How different native languages shape writing and rhetoric,

A Research and Review Proposal

Part 1: The Critical Review

The Stanford News article written by Clifton B. Parker "The Power of Language: How Words Shape People, Culture" shows cognitive scientist Lera Boroditsky's research on linguistic relativity which demonstrates that language structure determines thinking patterns. The article presents complex scientific concepts to non-experts yet fails to deliver academic scholarship standards because it lacks both critical analysis and balanced perspectives. The article achieves clear communication but fails to provide advanced theoretical analysis and rigorous evaluation.

Parker serves as a science writer for Stanford University who focuses on converting academic research into public knowledge. Although he lacks cognitive science expertise, Boroditsky's work as a Ph.D. psychologist in psychology serves as his primary research source. Through his Ph.D. in psychology Boroditsky lends credibility to the article since Parker functions more as a reporter than an analyst. It provides public access to Boroditsky's academic research yet avoids the critical complexities that academic writing requires.

The article establishes that language operates beyond basic communication since it creates actual thought patterns. The concept is demonstrated by research conducted by Boroditsky across multiple languages. Kuuk Thaayorre Aboriginal speakers use cardinal directions to communicate instead of spatial terms like "left" and "right." According to the article these speakers demonstrate exceptional navigational abilities because their language structure works this way (Parker). The German and Spanish terms for "bridge" demonstrate a contrast between their linguistic characteristics. The grammatical gender differences between German and Spanish lead German speakers to view bridges as elegant or beautiful while Spanish speakers describe them as strong or sturdy (Parker).

The article maintains a straightforward structure that makes it simple for readers to understand. After establishing Boroditsky's background the article uses various examples to demonstrate its main points. The accessible writing style combined with compelling real-life examples helps the subject appeal to readers from diverse backgrounds. It includes Boroditsky's direct statements while avoiding complex terminology which makes it suitable for science communication with the public. The basic approach restricts the article from achieving academic standards.

The article fails to deliver critical analysis when presenting research material to readers. It fails to recognize any opposing theories within cognitive science as well as current discussions about linguistic influence on thought processes. The text fails to present nativist perspectives which state that specific cognitive functions exist as universal biological determinants rather than being shaped by language. The article's failure to present opposing viewpoints leads to an unbalanced presentation of the field. On the other hand, the article presents brief suggestions about educational and cultural understanding as well as artificial intelligence applications yet fails to provide detailed analysis. It fails to explore crucial questions while missing its potential impact through this deficiency.

The article targets readers who have an academic education instead of experts in the field. The article achieves its persuasive effect through its easy-to-understand explanations and interesting illustrations but lacks effectiveness as a scholarly reference. Academic writing requires specific features that this article lacks including peer-reviewed study citations along with methodological explanations and analysis of study constraints. People interested in understanding Boroditsky's research findings will find this article helpful. The article fails to serve as an appropriate replacement for scholarly articles and research materials.

The article would become more valuable by adding information about Boroditsky's academic position and how her research compares to other scientists and practical uses of her findings. What implications do linguistic relativity hold for teaching languages and designing software and translation approaches? The article fails to address essential questions that could have deepened reader engagement.

In conclusion, the article works well as an introductory explanation of language and thought connections, yet it fails to achieve the required scholarly depth and critical evaluation needed for academic assessment. The article provides basic information about complex subjects, yet its simplified nature makes it unsuitable for those seeking advanced understanding. The research of Boroditsky is better understood through reading her academic publications and scholarly reviews which analyze her work through comparative and critical perspectives.

Works Cited

Parker, Clifton B. “The Power of Language: How Words Shape People, Culture.” *Stanford News*, 22 Aug. 2019, [https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2019/08/the-power-of-language-how-words- shape-people-culture](https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2019/08/the-power-of-language-how-words-%20shape-people-culture).

Part 2: The Tentative of Research Proposal

**Statement of Purpose**

This research examines how multilingual college students understand the impact of their native languages on their English academic writing. Through my experience as a Portuguese native speaker, I have observed how native language influences rhetorical style and tone and argument structure in writing. My Portuguese writing contains metaphoric language together with indirect arguments and emotional elements, yet my English writing follows direct linear patterns. The differences between these languages made me interested in understanding how language affects thought during the writing process. Reading Lera Boroditsky’s research about linguistic relativity deepened my interest because it shows language influences cognitive processes (Parker). Writing Studies needs to address essential questions about how native language backgrounds influence academic English rhetorical performance. Students encounter these differences during actual writing tasks.

This research will study how students who speak multiple languages perceive their first language's effects on their English academic writing while taking writing-intensive courses. My two research questions are:

1. How do multilingual college students perceive that their first language influences their English academic writing, particularly in terms of rhetorical structure, argumentation, or expression?
2. What specific writing challenges or advantages do multilingual students identify as stemming from their native language background?

This research aims to understand the cross-linguistic transfer of rhetorical elements between languages to improve teaching methods for multilingual students and composition theory and writing instruction. The research uses student experiences to develop writing education practices which promote inclusivity and adaptability.

**Research Plan**

The research questions will be addressed through qualitative research which combines semi-structured interviews with rhetorical analysis of writing samples. The mixed-methods methodology enables me to study multilingual students' perceptions while analyzing how their native languages affect their English writing content. The study will select 6–8 undergraduate participants from my university who take writing-intensive courses and have English as their second language. I will use the university writing center flyers combined with student organization contacts and classmate outreach to find participants. The study will include participants from multiple language backgrounds to achieve diverse linguistic and rhetorical influences.

Each participant will participate in semi-structured interviews that will last between 30 to 45 minutes. The semi-structured method maintains consistency between interviews yet enables participants to share detailed personal stories. The interview will investigate how first language affects English writing through questions about structural and tonal and argumentative aspects. The research will investigate the advantages and challenges students face because of their multilingual background. Saldaña demonstrates that semi-structured interviews serve as a useful tool to discover detailed insights based on personal experiences (32).

The participants must submit two brief writings that are in their native language (if possible) and in English. The two writing samples should represent formal writing regardless of their subject matter. The analysis of each text uses Selzer’s framework to examine argument structure alongside organizational patterns and tone and figurative language and metaphor use (283). The analysis will detect any linguistic transfers or language differences that exist between the texts.

All interview transcripts will undergo thematic coding to reveal dominant concepts and language patterns and essential perceptions. The coding process targets four main categories which include perceived influence and rhetorical adjustments together with emotional tone and identity markers. The analysis of writing samples will help researchers determine if student perceptions match or deviate from the rhetorical features found in their written texts. The integration of interview data with textual analysis through triangulation enhances my findings' reliability while providing a deeper understanding of English academic writing effects caused by multilingualism.

**Draft of Research Materials**

Interview Questions**:**

1. What is your first language?
2. How long have you been writing essays or academic papers in English?
3. When you write in English, do you ever notice yourself thinking in your first language? If so, when?
4. Do you think your first language affects how you organize or express your ideas in English writing? How?
5. Are there rhetorical or stylistic habits from your native language that you have had to adjust when writing in English?
6. Can you describe a specific challenge you’ve faced in English academic writing that you believe comes from your language background?
7. Do you think being multilingual gives you any particular advantages when writing in English? Why or why not?
8. Is there anything else about your experience as a multilingual writer that you’d like to share?

**Works Cited**

Parker, Clifton B. “The Power of Language: How Words Shape People, Culture.” *Stanford News*, 22 Aug. 2019, <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2019/08/the-power-of-language-how-words-shape-people-culture>.

Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 4th ed., Sage, 2021.

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**Working Bibliography**

Boroditsky, Lera. “How Language Shapes Thought.” *Scientific American*, Feb. 2011, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-language-shapes-thought/.  
- The article delivers an extensive analysis of Boroditsky’s research which will serve as a foundation for my study based on cognitive science perspectives of linguistic relativity.

Connor, Ulla. *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second-Language Writing*. Cambridge UP, 1996.

- The research of Connor on contrastive rhetoric provides frameworks to understand how cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence writing conventions which will be useful for analyzing my data.

Kubota, Ryuko, and Al Lehner. *Learning to Write in a Foreign Language: An Investigation*  *of Japanese University Students’ Writing Strategies*. Multilingual Matters, 2004.

- The research investigates how students move their writing strategies between languages while providing useful information for my multilingual research participants.

Matsuda, Paul Kei. “Second Language Writing in the Twentieth Century: A Situated Historical Perspective.” *Exploring Composition Studies: Sites, Issues, Perspectives*, edited by Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda, Utah State UP, 2012, pp. 15–33.  
 - Matsuda’s work provides historical and theoretical background on second language writing studies, helping situate my research within the field.

Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 4th ed., Sage, 2021.  
 - The book provides essential methods for coding and analyzing qualitative interview data which will be essential for processing my collected material.