth of studies on comparing the writing proficiency of both Arabic and Spanish speakers persuading in English. Motivated by such a huge research gap, this study was undertaken to answer the following questions: (1) what factors affect L_2 learners' accurate performance in writing, apart from their level of morphosyntactic competence? ; (2) from the cognitive perspective, do Arabic speakers differ from Spanish speakers during writing persuasive texts?, and what is the nature of this difference (if it exists)?; and (3) from the cultural perspective, do Arabic speakers differ from Spanish speakers in writing persuasivetexts?, and what is the nature of this difference (if it exists)?.

The subjects were ten foreign graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh, USA. They belonged to two different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The first was from the Arabic language group, and the second was from the Spanish linguistic group. The data were taken from (1) a questionnaire; (2) writing a persuasivetext, and (3) individual interviews. The data were analyzed qualitatively. Results were obtained and conclusions were made regarding the cognitive and cultural aspects of the subjects' persuasive texts.

Key words: Persuasive texts, Arabic and Spanish Speakers, Contrastive rhetoric

1. OVERVIEW

1.1 The Purpose

This study was undertaken to answer the following questions: (1) what factors affect second language learners' accurate performance in writing, apart from their level of morphosynctactic competence?; (2) From the cognitive perspective, do Arabic speakers differ from Spanish speakers during writing persuasive texts? And what is the nature of this difference (if it exists)?, and (3) From the cultural perspective, do Arabic speakers differ from Spanish speakers in writing persuasivetexts? And what is the nature of this difference (if it exists)?

1.2 Rationale

Choosing persuasive tasks is motivated by the finding reported by Connor and Lauer (1988). Both scholars have maintained that although there is a wealth of research on cross-cultural differences in expository writing, there is a lack of cross-cultural research into persuasive texts. To my knowledge, the only well-known study in the area of research is Connor's (1987) study of argumentative patterns in persuasive writing of English, German, Finnish, and U.S. high school students

According to Purves (1988), the following conditions need to be met in cross-cultural studies: (1) the basic premise of contrastive rhetoric is that we must deal with at least two groups of writers; (2) the settings in which the writing occurs should be as similar as possible; (3) the writing task should be consistently set in its function and cognitive demand as-well as in the specific subject matter; (4) the language in which the writers are writing must be defined; (5) the occupation of the writers should be similar or, if not, should be defined and accounted for as variable, and (6) the education of the writers should be similarly defined and described. Furthermore, Soter (1988) points out that one of the chief problems in setting common tasks for culturally and linguistically diverse groups is in finding common experience in the mode of writing selected, as well as knowledge of the subject matter to be written about.

Writing is viewed here as a complex process. In order to help L_2 learners write effectively in a second language, researchers need to examine writing from, at least, three interrelated perspectives: (1) linguistic, (2) cognitive, and (3) cultural aspects. This view is compatible with Vahapassi's (1982) line of thinking. According to Vahapassi's (1982) analysis of the concept of writing, the important contextual factors in a writing situation are (1) cognitive demands related to the topic and content, (2) social and intersubjective demands of writing concerning the purpose and audience of writing, and (3) linguistic and rhetorical demands of writing concerning the mode of discourse.With this understanding in mind, writing is defined, here, as (1) a communicative act that differs from speech although both share some similarities. (2) A creative discovery process, (3) a problem solving activity, and (4) a complex process that is constrained by linguistic, cognitive, and cultural conditions. And, with this definition in mind, the present study is based on the following premises, drawn from Purves (1988) extensive research contrastive rhetoric. (1) morphosyntactic competence is only a prerequisite to writing in a foreign/second language. That is, the fact that a student can understand the structure of individual sentences in a language does not necessarily guarantee that he/she can produce coherent and communicative written texts in that language. In fact, several national studies have shown that students in the United States perform at a remarkably low level on writing tasks (Boyer, 1983).(2) A composition is a product arrived at through a process. Both are equally important for effective models of instruction. (3)Different composing conventions do exist in different cultures. Every culture has its own specific conventions that may distinguish it from other cultures. (4) Writing is a social phenomenon. It is an act for negotiating meaning with some identifiable set of human beings. And this requires far more than a minimal control of syntactic and lexical items in the target language. Finally, from a cognitive point of view, we might consider the fact that the demands on short term/working memory might exceed capacity because students must not only plan, compose, revise, and reflect but must also access vocabulary, grammar rules, etc (Bitchener and Basturkmen, 2006; Conley, 2008; Kimberly, 2009).

1.3. Hypothesis

The general hypothesis of this study was that although the subjects in both groups have, supposedly, reached a high degree of competence in English as a target language, their overall performance in the tasks used in this study will display various degrees of competence in English. That is, by comparing the performance of the five subjects in each language group, and that of each group's members against each other, we expect to see

various degrees of performance.Specifically, it was hypothesized that the overall competence of second language learners is not systematic all the way (Bialystok, 1982). This study hypothesized that although the subjects in both language groups nay share certain structural and stylistic commonalities in writing tasks, culturally and linguistically specific features will be apparent in their writing products. Similarly, the subjects in both language groups may have distinctive sets of cognitive behaviors while writing the persuasiveessay (see Eskildsen, 2008; Gass & Mackay, 2011).

1.4. Subjects

The subjects of this study were ten foreign students at the University of Pittsburgh. They belonged to two different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The first was from the Arabic language group and the Middle Eastern culture. The second was from the Spanish linguistic group and South American culture (See Table 1; Appendix 1). The ten subjects were engaged in advanced graduate studies in various majors at the University of Pittsburgh. They can, therefore, be considered "advanced" language learners, and their overall competence in English is rather high.

1.5. Instruments / Tasks / Analysis

A questionnaire was administered to elicit information from each subject. The questionnaire (See Appendix I) consisted of two parts; each containing eight questions. The first part aimed at eliciting background information from each subject about his/her name, country, sex, age, linguistic repertoire and the extent of his/her exposure to the English language, either in his/her home country or in an English speaking environment. The second part of the questionnaire aimed at eliciting information about subjects' awareness of the nature of task they were asked to perform. Each subject in each language group was asked to write a persuasive text on the topic stated in Appendix 2. Instructions were given to each subject, before s/he wrote. I gave these instructions orally at the beginning of this meeting.After the subjects in both language groups wrote the persuasiveessay, they were interviewed individually. The interview with each subjectfocused on each student's written production in the persuasivetexts. Each subject was asked to describe how s/he approached the persuasivetext, how s/he started essays, developed his/her thoughts and ended his/her essays. Each subject was asked to describe how s/he would write the same persuasiveessay in his/her native language; whether it would be the same or different, and finally how each subject perceived his/her native language and culture as possible factors in shaping his/her written production. This means that each subject was asked to retrospect and reflect on the cognitive aspects of his writing process of the text. Subjects' interviews were transcribed by the researcher and, then, reviewed by a native speaker of English with background in such tasks. The mechanism of conducting the interviews is based on Gass' (1983:277) claim that one of the ways to understand the mechanisms of L_2 learners' performance is to ask them (learners). Specifically, Gass suggests that for second language learners the ability to think and talk about language might involve abstract analyses of a number of different types. It might include, for example, (1) analyses of their own language, (2) a comparison between their native language and the target language, (3) a comparison between their native language and other languages previously learned, or even (4) a comparison between the target language and other languages previously learned. With this understanding in mind, the interview was considered as an opportunity for each subject to retrospect and talk about his performance and/or his/her knowledge.This interview was inductively-oriented.Analyzing the data was based entirely on the individual's explanations, and aimed at accounting for the differences within and across the two language groups. Similarly, each subject's explanation of how he/she approached the persuasivetext , how he/she started both essays, developed his/her thoughts and ended his/her essays was reported. Each subject's explanation of how he/she perceived his/her native language and culture as factors in shaping his/her written-production was also reported.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Recent attention to communicative competence, with its emphasis on sociolinguistic factors of language use, has led to the erroneous impression that communication is an oral phenomenon. In other words, communicating in English has always been associated with students' ability to speak appropriately. For too long, therefore, proficiency in English has meant only oral proficiency. Consequently it has been considered quite appropriate to wait a fairly long time before the initiation of writing composition instruction.

Writing has now attracted the attention of researchers, practitioners and language teachers (See Boughey, 1997; Gaffield-Ville, 1998; Blanton, 1987; Mancie, 2000; Porte, 1995, Pearce, 1998). As Coombs (1986:115) suggests, "writing in a foreign language constitutes an important part of language proficiency. Like speaking, writing shows that the individual can use the language to communicate". In this regard, Buckingham (1979) also maintains that writing is no less communicative in intent than speech. Writing, like speech, is intended to reach a specific audience with specific, recognized characteristics, and has the intent of inducing, maintaining, or eliminating specific mental or physical behaviors in the reader. As Terry (1989: 51) maintains, 'we write to communicate both to ourselves and to others. We write because we need to communicate for social, business and professional reasons; we need to find out information; we need to give information' (see Centeno – Cortes, 2004; Braaksma et al. (2004); Knutson, 2006; Roca de Larios et al., 2006; Beare & Bourdages, 2007; Van Weijen et al., 2008; Weijen et al., (2009). Pea & Kurland (1987) maintain that the basic reasons for learning to write are (1) to write is to think and reflect, (2) writing can help communication with others, (3) writing may make one a better reader, and (4) writing can give writers a better sense of their own voice. They further claim that although not all people have the interest in writing as art, writing as communication is a necessary skill. (See Silva & Leki, 2004; Canagarajah, 2002; Nation & Macalister, 2011).

It must be emphasized that writing on one's mother tongue is a demanding task that calls upon several language abilities, as well as upon more general (meta) cognitive abilities. Writing in a second language is even more demanding, because several of these constituent, abilities may be less well-developed than in one's first language. For example, linguistic knowledge of the L2 may be limited, and the accessibility of this knowledge may be less rapid or automatic (see Schoonen et al., 2003). In addition, most existing writing models focus on the writing process (Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1983; Kellogg, 1996) or on the development of writing proficiency (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) more than on the characteristics of the cognitive and linguistic resources needed for writing. However, process models do acknowledge that writers need to have certain resources available.

Ever since the 1980s, much research has been done investigating the writing processes of L_2 writers of different ages and abilities. There are a series of controversial issues in second language (L_2) writing research (Casanave, 2004). As Mu and Carrington (2007) maintained, some researchers assert that L1 writing processes are different from L_2 writing processes (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Lee, 2005; Martinez, 2005). Other researchers emphasized the similarities of the two processes (Schoonen et al., 2003). Some other researchers argued that it is the cultural difference that results in L_2 students' rhetorical organization problems (Kaplan, 1966; Scollon, 1999), while others negate this claim (Hirose, 2003). It is acknowledged that culture influences L_2 writing, but the genre of the writing task completed by L_2 writers, cognitive development and interlanguage development should also be taken into account. On the other hand, despite the abundance in research on L2 writing process, there seems to be a dearth of studies on the writing processes of Arabic and Spanish speakers persuading in English. In addition although the literature is replete with studies on the written production of second language learners, there has been (to my knowledge) no attempt to consider the writing proficiency of L_2 learners from the various interdependent aspects that influence it. The majority of the studies that have been conducted on the writing of L_2 learners have been concerned with a single aspect of the writing skill, either linguistic, cognitive or cultural. To my knowledge, no single study emphasized or investigated the three aspects combined. It is my contention that writing in a foreign/ second language involves, at least, three interrelated skills: linguistic, cognitive and cultural. In this regard, Taylor (1976) points out that regardless of language proficiency, a writer also needs to master the essentially non-linguistic intellectual and cognitive skills which underlie writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Lindemann, 2001). Moreover, there has been a great shift from examining the written product to focusing on the writing process. In this regard, Hairston (1982:84) maintains that "we cannot teach students to write by looking only at what they have written. We must also understand how that product came into being, and why it assumed the form that it did. We have to try to understand what goes on during the act of writing... if we want to affect its outcome. We have to do the hard thing, examine the intangible process, rather than the easy thing; evaluate the tangible product" (Lillis & Curry, 2011; Tyler, 2011, Seglawitz, 2011).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Two ways to look at language and contrastive rhetoric

There have historically, been two quite different ways of looking at the nature of language, and each has led to a different theoretical posture. On the one hand, in what has been called 'general' linguistics, the object of inquiry has been seen as an independent language system composed of unique and invariant structural and semantic rules. Accordingly, "it is perfectly logical to investigate language as a separate entity because it has an independent existence unrelated to human production or use (Grabe& Kaplan 1993:176). On the other hand, language is perceived not as an independent system, but rather as a human product and a social tool. According to this perception, language is the product of the human mind and is therefore inseparable from that mind and all its attendant subjectivity, value-orientation and emotion. According to Grabe& Kaplan (1993), contrastive rhetoric derives its origins from such a view. It is also important to point out that contrastive rhetoric is responsive to cultural – use preferences, and not simply to difference in language structures and their frequencies of use (Grabe, 2001; Gregorious, 2011).

The term 'contrastive Linguistics' in especially associated with applied contrastive studies advocated as means of predicting and/or explaining difficulties of L_2 learners with a particular mother tongue in learning a particular target language. Although Lado (1957) included a comparison of cultures, early contrastive studies focused on what has been described as microlinguistic contrastive analysis: phonology, grammar and lexis. In spite of the criticism of applied contrastive linguistics, contrastive studies continued and their scope was broadened. Accordingly, in the 1970s and 1980s, contrastive studies became increasingly concerned with macrolinguistic contrastive analysis: text linguistics and discourse analysis.

Applied contrastive studies are based on a physiological foundation represented in the "transfer theory". It states that learners transfer what they already know about performing one task to performing another similar task. In other words, L_2 learners tend to transfer to his/her L_2 utterances the formal features of his/her L_1. Such a transfer can be either positive or negative. Positive transfer occurs wherever there are similarities between the two languages. This kind of transfer is also known as facilitation because similarities between languages can facilitate learning. On the other hand, negative transfer occurs wherever the two languages differ. This type of transfer is also known as "interference" (See Hinkel, 2011; Hua, 2011). The value of contrastive studies lies in its ability to indicate potential areas of interference which is the chief source and the most important source of errors, but not the only source. In this sense, in determining the differences encountered by L_2 learners, contrastive studies can contribute to language teaching.

As Grabe and Kaplan (1993) indicated, the notion of contrastive rhetoric emerged in the middle 1960s from an essentially pedagogical impetus. In early research reported in Kaplan (1966, 1972, 1988), a large number of international student compositions were examined and a number of patterns emerged from those examinations: "it seemed clear that the writing in English of students whose native languages were Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian, etc., was systematically different from the writing of comparable students who were native speakers of English" (Grabe& Kaplan, 1993:182). Kaplan (1966) sought to mdiscover whether organizational papers of written material vary from culture to culture. Since the appearance of Kaplan's study, the notion of contrastive rhetoric, along with the issues surrounding the transfer of cultural patterns in L_2 writing, has grown into an area of study. According to the proponents of this line of research, the style in which each culture organizes and presents written material reflects the preferences of that particular culture (Anderson, 1991; Carlson, 1988; Connor & Johns, 1990; Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Connor, 2002; Connor, 1997).

Many research studies have confirmed that many ESI writers do use different first language rhetorical patterns when writing English (Anderson, 1991; Morcos, 1986 "English vs Arabic"); Alptekin, 1988; Cheny, 1985, Scollen&Scollen, 1981 "English vs. Chinese"; Montano-Harmon, 1988; Santana Seda, 1974 "English vs. Spanish"; Bickner&Peyasantiwong, 1988; Indrasuta, 1988 "English vs. Thai"; Hinds, 1987; Kobayashi, 1984; Ricento, 1987 "English vs. Japanese".

3.2. Language, Thought and Culture

One of the most prominent debates in linguistics in the past century has been the issue of how language, thought, and culture are interrelated. Boas noted that language is used to classify our experiences with the world. Because languages have different ways to classify the world, different people will classify

theworld differently, based on the languages they speak. Sapir, one of Boas' students, expanded Boas' basic idea thatour thoughts themselves are channeled byour language. All of our thoughts are "done" in language; so the language we speak canshape our thoughts. Sapir's theory is that people will have different ways not just ofclassifying but also of actually thinking about the world. In this regard, Sapir defined culture as what a society does and thinks. Language is a particular how of thought.

The person most associated with the idea that language can influence both thoughtand culture is Benjamin Lee Whorf, an associate of Sapir. Based on his studies on several Native Americanlanguages, Whorf developed a principle that he called "linguistic relativity", which hedefined as follows: "users of markedly different grammars are pointed by the grammarstoward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts ofobservations, and hence are not equivalent as observes but must arrive at somewhat differentviews of the world" (1956:58). This, essentially, meant that the language someone speaksaffects how she perceives the world. Based on his analysis of the Hopi system, Whorf made the claim that language influences thought, which may in turn influence culture.

There has been another revolution in our thinking about writing in recent years, and it has come from learning to view writing as a process that is embedded in a context. It has been recognized that writers from different cultures havelearned rhetorical patterns that may differ from those used in academic settings in the UnitedStates and that are reinforced by their educational experience in their specific cultures(Purves, 1988).Vahapassi (1988) proposes that different cultures differ in terms of the functions ofwriting emphasized in school, typical writing assignments, appropriate topics to write aboutand appropriate form of task instruction. That is, the approach to writing instruction adoptedin different cultures and school systems is related to the general goals of education, theconception of language functions, and the process of writing. Fundamentally, educationalviews, including the goals of education, are shaped by the nature of the society in which theschool system is embedded, including the goals of writing instruction (Hinkel, 2004; Connor,2002). Scribner and Cole (1981) and Heath (1983) examined the relation of culture todiscourse and particularly to written discourse. Both studies pointed to the fact that writtentexts, and the ways in which they are used and perceived, vary according to the cultural groupto which an individual belongs. In addition, both studies pointed to two aspects of thatvariation: the content or what is written, and the rhetorical forms used to encode that content,both of which constitute the surface manifestations of cultural differences. Scribner and Cole,and Heath suggest also that behind these surface manifestations of culture difference lie threeother aspects of discourse, and particularly written language. The first of these aspects is therelative stress given to the functions of discourse. The second is the cognitive demand of thediscourse, that is, the degree to which the writer must "invent" either the content of the 'written text or the form of the text. The third is the pragmatics of discourse''. In this regard, Purves(1988) maintains that written language and the activities involved in composing or readingand responding are highly conventional (Mu & Carrington, 2007; Casanove, 2004). To sumup, both the content and the language to express this content are culturally determined. To beeffective, writers have to learn what is expected of them within their own culture.

Consequently, differences in cultural expectations are an obstacle for those who are learningto write in a foreign language. Under the influence of the norms within their own culture;they may deviate from the norms of the foreign culture in what kind of material are to beincluded in a particular variety of written discourse, what style is appropriate, and how the discourse is to be organized (Cooper &Greenbaum, 1988). Purves (1988:19) points out that"...the differences among rhetorical patterns do not represent differences in cognitive ability,but differences in cognitive style. When students taught to write in one culture, enter anotherand do not write as do the members of the second culture, they should not be thought stupidor lacking in "higher mental processes". Recalling Rumelhart's (1975) notion of Schematheory, it appears that in order for L_2 learners to write effectively in a second language, theymust develop the schemata related to the written rhetorical styles of the target language.Thus, the L_2 writer has to become familiar not only with the linguistic forms of the languagebut also with the written discourse patterns and conventions of that language (Lillis & Curry, 2011).

3.3. Research Evidence for Contrastive Rhetoric

Cross-linguistic language development research in the past decade showed howchildren acquiring different languages exhibit preferences for different sorts of linguisticstructures (See Berman &Slobin, 1994; Slobin&Bocaz, 1988). In addition, socioliguistics and the study of literacy have provided further evidence of variation in discourse which canonly be understood in terms of the socio-cultural contexts. That is, patterns of discourse useare socially and culturally shaped (Grabe& Kaplan, 1993). Many research studies haveshown that different cultures have different ways of doing things with language. Thesedifferent uses are culturally and socially shaped (Clancy, 1986; Ochs, 1988; Philips, 1983).Moreover, post-structural approaches to the critical study of text, and their emphasis on thesocio-historical forces which shape our writing, have argued that any text is the product ofmultiple forces, all of which are, in some way, contextual. As Grabe& Kaplan (1993)conclude, given this diverse array of supporting evidence for the general notion of contrastiverhetoric, it would seem appropriate to acknowledge contrastive rhetoric's broad theoreticalappeal (See Nunan, 2011).Widdowson(1987:iii-v) argues that "because texts have schematic structures which are culturallyvariable, writers from one culture who write for readers in another culture often haveproblems with the identification of audience expectations and so, with cross culturalcommunication". Glenn et al., (1977) analyzed meetings of the U.S. Security councilconcerning the Arab-Israeli war. They identified three general styles of presentinginformation. US delegates used a "factual-inductive" approach in which facts were studied first and conclusions drawn from those facts. On the other hand, the Soviets' predominantstyle was "axiomatic-deductive", in which a general theory was first advanced and then factswere studied within that framework. In contrast, the Arab delegates were four times as likelyto use on "intuitive-affective" approach, in which positions were expressed through personalappeals and emotions. The researchers concluded that when cultural styles of persuasion andthinking differ to this extend, effective communication is greatly reduced (Reid, 1993; Roca de Larios& Murphy, 2006).

3.4. Previous Research on Arabic and Spanish

Kaplan (1966) found that Arab students who were writing in English were seen aswriting in a pattern characterized by repetition and elaborate parallelism rather than in a linear pattern. Oster (1987) found that, on the oral to written continuum, Arabic studentswriting in English use language and organization that places that writing near the oral end ofthe continuum. They tended to use long sentences joined by coordinate conjunctions,repetition and syntactic balance. Oster argued that Arabic ESL writers are heavily influencedby classical Arabic; a language which is more reflective of oral traditions in language use (See Sa'Adeddin, 1989). Hatim (1991) reinforces the point that Arabic writers havehistorically had the option to develop arguments in writing in terms of balanced counterarguments,presenting the opponent's view, but then, countering it. In modern Arabic,however, a preference is given to argumentation which either makes no reference to anopposing view or presents a lap-sided argument with an explicit concessive (Grabe& Kaplan,1993).Research on Spanish writers shows that Spanish writers prefer a more 'elaborated'style of writing greater use of both coordination and subordination in clause structuring (SeeReid, 1988; Montano-Harmon, 1988, 1991; Lux, 1991; Lux &Grabe, 1991; Reppen&Grabe, 1993).

4. RESULTS/DISCUSSION

4.1. Cognitive Aspects of Students' Persuasive Writing

Based on the students' explanations, I can argue that persuasive writing was a little bit easy for the students. This can be due to the fact that the nature of the persuasive writing is closer to the academic life of many of the subjects. Even those who never wrote such a persuasive letter before did not have a serious problem handling the writing task. Almost all subjects in both language groups demonstrated an awareness of the demands of the task. Spanish subject (1) appeared to conduct a very deep mental representation of the second writing task. First, she considered the situation as 'completely hypothetical' and, second, she had to decide whom she would address and, then, tell him/her about what she wants and why she deserves it. She was totally aware of the requirements of the task, 'I had to convince this person to give me the extension' (Line: 960). Therefore, she pointed out that she planned for her writing and her plan sprang from the writing assignment itself:**S.962. okay... if you need an extension, it is because somehow you have some problem that you couldn't**

finish during the time you had... it is there; although you didn't tell me that, but by saying extension, I know. First, I have to create... invent this problem. On the other hand, the Arabic subject (2) indicated that the first thing he thought of after having read the persuasive assignment was how to convince his sponsor of his request for an extension. During the interview, subject (2) pointed out that he thought of this, first, because he never faced such a situation before and, accordingly, he tried to make the situation 'as a reality', 'realistic' and 'more convincing'. He also indicated that he organized his thoughts and planned for his letter before starting to write. In addition, subject (2) indicated that the type of the writing task that L_2 learners encounter imposes various demands. In this regard, he offered his perceptions of thedifferences between writing a narrative story and a persuasive letter. For example, the story could be long so that readers could have a chance to understand what he was writing about. That is, if they cannot understand his ideas from the first paragraph, they might be able to understand from the second one. And even if they fail to understand from the second paragraph, they might be able to do so from the whole story. But, the persuasive letter should be short, to the point, and convincing. In addition to the type of the writing task, the nature and setting of the writing assignment, according to subject (2) can affect the written production of L_2 learners. For example, in written classroom examinations, L_2 learners have to think of both the ideas and grammar structures simultaneously, because they are constrained by a specific amount of time. But, in writing a term paper, for example, L_2 learners have a chance to write and check their structures at their convenience. In this regard, subject (2) pointed out that he had to stop writing, from time to time, to check the grammaticality of his sentences.As his actual written letter and verbal explanations indicate, the Arabic subject (3) decided to state some facts about his program and the degree requirements. And although his letter is persuasive enough, subject (I) seemed not to be concerned about his audience (his sponsor). That is, he responded successfully to the writing task without having his audience in mind; rather, he wrote the letter as an assignment that needs to be done. In such a case, it seems that subject (3) was concerned more with satisfying the requirements of the writing task and the researcher, than appealing to the people who will receive the letter:**S. 438.... because those people whom I sent my letter to are not the decision makers of my extension... they just take my letter... they report to my university back home that I asked for an extension**.

Spanish subject (3) indicated that before she started to write her persuasive letter, she had an idea of what the letter should include and how she should proceed: 'I have to put all the facts together, and (2) 'I have to be more specific not general'. Arabic subject (4) thought of two things when he read the persuasive assignment: (1) he imagined that he was facing a problem in which he could not finish his studies within the time offered to him and, consequently, he had to ask for an extension, and (2) how to put his ideas on the paper. He, actually, pointed out that he had a specific plan in his mind before starting to write his letter. His main concern was how to convince his sponsor. In so doing, he relied on stating facts pertinent to his academic career. In contrast, Arabic subject (5) indicated that he immediately thought of whether he is doing good in the school or not, and whether he has a problem with the school or not, because 'my request will be denied if such a problem occurs' (Line:715). He also indicated that he did not have a specific plan for his persuasive letter: 'I just started writing... I think I started with strong points... I am doing extremely well in the school and my school has no problem with me' (Line: 717). It seems that subject (5) achieved what Anderson (1983) called spreading activation which identifies and favors the processing of information most related to the immediate context (or sources of activation). Also, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argued that the appropriateness of the information retrieved will depend on the cues extracted and on the availability of information in memory. They further claimed that the retrieval takes place automatically through the spread of activation, without the writer's having to monitor or plan for his writing. Finally, Spanish subject (5)'s relationship with her real sponsor appeared to affect her writing of the persuasive letter. She indicated that in her real-life situation, she 'didn't need to write to convince my sponsor... I only need permission from my university to stay and sponsor will agree if the university says yes' (Line: 1438). Accordingly, her perception of her real sponsor appeared to cloud her estimation of the persuasive letter, forgetting that the assignment asked her to convince her sponsor.

4.2. Difficulties and Strategies of Writing Persuasive Letters

Spanish subject (1) indicated that it was difficult for her to start her letter because she could not figure out what could be the problem. To create it, she resorted to her real academic life to get her ideas. She pointed out the following:**S.966. If I have finished the dissertation, now, and you ask me to write an extension... a letter of extension, it would be probably impossible... I will have to invent the whole thing, you know.**Spanish subject (2) indicated that writing a persuasive letter was difficult:**S.1112. Because I have never sent a formal letter to any financial institution... it was more difficult to perceive something I have never done before, but even I wasn't familiar with such letters, the topic was related to my life as a student.**Consequently, subject (2) found it difficult to start his essay and, this essay 'took more time to decide how to initiate it' (Line: 1114). In addition, subject (2) pointed out that he had contradictory feelings when he realized that he was to write such a letter:**S. 1110. ... this is basically American University issue... but it is not an important issue in our country... this is not a typical situation in my past experience, and my academic experience in Latin America, but this is an important reality for someone who wants to study and stay in the U.S.A. and to obtain a Ph.D.**

Arabic subject (3) was mainly concerned with the organization of his letter. Specifically, he was torn between writing the letter as he would any other correspondences with his sponsor, or writing it to 'persuade the officials so they believe I need to have this extension' (Line: 426). Finally, Spanish subject (3) indicated that her major problem was:**S.1224. ... to apply the rules... the cultural rules of the American people... in Spanish we use a lot of sentences and we are not specific, but here, I said to myself, I need to be to the point.**She also indicated that it was not difficult for her to write the persuasive letter because it was related to her real life as a student. That is why her persuasive tools in the letter are facts that pertain to her real situation at the university: 'you know, if I have to send a real letter to my sponsor it will contain the things I wrote in this letter' (Line: 1230).

In conclusion, analyzing the Arabic subjects' explanations indicates that, although each of them approached the persuasive essay in a unique way, it seems that there is a general pattern that all subjects share. That is, while Arabic subjects (2), (3) and (4) had planned for their writing before they started, subject (5) did not. While subjects (2), (4) and (5) showed audience awareness, subject (3) was mainly concerned with organizing his essay, and no audience awareness was shown. Also, based on subject (2)'s explanations, it seems that learners' perceptions, or what can be called prior knowledge of the task they are performing, has an undeniable effect on their written production. On the other hand, analyzing the Spanish subjects' explanations indicates that prior planning was a common strategy for all the Spanish subjects, except for subject (5). In addition, while subjects (1) and (2) stated that writing a persuasive essay was more difficult than writing a narrative story, subject (3) stated that persuasive writing was not difficult for her. And, while audience awareness helped subjects (1) and (3) to retrieve and write down relevant information, it appeared to cloud subject (5)'s threads of thoughts. Finally, while most of the subjects indicated that they were familiar with such type of writing tasks, subject (2) appeared not to be fully comfortable with the idea of writing a persuasive essay.All the above observations indicate that it is still unclear what can be considered simple or complex writing tasks, since the subjects have different knowledge backgrounds. In addition, it is still unclear what can be considered familiar to the subjects or unfamiliar. And, although there has been a call for the students' need to consider their audience when they write, it seems that audience awareness may cloud writers' ideas in the absence of (1) writers' understanding of the requirements of the writing task, and (2) writers' self-belief in the value and status of their audience. Overall, the behavior of the subjects in writing the persuasive essay corresponds to what the knowledge-telling model indicates. This point will be further explained later.

4.3. Cultural Aspects of the Arabic Students' Persuasive Writing

Analyzing the Arabic subjects' explanations shows a divide on opinion regarding the Arabic culture's effect on the Arabic subjects' persuasive essays. While subject (4) maintained that native culture did not affect persuasive writing, subjects (3) and (5) clearly indicated that their written production was affected by their native culture. More interestingly, subject (2) took a neutral position.Arabic subject (2) indicated that his native culture may affect his writing of a narrative essay more than it did in the persuasive letter. In this regard, he gave two reasons: (1) 'because [in] the persuasive letter... you have some points... direct points' (Line: 343), and (2) 'I didn't write any letters back home... so, it was more from myacademic study here more than my country'.

Subject (2) pointed out that his culture affected his view of how to persuade other people or convince them with his own ideas: 'don't feel that you are lower than them because they have the authority... and if you state your point of view without, you know, lowering yourself, you'll get what you want' (Line:345). That is why he tended to state facts pertinentto his academic career, in his attempt to persuade his sponsor:**S.345. That is what my culture taught me...that be a human being... don't feel that you are lower than them because they have the authority**.Moreover, subject (2) pointed out that if he were to send a similar persuasive letter to an American sponsor, he would write it the same as the one he wrote to his Saudi sponsor.6Arabic subject (3) indicated that his native culture affected his writing of the persuasive letter. Because there is some trust between the student-writer and his audience, based on Islamic rules, he felt that he did not have to convince them of his request: 'just tell them that this guy needs extension, whether he deserves or not' (Line:446). Belatedly, the people who will receive the letter, as previously indicated, are not the decision makers. Hence, subject (3) did not, seriously feel that he should convince them: 'when I write sometimes to some agencies back home I don't have to convince them' (Line:448). Furthermore, subject (3) indicated that if his audience is an American sponsor, he will do his best to persuade and convince them because 'they will take your paper seriously and what youwrote in the paper is the   thing... that is my perception' (Line:448). Subject (3) indicated that if he were to write such a persuasive letter to an American sponsor, he would write it differently: 'sending a letter to American people, they need something which is logic... that is my view' (Line:438). By the word 'logic', subject (3) meant the following:**S.442. Something based on American culture... some details... something that has to do with the constitution of the organization... I need to cite something from the rules. I mean, some items from their constitution... I have right to have this because you have such and such, so, as if I am talking in the court... the is my belief...**. Arab subject (5) pointed out that he can get the extension without even writing a letter to his sponsor; just a phone call is enough:**S.721. this goes back to the relationship between us. We are a very small country... Kuwait, and we have good relation even with people we don't know... I don't know the guy but without writing any paper, he will approve my extension; not because I am a good student or he know me before, but the cultural thing... we trust each other... we are only two million people and... he knows my family... I think these things count.**Subject (5) indicated that if he were to write such a persuasive letter to an American sponsor, his letter would not differ from the one he wrote to his Arab sponsor: 'sinceI have strong points, I can use them with American or non-American' (Line:723).When asked about his persuasive tools, subject (5) indicated that he relied on stating facts like his 'general point average', never having asked for an extension before since he started his program at the university, being the first one in his country who came to the university and, being helpful to his friends when they have problems. Contrary to what subjects (2), (3) and (5) thought of their native culture's effect on their strategies and feelings about persuasion, subject (4) totally denied any effect. During the interview, he indicated that the letter he wrote 'can convince anybody; Arab or American' (Line:576), although he pointed out that if he were to write a persuasive letter to an American sponsor, this letter would be different from the one he wrote for his Egyptian sponsor:**S. 576.... it will be the same, but as a culture, it should be different a little bit, you know, because every people... they think differently.**However, subject (4) indicated that his native culture did not affect his writing of the persuasive letter: 'most of the Arab people they try to play with words to convince the other people', but 'I didn't do this here... maybe because you asked me to write it in English, maybe if you asked me towrite it in my native language, it may be different... you know' (Line:582).Subject (4) pointed out that he did think in English when he wrote the letter: 'I followed the American style when I wrote it' (Line:584).

4.4. Cultural Aspects of the Spanish Subjects' Persuasive Writing

During the interview, the Spanish subjects demonstrated what can be called 'cultural competence.' That is, they were aware of their native culture's ways of thinking as well as those of the target language. This cultural competence helped the Spanish subjects to be aware of the differences between persuading an American sponsor and persuading a Spanish sponsor. As they indicated, in writing to a Spanish sponsor, persuasion should be polite, indirect, formal, niceand the audience should feel good about themselves. In persuading an American sponsor, the writer should be direct, to the point and brief. Moreover, based on the Spanish subjects' explanations, it seems that the Spanish culture's effect was constrained by such factors as (1) the subjects'

perceptions of their own culture, and the target culture, as well. It seems that the Spanish subjects tended to intentionally disreveal their identities as Hispanic. This attitude took various forms, either suggesting that their persuasive writing is a combination of Spanish and American cultures; denying theeffect of their native culture altogether; claiming that this is the way they write without knowing whether Spanish affected their written productions or not, or indicating that they followed the American style of writing. This is not to suggest that the Spanish subjects were not proud of beingHispanic. Quite the contrary, they demonstrated a great loyalty to their own native culture. But, they seemed to be concerned about other people's opinions of them and their culture. So, to play it safe, they tended to disreveal their identity. When asked whether or not her native culture affected her writing of the persuasive letter, Spanish subject (1) indicated that this letter was a combination of Spanish culture and American culture. The Spanish culture was represented in what I may call 'fighter's spirit' that subject (1) shows in her persuasion:**S. 968.... In Spanish, we say you have something to stand by your petition... you are not asking something up in the air... you are asking something because you have the guts to do so.**

Subject (1) indicated that if she were to write this letter in Spanish, there would be a great difference between the letter in English and the one in Spanish: 'In Spanish, you have to be extremely polite and indirect'. However, she indicated that she tried to follow the English style in writing the persuasive letter:**S.982. If you are writing in English, you write the way it is in American, you cannot write Spanish style in English.**Finally, subject (1) indicated that if she had to write this letter six years ago, she would follow the Spanish tradition: **S. 984. Now, I live in America, and the money comes from an American... so, I have to convince the American people by talking to them in their own style.**

Spanish subject (2) indicated that if he were to write a persuasive letter 'in Spanish, it would have 'the same logic': 'the way I wrote reflects, in my view, the main things they are looking for in a letter' (Line:1118). He further pointed out that the only difference maybe in what he called 'the social dimension or what he is going to do after graduation':**S.1118. I should tell my Spanish sponsor of that. This is of great value to Latin American institution... and higher than an American institution.**His awareness of Latin American culture and how it differs from the American culture made subject (2) adopt theAmerican style of persuasion, as he perceived it, and refrain from following that of his own culture:**S.1120. ... there is a couple of things; the first is the social dimension or what I will do for my country after I finish my degree; and the second is the nature of the research I am doing: what are the benefits of this research to my people?... these things are not mentioned in my letter here... but if I am writing a letter to Latin American, I must make a reference to them. I didn't mentioned them in this letter because American sponsor needs to hear my academic performance, whether I get A's or C's or whatever. They need facts related to I as a student.**She further, explained her main concern which took a lot of thought, as follows:**S.1228. ... the problem was I don't need to be general... the reader wants to know what is the purpose... why I wrote this letter and how I justified my request I asked... this was the main thing I thought about...**

Subject (3) indicated that if she were to write such a letter in Spanish, she would be more formal:**S.1234. I will not refer to 'him' or to 'her'... I will always say 'I am asking to your organization'... 'I am asking your institution' or something like that... so, it will not be personal... not 'him' or 'her'.**However, as subject (3) indicated, the persuasive tools in the Spanish letter would be similar to those used in the English letter: based on facts, 'because it is still my real life... ah... a real situation' (Line: 1236). Spanish subject (3) indicated that she did not know whether or not her culture affected the way she wrote the persuasive letter or the ideas included. The following is her explanation.**S.1238. This is the way I will write to American person or Spanish person or institution... ah... I don't think being Spanish native has anything to do with this letter. I am not sure of this.**Subject (3) admitted that her native language used to interfere in her writing in English but, she is not 'aware and able not to let this happen'. Even when she feels that her English structures sound like Spanish, she always scratches and writes them in a different way:**S.1216. ... you know, when I was new in this country I didn't know to write English sentences as they should be... I used Spanish structures a lot in English but this time, now, I don't think I do this.**She indicated that she didn't have to think in Spanish, and then translate her structures into English:**S.1222. ... the ideas were clear in my mind... I just have to put the thoughts I have in**

English... Sometimes when I write and the idea is difficult for me to express or say in English... that is true... sometimes I think of Spanish and then this makes it easier for me.. but here I didn't have problem finding the ideas... they are clear in my head.

Spanish subject (5) seems to have adverse feelings against the American culture and extreme pride in her own culture. Being unable to adapt herself to the American culture and being apparently incompetent in the English language, she failed to perform successfully in the writing tasks, error correction analysis and, even her verbal explanations were unclear and biased towards her native language and culture. When she was asked about the first thing that came to her mind when she read the persuasive assignment, she gave the following response:**S.436. That I want to go to my country... I want to go to my country, but I need to be here more time.**Subject (5) also indicated that if she were to write a persuasive letter in Spanish, this letter would be shorter than the one she wrote here. In the Spanish letter 'you have to be indirect and be nice'. In this regard, she shows her feelings about American behavior: 'In English, you say I want this because... but in Spanish, it is impolite'.

In conclusion the above explanations show that the Arabic-subjects had a sense of how the Arabic and American cultures differ. This understanding of cultural differences helped them to write in such a way that suits their audience. In many cases, the Arabic subjects indicated that the letters they wrote could be sent to American sponsors as well as Arabic sponsors. This means that because they learned to write persuasive essays in American institutions, they tended to follow the American style of persuasion which, according to them, could also be used to convince an Arab sponsor.We should not deny the fact that the Arabic subjects had been in the U.S.A. for such a long time that they become able to read the American mind, and know how they convince their American superiors of their appeals. For example, subject (1), who indicated that he should consider three factors in writing to an Arab organization (pronouns of address, decorated ideas and the length of the letter), indicated also that he should be clear, brief and to the point if he had to write to an American organization. Also, subjects (2), (4) and (5) indicated that their persuasive essays could also be sent to an American sponsor since they relied on facts and appeals to reason as persuasive tools. They also indicated that they followed the American style and the American ways of thinking in writing their persuasive essays. Subject (3), however, was the only Arabic subjectwho indicated that his persuasive letter to an American sponsor was totally different from the one he would write to an Arab sponsor. That is, he tried harder to convince his American sponsor of his appeal, while he would not have to do so with his Arabic sponsor because of the reasons he gave in his explanations previously reported.

Based on what has been already mentioned, it seems that the Arabic culture's effect on the Arabic subjects' persuasive writings was constrained by the following factors: (1) whether they learned persuasive writing in the U.S.A. or in their home countries; (2) the degree of exposure to the target culture and whether or not they adopted its ways of thinking; (3) students' beliefs about the value of persuading their sponsor to get the extension, since some of them could get the extension even without writing anyway, and, relatedly, (4) the degree of seriousness in attempting to persuade their audience, which determined the subjects' persuasive behaviors.Finally, analyzing the Spanish subjects' explanations indicate that there is a tendency among the Spanish subjects to deny their native cultures effect on their persuasive writing.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1. Complexity of Writing – Attention Theory

The qualitative analysis of the data showed that there are many reasons for students' errors, in addition to students' incomplete knowledge of grammar. Two of the major reasons are (1) the complexity of writing in a second language; therefore, students were unable to do more than one thing simultaneously during writing, and (2) students' focus on the meaning and generating ideas rather than grammar accuracy. Based on the subjects' explanations during the interview, one can argue that writing in a second language is a multidimensional activity which requires L_2 learners to do more than one thing simultaneously. The results of this study seem to support Perl's (1980a, 1980b) findings regarding the behavior of students writers. Specifically, Perl found that both skilled and unskilled writers discover their ideas in the process of composing. Composing, as described by some of the subjects, seems to be a process of discovery, exploring ideas and presenting them in the best way

possible. It is creative and may not be based on a clear sense of direction or explicit plan. It is true that some of the subjects indicated that they had a specific plan before writing their essays; however, their plans were not static but rather dynamic, that is, it allows for further discovery and exploration. In other words, the subjects of this study seemed to experience writing as a process of creating meaning. Rather than knowing from the outset what is it they will say, these students explore their ideas and thoughts on paper, discovering in the act of doing so not only what these ideas and thoughts are, but also the form with which best to express them. (Brown, 2009; Robinson & Ellis, 2011; Sebba & Mahootian, 2011).

Moreover, the composing behaviors of both Arabic and Spanish speakers appeared to correspond to what the knowledge-telling model says. Based on the subjects'explanations, it is clear that writingpersuasive texts was a matter of just telling about theknowledge or the events of their   letters.According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), knowledge-transforming strategies are only found in people who actively rework their thoughts, consider whether the text they have written says what they want it to say and whether they themselves believe what the text says. In the process, they are likely to consider not only changes in the text but also changes in what they want to say. Thus, it is that writing can play a role in thedevelopment of their knowledge. (Ortega, 2003; Williams, 2005).In addition, the composing behaviors of the subjects do not totally support Flower and Hayes' (1980) model of writing. Specifically, in terms of planning not all subjects planned for their writings. Those who planned for theirwritings were of two types: (1) some of the subjects did have a full and complete plan for their writing, including the details that their essays should include; (2) other subjects did have a general sense of direction, withoutknowing in particular what they would say. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) called such behavior "what next strategy." Some other subjects explained, however, that they did not have any images, proposition or feelings of knowledge to be used in writing. Rather, they wrote what they remembered;one event after the other. The Spanish subject (3), for example, did not think of organizing her thoughts and, as she said, she did not have to elaborate on anything because it was easy for her "to remember what happened." (See Segalwitz, 2011; Tyler, 2011; Walker, 2011).

The only mental process that was identified by Flower and Hayes, and also found in the subjects' behavior was the process of "translating," which is defined as the process of turning ideas into written language. However, the two mental processes "reviewing" and "monitoring," as defined by Flower and Hayes, were never reported by the subjects except the Arabic subject (1) and the Spanish subject (4).Analyzing the Arabic subjects' explanations shows a divide on opinion regarding the Arabic culture's effect on the Arabic subjects' persuasive essays. While subject (4) maintained that native culture did not affect persuasive writing, subjects (3) and (5) clearly indicated that their written production was affected by their native culture. More interestingly, subject (2) took a neutral position.During the interview, the Spanish subjects demonstrated what can be called 'cultural competence.' That is, they wereaware of their native culture's ways of thinking as well as those of the target language. This cultural competence helped the Spanish subjects to be aware of the differences between persuading an American sponsor and persuading a Spanish sponsor. As they indicated, in writing to a Spanish sponsor, persuasion should be polite, indirect, formal, niceand the audience should feel good about themselves.

In persuading an American sponsor, the writer should be direct,to the point and brief.(Ferris and Hedgecock 2005; Wang, 2003).

Moreover, based on the Spanish subjects' explanations, it seems that the Spanish culture's effect was constrained by such factors as (1) the subjects' perceptions of their own culture, and the target culture, as well. It seems that the Spanish subjects tended to intentionally disreveal their identities as Hispanic. This attitude took various forms, either suggesting that their persuasive writing is acombination of Spanish and American cultures; denying the effect of their native culture altogether; claiming that this is the way they write without knowing whether Spanish affected their written productions or not, or indicating that they followed the American style of writing. This is not to suggest that the Spanish subjects were not proud of being Hispanic. Quite the contrary, they demonstrated a great loyalty to their own native culture. But, they seemed to beconcerned about other people's opinions of them and their culture. So, to play it safe, they tended to disreveal theiridentity.(Silva and Brice, 2004).In conclusion, this study suggests that writing in a second language involves three interrelated skills: linguistic, cognitive, and cultural. Regardless of language proficiency, students also need to master the

essentially non-linguistic intellectual and cognitive skills which underlie writing. (Devitt, 2004; Schulz, 2001; Loewen et al., 2009).

6. PEDAGOGICAL REMARKS

If culture can be defined as "the overall system of perception and beliefs, values andpatterns of thought that direct and constrain a social group" (Porter & Samovar, 1991:15),then teachers must understand how culture must necessarily inform their classroompedagogy. As Reid (1993:49) argues, "What teachers know about key cultural issues willdetermine what assumptions they make about their students, and their assignments. Nophilosophy of ESL teaching can ignore the dramatic effects that culture has on languagelearning in the ESL classroom".

As Brown (1986) maintains, by recognizing different world views and different waysof expressing reality, we can recognize some universal proper ties that bind us all together inthe world. Similarly, Bennett (1988) and Wallace (1988) argue that both learning andteaching in a cross-cultural or multicultural classroom demand more than just tolerance forcultural differences; they demand appreciation and respect for differences. In this regard,Bennett (1988) states that intercultural communication is an interactive process, a mutual creating of meaning. Any form of cross-cultural communication is subjective in itsinterpretations; that is, absolute judgments cannot be made.It must be emphasized that differences among rhetorical patterns do not representdifferences in cognitive ability but rather differences in cognitive style. They should not bedescribed as a stigma or a deficiency (Reid, 1993: 62).

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APPENDIX (1)

PART ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.   Name:

2.   Country:

3.   Sex: Female: _____   Male: _____

4.   Birth Date:

5.   How long did you study English in your country?

6.   How long have you been in the U.S.A.?

7.   Had you ever been in an English speaking environmentbefore coming to the United States?

8.   If your answer to Question (7) is `YES' - please, statehow long? And where

PART TWO:

9.   What did your previous English classes give most attention to? Please number in order of importance, #1 being the most important, #5 the least important.

       _____ Listening   _____ Reading   _____ Writing

       _____ Vocabulary   _____ Grammar

10.   In your home country, what did your teacher of English give attention to in teaching writing? Please, number in order of importance, #1 being the most important, #5 being the least important.

       _____ Content   _____ Organization   _____ Vocabulary

       _____ Language use   _____ Mechanics

11.   Do you think learning to write in English is important? Please explain your answer.

12.   Do you think learning English grammar affects your writing in English? Please, explain your answer.

13.   Did you learn to write English compositions in the form of stories?

       _____Yes   _____No

14.   If your answer to Question (13) is 'YES', where did you learn it?

       _____In the U.S.A.   _____Back Home

15.   Did you learn to write English composition to convince someone else of your opinion?

       _____Yes   _____No

16.   If your answer to Question (15) is 'YES', where did you learn it?

       _____In the U.S.A.   _____Back Home

APPENDIX (2)

WRITING TASK: PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Write a letter to the financial agency that supports your education in the United States. In this letter, you are asking for an extension of six months so that you can finish your studies. Be sure to explain your position clearly in order to convince your "sponsor" that you really deserve extra time.

Table 1: Distribution of the subjects

SUBJECTS	COUNTRY	AGE	YEARS OF LANGUAGE	YEARS OF EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH IN U.S./ENGLAND	SPECIALIZATION
ARABIC					
1	Syria	30	10 Years	5 Years	Linguistics
2	Saudi Arabia	25	6 Years	5 Years	Physical Education
3	Saudi Arabia	34	4 Years	4 Years	Instruction/learning
4	Egypt	44	10 Years	3 Years	Instruction/Learning
5	Kuwait	33	12 Years	4 Years	Public Administration
SPANISH					
1	Honduras	27	1 Year	5.5 Years	Sociolinguistics
2	El Salvador	2?	2 Years	1 Year	Computer Science
3	Paraguay	39	2 Years	2 Years	Economic Development
4	Chile	38	25 Years	6 Years	Spanish Linguistics
5	Honduras	37	2 Months	2 Years	History