“It’s like a story”: Rhetorical knowledge development in advanced academic literacy

Christine M. Tardy*

Department of English, DePaul University, McGaw 232, 802 W. Belden Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614, USA

Abstract

In the academic ranks of schooling, writing tasks move gradually from a focus on the transmission of knowledge to the transformation of knowledge. As a more complex writing task, knowledge-transforming requires writers to engage in the rhetorical act of persuading readers of their work’s value, significance, and credibility. At the graduate level, writers may be wrestling with these issues for the first time, often discovering this more occluded rhetorical dimension only after they have become somewhat more comfortable with issues of generic form or subject-matter content. This paper explores the nature and role of rhetorical knowledge in advanced academic literacy through the writing of two multilingual writers. As these writers engage in high-stakes writing tasks, their rhetorical knowledge of disciplinary writing becomes more explicit and more sophisticated, influenced by mentoring, disciplinary participation, identity, and task exigency.

Keywords: Advanced academic literacy; Disciplinary writing; Rhetorical knowledge; English for academic purposes

As students move through the academic ranks of education, they progress gradually from tasks of “knowledge-telling”, in which they write to prove their understanding of existing knowledge, to more complex tasks of “knowledge-transforming”, in which they actively construct new knowledge. For student–researchers like graduate students, these advanced-level knowledge-transforming tasks are almost always difficult because they ask new researchers to wrestle with issues of their own identity as novices writing to and in a community of experts. Such tasks require not only subject-matter knowledge or formal genre knowledge, but also an understanding of how to write convincingly to expert...
readers. This paper focuses on the pivotal writing practices of two multilingual graduate students during a 2-year case study at an American research university, as they complete research-based writing tasks for their advisors and larger disciplinary communities. Like prior case studies of advanced academic writers (e.g., Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 2002; Riazi, 1997), this study follows changes in the writers’ advanced academic literacy tasks over time. In contrast to these previous studies, however, my primary focus is on the writers’ evolving rhetorical understanding of writing within their disciplinary settings.

1. Rhetorical knowledge development and advanced academic literacy

Literacy practices are a foundational feature of academic environments, where students read and write a variety of texts as they work their way through the curriculum. At more advanced levels of education, however, literacy extends beyond simply an ability to read and write. In graduate school, for example, students need to learn ways of thinking about, interacting with, and constructing knowledge of disciplinary communities and content. It is only with this level of literacy that students can become active members of their field, presenting papers to their peers, publishing their work in journals, and writing grants for future research. This advanced academic literacy (AAL) requires much more than linguistic ability; it also demands rhetorical insight into the disciplinary community’s ways of building and disseminating knowledge.

Despite its importance, discussion of rhetorical knowledge has been surprisingly scarce in studies of AAL development for multilingual writers. While rhetorical issues certainly are touched upon in research into knowledge of form and communities of practice, they remain a less explicitly studied element. One reason for this relative absence may be disciplinary, as second language scholarship has traditionally been rooted in the study of linguistics rather than the study of rhetoric. But a further obstacle to the study of rhetorical knowledge for multilingual writers is the lack of an articulated definition of the construct itself and an understanding of how multilingual writers develop this type of knowledge.

The earliest discussions of rhetoric within multilingual writing research are found in Kaplan’s (1966) pioneering article on cross-cultural thought patterns. Rhetoric in this early work was equated with paragraph organization rather than with Aristotle’s classic definition of rhetoric as “an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, trans. 1991, p. 36). More recent descriptions of rhetorical knowledge can be found within discussions of disciplinary writing expertise, particularly in first-language (L1) composition studies. Jolliffe and Brier (1988), for example, outline four components of writers’ knowledge in academic disciplines, corresponding roughly to the rhetorical concepts of audience, invention, arrangement, and style. Invoking these fundamentals of classical rhetorical theory underscores the authors’ view that “writing for an academic discipline [is] essentially rhetorical behavior” (p. 38). Particularly relevant to a discussion of rhetorical knowledge is their definition of audience knowledge as “the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community” (Bartholomae, 1985, as cited in Jolliffe & Brier, 1988, p. 40).

Beaufort (2004) has similarly delineated rhetorical knowledge as one knowledge domain within disciplinary writing expertise, defining it as “considering the specific audience for
and purpose of a particular text, and how best to communicate rhetorically in that instance” (Beaufort, 2004, p. 140).

Discussions of rhetorical knowledge are also found within definitions of genre knowledge. The relationship between these two domains is somewhat indistinct, but for the purposes of this paper, I will consider rhetorical knowledge as one essential dimension of genre knowledge; that is, it is necessary but not sufficient, in the same way that knowledge of generic form or subject-matter content alone is inadequate for genre users. Rhetorical knowledge is the part of genre knowledge that draws upon an understanding of epistemology, background knowledge, hidden agendas, rhetorical appeals, surprise value, and kairos (rhetorical timing), as they relate to the disciplinary community in which a given genre is situated (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Bhatia, 1999). In scientific research genres—like those described later in this paper—rhetorical knowledge is embodied in fundamental concerns like the explicit recognition of the structure of the field, viewing knowledge production as a web of interrelated social activity, and accepting the dialectic nature of knowledge (Bazerman, 1988). In order to successfully persuade readers of a work’s value and significance, therefore, academic writers need to grasp the ideologies of a community—and this is a quintessentially rhetorical task.

McNabb (2001) demonstrates specifically how rhetorical knowledge may emerge in the development of AAL. Examining graduate student submissions to Rhetoric Review, McNabb finds that these papers tend to lack the “epistemic presentation” that is essential for creating an authorial niche. He illustrates how graduate student submissions that were revised (and eventually accepted) in response to peer reviews maintained their basic argument but altered the presentation and framing of that argument; his example provides convincing evidence that readers are persuaded not only by what is said, but also by how it is said. Graduate student writers may lack this “knowledge of an active and changing world in which authors agree or disagree, make alliances and dissolve them, make progress on a problem or get distracted” (Geisler, 1994, p. 212). Expert writers, on the other hand, see texts rhetorically, existing within social activity, created by and for real people; rhetorical knowledge is therefore a crucial part of advanced academic literacy, which demands writing for and within a social group.

The process of developing rhetorical knowledge has been researched and theorized, though primarily for L1 writers. Carter’s (1990) pluralistic theory of expertise, for example, views performance-guiding knowledge as a continuum from general to highly contextualized local knowledge, akin to the type of rhetorical knowledge described above. His theory describes a complementary relationship between local and global knowledge, acknowledging that both are important in writing expertise. Local knowledge of a specific domain becomes crucial at higher levels of expertise, and this knowledge, Carter argues, is developed through the experience of reading and writing within a local domain and through guidance from teachers or mentors. In her model for developing academic writing expertise, Geisler (1994) sees writers as beginning in a stage of knowledge-telling (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), in which they view texts as autonomous and collapse the rhetorical knowledge domain within the content knowledge domain. At more advanced stages of expertise, writers can abstract the “rhetorical-problem space” from the “domain-content space”; here, they begin to view texts as having authors, claims, credibility, and temporality. While both Carter (1990) and Geisler (1994) offer useful frameworks for
understanding the development of rhetorical knowledge in academic writing, their models grow out of research with L1 writers. The present study explores the development of rhetorical knowledge for two L2 writers, focusing on the nature of this knowledge and the influences on rhetorical knowledge development in advanced academic writing tasks.

2. Methodology

The stories that I describe here are those of two graduate student writers studying at an American university. Both writers had lived in the US for only 12–18 months when I first met them, and in each case this was their first time in an English-medium academic setting. Paul was enrolled in a Master’s degree program in computer sciences and also worked as a research assistant in a lab that studied handheld devices; the director of the group was Paul’s advisor. Paul participated in my study during the second (and final) year of his master’s program in computer sciences. A native of the People’s Republic of China, Paul had lived in an English-speaking environment only for the 2 years of his Master’s degree. He was a self-acknowledged computer fanatic whose eventual hope was to obtain a position in the computer industry as a game developer in either the US or China. While he had toyed with the idea of continuing on for a doctoral degree, Paul eventually decided that he was better suited toward the ‘practical’ work of industry rather than more “theoretical” work of academe.

Chatri seemed somewhat more at home than Paul in an academic research environment. After completing his Master’s degree in his native country of Thailand, Chatri worked for several years as a lab researcher. Chatri later moved to the US to enroll in an electrical engineering doctoral program, focusing on computer vision research; like Paul, he worked in a research lab run by his advisor. Chatri participated in my study during his busy second and third years as a doctoral student, as he successfully completed a qualifying exam and wrote two international conference papers and his preliminary paper (a precursor to the dissertation). After graduating, Chatri planned to return to Thailand to work as an academic. Although he often lacked confidence in his work, Chatri did not express the same discomfort with academic research as Paul. Instead, he seemed intrigued by the process of finding an important problem to study and then learning how to tackle that problem.

The two writers volunteered to participate in this study by sharing their writing and discussing it with me in regular taped and transcribed interviews. I collected approximately 160 pages of writing and conducted 11 interviews with Paul over a 1-year period. The writing was composed in classroom and research settings and included homework problems, reviews, term projects, writing class assignments, job application materials, and multiple drafts of his master’s thesis. Chatri participated in my study for 2 years, during which I collected approximately 240 pages of his writing and conducted 20 interviews with him. Most of Chatri’s writing that I was given was research oriented, including class projects, conference proposals, conference papers, and his early drafts of his dissertation research. In this paper, I will focus on only a subset of this larger data pool, including all drafts of Paul’s master’s thesis and Chatri’s research papers as they worked
through multiple stages of revision; nevertheless, the larger data pool has informed my analysis and interpretations.

This corpus of written texts was analyzed in various ways, including genre analysis of move structures and textual analysis of linguistic and rhetorical features. Qualitative coding was used to analyze the interview transcripts, specifically identifying the writers’ multidimensional knowledge of different academic genres over time. While analysis of the written texts allowed me to trace changes in their performed academic literacy, the interviews provided further insight into the writers’ knowledge of literacy and some of the influences on that knowledge development. Finally, intertextual tracing (Prior, 2004) of the writing and interviews was used to locate influences on and changes in the writers’ texts and textual knowledge over time.

3. Pivotal points in rhetorical knowledge building

Development of rhetorical knowledge is certainly a long-term process; yet, as I traced this process for Paul and Chatri, I found certain pivotal points at which they made visible leaps in knowledge. These points came in high-stakes tasks that were a part of their independent research, rather than in the lower-stakes tasks that typify most classroom writing. Such high-stakes tasks have tangible outcomes and involve expert readers to whom the writers must present new knowledge claims of value and significance. The writers encountered more resources for knowledge-building in these high-stakes tasks, and they expended the time and energy to marshal these resources. I recount here Paul’s rhetorical knowledge development as he worked on his Master’s thesis and Chatri’s as he composed research papers for graduate work and conferences.

3.1. Paul

A Master’s thesis can pose many challenges for students as it is usually their first piece of extended academic writing. It may also be their first attempt at presenting their work to a scholarly audience consisting of more than a single instructor. With few exceptions, students lack previous experience in writing a Master’s thesis, or similar genres, and must learn the expectations, procedures, and conventions of the task while carrying it out.

Paul had not produced any lengthy texts in English prior to his thesis. During his graduate work, Paul had written homework assignments, short reviews, presentations, and a few project reports. Outside of school, he had written numerous reports as an intern at a local computer company. Paul described this workplace writing as more ‘natural’ than academic writing because it required—as he described it—merely writing down what he had done. Academic writing, he believed, required more explanation and greater focus on style:

For example, I think in [a course project] paper, there’s lots of statistics formula and theory, and not everybody have that background. [...] And I will explain my idea step-by-step from the easiest thing to difficult. But for [workplace] documentation,
I think that it’s not necessary. I just write down what I did. [...] There’s no difficult algorithm, no difficult theory. (01/23/03)

When Paul first began thinking about his Master’s thesis, he knew very little about the genre, guessing that it may be “similar to a paper, but not so formal” (12/12/02). Paul’s advisor, Dr Xu, helped him find a topic that would be more practical than theoretical, and Paul spent 4 months conducting experiments and gathering data. The writing itself took place over 3 months during which Paul wrote four drafts, receiving extensive feedback from Dr Xu on two of these; this feedback was fundamental in Paul’s development of rhetorical knowledge.

From the early stages of thesis writing, Paul struggled with issues of organization, describing this as the most difficult aspect of the task. When he began to work on the first draft, Paul spent a great deal of time reading papers and “thinking how to organize my results, how to organize my thesis, how many parts, how many sections there are” (05/13/03). He saw organization as the biggest challenge he had had up to that point and thought that it would also be a challenge if he were writing in Chinese. Looking at the organization of another Master’s thesis provided Paul with some ideas for organizing his own thesis, and he was able to adopt largely the same organization as the sample.

Research papers became an additional resource for Paul in these early stages, as his texts were often culled together from multiple sources:

On the desk, I put several papers related to my topic. On the screen, I put several papers there. So, I look at this and this, and I put them together, select the best of them [laughing]. (05/13/03)

The organization that Paul finally settled on for his first draft matched his goal of providing readers with sufficient background knowledge of the key concepts in his research—a feature that he saw as characteristic of academic writing, as mentioned above. Paul aimed to explain every detail that his readers may need in order to understand the thesis:

Every concept in my experiment should be explained well in some introduction section. [...] So, for each of them I need to explain first what the concept is and what’s the state of the art of that concept. After that, when I show the result about concept, it will not be strange to the reader. (05/13/03)

Although he did attend to his audience in terms of background knowledge, Paul focused primarily on linguistic rather than rhetorical elements at this early stage of writing. He admitted to “pay[ing] attention to every word I use”, saying repeatedly, “I want it to be perfect” (05/13/03).

Paul spoke in detail about the introduction of this first draft. The purpose of this opening section, he felt, was to provide a “high-level overview” of the topic. Drawing upon his experience reading academic papers, Paul had built a sense of the purpose and appropriate length of an introduction. He felt that it “should not be too detailed” and “it should not be more than one page.” He noted that most introductions in academic papers were relatively brief, providing “an overall view about the paper, about the topic.” And he felt that the introduction should capture the main points of the paper: “I think if some person didn’t
have time to go through my thesis, he can look at the abstract and introduction and get the idea” (05/13/03). His comparison to academic papers suggests that Paul noted a resemblance between the two research genres (i.e., theses and papers). With limited experience in thesis writing, he applied his knowledge of another genre which he perceived to be similar, though overgeneralizing some of the formal features—such as length and purpose—to a different rhetorical situation. After reading his first draft, Dr Xu told Paul that the draft was ‘extremely terse’, a comment that Paul interpreted to mean that he should go into more detail and lengthen the text. In revising this first draft, Paul expanded the content but maintained the overall organization.

Dr Xu wrote extensive feedback on the second draft, focusing heavily on organizational issues. He advised re-organizing the thesis by integrating some of the background details into the experimental results rather than outlining them all in the introduction. He stressed the importance of showing the work’s significance, writing: “It is boring to read IPSec details (which are other people’s work) before understanding why one should care.” Elsewhere on the same page, Dr Xu reiterated this point, stating, “The question to answer is why choose IPSec to study?”

Dr Xu’s comments led Paul to thoroughly revise his introduction, including the following changes: (a) adding a direct statement of the need for this research, (b) adding the purpose of the research, (c) revising background details to provide a more general overview, (d) omitting details about IPSec security protocols and algorithms, (e) adding meta-text to clarify the advantages and disadvantages, (f) adding details about the use of IPSec on handheld devices, and (g) including a roadmap of the entire thesis. These revisions transformed the initially brief and general introduction of 291 words into a more rhetorically-sensitive introduction of 581 words. Changes to the opening paragraph, which blends Paul’s own words with the words of his advisor, are illustrated in Fig. 1.

Despite the heavy hand that Dr Xu played in these revisions, Paul’s changes were not simply mechanical responses to his advisor; instead, Paul had begun to develop a new understanding of the rhetorical goals of the text. Whereas he had previously focused on building readers’ background knowledge, he later believed that readers would be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Draft</th>
<th>Third Draft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Handheld computing devices with wireless network connections have the potential to become powerful mobile tools to access information and software resources from anywhere at any time. The access of sensitive data has fueled a tremendous growth of secure wireless sessions to ensure secured data transmission. | 1 Introduction
Handheld computing devices with wireless network connections have the potential to become powerful mobile tools to access information and software resources from anywhere at any time. Wireless networks, however, are vulnerable to intrusion. Therefore, Securing wireless data transmission is highly critical. On the other hand, the computation and energy cost to achieve security can be high. Since the resource on handheld devices is limited, it is important to evaluate the cost of data security on such devices. In this thesis, we evaluate the cost of running the IPSec protocol. |

Fig. 1. Opening paragraph from Paul’s thesis drafts. Shared words between the two drafts are underlined; words borrowed from Dr Xu are italicized.
interested in the logic of his thesis, stating, “I should convince them my experiment is important for understanding this new technique” (06/26/03).

After Paul’s thesis had been written and defended, Paul viewed organization as inextricably connected to both content and the goals of the genre. He also began considering how such rhetorical issues might influence his writing in other domains and tasks:

One thing I learned from this is when I wrote something quite long, I must make it clear that what I try to express is interesting to readers. I cannot just put lots of experimental results in my writing without explaining what’s the importance of this result and why we should care about this experiment. (08/04/03)

If I were to write something in the future, I will first introduce the background clearer before I go ahead to other parts. It is like a process of convincing people, and the whole thing should be very-like a story. It’s a complete story. It has some other part needed, and the reader should not feel foreign when he is reading my writing. I think, for example, in my first draft, which is 10 pages long. I just state the fact and the result I got without giving solid evidence why it’s important. And so I was likely to be questioned by readers why we should care about your work. If I got a defense based on my first draft, I’m going to be in big trouble! (08/04/03, emphasis mine)

The last time that I met with Paul, he returned several times to this notion of convincing readers of his work’s importance. He conceded that he had “seldom consider[ed] this an issue before,” but that he thought that he would think about this in the future when writing “similar things to convince people, like a proposal” (08/04/03).

3.2. Chatri

Chatri’s roles within his disciplinary community differed in important ways from Paul’s. Having already completed a Master’s degree and having worked full-time as a researcher in Thailand, Chatri had been involved in research for several years when I first met him. For Chatri, pivotal points in rhetorical knowledge development came as he began participating more actively in his research community, submitting his work to a conference and peer reviewing a journal manuscript; it was through these tasks that Chatri began thinking of writing as a tool for convincing others. I traced changes in several of Chatri’s research papers written for various conferences and small-scale journals over three and a half years, as well as his comments on that writing during the latter 2 years of that time frame. During this period, Chatri developed more complex rhetorical knowledge; he altered his strategies for constructing what he called ‘the story’ of his research, for building claims of significance, and for selling his work to the disciplinary community.

While the overall structure of Chatri’s research papers remained largely the same over time, he modified his move patterns within the introductory sections of his papers. As Hyland (2000) illustrates, generic move structures provide writers with one tool for rhetorical persuasion. Chatri’s introductions generally include the five moves described in Table 1; while these moves resemble those found in Swales’ (1990) CARS model, I have chosen to use labels that more closely reflect Chatri’s descriptions of his writing.
Chatri used only two of these moves—Introduction and Overview—consistently in his four research articles written from Spring 2000 to Fall 2003; these moves were typically used to frame the introductory sections. Despite this similar structure in Chatri’s texts, however, some important internal differences reflect his changing rhetorical knowledge (see Table 2). Chatri’s early papers make only tenuous connections between his own research (in the Announcement move) and prior research in the field (in the Literature Review), putting the onus on his readers to recognize the motivation for his work. Re-reading Paper No. 1 several years after he had written it, Chatri recognized this weakness, noting that there was no explicit link between his work and previous research. He went on to explain that his approach had changed in his more recent writing:

It’s not my style right now, because it seems that when I write Introduction and Previous [Work], I [now] tend to make it into the same, the same one. It’s hard to separate Introduction and Previous Work. (12/16/03)

Indeed, Chatri’s two most recent introductions explicitly link previous research with his current research by moving directly from the Literature Review into the Present Work. In adopting this new structure, Chatri is able to motivate his work and illustrate to his readers how it fits within a larger research context. What Chatri had changed was the ‘epistemic presentation’ that McNabb (2001) describes, altering the framing of his argument rather than the argument itself. By the time he had written the latter two papers, Chatri had begun to view writing as a tool for persuading readers:

Maybe your work is not good, you can tell a story so that the reviewer [thinks], “Oh! I agree with you!” Something like that, right? It’s not about the work too much, I think. Sometimes it depends on the writing. (09/12/03)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction to the topic area and the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Announcement of the work to be described in the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Review of relevant work in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present work</td>
<td>Outline of the goals and/or description of the work to be described in the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Outline of the paper itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
Descriptions of moves used in Chatri’s research papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction to the topic area and the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Announcement of the work to be described in the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Review of relevant work in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present work</td>
<td>Outline of the goals and/or description of the work to be described in the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Outline of the paper itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chatri used only two of these moves—Introduction and Overview—consistently in his four research articles written from Spring 2000 to Fall 2003; these moves were typically used to frame the introductory sections. Despite this similar structure in Chatri’s texts, however, some important internal differences reflect his changing rhetorical knowledge (see Table 2). Chatri’s early papers make only tenuous connections between his own research (in the Announcement move) and prior research in the field (in the Literature Review), putting the onus on his readers to recognize the motivation for his work. Re-reading Paper No. 1 several years after he had written it, Chatri recognized this weakness, noting that there was no explicit link between his work and previous research. He went on to explain that his approach had changed in his more recent writing:

It’s not my style right now, because it seems that when I write Introduction and Previous [Work], I [now] tend to make it into the same, the same one. It’s hard to separate Introduction and Previous Work. (12/16/03)

Indeed, Chatri’s two most recent introductions explicitly link previous research with his current research by moving directly from the Literature Review into the Present Work. In adopting this new structure, Chatri is able to motivate his work and illustrate to his readers how it fits within a larger research context. What Chatri had changed was the ‘epistemic presentation’ that McNabb (2001) describes, altering the framing of his argument rather than the argument itself. By the time he had written the latter two papers, Chatri had begun to view writing as a tool for persuading readers:

Maybe your work is not good, you can tell a story so that the reviewer [thinks], “Oh! I agree with you!” Something like that, right? It’s not about the work too much, I think. Sometimes it depends on the writing. (09/12/03)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Announcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Present work</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Present work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Move patterns in Chatri’s research paper introductions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Announcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Present work</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Present work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Move patterns in Chatri’s research paper introductions
Still, Chatri struggled with what he called “tricky writing”, and he often avoided overt attempts to boost his own credibility. He disliked writing that seemed to “boast”, which he viewed as a tactic that was necessary but personally quite difficult. Tracing Chatri’s use of “boosters” (Hyland, 2000) again illustrates a qualitative change in his writing. In his early years as a doctoral student, Chatri knew that he needed to persuade readers of his work’s importance, but he was unsure how to do so other than to conceal any weaknesses:

Chatri: …Suppose that our work is not so good, but not so bad. We have to pick up the key idea that make the referee think that it’s very interesting or it should deserve to get accept. That’s really important and difficult.

Chris: How do you do that?
Chatri: I don’t know. Because I got accept maybe three papers, I think. I don’t have much experience about that. But I think for me it’s—because I can tell my boss, in the team, or my friend, about my research, but to write it is very difficult. And we have only one or two pages to share something. And to conceal something, because [if] something is not good about my research, and I don’t want anyone [to] know, I will not tell. I will conceal something. That’s very important.

(11/08/02)

Nearly 1 year later, through more extensive reading, writing, mentoring, and disciplinary participation, Chatri had developed a keener sense of how to highlight his work’s strengths. Still, he expressed discomfort with taking a stance that he felt was discordant with his own sense of self:

…it seems that sometimes we have to boast. Boast like, “Okay, my work is good”. […] I don’t know, maybe in any work, you have to find your good points and talk about this. […] But, I don’t know, it seems that we have to boast about your work, but my character is not something like that. (08/29/03)

Chatri tended to avoid promoting his work at all, particularly in early papers, as illustrated in the excerpts below from each of Chatri’s research papers. Comparing these knowledge claims, we can see the rhetorical evolution in Chatri’s assertions about his work’s contribution to the field:

The average accuracy of space classification, break-space detection and false-break rate tested on the ORCHID corpus are 85.26, 79.82 and 8.75% respectively. Furthermore, we found that the error rate of POS tagging in the sentence that achieved by the product in our algorithm comparing with the tagger that works on token-by-token is reduced by average 11.3%. (Paper No. 1, Spring 2000)

After implementing the system with the above approach and evaluating the synthetic speech, we found that the quality was acceptable. However, the improvement of the naturalness of the speech is suggested. (Paper No. 2, Summer 2000)

Also, from the above results which show that both methods can perform at least equivalent to the typical feature/model based approach, this can confirm us to hopefully proceed in making more progress with the appearance-based approach. (Paper No. 3, Summer 2003)
From the above results, we found that the accuracies of our both methods are somewhat similar even the second method may be slightly better. Clearly our methods outperform the geometrical feature-based method especially if we consider the maximum error. Furthermore, we found that the stability of estimated pose our both methods is better than the one of feature-based method. (Paper #4, November 2003)

Chatri’s earliest paper avoids boosting claims almost entirely by citing quantitative rather than qualitative comparisons between his method and previous methods. While his later texts are still qualified (containing hedges like “hopefully” and “may be”), they illustrate a move toward increased boosting, making direct claims that his work has something to offer over previous work. In fact, Chatri was fully aware of the hedging in Paper No. 3, describing it as problematic, but he was also uncomfortable writing in a more assertive style:

I think these sentence show me, show that I’m not the kind of researcher that convince in my work. Because I know that the work is not perfect…Finally, I think, believe me, we have to change this. I know. Otherwise, even my boss, he will not write this. (09/12/03)

Chatri’s fourth paper represents the most high-stakes writing among these texts—his first submission to an international conference. His writing here illustrates a decreased reluctance to hedge his claims, using a mix of hedges and boosters. Because of the task importance, Chatri wrote many more drafts and revised the final version with his supervisor (a postdoctoral student in his lab). During this collaboration, Chatri’s supervisor deleted many of the hedges, inserted more boosters, and foregrounded the statement of the work’s contribution by moving it into the abstract. Although Chatri was not entirely comfortable with some of these changes, he deferred to his supervisor, whom he described as a more experienced researcher. In a subsequent paper, Chatri implemented many of these strategies on his own.

When Chatri discussed boasting, he also referred to the difficulty he faced in critiquing the work of others. He realized that promoting his own work meant that he had to situate it within a research context, but he was hesitant to frame it in terms of the limitations of previous work—an act that he referred to on some occasions as “blaming”. While his early papers contain no mention of such limitations, his later papers consistently describe disadvantages of previous methods. Yet Chatri remained cautious about overstating his case, calling this a “risky” strategy and referring frequently to his experience reviewing a manuscript for a professional journal. As a reviewer, Chatri explained, he was forced to think about writing in a new way, considering the validity of claims and evidence. In this role, he took on the perspective of a gatekeeper and gained a more complex understanding of the research paper as a genre written by real authors for a variety of purposes (from sharing results to gaining promotion). In essence, this experience pushed Chatri to consider the rhetorical space as separate from the domain-content space of writing.

Like Paul, Chatri’s perspective on writing research changed over time from thinking of writing as a way to inform readers to thinking of writing as “a tool to sell your ideas”
And as with Paul, it was through high-stakes writing, such as his conference paper submission, that Chatri made the most visible leaps in this rhetorical knowledge.

4. Discussion

The stories of Paul and Chatri illustrate the role of rhetorical knowledge in AAL and provide insight into how such knowledge may develop over time. As I watched these stories unfold, what struck me most was the writers’ increasingly rhetorical view of texts, as they began to focus not just on what content to transmit to their readers but how to transmit that content in a persuasive way. They did not simply learn the community’s values and practices; they learned to understand writing as an explicitly rhetorical process, referring to writing as “a tool”, a way to “convince readers”, and “a story.” While such a consideration may be largely unnecessary in the knowledge-telling tasks of many school genres, it is crucial in the knowledge-transforming tasks of academic research. To overlook this element of AAL is therefore to overlook one of the most essential parts of expert academic writing.

The stories recounted here also point to some important influences on rhetorical knowledge development, including mentoring and collaboration, identity, disciplinary participation, and task exigency. Like many graduate student writers, both Paul and Chatri benefited from legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as their mentors provided feedback and prodded them to explore new directions. These relationships help newcomers make sense of the invisible rules of disciplinary participation. For Paul and Chatri, mentoring and collaboration also led to social encounters that were subsequently woven into their experience and knowledge, often resurfacing in later texts—a pattern similarly found in other case studies (Ivanič, 1998; Prior, 1998). Perhaps even more important for developing rhetorical knowledge, the encounters brought academic literacy alive so that research genres came to be seen as central to disciplinary knowledge construction rather than simply a means of communication. Through mentoring, the writers began to view content, genre forms, and even the research process rhetorically. They viewed texts as having authors, claims, credibility, and temporality—exemplifying the ways that expert writers see texts (Geisler, 1994). In other words, they developed the type of local (rhetorical) knowledge that Carter (1990) sees as characteristic of advanced levels of expertise.

Both Paul and Chatri enjoyed mentoring relationships that also allowed them to maintain their own preferences, affiliations, alignments, and senses of self. Chatri, as an academic-in-training, had more invested in the development of AAL and struggled more obviously than Paul with decisions of whether and when to adopt the voices of his mentors. Even when he knew common strategies for persuasion, he wrestled with his personal sense that such strategies were somehow “tricky” or duplicitous. Academic writers who face tensions between their individual identities and the values and practices of the community they are joining are by no means unique (Casanave, 2002); despite these tensions, however, both Paul and Chatri managed to maintain a feeling of ownership over their texts.

As the writers became increasingly immersed in knowledge construction, they engaged heavily with texts as well as people. Textual interactions helped build subject-matter
expertise and served as powerful influences on the writers’ linguistic development, particularly in learning forms through borrowing strategies. Chatri looked to published texts to analyze how writers sold their work, he picked out phrases used for such aims, and he considered how reviewers might respond to various strategies of persuasion. These strategies, coupled with mentor collaboration and mediated by his own sense of self, led Chatri to take increasingly bolder stances in expressing knowledge claims and promoting his work.

Paul and Chatri’s rhetorical understanding of disciplinary texts developed gradually over time, but the pivotal points described above prompted them to consider new issues in new ways with an increased sense of urgency. In other words, the experiences of these writers suggest that not all tasks are equal and that some may exert considerably more influence on rhetorical knowledge development than others. In these cases, high-stakes tasks in which the writers struggled with issues of audience, persuasion, identity, and the value of their work were more significant in the long-term process of building rhetorical awareness; facing these issues, the writers invested considerable time and effort, and they drew upon multiple resources for support. In contrast, Paul and Chatri generally invested little time in classroom writing tasks, feeling that only a minimal effort was necessary. Such differentiated investment in writing tasks—and the importance of high investment—indicates that the issue of situational exigency holds an important role in AAL development in general and in rhetorical knowledge development in particular.

These stories further reveal an element of AAL that is often given marginal attention in EAP writing classrooms. Although writers cannot develop the type of localized rhetorical knowledge described here solely through classroom tasks, advanced EAP classrooms may provide a starting point from which learners begin to consider disciplinary writing through a rhetorical lens. Belcher (1995), for example, asks writers to analyze and write critical reviews of disciplinary texts, attending to rhetorical issues of credibility and audience; through such tasks writers can gain a new perspective on knowledge claims in published research, evaluating their validity and analyzing how authors boost such claims through various linguistic devices. Swales and Feak (2004) have students rate the strength of verbs and adjectives used to indicate a gap in previous research. Instructors may build on activities like this with follow-up discussions of rhetorical persuasion—how do various generic and linguistic elements serve to convince like-minded readers that the research makes a valuable, credible contribution to the field? Of course, these activities will not and cannot replicate or replace pivotal high-stakes tasks in the development of AAL, but classroom activities might begin to highlight for students the rhetorical nature of academic writing, at least planting the idea that such writing, even in the ‘objective’ sciences, is like a story through which savvy writers both locate and employ the available means of persuasion.

References


Christine M. Tardy is an assistant professor of English at DePaul University in Chicago. She teaches undergraduate courses in writing and graduate courses in the teaching of writing and ESL to graduate students. Her work has appeared in *Written Communication, Journal of English for Academic Purposes,* and *ELT Journal.*
学霸图书馆
www.xuebalib.com

本文献由“学霸图书馆-文献云下载”收集自网络，仅供学习交流使用。

学霸图书馆（www.xuebalib.com）是一个“整合众多图书馆数据库资源，
提供一站式文献检索和下载服务”的24小时在线不限IP图书馆。

图书馆致力于便利、促进学习与科研，提供最强文献下载服务。

图书馆导航：
- 图书馆首页
- 文献云下载
- 图书馆入口
- 外文数据库大全
- 疑难文献辅助工具