

Katarzyna Hryniuk

*Spółeczna Akademia Nauk, Warszawa
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis*

ULLA CONNOR

INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

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Omówienie publikacji

The author of the book entitled *Intercultural Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom*, Ulla Connor, is a Chancellor's Professor of English in the School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis in the U.S. She is a world renowned expert in the subject area covered. The book was published in 2011 by the University of Michigan Press in The Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers, which is edited by Diane Belcher and Jun Liu. It is a succinct account of research on second-language writing which includes explanations of key concepts in Intercultural Rhetoric (IR). The author emphasizes in it the evolution of the research paradigm from Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) to IR, which marks the present state of affairs in this area.

The book consists of six chapters preceded by a *Foreword*, written by the series editors, which briefly introduces problems related to the research area discussed and endorses Connor's work stressing her expertise in the field. The first chapter is *An Introduction* which contains a detailed explanatory definition of the term "intercultural rhetoric". First, it describes the emergence and development of research in CR and the major influences which shaped the current research framework, i.e. Intercultural Rhetoric. Next, it mentions its impact on studies in other disciplines, beyond second language writing. Finally, it sets the book's aims and outlines its content.

In the second chapter, the author refers to her earlier book from 1996, *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second-Language Writing*, stressing the interdisciplinary nature of the research reviewed in it, and

then she lists numerous publications on this subject by other authors, which gives evidence to an increased interest in cross-cultural studies of writing carried out in CR framework in the last decades. Next, the author responds to a few points of criticism concerning this area, expressed by other scholars, emphasizing the use of linguistic textual/discoursal methods in IR explorations. Then, in the next four parts of this chapter she elaborates on such related with IR areas of study as: New Literacy, Translation Studies, Study of Culture as well as English for Specific Purposes, which have certainly influenced research carried out in IR framework. It seems that the developments which made the greatest impact on the shift of the research paradigm were in the study of culture, so the author points to the redefinition of the concept in this context. This chapter ends with the description of work on dissemination of research results in the area discussed, which was done in Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) - the main research center relying on IR principles - directed by the author of the book. It lists publications and professional events such as symposia and conferences organized by or in cooperation with this institution. In this way it also emphasizes an increase of interest in IR, its evolution and shift away from the old, CR approach to research.

In the third chapter, entitled *Culture in Intercultural Rhetoric*, the author briefly describes the evolution of this complex key concept in IR research. After discussing the theories of culture by such theorists like U. Hannerz, A. Appadurai and G. Mathews, she focuses on two concepts most closely related to IR research context, i.e. *large cultures* and *small cultures*, referring to works by Atkinson (2004) and Holliday (1999). Next, the importance of implementation of *accommodation* and *negotiation* notions into workshops and seminars rising cross-cultural awareness is discussed. Finally, the author presents the intercultural communicative competence model by M. Byram as a construct strongly associated with IR and often used in intercultural communication instruction. She also emphasizes the dynamic nature of the notion of culture and, following other scholars, she suggests its treatment as a “metaphorical verb” (p. 35).

The topic receiving the largest coverage in the book is text analysis. It has always been the major research approach in this context, that is why the fourth chapter is entitled *Text Analysis in Intercultural Rhetoric*. The author first refers to three important theorists in it (N. Fairclough, J. P. Gee and K. Hyland) and sketches their approaches to academic discourse analysis, which she regards as especially helpful in IR research. Then, she discusses three main methodological approaches to the study of writing in IR framework, i.e. corpus analysis, genre analysis and multi-modal visual analysis of texts, emphasizing the importance of context, social-situatedness and pro-

cesses involved in writing in such investigations. After that, the author gives guidance on the methodology of research in IR, focusing on using comparable corpora, the method which she advises to supplement with ethnographies, observations and interviews for more context-sensitive, qualitative explorations. Then she presents general principles and steps to be followed in IR research, and finally describes in more detail a few types of studies, summarizing examples of those which were conducted with the use of the three methodologies discussed earlier in this chapter (i.e. contextualized text analysis, corpus analysis and ethnographic approaches).

The fifth chapter, entitled *Intercultural Rhetoric and Teaching*, points to the impact of IR theory on such areas as teaching writing in English as a second or foreign language and its assessment, teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English as a lingua franca, as well as composition in the U.S., and the influence of the theory on practices of writing centers there. In this chapter the author refers to many valuable resources which can be recommended as follow-up reading, and poses questions worth further empirical exploration, emphasizing complexity of many issues in IR. She gives examples of how the theories and concepts connected with IR can be applied in the writing classroom and problems which may arise. The author also presents two ESP instructional programs for Chinese Ministry of Finance officials and for international postdoctoral laboratory researchers working at an American university, developed and administered in the ICIC, to show how central concepts in IR theory are implemented in teaching.

The last chapter, *Intercultural Rhetoric and Health Care Communication*, describes how concepts, theories and IR research results can be applied in training international medical staff in the U.S. It provides summaries of studies which were conducted by the author of this book and other scholars, but states that the explorations of health care discourse with implications for instruction in English as a second language are at a very early stage of development. Then the specific problems linked with communication in English faced by international medical graduates are discussed, and it is suggested how they can overcome them through participation in language and culture training offered by the ICIC, as well as in workshops on intercultural communication. In this institution also a battery of language assessment tests was developed, which is shortly described in this chapter. All these activities and tools are based on relevant theories and research findings, however, at the end of this chapter the author emphasizes that much more research is needed. Additionally, in an Appendix following this chapter there are two tasks presented for practicing rhetorical analysis of visuals (magazine advertisements), to which the author refers in one of the subsections of chapter four.

This is in many respects a significant and recommendable book. However, while reading it an error and a weakness can also be noted. It must be pointed out that on page 48, when discussing the key concept in corpus studies, i.e. *tertium comparationis*, T.P. Krzeszowski should be credited as the inventor, as it was done in U. Connor's book from 1996 mentioned above. Another feature of the book which can be regarded as a weakness is that the main body of the text has only 106 pages. Due to the fact that it covers a large number of issues (theories, summaries of studies, applications of research findings, research methodology, etc.), reading it can leave a more insightful reader with a feeling that many of them should be considered more exhaustively. Such readers will have to reach for the many sources that the author refers to while awaiting next publication – a result of further developments in the area. On the other hand, the book's brevity may be regarded as an advantage because it can be used on short university courses in linguistics, applied linguistics and other. Considering this purpose of the book, the inspiring discussion questions placed after each chapter are also very helpful – they can start interesting debates. Additionally, for users' convenience there is a subject and author index at the end of the book. Overall, the title of the book is an accurate indication of the content and I would recommend it as an invaluable resource both for the beginners and more experienced researchers in the field.

REFERENCES

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