

Contrastive Rhetoric in Shona and English Argumentative Essays, By Juliet Thondhlana, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2000, 182 pp. ISBN: 0-908307- 86-1.

Kaplan's (1966) work suggested that Anglo-European expository essays follow a linear development. In contrast, paragraph development in Semitic languages is based on a series of parallel coordinate clauses. Essays written in Oriental languages use an indirect approach and come to the point only at the end. In Romance languages and in Russian, essays are permitted a degree of digressiveness and extraneous material that would seem excessive to a writer of English.¹

From the above quotation, it can be deduced that language and writing are expressions of, and are themselves influenced by the particular culture of a given society. Given this fact, there is bound to be mother tongue interference when non-native speakers learn to write in a foreign language such as English. This is the main theme of Thondhlana's book, *Contrastive Rhetoric in Shona and English Argumentative Essays*. Contrastive rhetoric (CR) is used in the book 'as a way of studying language that looks at textual products of language learners, both in the first or source language, as well as in the second or target language' (p. xii). This is in addition to the other sense of rhetoric as an art of persuasive communication.

Chapter 1 of the book lays the foundation of the study by providing a concise socio-linguistic background of the language situation in Zimbabwe. It discusses issues of bilingualism and the absence of a language policy in Zimbabwe, among others, pointing out the urgent need for the country to develop a coherent and meaningful language policy in order to redress the problems inherited from the colonial era. In Chapter 2, Thondhlana traces the origin and development of CR, taking the reader back to 1966 when American applied linguist Robert Kaplan initiated the contrastive rhetoric model to explain pedagogical problems encountered in the writing of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL), while Chapter 3 explains the research methods used in collecting data for the book. In their turn, Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the book's analytical approaches, which are described as "argument structure analysis and the persuasive appeals analysis". Chapter 7 sums up the findings of the study.

Using data collected from O-level argumentative compositions, the author clearly demonstrates that Shona-speaking students of English as a second language (ESL) transfer rhetorical patterns that are appropriate

¹ Connor, U., *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second-Language Writing* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15.

in Shona but which are considered inappropriate in English. The author attributes the transfer of rhetorical patterns from Shona to English to the influence of Shona culture and argues that the problem of rhetorical transfer cuts across all education levels in Zimbabwe. To demonstrate this point, she quotes from the O-level English Language examiners' report for the 1990 Examination, which documents awkward and ridiculous expressions used by students which arose out of literal translations of various expressions from Shona to English. Examples include: "the rain was raining hard" an English rendition of Shona's *Mvura yainaya chaizvo*; "he rang a phone" from *Akaridza runhare*, and "the money was eaten by the headmaster" from *Mari yakadyiwa nahedhimasita* (p. xiii). Although the levels of rhetorical transfer differ from level to level, college and university students, like school pupils, are also susceptible to problems of rhetorical transfer. On the basis of this finding and from her own wide experience as a teacher of both Shona and English, Tondhlana has produced a book, which is not only lucid and insightful but which also makes a very welcome and important contribution to the field of Applied Linguistics.

Contrastive Rhetoric in Shona and English Argumentative Essays is a well-written, well-packaged and professionally-edited book, which is highly recommended to English teachers at all levels, student teachers, lecturers, language and education policy makers, and all those involved with rhetoric as persuasive communication.

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Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000, By Brian Raftopoulos and Lloyd Sachikonye (eds.), Harare, Weaver press, 2001, 316pp, ISBN 0-7974-2286-2.

Although labour and labour movements have long played an important role in the political and economic history of Zimbabwe, as demonstrated by the Shamva Mine Strike of 1928, the ICU, the 1945 and 1948 strikes and the involvement of labour activists in the birth and development of Zimbabwe's nationalist struggle against colonialism, they have not always been accorded the importance they deserve in Zimbabwean historiography and have, especially in the post-independence retelling of the country's accounts of the struggle for independence, been relegated to the margins of history. In their 1997 publication, *Keep on Knocking: A History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe, 1900-97*, Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister demonstrated that, not only does the labour movement have a rich history of organisation, mobilisation, and agitation for better