Cultural Influences and Transfer Issues Across L1 and L2 Argumentative Writing: EFL Performance in Writing

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Studies about written discourse indicate that what is represented as an effective argumentation is culturally driven and L1 specific rhetorical or argument patterns may influence written argumentation in a second language. The present study, thus, explored the argument preferences of people from the same cultural background across their L1 and L2 texts within an educational-cultural framework. Participants who had acceptable writing knowledge and skills in their L1 and were holding at least B.A. degrees were selected. To insure the homogeneity of the participants they were given an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and those who had appropriate writing proficiency level were selected. First, participants were given a background questionnaire regarding their previous writing instruction that served as the "small cultural context" to contextualize the findings; then, they wrote argumentative essays both in their L1 and L2. The texts were analyzed mainly in terms of argument structures based on Toulmin's (1958) model of reasoning, Hinkel's (1997; 2005) indirectness devices, Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, and language style. Then, stimulated recall interviews were conducted to learn the reasons behind the participants' use of detected patterns and their transfer. The results showed the students' performance in writing is affected by cultural patterns, confidence in L1 writing, audience, language proficiency, and previous L2 experiences.