

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapter, the first research question of tense choices for the three persuasive modes was answered using the results of the quantitative analysis. The results reflect that there tends to be a relationship between tense choice and Aristotle's rhetoric (persuasive functions). In addition, the second research question of the relationship between the three persuasive modes and their associated tenses was answered by the results of the contextual analysis. The results emphasize the explanation of the relationship by considering the basic meaning and uses of tenses as described in general grammar. This chapter includes general conclusions and limitations of the study, followed by recommendations on tense teaching and learning in relation to persuasive functions, and concluding with suggestions for further research.

1. Conclusions

This research study aimed to examine the relationship between tense choice and the three main persuasive functions suggested by Aristotle: Ethos, Logos and Pathos.

In the first stage of the study, the contents of CEO letters were divided into the three persuasive modes; Ethos, Logos and Pathos. After that, the frequencies of each tense were examined by counting the finite verb forms in main and subordinate clauses. Next, the frequencies of tenses were compared across the three modes to find the dominant tenses. The results of the analysis are as follows.

As was shown in Section 4.1, each persuasive mode has dominant tenses. Ethos has the present simple tense, the future simple tense and the past simple tense. The past simple and the present simple tenses are dominant in Logos. Pathos contains primarily the present simple tense.

Despite the overlaps of the dominant tenses between modes, the cross-mode comparison shows the dominance of a specific tense in each persuasive mode. It is

evident that the present simple tense is used mostly for Pathos, the past simple tense mostly for Logos and the future simple mostly used in Ethos. To explain this phenomenon, the sentence context analysis followed.

In Ethos, the future simple tense is used for giving promise to the readers (Guarantee). Giving promise is an Ethos' sub-mode which is used mostly to reassure the readers and to enhance credibility of the company. In Logos, the past simple tense is mostly used to report the economic overview, the company's actions and its operative results. The writers are reporting situations that already have happened. In addition, the present simple tense is often used in Pathos. There is the relationship between Pathos and the present simple tense in that both Pathos and the present simple tense involve perception of feelings. Therefore, the present simple tense dominates in Pathos.

Apart from the present study, the relationship between rhetorical functions and tense choice has been mentioned by Martinez (2010), Shaw (2011), and Malcolm (2002). These studies indicate that there is a correlation between tense choice and rhetorical functions in specific professional contexts, such as scientific, technical, humanities, economic, and business discourse. In addition, Taylor (2001) examined the relationship between tense choice and other rhetorical functions, *Deictic Function* (utterances through which the writer communicates with the reader), and *Referential Function* (references to other sources) which are unique to journal article genre. However, the rhetorical functions which were examined in the present study are different. They are persuasive functions (Aristotle's rhetoric).

To conclude, this study supports the hypothesis that tense choice can be related to the persuasive functions (Aristotle's rhetoric) in CEO letters. In other words, there is the relationship between tense choices and Aristotle's rhetoric. In agreement with studies by Taylor (2001), Martinez (2010), Shaw (2011) and Malcolm (2002), the present study shows that the rhetorical uses of tense in CEO letters can also be explained by temporal factors and basic meanings of the tenses.

2. Limitations of the Study

Even though the results of this study supports the hypothesis that tense choice can be related to the persuasive functions (Aristotle's rhetoric) in CEO letters, there are some limitations that need to be addressed.

As mentioned earlier, in the first stage of this study, the CEO letters were taken from annual reports published online by some of the world top-ranked multinationals. At first, the researcher tried to collect CEO letters from the most successful multinationals (the world's top ten multinationals). However, not all top ten multinationals publish the annual report online. Therefore, only five letters are from the top ten multinationals. The other five letters are taken from the multinationals which are in the lower ranks (No. 13, 20, 36, 84, and 86). To conclude, the CEO letters in the corpus are from the world's top hundred multinationals.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, choosing the CEO letters, the researcher tried to construct the corpus which includes a sufficient range of text and various type and ethnicity. However, those proportions of the ethnicity are not equal. According to Appendix D, half of the letters (five letters) are from the English native speaking countries. In addition, the small corpus size limits the variety of type. Therefore, bigger size of the corpus is recommended. In other words, more CEO letters should be used in the further analysis, so that the better generalization of the rhetorical functions could be made.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Recommendations for Classroom Use

As mentioned earlier, this researcher realizes the serious problem of tense misuse in Thai learners and aimed to make recommendations for tense teaching in relation to Aristotle's rhetoric.

The findings of this study show the possibility of certain recommendations on tense teaching and learning in relation to the persuasive rhetoric. This study shows that there is the relationship between tense choice and Aristotle's rhetoric and that the persuasive functions can be explained by temporal factors and basic meanings of the tenses.

To teach grammar in relation to rhetorical function, this researcher recommends tense teaching using the rhetorical grammar approach. The tense teaching and learning in the rhetorical grammar approach will not only help the learners to acknowledge these relationships, but to understand the feeling and attitude of writers. This will help lead to achieving meaningful and purposeful language use because of the advantages of the approach presented below.

In rhetorical grammar teaching, the learners learn how a given grammatical concept creates and/or alters meanings. According to Lefstein, 2011, while rule-based grammar teaching tends to focus on rules to be obeyed, one's correctness, and decontextualised grammar exercises, rhetorical grammar teaching focuses more on meaningful communication. Other differences between the two approaches are presented in the table below.

Table 20 Rule-based vs. rhetorical grammar teaching

	Rule-based grammar	Rhetorical grammar
Grammatical conventions are...	rules to be obeyed	resources to be exploited
Grammatical problems appear in the context of...	decontextualised grammar exercises	meaningful communication
Grammar problems tend to...	have one correct answer	have multiple possible answers
Solving grammar problems involves...	knowing the rules	exercising judgement
Learning grammar involves...	practice in applying the rules	awareness, reflection and deliberation
Tacit grammatical knowledge is...	a source of mistakes	a reliable source of knowledge
Standard grammar is...	the structure of proper English	one variety of English, particularly important in formal and academic communication

(taken from Lefstein, 2011)

In rhetorical grammar teaching, making judgments on language use should be avoided. To clarify, the instructor should not say which grammar must be or must not be used. Instead, the instructor should encourage the learners to recognize the structure and stylistic choices available and to practice using them properly and appropriately. When recognizing the structure and choices, the students are encouraged to understand how the use of those choices affects the readers' thinking and actions. The systematic description of grammar that they know subconsciously is reviewed with the students, and the students are encouraged to use this knowledge to understand their choices as writers.

While grammar instruction can be considered unfashionable, Kolln (2003) and Micciche (2011) support the approach. Kolln presents grammar as a rhetorical tool, and Micciche states that in teaching grammar, critical thinking skills are also taught. Besides, he explained, rhetorical grammar helps students to learn the rules of the grammatical concept through analysis and imitation. To teach grammar according to the rhetorical grammar approach, aiming to help the student to use language appropriately and effectively while focusing on teaching them to use the language correctly, the instructor helps to open up student's mind to the versatility, beauty, and possibility of language (Kolln, 2003).

According to the suggestions by Kolln (2003), Micciche (2011) and Lefstein (2011), this researcher recommends tense teaching based on the following procedures adapted from Micciche's application. In this context, the tense teaching and learning is taught in terms of writing skill, as formal grammar instruction is considered essential to writing skill improvement (Earle & Zimmermann, 2003; Hudson, 2001; Chandrasegaran & Schaetzel, 2004).

1. Initially, the instructor provides contents from persuasive writing in business English to the learners. The content includes sentences written in the tenses that are being taught at that time (i.e. present simple, past simple, future simple, etc.)

2. The importance of persuasion in business context should be discussed. In this case, the notion that Aristotle's rhetoric is the centre of the persuasive writing must be explained by the instructors.

3. For each sentence, students analyse how tense and content work together to convey meaning.

4. Students analyse how the tense use affects their attitude to the company and the desirability to invest in or associate with the company.

5. Students consider other situations in which the construction might be used effectively.

6. Finally, students create a new passage, using the provided passage as a syntactical template. The student creates new content, depending on the new situation and how they would use the target language.

7. As an extension of this practice, students then find their own passages that use the tenses they are learning and repeat the same process.

Another point to consider is that there are only six verb forms commonly used for persuasion in CEO letters. They are present simple, past simple, future simple, present perfect, modal and present progressive. Therefore, the teacher should focus more on those tenses instead of focusing on all tenses equally. As a result of this study, the present simple, past simple, and future simple tenses, which are the dominant tenses, should be taught in the persuasive context. The other reason that they should be focused on is that they are difficult for Thai learners and many Thai learners cannot use them correctly (Chownahe, 2000; Boonyavanich, 2002; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Ayurawatana, 2002; Baker, 2002). In addition to the three tenses, the present perfect tense should not be neglected because it is considered a variation of the past simple tense. According to the results of this study, the total mean of the present perfect tense combined with the past simple tense is more than the mean of the most dominant tense (present simple), as can be seen in Table 3 in Section 4.1. Moreover, many Thai learners seem to have repeated difficulties using the two tenses even though they are often introduced to them at an early stage of their English education. Furthermore, the learners often have difficulties distinguishing between the two even at an advanced level (Baker, 2002). In addition, the high percentage (25.9) of misuse of the present perfect tense was also found in the study by Boonyavanich (2000). Therefore, this researcher believes that learners should be taught to distinguish between the two tenses. These two tenses are often comparatively presented in grammar text books (for example, see Oxford Practice Grammar, by John Eastwood; Advanced Grammar in Use by Martin Hewings; and English Grammar in Use, by Raymond Murphy). However, the presentation of the

two tenses in relation to the persuasive context is not found. In other words, the present simple, past simple, future simple, and present perfect tenses should be presented in text books and focused on in tense teaching and learning in relation to persuasive context.

Finally, the researcher gave recommendations on tense teaching and learning in relation to the rhetorical functions in specific context, especially in annual report CEO letters. Even though some tenses (past simple, past progressive, present perfect) are mentioned as *Narrative Tenses* in some texts (e.g. *Intermediate Business English Course Book: Market Leader*) used in teaching Business English., there is no tense teaching focusing on Aristotle's rhetorical functions. The findings from the present study can provide guidance for the development of materials to help writers gain proficiency in tense use in persuasive writing in business English.

3.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study lead to several recommendations for further research.

First, the corpus of this study is the collection of ten CEO letters. A larger corpus should be used in further analysis, so that the better generalization of the rhetorical functions could be made.

Second, the present study has focused solely on the genre of CEO letters from some of the world's top ranked companies. These letters are considered examples of effective persuasive writing. In other words, the results of this study illustrate the tense choice only in effective writing. In further research, smaller and/or less successful companies could be examined. The analyses on similarities and differences of tense choice in the two groups might provide a clear picture of tense use in specific persuasive functions.

The present study has focused solely on the genre of CEO letters. A further study could be done on persuasive writing in other business genres such as the business memo, business letter, business plan, business proposal, etc. The relationship between tense choice and Aristotle's rhetoric in those business writings in which persuasive function is the centre or whose main purpose is to persuade should be analysed.

Moreover, further study can be done on other persuasive text in other areas such as language use in Sciences, Psychology, Law, Politics, etc. Similar to this study, the tense choice of these texts should be analyzed in relation to their rhetorical functions.

During the sentential contextual analysis, it was found that the issue of vocabulary deserves more consideration since it tends to determine the persuasive modes. While the relationship between the rhetorical function and tense choice can be described, the persuasive modes can also relate to some specific vocabulary. To better understand how to write CEO letters effectively, besides tense choice the analysis on the relationship between vocabulary and persuasive function should be looked at.

In addition, this study has explained only the phenomenon of the preponderant verb forms because of the limitation of time. Actually, the other verb forms which have less frequency in the corpus should also be carefully considered in further analysis. For example, the use of modals is lower than many verb forms throughout the corpus. As can be seen in Appendix O, each modal dominates in a specific persuasive mode. To illustrate, *can* and *could* dominate in Ethos, *should* and *must* dominate in Logos, and *would* dominates in Pathos. Despite their small percentage of frequency (4.7%) throughout the corpus, these modals should be analyzed separately from other verb forms to see how their basic meanings support the persuasive functions.

Moreover, to identify the effectiveness of the tense teaching in the rhetorical-grammar approach in the persuasive context, this researcher recommends further research on tense teaching based on the rhetorical-grammar approach. In further research, the most frequently used tenses in the corpus of persuasive writing should be taught to one or two groups of students. The content used in the teaching should be from persuasive business writing. The students' attitudes and achievement could be measured to determine the effectiveness of the teaching. Hopefully, further research based on the rhetorical-grammatical analyses would help solve the problem of *tense misuse* in Thai learners according to many error analyses previously referenced (Chownahe, 2000; Boonyavanich, 2002; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Ayurawatana, 2002; Baker, 2002).

As long as discourse analysis is examining aspects of the structure and function of language in use, the discourse analysis on grammatical structure and persuasive functions is always necessary because of the fact that all genre and modes of discourse may have persuasive components (Johnstone, 2002; Smith, 2003) . However, there are not many rhetorical-grammatical analyses focusing on the persuasive modes. The present study has led to a picture of tense use in business persuasive writing. Further research on the relationship between grammatical structures and persuasive functions are recommended. Hopefully, further rhetorical grammatical analysis will lead to more choices of effective grammar teaching and learning.

